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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Monday, 2 June 2025

Notice of meeting

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday, 10th June, 2025 at 10.00 am,
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.	Welsh Language Annual Report 2024-25 - To scrutinise the Council's performance.	1 - 32
5.	Public Protection Performance 2024/25 - To review the performance of the service area.	33 - 64
6.	Registration Services Annual Report 2024/25 - To review the performance of the service area.	65 - 78
7.	Council and Cabinet Work Planner.	79 - 84
8.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and Action List.	85 - 92
9.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	93 - 102
10.	Next Meeting: 9th July 2025 at 10.00am (Special Meeting).	

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

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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

Welsh Language

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

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.

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
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General Questions:

Empowering Communities

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

Service Demands

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

Financial Planning

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

Making savings and generating income

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

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

Questions to ask within a year of the decision:

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

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

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

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

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

SUBJECT:	Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2024/25
MEETING:	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	10th June 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To enable members to scrutinise the council's performance during 2024/25 against the Welsh Language Standards.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee uses the draft annual monitoring report to scrutinise the council's performance during 2024/25.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Welsh language is an important part of the culture and heritage of our place. Our desire to increase the number of people who speak and learn Welsh is a commitment within the Community and Corporate Plan. Dovetailing with this, the Council's Welsh Language Strategy sets our commitment to ensure that Monmouthshire is having a positive impact on achieving the Welsh Government's ambitious strategy of having a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 3.2 Alongside our strategy sit the Welsh Language Standards which promote the language and ensure that it is treated no less favourably than English. The standards applying to each public body can differ and there are 176 applying to our council. It is a requirement of standards 158, 164 and 170 that we produce an annual report which deals with the way in which we have complied with the standards during the year and publish this on our website. This is referred to as the Monmouthshire's Welsh Language Standard's Annual Monitoring Report. This is a duty placed upon us, but of equal importance is a desire for the language to thrive and grow in our county.
- 3.3 The annual report demonstrates how we have complied with the Welsh language standards, these include:
- Making available Welsh language courses at all learning levels to members of staff. These courses are facilitated through the National Centre of Learning Welsh and delivered by Coleg Gwent. Courses are fully funded and can be undertaken during work hours or in the evenings if staff prefer. 53 members of staff have been completing

these courses in 2024/25, this is an increase from 2023/24 where 40 members of staff had completed these courses.

- Efforts were made to increase the number of Welsh speaking applicants for new posts. Welsh language essential posts as well as some select Welsh language desirable posts were advertised on Welsh language recruitment sites which saw success in attracting applicants with Welsh language skills.
- A 'Welsh Tip' continues to be utilised in the staff's fortnightly newsletter which helps promote the Welsh language standards, distribute guidance for best practice and provides Welsh language support to staff.
- To celebrate Diwrnod Shwmae and promote awareness of the Welsh language, we launched a staff competition featuring a bilingual quiz. The quiz tested knowledge of everyday Welsh phrases, the history of the language, and key elements of the Welsh Language Standards. Efforts are made to promote different Welsh language campaigns and important dates in the Welsh language calendar to staff.
- We continued to utilise the Cymraeg Teams Channel which is a dedicated bilingual space on Microsoft Teams that supports Welsh-speaking and Welsh-learning staff. The channel is used to share resources, promote training opportunities, and foster a supportive community that encourages everyday use of Welsh across the organisation

3.4 During the year there have been some challenges. These included:

- Due to delays in procuring a new telephony system, Welsh language calls were routed for most of the year to a hunt group of Welsh-speaking officers across the authority. In March 2025, the new system was implemented, allowing calls to be directed straight to a Welsh-speaking advisor in the Contact Centre. If no advisor is available, calls revert to the hunt group to avoid delays.
- In response to rising demand and budget pressures, the Council began reviewing its translation delivery model to identify a more cost-effective and sustainable approach. Options under consideration include continuing with external providers, establishing an in-house team, or collaborating with neighbouring authorities. This work is ongoing and guided by an Integrated Impact Assessment which includes a Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

3.5 During the year, steps have been taken to improve our processes and strengthen our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. These include:

- A non-opinion internal audit review was conducted at the end of 2024/25 to assess compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. While areas of good practice were identified, the review also highlighted areas for improvement across services. An action plan is being developed to address the findings and strengthen compliance moving forward.
- The Welsh Language Officer and Equalities and Welsh Language Manager takes part in the induction process for all new staff members so that they are familiarised with our requirements to the Welsh Language Standards.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

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

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Monmouthshire Compliance Notice – Welsh Language Standards](#)
[Monmouthshire's Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#)

6. AUTHOR:

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Monmouthshire County Council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025



Overview

This is Monmouthshire County Council's annual report on the Welsh language standards. Its purpose is to evaluate our compliance with the standards, and the ways in which we have promoted and facilitated opportunities to use Welsh and ensured that the language was treated no less favourably than English during the year. It was produced in accordance with Schedule 4 of the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015, to meet the requirements of standards 158, 164 and 170.

Further Information

This report can be found on the Monmouthshire County Council website: www.monmouthshire.gov.uk. If you have any questions regarding the contents of this report, please contact us on the details below.

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Welsh Language Officer

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh, contacting us in Welsh will not lead to a delay in response.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.



This document is also available in Welsh

Related Documents

[Monmouthshire County Council 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#)

The cabinet member with responsibility for the Welsh language during 2024/25 was Cllr. Angela Sandles.

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1. Background

Monmouthshire County Council recognises the importance of the Welsh Language as an integral part of our cultural identity, heritage and community cohesion. Throughout the year 2024/2025 the council has been dedicated to fostering an environment where the Welsh language can thrive, and Welsh speakers are able to use the language in their everyday lives.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework that imposed a duty on Monmouthshire County Council, alongside other public organisations, to comply with standards relating to the Welsh language. The key principles of these standards are that:

- the Welsh language should not be treated any less favourably than the English language.
- we should promote and facilitate the use of the language

In 2015, Monmouthshire Council received a compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner. This document outlines the standards that the council must comply with. In total, there are 176 Welsh Language standards that apply to Monmouthshire Council. These standards are grouped into 5 categories, which are:

- Service Delivery
- Policy Making
- Operational
- Promotion
- Record Keeping

The Welsh Language Standards require us to:

- Produce and publish on our website a 5-year strategy that sets out how we propose to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in our area. (Standards 145,146)
- Produce an annual report, in relation to each financial year, which deals with how we have complied with the standards and published on our website. (Standards 158, 164, 170)

The council's [compliance notice](#) can be found on our bilingual website.

2. Compliance

Service Delivery Standards

Standards Group	Actions Taken During 2024/2025	Actions to be Taken 2025/2026
Standards 1 - 7 Correspondence sent and received.	Staff reminded of requirements to the Welsh language in our correspondence.	Monitor compliance across the authority.
Standards 8 - 22 Telephone calls made and received.	- Up until March 2025, Welsh phone calls to the council were managed through a hunt system, where callers were directed to a pool of Welsh-speaking officers from across the authority. - In March 2025, following the procurement of a new telephony system at the Contact Centre, the process for handling Welsh calls was updated. Now, these calls are directed straight to a Welsh-speaking advisor at the Contact Centre. If no Welsh-speaking advisor is available, the system reverts to the old hunt group system to ensure that the call is answered as promptly as possible.	- Monitor efficiency of new system. - Ensure that all staff are aware of the processes when receiving Welsh language phone calls.
Standards 24 – 36 Meetings with the Public.	Simultaneous translation provided in public meetings where required.	Monitor to ensure that the offer of simultaneous translation continues to be actively and consistently made.
Standards 37 - 51, 69 - 70 Other bilingual documents.	- Staff issued reminders of the need to state that documents are also available in Welsh. - Compliance monitored	Utilise 'Welsh Tip' within the Compass Staff News- letter to remind staff of requirements.

	through website checks and translation requests made through the Cymraeg translation service. • All forms for public use are created bilingually. • All official notices are produced and displayed bilingually.	• Monitor compliance closely
Standards 52 – 60 Websites, Social Media, Apps, and Self-service Ma- chines.	• Websites and social media accounts monitored closely to ensure compliance by Website Officer and Welsh Language Officer. • When issues arise, the Welsh Language Officer liaises with the Website Officer and web- site authors to rectify any is- sues. • Welsh Language Officer logs compliance checks for web- sites and social media ac- counts and notes any actions taken. • The number of hits on Welsh and English are as follows: Recycling and Waste: English: 126,892 Welsh: 320 Council Tax: English: 44,421 Welsh: 68	• Continue to monitor and log compliance. • Create mandatory training for website authors on how to use the Welsh language on digital platforms. • Create a log of any issues identified and any actions taken to resolve them.

	Early Years, Childcare and Schools Education: English: 2,790 Welsh: 59 Welsh Medium Education: English :542 Welsh: 67 Community Hubs and Libraries: English: 27,316 Welsh: 264 Cost of Living English: 3,275 Welsh: 103	
Standards 61 – 63 Signs	• All new street signs are either bilingual or monolingual Welsh. Names are carefully chosen to reflect the history and heritage of the area. The Welsh Language Officer works closely with the Street Naming Officer to help with this process. • To ensure accurate translations, all street naming translations are sent to an individual translator who is knowledgeable and experienced in translating street names.	• Welsh Language Officer to continue to work closely with the Street Naming Officer on the naming of new streets.
Standards 64 – 68 Reception Services	• Receptions across the authority are monitored to ensure 'Cymraeg'	• Develop targeted Welsh language training for reception staff to enhance

	posters are displayed indicating that Welsh can be used. • Welsh language skills assessed during interview for reception roles. • Internal Audit conducted a review of receptions' Welsh language compliance. The findings highlighted inconsistencies in Welsh language skills across reception services, with a full Welsh language service not always available.	existing skills and build confidence in delivering bilingual services. • Collaborate with reception service managers to establish clear plans for meeting public demand for Welsh language reception services. • Ensure all new reception posts are advertised as Welsh language essential to support consistent service provision. • Continue to monitor reception services across the authority.
Standards 71 – 75 Awarding Grants	• The council has a policy for 'Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language'.	• Monitor to ensure compliance.
Standards 76 – 80 Awarding Contracts	• The council has a Welsh Language Requirements - Procurement checklist.	• Monitor to ensure compliance.
Standards 81 – 82 Promoting Welsh Language Services	• Welsh language services are actively promoted on the council's website and social media pages. • Social media posts created for important dates in the Welsh language calendar to promote the Welsh language.	• Monitor social media to ensure that Welsh language services continue to be actively promoted. • Schedule promotions for key events / dates.
Standard 83 Corporate Identity	• All staff issued with bilingual e-mail addresses. • Ensure that all aspects of corporate identity are bilingual and that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably.	• Ensure that bilingual e-mail addresses are used across our website, documents and forms.

Standards 84 & 86 Educational Courses	• Educational courses are assessed to determine the need to be delivered in Welsh.	• Continue to assess and monitor the need to deliver educational courses in Welsh.
Standard 87 Public Address Systems	• All public address systems are bilingual. • Monitoring compliance through visits.	• Issue reminders to staff of requirements. • Monitor for compliance.

Policy Making Standards

Standards Group	Actions Taken During 2024/2025	Actions to be Taken 2025/2026
Standards 88 - 93 Policy Making.	• Training on 'Welsh Language Impact Assessments' provided on the Democratic Services Section of the Hub. • Welsh language impact assessments are undertaken for all policy decisions. • Quality assurance meetings for Impact Assessments and feedback provided to report authors - Policy Team. • Integrated Impact Assessment template and guidance has been reviewed and updated. • Videos have been recorded providing officers with information on how to complete the Welsh Language Impact Assessment and will soon be made available on our learning platform Thingi.	• Videos and further training to be uploaded on the Thingi learning platform. • Deliver workshops on completing effective Welsh Language Impact Assessments to support informed and compliant policy decision-making. • Quality assurance meetings to continue and monitor effectiveness on outcomes. • Monitor compliance of standards and issue further training to staff where issues are identified.

Operational Standards

Standards Group	Actions Taken During 2024/2025	Actions to be Taken in 2025/2026
Standards 99 – 104 Employment Documents.	- Welsh language versions of the following key policies are available on the staff intranet's Welsh language page: Fairness in the Workplace, Attendance Management, Hours and Leave, Discipline, Code of Conduct, and Performance Evaluation. - Staff are regularly reminded of their right to receive employment-related documents in Welsh through updates shared in the Cymraeg Teams channel.	Continue to issue regular reminders to staff about their right to receive employment-related documents in Welsh.
Standards 105 – 111 Human Resources Policies.	Currently, Welsh language versions of key HR policies are only accessible via the Welsh language section of the Hub and are not yet listed under the main Policy section of the HR page.	- Relocate the Welsh language versions of HR policies to the Policies section of the HR page on the staff intranet and provide clear guidance to staff on how and where to access them. - Ensure that Welsh language versions of HR policies are reviewed and updated in parallel with their English counterparts to maintain accuracy and compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.
Standards 112 – 119 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.	Staff are made aware of their right to complete the complaints / disciplinary process in Welsh.	Continue to ensure this is actively offered. Utilise the Cymraeg Teams Channel to ensure reminders are issued to staff.
Standards 120 – 126 Staff Intranet and IT Resources.	Cysgliad is available on every computer, providing Welsh language spelling and grammar checking, as well as an English- Welsh dictionary.	- Continue to offer support to staff on using 'Cysgliad' - Collaborate with the Hub officer to improve the layout and usability of the Welsh language section on

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

	• To Bach Software is provided on every computer to assist staff in typing more easily in Welsh. • Guidance provided on how to use Cysgliad / To Bach on Cymraeg Teams Channel. • A dedicated Welsh language page is available on the staff intranet, offering key documents and support.	the staff intranet, and broaden the range of support documents available to better assist staff in using Welsh confidently in their roles
Standard 127 Staff Language Skills.	• Information on staff language skills is collected during the application process for new posts. • Welsh Language Officer receives information from HR about new starters and leavers and their recorded Welsh language skills. The list of Welsh speakers is updated on a regular basis.	• Incorporate the reporting of Welsh language skills into an online system such as Thingi. Amend our Welsh language framework to use the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) for assessing Welsh language skills instead of the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) framework. This change will align our framework with the preferred standard used by other organisations.
Standards 128 – 133 Staff Training.	• The Welsh Language Officer, alongside the Equalities and Welsh Language Manager, plays an active role in the Corporate Induction process throughout the year by delivering Welsh language awareness training to new staff. During these sessions, the Welsh Language Officer provides valuable insights into the history and importance of the Welsh language, outlines the	• Welsh Language Officer to continue to be a part of the induction process. • Continue to advertise and promote Welsh training to staff.

	council's responsibilities under the Welsh Language Standards and explains the role employees play in supporting and promoting the language. Staff are also informed about the range of support resources available to them, including opportunities to learn Welsh and practical tools to help them use the language confidently in the workplace. • Welsh language courses at all levels are available to all staff members. • 53 staff members have been completed a Welsh course in 24/25.	
Standards 134 & 135 Wording and Logo for Staff Email Signatures	• All staff members have access to the translation service to ensure that email signatures are bilingual. • The 'Work Welsh' logo is available on the staff intranet as well as the Cymraeg Teams Channel for staff to include in their email signatures.	• Continue to utilise the Cymraeg Teams Channel to share information with Welsh speaking staff. • Use the "Welsh Tip" section in the staff newsletter to remind staff of the requirement for bilingual email signatures and provide guidance on how to request a translation.
Standards 136 - 140 Recruitment Process	• Please see the section on 'Recruitment' • The council classifies each new vacant post as being either Welsh language desirable or Welsh language essential. • All vacant posts are advertised bilingually, they include the Welsh language skills framework and Welsh language assessment.	• Continue to make use of Welsh language recruitment sites. Welsh Language Officer to monitor the outcomes of these adverts. • Provide additional information for Welsh language essential posts to specify what kinds of skills will be needed for the role. • Create training for managers on Welsh language recruitment.

	- Welsh Language Officer monitors new post adverts to ensure compliance. - All roles that are assessed as being Welsh Language Essential and some select Welsh Language Desirable roles are advertised on Welsh language recruitment sites.	
Standards 141 – 143 Internal Signage	- Guidance provided to staff for internal signage. - Signs monitored for compliance.	Continue to monitor for compliance.
Standard 144 Workplace Announcements	All announcements are recorded bilingually.	Monitor for compliance.

3. Complaints

Complaints from the Public

Street Name Plate - A complaint was received regarding the Welsh translation of 'Springfield Road' on a street nameplate in Abergavenny, where the word 'spring' had been mistranslated to reflect the season rather than a water source. The Welsh Language Officer and Street Naming and Numbering Officer investigated the issue and following consultation with a translator, agreed on the corrected version "Heol Cae'r Ffynnon." A patch with the revised name will be applied during the next round of nameplate updates. The original translation, made over a decade ago, predates current standards and no records exist explaining the initial decision for this translation. As a result, the Council continues to strengthen its translation process through collaboration between officers and a dedicated translator, ensuring consistency and cultural sensitivity in all future street naming processes.

Automated Responses - A complaint was received regarding the lack of a bilingual response generated by the Council's 'My Monmouthshire' reporting system when a service request is completed. It was identified that Welsh-language submissions were triggering English-only replies. In response, the Welsh Language Officer collaborated with the digital team to investigate and resolve the issue. System updates were implemented to ensure the Welsh responses are now issued when Welsh forms are submitted. Additionally, staff were reminded of the Welsh Language Standards, and monitoring procedures have been strengthened to maintain bilingual compliance.

Complaints from the Welsh Language Commissioner

Third Party Services - Correspondence was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner requesting information about a third-party contract, following concerns raised by a member of the public regarding the absence of a bilingual service when contacting the provider for support. The Commissioner sought clarification on the nature of the relationship between the Council and the third party, specifically whether the company was delivering services on behalf of the authority. The service is operated under a concession agreement as part of a collaborative project involving several local authorities. The original procurement process, led by one of the partner authorities, included a requirement for bilingual service provision, including a bilingual help desk. This matter remains under investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Welsh Courses - We were contacted by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office as a concern had been raised regarding access to Welsh language lessons for a part-time employee. The concern related to the employee's ability to attend a scheduled course due to their working pattern. In response, the Welsh Language Officer worked with the relevant teams and Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent to identify a more suitable class. A revised arrangement was agreed, allowing the employee to continue their learning. This resolution was shared with the Commissioner's office, demonstrating the Council's commitment to supporting staff in accessing Welsh language training.

4. Welsh Language Skills

The following tables presents data on staff who have recorded some level of Welsh language skills.

Staff Welsh Language Skill Levels

Welsh Language Skill Level	Number of Staff (excluding schools)	Percentage
Fluent	48	12.2%
Advanced	7	1.8%
Intermediate	51	13.0%
Foundation	33	8.4%
Beginner	253	64.5%
Total	392	-

Welsh Language Skills by Directorate

Directorate	Number of Welsh Speakers (excluding schools)	Percentage %
Learning, Skills & Economy	28	7.1%
Place	23	5.9%
Law and Governance	6	1.5%
Resources	19	4.8%
Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	129	32.9%
People, Performance and Partnerships	15	3.8%
Chief Executives – Housing, Rural Development & Strategic Partnerships	18	4.6%
Infrastructure	37	9.4%
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	117	29.8%
Total	392	-

Fluent Welsh Speakers by Directorate

Directorate	Number of Fluent Welsh Speakers (excluding schools)	Percentage %
Learning, Skills & Economy	2	4.2%
Place	2	4.2%
Law and Governance	4	8.3%
Resources	2	4.2%
Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	17	35.4%
People, Performance and Partnerships	3	6.3%
Chief Executives – Housing, Rural Development & Strategic Partnerships	1	2.1%
Infrastructure	1	2.1%
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	16	33.3%
Total	48	-

5. Welsh Language Courses

The Council offers a wide range of Welsh language courses for staff at all levels of proficiency. These courses aim to increase the number of Welsh-speaking staff within the authority and boost their confidence in using the language in their work. Ensuring staff learn Welsh is crucial for the authority to provide equitable Welsh language services to our residents. Additionally, offering these courses helps the authority to comply with the Welsh Language Standards.

The courses are facilitated through the National Centre for Learning Welsh and delivered by Coleg Gwent. They are funded by the Welsh Language Department and staff are provided with the time to complete these courses during their working hours.

In the year 2024/2025, the number of staff who attended Welsh language courses at the relevant levels are as follows:

Language Level of Course	Number of Staff Completing Course 2023/2024	Number of Staff Completing Course 2024/2025
Mynediad 1 / Entry 1	23	26
Mynediad 2 / Entry 2	10	10
Sylfaen 1 / Foundation 1	1	9
Sylfaen 2 / Foundation 2	2	3
Canolradd 1 / Intermediate 1	2	0
Canolradd 2 / Intermediate 2	1	3
Uwch 1 / Advanced 1	1	0
Uwch 3 / Advanced 3	0	2
Hyfedredd / Proficiency	0	0
Total	40	53

Staff completing courses per directorate 2024/2025

Directorate	Number of Staff	Percentage %
Learning, Skills and Economy	10	18.9%
Place	4	7.5%
Law and Governance	0	0%
Resources	3	5.7%
Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	9	17.0%
People, Performance & Partnerships	8	15.1%
Chief Executives – Housing, Rural Development & Strategic Partnerships	6	11.3%
Infrastructure	2	3.8%
Customer, Culture & Wellbeing	11	20.8%
Total	53	-

Standard 128, requires the Council to provide training in Welsh for staff in the following areas, if they are provided in English:

- Recruitment and interviewing;
- Performance management;
- Complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- Induction;
- Dealing with the public; and
- Health and safety.

Staff are asked whether they would like to receive these training sessions in Welsh.

We utilise our Welsh Language Teams Group to actively remind staff that they are able to access the above training through the medium of Welsh.

6. Recruitment

Posts Advertised During 2024–2025

	2023- 2024 Number	2023- 2024 %	2024- 2025 Number	2024- 2025 %
Vacant/new posts advertised	649	-	384	-
Vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills essential'	24	3.7%	9	2.3%
Vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills desirable'	625	96.3%	375	97.7%
Vacant/new posts advertised specified as posts where it is 'necessary to learn Welsh-language skills when someone is appointed to the post'	0	0	0	0
The number of vacant/new posts advertised that 'did not require Welsh language skills'	0	0	0	0
The number that did not include an assessment	0	0	0	0
The number not stated	0	0	0	0

School Posts Advertised During 2024–2025

	2023-2024 Number	2023- 2024 %	2024- 2025 Number	2024- 2025 %
Schools vacant/new posts advertised	117	-	299	-
Schools vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills essential';	20	17.1%	15	5.0%
Schools vacant/new vacant posts advertised that had 'Welsh language skills desirable'	97	82.9%	284	95.0%
Schools vacant/new posts advertised specified as posts where it is 'necessary to learn Welsh language skills when someone is appointed to the post'	0	0	0	0

The number of schools vacant/new posts advertised that 'did not require Welsh language skills'	0	0	0	0
The number that did not include an assessment	0	0	0	0
The number not stated	0	0	0	0

The job application process is fully accessible in Welsh, in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards, and all job vacancies are advertised bilingually. As part of the recruitment process and in compliance with Standard 136, every vacant post must be assessed for the necessity of Welsh language skills. The council classifies each new vacant post as Welsh language desirable at a minimum.

For positions that involve a high degree of interaction with the public or where there is a lack of current Welsh language skills in the service area, these roles are assessed as Welsh language essential. For these essential posts, we encourage managers to specify in the job description the types of Welsh skills required. This approach aims to encourage applications from individuals who have learnt the language, as learners often lack the confidence to apply for Welsh language essential roles due to uncertainty about the tasks they will need to perform in Welsh.

Additionally, we include the Welsh language skills framework in every job advert. We also utilise Welsh language recruitment sites to advertise posts that are assessed as Welsh language essential, as well as some Welsh language desirable posts. By advertising roles on these dedicated recruitment sites, we make it easier for Welsh speakers to find our vacant posts, and we have successfully appointed Welsh speakers as a result.

In January 2025, the Council launched a new e-recruitment system aimed at streamlining processes and enhancing the recruitment and onboarding experience for both hiring managers and prospective employees. The system is fully bilingual, and job advertisements are regularly reviewed by the Welsh Language Officer to ensure ongoing compliance with Welsh language requirements across all stages of the recruitment process.

7. Customer Service

Welsh Language Phone Calls

Between 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 there were 69 calls made to the Welsh language line.

The following table provides a departmental breakdown of the nature of enquiries for the years 2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025.

Department	Number of Welsh Calls 2022-2023	Number of Welsh Calls 2023-2024	Number of Welsh Calls 2024-2025
Recycling and Waste	17	27	33
Communications Team	5	2	0
Council Tax / Rates / Finance	4	9	10
CYP / Education	3	2	5
Highways	4	4	12
Welsh Language Officer	4	3	0
Countryside	1	0	0
Grants	0	1	0
Grass routes / Passenger Transport	2	0	4
Social Care	2	5	1
Planning	2	1	0
Licensing	1	0	0
Leisure Centre	0	0	1
Reception	0	0	1
Human Resources	3	2	1
Environmental Health	1	0	1
Elections	2	0	0
Total	51	56	69

For the majority of the reporting year 2024/25, Welsh telephone calls to the council were directed to a hunt group system, consisting of a pool of Welsh-speaking officers, as has been the process for many years. However, in March 2025, this system was updated so that Welsh calls are now transferred directly to a Welsh-speaking member of staff in the Contact Centre. This change was made possible by the procurement of a new telephony system.

In addition to our telephony services, we offer a fully bilingual app, My Monmouthshire, where customers can make payments, report incidents, and request services in Welsh. We also provide a fully bilingual chatbot, available 24/7, allowing customers to access support in Welsh at any time. During office hours, our staff monitor the chatbot to assist with any queries that the chatbot is unable to resolve.

8. Promotion

Welsh Tip

To promote the Welsh language among staff, we have included a bilingual Welsh Tip feature in the staff Compass newsletter. Each tip highlights specific Welsh Language Standards and provides practical guidance on how to comply with them. Additionally, we provide information about the support available to staff such as provision for learning Welsh and Iaith Gwaith lanyards. Welsh language campaigns are also promoted within the newsletter such as the Welsh Language Commissioner's 'Defnyddia dy Gymraeg' campaign. These tips are designed not only to help staff understand and adhere to Welsh language standards but also to encourage the use of Welsh in the authority's daily operations.

Cymraeg Teams Channel

The Cymraeg Teams channel continues to be a valuable resource for both Welsh-speaking and Welsh-learning staff members. All staff, regardless of their language ability are welcome to join the channel. To encourage participation and inclusion, all posts by the Welsh Language Officer are made bilingually.

This channel provides a platform for staff to interact, practice their language skills, and build a supportive community within the authority. It is a hub for sharing useful Welsh language resources and information, as well as promoting courses delivered through the medium of Welsh.

By fostering a sense of Welsh language community, the channel ensures that Welsh-speaking staff receive the support they need from the Welsh language department. It also helps to integrate the use of Welsh into daily operations, promoting a bilingual working environment.

Diwrnod Shwmae

To promote and raise awareness for Diwrnod Shwmae, we launched a competition for staff to test their knowledge through a quiz. The quiz featured questions on simple Welsh language phrases, the history of the language, language legislation, and Welsh language standards.

The winner of the quiz received two tickets to see Welsh folk band Calan perform at the Borough Theatre. These tickets were generously donated by the Borough Theatre. The primary aim of the quiz was to promote the Welsh language among council staff and to encourage participation in Diwrnod Shwmae by utilising their Welsh language skills.

Additionally, by awarding the winner tickets to see a Welsh language band perform locally, we provided an opportunity for them to experience the language outside of the workplace and within the community. This initiative not only supported the use of Welsh in the council's operation but also fostered a deeper connection to the language and culture.

9. Conclusion

Welsh Language Classes

In the reporting year 2024/25, a total of 53 staff members completed a Welsh language course, marking an increase from the previous year, 2023/24, when 40 staff members completed a course. Initially, an additional three staff members had enrolled in the Welsh courses; however, two had to unenroll due to personal circumstances, and one staff member left the authority but continued their course at their new employment.

When examining the registrations for each level, we observed a slight increase in those completing Mynediad / Entry 1 course, the very first level of learning, with 23 completions in 2023/24 and 26 completions in 2024/25. The number of staff completing the Mynediad / Entry 2 course remained consistent at 10 members for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. Notably, there was a significant increase in those completing the Sylfaen / Foundation 1 class, rising from 1 completion in 2023/24 to 9 completions in 2024/25.

Welsh language courses are promoted to staff throughout the year, with a specific promotion campaign starting in June to prepare for courses beginning in September. These courses involve 2 hours of lessons each week and run for approximately 32 weeks during term time only. The Welsh Language Officer conducts regular informal evaluations with those undertaking Welsh courses to gather feedback on their progress. If any issues are identified, the Welsh Language Officer collaborates with the Welsh in the Workplace officer at Dysgu Cymraeg Gwent to resolve them. Additionally, a feedback survey is conducted towards the end of the courses to gain a better understanding of course satisfaction.

To support staff in using their Welsh language skills in a meaningful and public setting, several learners took part in the council's Christmas carol service. As part of the event, they confidently recited a Welsh-language poem, marking a significant milestone in their language journey. This experience not only helped build their confidence but also demonstrated to colleagues that Welsh is actively used within the authority. It served as a positive example of language learning in action and helped promote the availability of Welsh language courses to other staff.

Contact Centre: Implementation of New Telephony System

In March 2025, the council updated its processes for handling Welsh calls. Previously, for most of this reporting year, callers wishing to speak to the council in Welsh were transferred to a hunt system that included various Welsh speaking officers across the authority. However, with the procurement of a

new telephony system by the Contact Centre, Welsh calls are now directed straight to a Welsh speaking advisor in the Contact Centre.

This new system ensures that Welsh speakers can directly connect with a staff member who is fully trained to handle a wide range of topics, such as Council Tax, Highways, and Grass Routes, allowing their enquiries to be addressed entirely in Welsh. When a caller selects the Welsh language option, their call is prioritised in the queue for Welsh speaking Contact Centre staff. Given the higher proportion of English-speaking staff, this prioritisation, or 'queue jumping', is justified to ensure Welsh language callers receive timely assistance.

If no Welsh-speaking member of staff is available to answer calls, the system reverts to the old hunt system to ensure that calls are dealt with without delay. There is also an answerphone function where callers can leave a message, and their call will be returned as soon as possible.

Currently, we have one fluent Welsh-speaking member of staff at the Contact Centre, along with two staff members who are learning Welsh through the Welsh in the Workplace courses. Despite our efforts to recruit an additional Welsh speaker through Welsh language essential vacant role adverts, we have not yet been successful.

We hope that the new telephony system will encourage more people to use Welsh when interacting with us, aligning with our Welsh Language Strategy's objective to increase opportunities for public service interactions in Welsh. We will monitor the efficiency of this new system to ensure compliance with the standards and to continually improve our services.

Welsh Language Standards Internal Audit

At the close of the 2024/25 financial year and the start of 2025/26, the authority's Internal Audit team conducted a non-opinion review of the council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. A memorandum summarising their findings has been produced, and we are currently developing an action plan to address the issues identified.

Observations undertaken as part of the review did observe many areas where compliance could be demonstrated with the standards. Staff seemed to be aware of messages in staff communications and the offer of learning Welsh at work. However, there was some inconsistency with how the standards were applied across the Authority.

Some key areas for development were identified, including opportunities to enhance bilingual communication in automated email responses, improve consistency in signage, and strengthen processes for handling Welsh language calls across certain services. Additionally, there is scope to ensure that advertising and publicity materials reflect equal treatment of the Welsh language, and to align the English and Welsh versions of the council's website and mobile app (My Monmouthshire) more closely.

Throughout the 2025/26 financial year, we will focus on implementing the necessary actions to strengthen our compliance with the Standards. A detailed account of the review findings, the resulting action plan, and the progress made will be included in our next Annual Monitoring Report for 2025/26.

Welsh Language Translations

During the reporting year, the council explored alternative approaches to delivering translation services as part of its broader budget-setting process. This review was prompted by sustained financial pressures and a marked increase in demand for translation, which has led to annual expenditure exceeding the allocated budget. The options considered included continuing with existing external providers, establishing an in-house translation team, and exploring collaborative arrangements with neighbouring authorities such as Torfaen County Borough Council.

In evaluating these options, careful consideration was given to the potential impact on small Welsh businesses, the quality and timeliness of service delivery, and the need to maintain full compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. This work has been underpinned by an Integrated Impact Assessment which includes the Welsh Language Impact Assessment and remains ongoing as we work towards a sustainable, efficient and high-quality translation model that meets the needs of our communities.

A final decision on the future delivery model is yet to be confirmed, and a full update will be provided in the next Annual Monitoring Report.

SUBJECT: PUBLIC PROTECTION 2024/25 PERFORMANCE REPORT

MEETING: PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 10th JUNE 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To undertake scrutiny of service delivery across Public Protection services for the financial year 2024/25, with comparison to previous years. The Public Protection division comprises of Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Animal Health and Licensing.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To consider and comment on the contents of the attached report – Appendix One, titled ‘Public Protection Performance Report 2024/25’.
- 2.2 Noting the breadth of services provided, Members to consider whether they would like to scrutinise a particular area of public protection work.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 This is the tenth annual report summarising performance across the Public Protection division. Members in 2015 requested an annual report to enable them to be sighted on performance, particularly how this varies when compared to previous years. The concern mainly related to ensuring the respective teams had capacity to deliver the array of services provided across all disciplines. The last annual performance report was presented to this Performance and Overview Committee in June 2024.
- 3.2 The attached report, Appendix One, summarises performance for the twelve month period 2024/25 and highlights the following:
- Service Requests, which refer to complaints and requests for information from the public and businesses, remain at very high levels.
 - The Environmental Health (Commercial) team completed their proactive food safety plan and inspected 630 premises. The EH (Public Health) team responded to an overall increase in the number of persons requesting a service with a total of 2843. Trading Standards & Animal Health remained very busy (e.g. 258 Animal health visits) completing their Feed programme and Licensing applications increased significantly to 1721.

- Monmouthshire Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) – the number of interventions again increased significantly with 161 event organisers assisted. ESAG provides partnership support to organised events and helps mitigate risks to music, sporting, agricultural and cultural gatherings.
- Annual reports will continue to be made to this Committee to assess performance overtime and help inform future priorities noting the competing demands. Future annual reports will be similarly scheduled for June or July each year.
- Services may struggle to take on any new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment and therefore funding must be sought to support any new work. For example, the Special Procedures implemented in the 2024/25 period is funded via the licence fees for tattooists etc.
- Future strategies for sustaining Public Protection services will be developed (to include further income generation and collaboration), locally, regionally and nationally.
- Services will continue to have full regard to the Authority's Community and Corporate Plan 2022 – 2028 and other key drivers when prioritising service delivery.
- Officers across Public Protection continue to actively participate in local, regional and national work. All are keen to learn from others to secure improvements in service delivery for future years. The Head of Public Protection role, vacated October 2024, has not been directly back filled, which will need to be evaluated.
- Overall the services reflect the national picture of the professions involved, with an aging workforce and the continued need to invest in new officers.
- New legislation and responsibilities continue to demonstrate the key role all Public Protection services play in delivering key Government policies.

4. **REASONS:**

- 4.1 The Cabinet decision log from 7th January 2015 stated: 'Noting the continually changing legislative landscape in the future, it was decided Strong Communities Select Committee would receive six monthly reports on Public Protection services'. In 2019 it was decided to report annually to allow Members to scrutinise performance across the Division. Under the new administration, since May 2022, it is good governance to continue to provide performance reports to scrutinise service delivery and be open to any suggestions for improvement.
- 4.2 Officers would welcome any thoughts on specific topic areas for scrutiny in the future to provide a more detailed understanding, a deeper consideration of pertinent matters and suggestions on potential improvements.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

None as a consequence of this report.

6. **INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (includes equality, future generations, social Justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting).**

Assessments were previously completed for the Cabinet report in 2015. This report serves to update the position in relation to performance and therefore does not require a further

assessment and 'no decision' is needed. However, as referenced in Appendix One, clearly Public Protection services contribute to protecting our environment, helping vulnerable people, providing safe food and consumer protection etc which are all positive contributions to people living, working and visiting our county. The Division also supports local businesses by providing consistent advice and tackling those that do not comply with legal requirements (providing a level playing field for 'fair trade').

7. CONSULTTEES

Public Protection Service Managers
Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Report to Cabinet, 7th January 2015, titled 'Review of Service Delivery in Public Protection Department'.

- 9. AUTHOR:** Public Protection Service Managers (Gareth Walters - Trading Standards & Animal Health; Linda O Gorman – Licensing; Kris Williams & Alun Thomas - Environmental Health (Commercial), Huw Owen – Environmental Health (Public Health).

- 10. Contact Details:** garethwalters@monmouthshire.gov.uk;
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Appendices

Appendix One: Public Protection Performance Report 2024/25

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REPORT TO PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE10th June 2025**PUBLIC PROTECTION PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25****INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Since 2015 annual performance reports on Public Protection services have been provided to Scrutiny Committees. This has proved beneficial for Members to understand the broad range of services provided by the teams, overall performance and how this compares to previous years. It has also triggered follow-up reports on specific issues that Members have requested.
- 1.2 The Public Protection division, which sits within the Social Care & Health Directorate, comprises of four distinct teams:
 - (i) Environmental Health, Commercial
 - (ii) Environmental Health, Public Health
 - (iii) Licensing
 - (iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health

PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of Public Protection (PP) services can be summarised as follows:
 - a. Protect people from harm and promote health improvement.
 - b. Promote a fair and just trading environment for the public and businesses.
 - c. Improve the local environment to positively influence quality of life and promote sustainability.
 - d. Ensure the safety and quality of the food chain to minimise risk to human and animal health.
- 2.2 These four outcomes contribute to the seven well-being goals set for public bodies in Wales. They directly help achieve a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. It also resonates with this Council's Community & Corporate Plan 2022/28, which sets out the Authority's goals under the current administration. PP services contribute to the goals of making Monmouthshire (a) a safe place to live, (b) a fair place to live, (c) a green place to live and work, and (d) a thriving and ambitious place.

3. **RESOURCES**

3.1 **Staff resource**

- (i) Environmental Health – Commercial:
 - 6 Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) including a Principal EHO (job share) at 5.8 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs).
 - 2 Commercial Services Officers (2 FTE).
 - 1 Graduate Student Trainee EHO (1 FTE – fully funded by an ABUHB Allocation).
- (ii) Environmental Health – Public Health:
 - 6 EHOs, including Principal EHO, at 6 FTEs.
 - 2 Technical Officers, 1.9 FTE's.
- (iii) Licensing:
 - 5 Licensing Officers, including Principal, 4.5 FTE's.
 - 1 Systems Administrator.
- (iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health:
 - 3 Trading Standards Officers, 3 FTE's (including TS&AH Manager post)
 - 1 Senior Fair Trading Officer, 0.6 FTE
 - 2 Fair Trading Officers, 1.6 FTE
 - 4 Fair Trading (Animal Health) Officers, 3.8 FTE (1 temp to 31st March 2026)

Animal Licensing Project attached to TS but Wales wide:

- 1 Project Manager/Regional Co-ordination role, funded by Trading Standards Wales
 - 9 Animal Licensing Officers
 - 1 Animal Licensing System Coordinator
 - 2 Support Officers
- (v) Support team:
 - 4 Support Officers, 3.5 FTE's

Above staff resource adds up to a total of 37 Officers, 33.7 Full Time Equivalents, excluding the national Animal Licensing team of 13 Officers. The Public Protection division also comprises the Authority's Registrar service, but this report covers 1.2 services only, as directed by Members in January 2015. The Head of Public Protection retired at the end of September 2024.

3.2. **Financial resource**

In 2024/25, the budget allocation and actual spend is shown below:

SERVICE	BUDGET	NET SPEND	UNDER / OVER-SPEND
Environmental Health – Commercial	£580,714	£538,420	£42,294 under
Environmental Health – Public Health	£547,657	£528,560	£19,097 under
Trading Standards & Animal Health	£543,383	£497,999	£45,384 under
Licensing	£94,064	£77,577	£16,487 under
Management & generic costs (eg software)	£178,607	£116,222	£62,385 under
Total	£1,944,425	£1,758,778	£185,647 under

The Public Protection budget position for the 2024/25 year in total was an underspend of £185,647. The underspend is primarily due to:

- The Head of Public Protection retiring on 30th September 2024 and the post not being filled.
- Income generated through the work of the teams to more than projected at the start of the year.
- Delays appointing to a number of vacant positions in the teams.

In addition to the £185,647 underspend, funds of £92,279 generated in previous years through the Proceeds of Crime Act were transferred to the corporate centre to support the MCC financial position.

4. **PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 Internal performance monitoring – the four teams within Public Protection each complete an annual Business Service Plan. These outline annual targets, specific projects etc. and progress is reviewed regularly (i) by the teams themselves, (ii) Policy & Performance team, and (iii) Departmental Management Team.
- 4.2 External reporting – regular returns are made to the Food Standards Agency, Health & Safety Executive, Office for Product Safety and Standard (including metrology), Drinking Water Inspectorate, Welsh Government and other organisations.
- 4.3 **2024/25 Performance** (and comparison to previous years)

The right-hand columns summarises performance during the 2024/25 year. The left-hand columns cover the previous 4 years, to enable comparisons to be made.

The following table summarises performance data from the four service teams –

<u>Service</u>	<u>2020/21 Performance</u>	<u>2021/22 Performance</u>	<u>2022/23 Performance</u>	<u>2023/24 Performance</u>	<u>2024/25 Performance</u>
Food safety full inspections	28 - suspension of programme due to Covid response and businesses closed, (same as all other Welsh LA's)	152 full inspections	681	551	630
Other interventions – sampling, verification etc (Not H & S)	287	160	260	343	281
Total	315	312	941	894	911

Number of new businesses opened	101	76	126	210	186
Broadly compliant food businesses (high risk)	Proactive visits suspended	94.4.%	95%	96.9%	96.1%
Broadly compliant food businesses – All	As above	97.4%	99%	95%	94.9%
Service Requests - food safety	453 (78% within target)	533	450	699	687
Food Hygiene training	Nil (courses cancelled due to Covid pandemic)	Nil	Nil	39 food handlers trained	78
Communicable Disease cases	3,826 Covid & 142 other notifiable diseases	15,584 Covid, 217 notifiable diseases	915 Covid, 287 notifiable diseases all contacted within the target response times	246 notifiable diseases, all contacted within target response times	344 notifiable diseases, all contacted within target response times
Total Service requests, including H&S, TEN's, food & food standards, ID outbreaks etc.	1,792 but more likely ~2,500 due to under-reporting during pandemic	1321	1142	1699	1566

Inspections and interventions – Health & Safety (H&S)	23 project 4 hazard spotting (Most work in relation to Covid restrictions regs. Not all work recorded due to time constraints, e.g. Covid responses to schools and care homes).	2 project 15 hazard spotting 1 proactive (Most work in relation to Covid restrictions regs. Not all work recorded due to time constraints, e.g. Covid responses to schools and care homes).	45 project (electrical safety and gas safety) 20 hazard spotting 2 proactive	60 project (electrical safety and gas safety) 15 hazard spotting	55 project inspections (gas safety/electrical safety); 1 sports grounds regulated stands inspection. 5 large event safety visits. 10 low sill heights scoping project visits in coffee shops and hospitality premises. 5 interventions involving written advice being provided to premises offering 'lambing live' events (i.e. crypto infectious disease risks). 75 cellar access safety checks. 10 Hazard spotting visits.
Service requests – Health & Safety	127	121	131	133	190
Event Safety Advisory Group	No LAE1 return (covid)	49	62	90	118

(ESAG) notifications responded to (triaged for risk)					
RIDDOR (accident) notifications	54	42	44	53	51
H&S Notices served (improvement and prohibition)	1	4	5	4	3
EH Public Health					
Housing service requests (SR's)	105 Total	110 Total 79 within 3 working days = 71.8%	207 Total 162 within 3 working days = 78.3%	156 Total 117 within 3 working days = 75%	132 Total 88 within 3 working days = 66.7%
Noise	366 Total. 300 within 3 working days = 82% 199 closed within 3 mths = 54.4%	388 Total.308 within 3 working days = 79.4% 211 closed within 3 mths = 54.4%	405 Total. 319 within 3 working days = 78.8% 217 closed within 3 mths = 53.6%	385 Total. 285 within 3 working days = 74% 219 closed within 3 mths = 56.9%	370 Total. 237 within 3 working days = 64.1% 176 closed within 3 mths = 47.6%
Statutory nuisance, excluding noise	236 Total. 209 within working 3 days = 88.6% 155 closed within 3 mths = 65.7%	182 Total. 153 within working 3 days = 84.1% 114 closed within 3 mths = 62.6%	166 Total. 131 within working 3 days = 78.9% 96 closed within 3 mths = 57.8%	153 Total. 122 within working 3 days = 79.7% 93 closed within 3 mths = 60.8%	158 Total. 111 within working 3 days = 70.3% 89 closed within 3 mths = 56.3%

Environmental Protection (fouling, littering, fly tipping etc.)	705 Total. 651 within 3 working days = 92.3% 534 closed within 3 months = 75.7%	743 Total. 697 within 3 working days = 93.8% 598 closed within 3 months = 80.5%	771 Total. 721 within 3 working days = 93.5% 616 closed within 3 months = 79.9%	619 Total. 525 within 3 working days = 84.8% 440 closed within 3 months = 71.1%	542 Total. 383 within 3 working days = 70.7% 316 closed within 3 months = 58.3%
Pest Control	Total 113. 95 within 3 working days = 84%	Total 129, 96 within 3 working days = 74.4%	Total 109, 82 within 3 working days = 75.2%	Total 131, 98 within 3 working days = 74.8%	Total 109, 79 within 3 working days = 72.5%
Licensing					
Applications dealt with by Licensing	1142 applications - 31% decline from previous year as a direct result of Covid lockdown and restrictions. 2 TEN's due to ban on events	1515 applications, including 210 TEN's. Big increase due to events recommencing after lockdowns.	1603 applications, including 373 TEN's – over 50% more previous year due to lifting of all restrictions.	1582 applications including 546 TEN's –, TEN's which has a 24 hour window to process, increased by 46%	1721 applications including 567 TEN's (increase of 139 applications) –, TEN's which has a 24 hour window to process, increased by 4%
Inspections carried out	237 inspections (no risk rated premises were included this year; team concentrated on Covid advice/enforcement).	212 inspections. Still dealing with Covid restrictions and impact on hospitality sector.	60 premises inspected – lower number due to changeover of staff and training requirements. Risk rated inspections of premises to recommence 2023-24.	314 premises inspected – increase of 254 inspections on previous year – this follows reintroducing risk rated inspections.	286 premises inspected – decrease of 28 inspections on previous year

Service Requests carried out	922 service requests - 92% with a 3 day turnaround for first response, (on target).	873 service requests - 93% on target for first response.	643 service requests – 92% on target for first response. Drop due to less Covid-related requests.	833 service requests – increase of 190 requests on previous year – 95% on target for first response.	773 service requests – decrease of 60 requests on previous year – 90% on target for first response.
Trading Standards & Animal Health					
Trading Standards Visits	115	78	50	58	46
Trading Standards Complaints/Advice	1018	622	725	520	479
Citizens Advice Consumer Service	341 Referrals 956 Notifications	352 Referrals 962 Notifications	372 Referrals 981 Notifications	316 Referrals 879 Notifications	227 Referrals 407 Notifications
Animal Health Visits	231	244	327	269	258
Animal Health Complaints/Advice	282	293	198	295	362
Inspections at our: High Risk premises, Upper Medium premises.	No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures.	No formal programme due to other pressures.	No formal programme due to other pressures.	No formal programme due to other pressures.	No formal programme due to other pressures but looking to commence in 2025/26.
Feed Law Enforcement	Visits were suspended with database cleansing	68% - 93/136 64 ceased operations	94% - 117/124 additional inspections undertaken 30 due to regional shortfalls.	92% - 138/150 Total of 142 including revisits.	100% - 118/118 Total of 122 including revisits and ceased trading.
Programmed animal health inspections	No formal programme due to Covid	Combined with feed inspections.	Combined with feed inspections.	Combined with feed inspections.	Combined with feed inspections – additional high risk

					to be programmed for 2025/26.
New Business Visits	61% TS (32/52) 74% AH (52/70)	51% TS (48/95) 48% AH (32/66)	23% TS (35/153) 79% AH (57/72)	33% TS (36/108) 83% AH (48/58)	23% TS (46/196) 63% AH (102/162)
Animal Welfare Complaints responded to within 3 working days.	74.5%	68%	95%	95%	96.2%
Vulnerable Scam Reports	0 visits due to Covid 187 individuals (running total)	0 visits due to Covid 214 individuals (running total)	4 visits 219 individuals (running total)	3 visits	4 visits
Other					
FOI Requests (PP Total)	39	79	51	199	110
Events requiring advice via Safety Advisory Group	39, 30 cancelled due to national restrictions	63	118	124	161

5. **ANALYSIS AND ACTIVITY 2024/25**

Each section provides the following narrative for their work last year -

5.1 **Environmental Health – Commercial**

5.1.1 **Food safety (food hygiene and food standards)**

In 24/25 the Commercial team delivered a full programme of high-risk premises inspections (A-Cs) whilst continuing to level out the post-Covid backlog of lower risk inspections (D-E's) and new business registrations, using the full range of enforcement options available to us to secure compliance and protect public health. Indeed, out of Monmouthshire's 1133 food premises in 24/25, 94.9% are broadly compliant in terms of food hygiene requirements – indicating the Commercial team's commitment to the

improvement and maintenance of the very highest standards. As of financial year-end 24/25, the Commercial Team have fully caught up on high-risk food hygiene inspections under the post-Covid recovery plan put in place by the FSA. We efficiently align our food standards inspection frequencies alongside our hygiene programme, which includes the delivery of allergenic control interventions. The team works efficiently in delivering positive outcomes – it's renowned for its 'can-do' and problem-solving approach. The following extract is an example of the praise we have received for delivering our services from members of the community, testament to our vocational dedication to improving public health outcomes in support of businesses:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your help and guidance this past year we could not have got anywhere near five stars without your supportive guidance.

Fourteen months or so ago we were just two blokes with a burger van, an archery club and little to no idea of what we were doing, and now with your help, we have a nice van that's easier and more efficient to work in and a great idea of what we're doing, five stars 😊. Sam on a personal note you helped without threats or treating us like idiots, for that we thank you

5.1.2 Assisting businesses and income generation

We have supported new and improving businesses through our ACCESS consultancy scheme, alongside the delivery of our highly regarded Level 2 and 3 food hygiene training courses, which has generated income totalling £8511.05 in 24/25

5.1.3 Responding to complaints and service requests

The team continued to respond to a significant number of varied service requests in 24/25, totalling 1566 requests. These requests for service cover food hygiene and standards, allergen management, health and safety, infectious disease control and special procedures (tattooing and piercing etc).

5.1.4 Special Procedures Licensing (tattooing, piercing, acupuncture and electrolysis)

We continued to work closely with Welsh Government as a member of the Special Procedures Implementation Group (which has evolved into a Steering group for consistency) as Wales moved to a licensing scheme for tattooing, piercing, semi-permanent make-up, acupuncture and electrolysis in Autumn 2024. As a key deliverable of the scheme under WG funding, the Commercial Team have been responsible for procuring and implementing a national online register, which is now operational.

The licensing of special procedures practitioners and approval of premises represents a significant workstream for the Team from Quarter 4 of 24/25. We received 48 Special Procedures licence applications under the new licensing scheme (ongoing handling of applications and inspection work – to be reflected in Q1 stats 25-26).

5.1.5. Communicable Diseases

In 24/25 we again investigated all cases of statutory notifiable diseases; a total number of 344 notifications dealt with by the Commercial Team and Lead Officer for Communicable Disease. These included cases of Shigella, E Coli, salmonella and campylobacter, complying with the response times under the terms of PHW's Expert Rules. This key area of work is essential to prevent the spread of infectious disease in the community. The Lead Officer for Communicable Disease feeds into ongoing pandemic preparedness (an evolution of the TTP systems under the All-Wales Expert Panel), giving Monmouthshire an enhanced preparedness in terms of any future outbreak response. Part of this will see the Team involved in an extensive UK wide desktop operation to test outbreak response systems.

5.1.6 Health and Safety at Work

In 24/25 our Officers engaged in health and safety project work relating to gas safety and electrical safety in hospitality premises – aligned with HSE national priorities, exceeding inspection targets set by our intervention plan. We used a range of enforcement notices to deal with several dangerous premises, protecting the public and employees from harm.

Our work as a key member of the event safety advisory group (ESAG) saw the team respond to 118 ESAG notifications in 24/25. Liaising with partners such as the police, fire service, highways, SWTRA, and the Welsh ambulance service (amongst others), we provided important advice to event organisers on matters such as crowd safety, emergency egress and food hygiene, which included several site visits to higher risk events.

The team handled 51 RIDDOR (statutory workplace accident) notifications in 24/25, all subject to triage using the HSE's Incident Selection Criteria. 5 were serious enough to warrant a formal investigation by a visit to the premises.

5.2 Environmental Health – Public Health

5.2.1 Housing

Requests for service from persons in the private rented sector stabilised to pre covid levels with 132 enquiries. These triggered 23 inspections of residential properties, a drop from 23/24 (42 inspections). However, the number of hazards identified remained much the same with 74 hazards compared with 80 in 23/24.

Category 1 hazards are the most serious and 10 of the 19 identified (53%) were remediated by 31st March 2025.

A larger number of Category 2 hazards were found, with 24 of the 55 identified (44%) rectified by landlords during 24/25 following officer intervention.

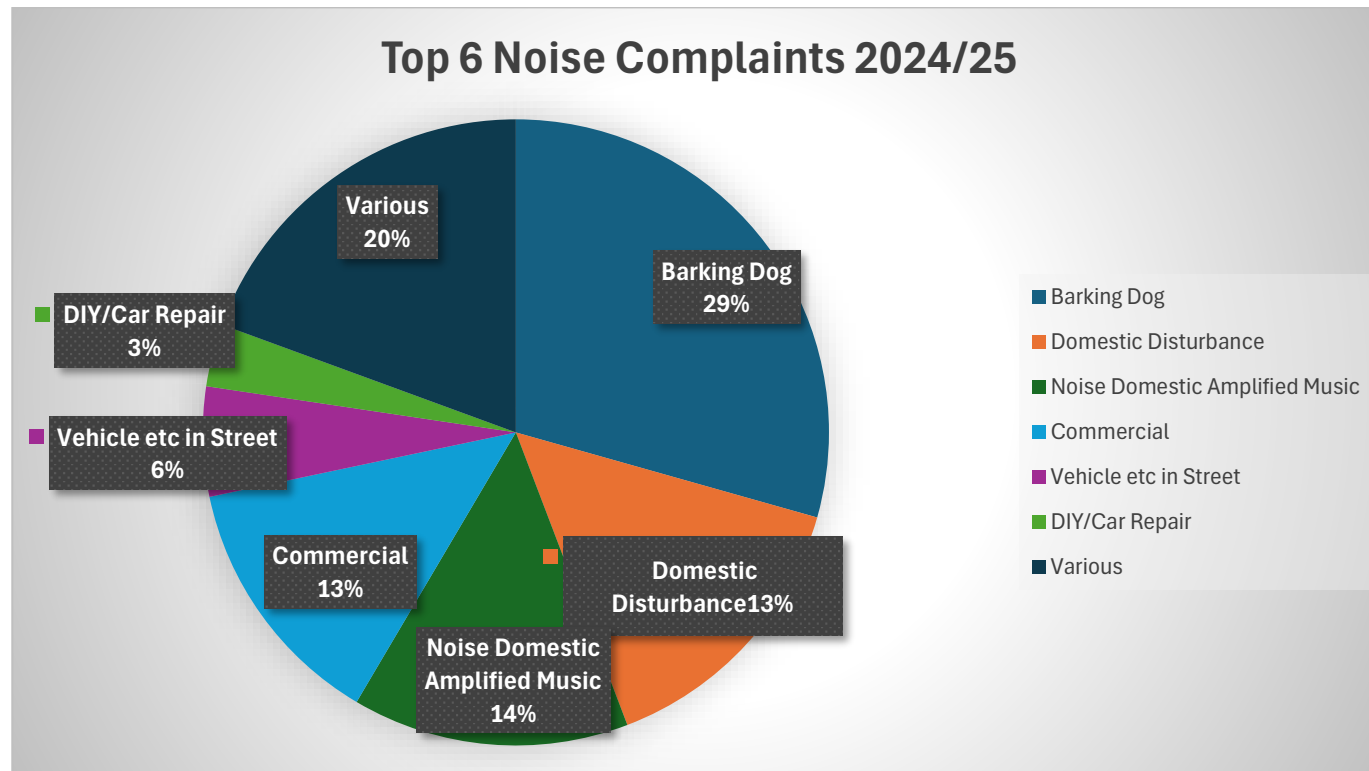
32 adults and 21 children were exposed to these hazards and engagement continues with the landlords to ensure all issues are addressed and the tenants protected.

Officers endeavour to liaise directly with landlords, clearly setting out the concerns identified and seeking their cooperation to address the issues in suitable timescales. The housing legislation though does provide a suite of enforcement powers, for use where necessary, such as the service of Improvement Notices and in the most serious cases Prohibition Orders. Fortunately, the team did not need to serve any of these Notices during the year.

The team had hoped to carry out a number of pro-active inspections in its programme of Housing Above Takeaways (HAT) scheme, where there is the potential for issues of particular concern in these mixed use buildings such as fire safety, overcrowding and excess cold. Unfortunately, because of service demands these inspections were not progressed, but are a priority for the forthcoming year.

5.2.2 Noise

Complaints of noise are a significant part of the team's workload with a similar number of service requests (370) to previous years. The main sources continue to be barking dogs, loud music and domestic disturbance, which totalled 217 (58.5%).



Complaints of noise from commercial sources, 49, slightly down from the 64 received the previous 23/24 year. The relatively low figure underlines the effective proactive work the team undertakes in liaising with promoters of the multitude of events and festivals which take place throughout the county. Early engagement through Licensing consultations and ESAG are key in assisting promoters meet noise control expectations and helping ensure that such events are a success for visitors and residents. It can be difficult to fully demonstrate the extent of the engagement our officers have and the importance of it.

Similarly, significant effort is put in by officers in the early stages of an investigation to try to deal with a noise complaint quickly, in the hope of limiting escalating tensions and ultimately enforcement action. Inevitably though enforcement action is needed at times with 2 noise abatement notices (barking dogs) served; and a case prosecuted in the magistrates court for breach of a noise abatement notice served in 2023 (again barking dogs).

5.2.3 Environmental Protection

This area of work covers enviro crime, including fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling and littering. A slight reduction in service requests from 619 in 23/24 to 542. Actions of note include:

- Fly tipping: 2 successful prosecutions.
- Case 1, a collaborative prosecution with Newport CC and Torfaen CBC in Cardiff Crown Court for 12 separate fly-tipping offences (4 in Monmouthshire), over a 17-month period in 2023 and 2024, of a person collecting / removing waste from residential properties for money. Sentence included 30 weeks in custody, suspended for 18 months, 120 hours unpaid work and a Criminal Behaviour Order designed to stop the offender engaging in waste collection.
- Case 2, in Newport Magistrates Court, again for collecting waste for a fee. Sentence included 18 weeks in custody, suspended for 12 months, fine / costs of over £1700.
- Fixed Penalty Notices: 2 served and paid.
- Monmouthshire County Council (Dog Control) Public Spaces Protection Order 2024 was approved by Cabinet, became effective on the 1st June 2024 and will remain effective until the 31st May 2027. The Order introduced 5 restrictions designed to protect our public spaces:
 - Requires person in charge of a dog to pick up if it defecates in a public space.
 - Requires person in charge of a dog to have a means to pick up dog faeces (a bag).
 - Requires person in charge of a dog to put it on a short lead if asked to do so by an authorised officer, where the dog is considered to be out of control or causing alarm or distress or to prevent a nuisance.
 - Dogs on lead areas designated – 20 in total.
 - Dog exclusion areas designated – 180 in total.

5.2.4 Private Water Supplies

The team has the responsibility for fulfilling the Council's statutory duty of risk assessing every 5 years all private water supplies (PWS) in the county, other than those serving a single residential property, where water is intended for human consumption.

Some of these supplies are extensive providing water to commercial properties (Regulation 9 'large' supplies), or to a number of residential properties (Regulation 11 'small shared' supplies). The Council's duty includes sampling each 'large' supply every year and the 'small' supplies every 5 years.

The aim is to ensure a wholesome and sufficient water supply. Where a supply is considered to be high risk, improvements are required to be undertaken, if necessary by the service of a notice. Annual reports are provided to the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI).

This area of largely proactive work has been consistently highlighted in the last 5+ years in the service plan as an area of significant resource pressure.

The recruitment of an additional EHO in February 2023 has helped the team allocate some resource to this area of work, with significantly more risk assessments (42) completed in 24/25 than in recent years. However, a lot remains to be done:

- Regulation 9 'large' supplies: 70 are known, 37 of these are in the high risk category.
- Regulation 11 'small' supplies: 123 are known, 60 of these are in the high risk category.

5.2.5 Pest Control

Complaint levels remain very similar to previous years with 109 in total, the majority of these relate to rats (98). The team's role is essentially one of enforcement, which for example includes responding to complaints regarding accumulations of waste, residential properties in a poor condition, hoarding etc.

5.2.6 Air Quality

The team actively engages with a number of commercial / industrial businesses in the county to ensure they comply with Environmental Permits and Petroleum Certification designed to control pollution levels.

Permit work can be complex with the varying nature of the industry involved. There are 26 permitted sites and 20 petroleum certified sites in the county. The team met its inspection responsibilities with a total of 47 inspections, with all businesses compliant by the year end.

Monitoring continued of traffic related pollution (nitrogen dioxide) in our 4 major towns and the team leads in meetings of the steering groups in the Chepstow and Usk Air Quality Management areas (AQMA).

Again, there were no exceedances in the county in 2024 (calendar year) of the nitrogen dioxide annual objective level, which builds on the previous four compliant years.

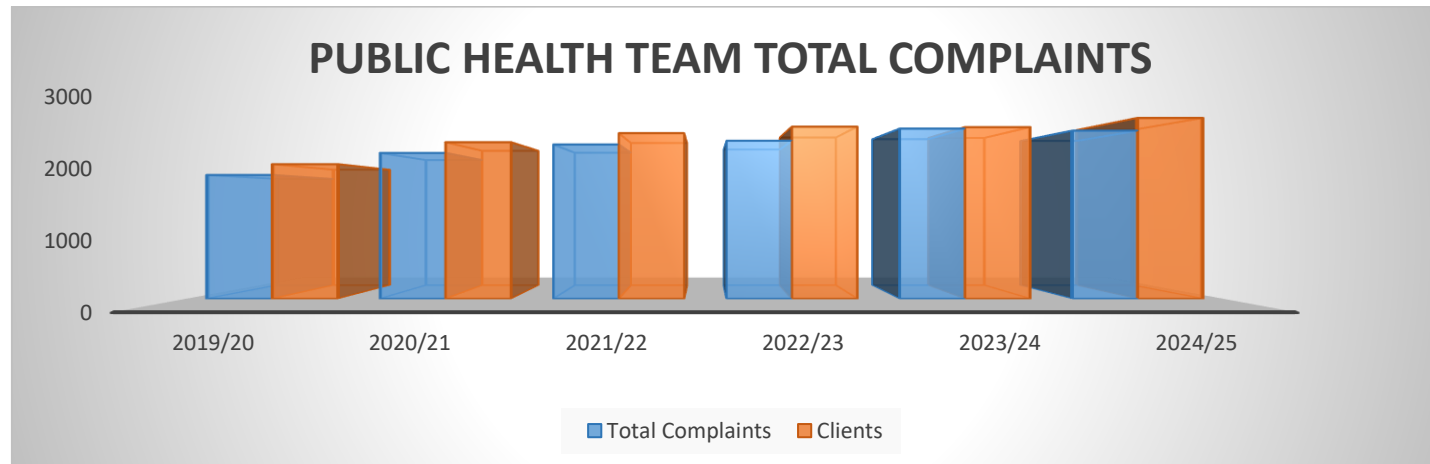
A pleasing update for the Usk AQMA as 2024 was the 10th year that the nitrogen dioxide levels were below the annual objective level of 40 µg/m³ and the 7th year below 36 µg/m³. This is the level Welsh Government advise an AQMA should be revoked if below it for 5 years. Making allowances for lower traffic levels during the 2 years of the covid pandemic, the aim for 25/26 will be to revoke the Usk AQMA.

5.2.7 Total Enquiries

A very slight reduction in the number of service requests received by the team with 2643 received compared with 2675 the previous year which was the highest ever recorded. However, of note, many service requests have multiple complainants and this total saw a significant increase with 2843 compared with 2699 in 23/24 (a 5.3% increase).

These service request levels are in stark contrast to the pre covid 2019/20 period where there were 2117 service request users compared with the 2843 in 24/25, a 34% increase.

This continuing pressure on reactive work makes it more difficult for the team to focus on very important areas of proactive work, as highlighted in the service plan, such as carrying out inspections of residential accommodation above takeaways which can be particularly high risk (fire safety etc) and private water supplies. The trend can be illustrated as follows:



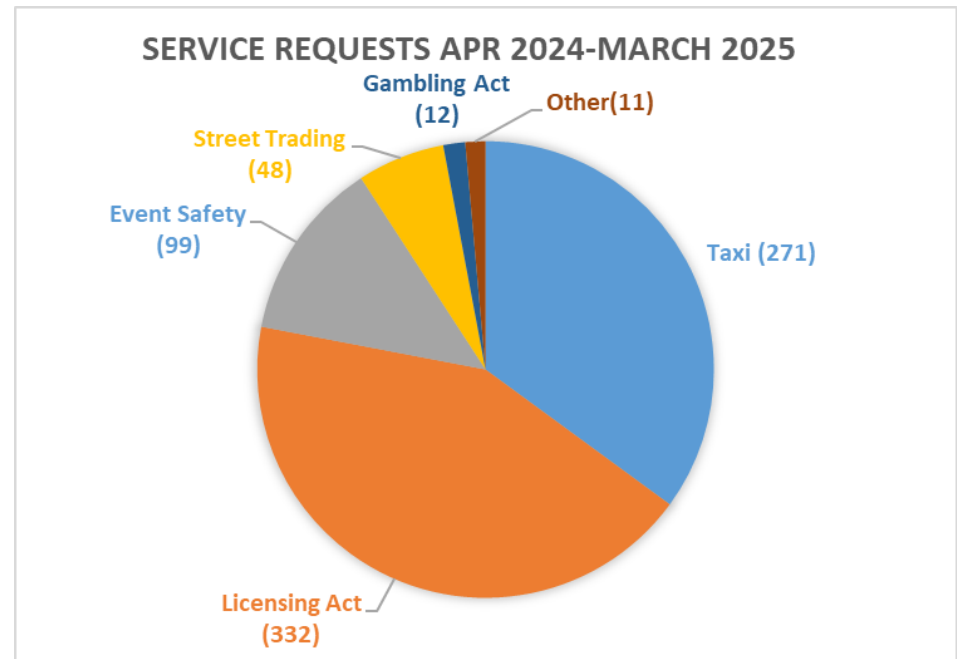
5.3 Licensing

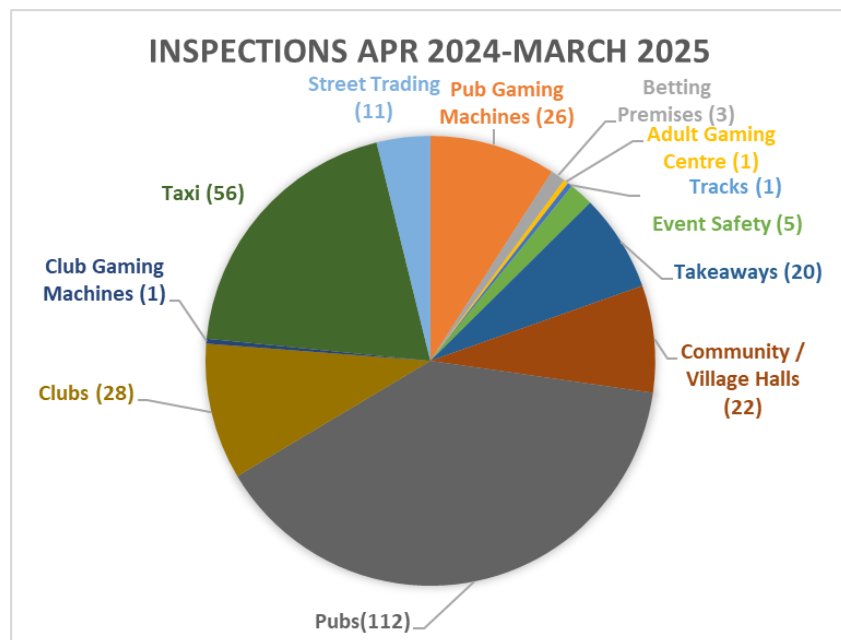
5.3.1 General

The Licensing team deals with a variety of licences, dealing with pubs, restaurants, off-licences and takeaways, taxis, street trading (e.g. burger vans), street/house to house collections, (e.g. charity collections in the street or bag drops at homes), gambling (e.g. betting shops, racecourse, one armed bandits in pubs/clubs, raffles etc.), scrap metal collectors and sites. The team are also authorised to deal with sex establishments, boats and hypnotism. Licensing has experienced pressures for such a busy small team due to absence of staff, with a shortfall of a licensing officer from November and long-term sickness within the team. The building a new licensing system to deal with applications and the transfer of data also added to service delivery pressures.

773 requests for service were processed by Licensing between April 2024 – March 2025 (98 of which were complaints). This is a decrease of 60 for the same period last year. A breakdown of the requests by licence types is shown opposite.

The predominant requests are for the Licensing Act, which deals with alcohol, entertainment, and late-night eating venues. These requests range from giving licensees advice or assisting the public who have concerns relating to antisocial behaviour, safety, and nuisance that the night-time economy can bring.





286 inspections were carried out by Licensing between April 2024 – March 2025. A decrease of 28 for the same period last year. A breakdown of the types of venues inspected is shown pictorially.

The predominant inspections being at pubs as this is where licensing also gets the biggest requests for assistance. We have also reintroduced a risk rating programme for such venues. The rating given to a premises will put them in a high, medium or low category, with high receiving 6 monthly visits, medium annual visits and low visited every 3 years. The risk rating programme ensures that those venues that are either being poorly managed or have the highest rate of incidents, will receive more visits. It also means that every premises will have a rating so no one gets overlooked. This has proved invaluable with licences also being updated to the needs of the licence holder following visits.

Other work carried out by Licensing during 2024/25 include:-

5.3.2 Pubs, Restaurants, Off-licences, Clubs and Takeaways

Event Safety

Event safety measures are crucial to protect attendees, staff and performers, minimizing accidents, injuries and emergencies. They also help meet legal requirements, build trust with attendees, and ensure a smooth, enjoyable experience. As such Licensing conducted the following during 2024/25:

- 99 Service requests to ensure licensing compliance and issue licences/permits where appropriate for events.
- 6th September 2024 - Joint inspection with Licensing and Environmental Health following concerns over management of a festival in Chepstow - landowner will no longer permit use of the land by festival organisers.
- 13th September 2024 - Joint inspection with Licensing and Environmental Health to give advice and recommendations to a proposed festival in Chepstow as part of Event Safety checks.

- 8th October 2024 – Multi agency with emergency services, Licensing and Environmental Health for use of a large concert at a venue in Chepstow to ensure event safety. Agreement of landowner regarding notifying the Local Authority prior to events of this nature taking place at the venue.
- 25th March 2025 – Multi agency site visit, which include emergency services, Licensing and Environmental Health at a concert venue in Chepstow – no issues.

Anti Social Behaviour and Breach of Licence/illegal sales

Measures addressing anti-social behaviour and breaches of licence conditions for alcohol premises are in place to protect the public. Alcohol related crime and disorder, including violence and public nuisance, can pose a significant threat to public safety. Alcohol related issues not only puts a strain on Licensing but also on public services like the police and health services. Excessive noise, littering and other behaviours associated with irresponsible drinking can create a nuisance for residents and other members of the public. As such Licensing conducted the following during 2024/25:

- 332 Service requests to ensure licensing compliance.
- 25th April 2024 - Joint operation between Licensing and Police to a hotel in Abergavenny following the venue not having a Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) - person in charge of alcohol sales. Advised not permitted to sell - ongoing monitoring of the venue.
- 15th October 2024 - Joint operation between Licensing and Police on 2 pubs in Abergavenny concerns over serving alcohol after permitted hours and breach of conditions. No proof alcohol sales so advice given. Warning letter issued for breach of conditions.
- 17th March 2025 - Police and Licensing visited a pub in Abergavenny following concerns of fighting at the venue. Licence holder acted appropriately by contacting emergency services in providing medical assistance and aimed to prevent the disorder at the time.

Underage Sales and Challenge 25

Ensuring compliance with licensing regulations is crucial for maintaining a safe and responsible drinking environment.

- 19th February 2025 - Police and Licensing visited a pub in Abergavenny concerns of underage drinking at the venue. Warning issued and Licence holder provided training to his staff to prevent this occurring again.

Immigration and anti-slavery

Immigration and anti-slavery measures are linked as both address issues of exploitation and vulnerability with licence holders requiring proof they can work in the UK before a licence is issued. Licensing systems can be used to monitor and regulate

businesses, making it easier to identify and address potential cases of modern-day slavery or illegal immigration. Licensing is the single point of contact for Public Protection should concerns be raised by officers in this directorate when officers are conducting visits at such venues.

- 27th April 2024 - Joint operation between Licensing and Immigration in Abergavenny following concerns raised that those employed at a restaurant did not have the right to work in the UK, with sleeping arrangements of staff which giving rise to possible modern-day slavery – No issues found at the venue.

5.3.3 Taxis

Taxis and School Contracts

- 19th December 2024 - Joint operation by Licensing and Passenger Transport Unit, checking taxis and Private Hire Vehicles at a school in Caldicot – 5 vehicles inspected, no issues found.
- 25th March 2025 - Licensing and Passenger Transport Unit responded to concerns over faulty door of a vehicle which was being used for a school run in Abergavenny. Advised to repair faulty door but no concerns over safety as egress in case of emergency was still possible via other doors.
- This collaborative effort helps ensure the safety and reliability of transportation services for school children.

Taxi Compliance

- 11th October 2024 - Taxi operation conducted in Chepstow, where a large concert was taking place. To prevent illegal pick-ups by taxis that are not licensed by Monmouthshire and who has not been pre-booked.

5.3.4 Gambling

Licensing has introduced a new risk rating system for gambling premises as a proactive step to maintaining high standards of compliance within gambling premises. Inspections were carried out on the racecourse and all premises licenced for gambling namely, 6 adult gaming centres and 6 betting shops. All venues complied with the advice given for improvements.

Licensing conducted refresher e-learning with the Gambling Commission, and this proved to be beneficial, covering essential aspects such as local risk assessments and dealing with problem gambling. The thorough assessment and in-depth inspections that followed the training are indicative of a diligent effort to implement the new risk rating program effectively.

In 2024/25 Licensing updated its Gambling Policy. Under the Gambling Act 2005, the Council must publish a policy of how the Licensing Authority will carry out their functions of licensing all gambling activities, this excludes remote gambling, such as online

gambling as this is directly carried out by the Gambling Commission. The policy needs to be published every 3 years. The new Policy proposed by Licensing was adopted at Full Council on 24th October 2024 where they agreed to the policy, which was drafted following consultation. They further agreed to the proposal to uphold the resolution not to permit casino applications. This Policy came into force on 31st January 2025.

5.4 Trading Standards & Animal Health

5.4.1 Feed

The Feed Programme allocation for 2024/25 was fully delivered with 118 inspections achieved as allocated. As the regional lead it was pleasing to report that overall, the Gwent region achieved 91% of their high risk inspections (above the Wales average of 87%) and 113% of their primary production allocation (above the Wales average of 99%). Another member of the team has qualified and the animal health officers have all been enrolled in the new professional competency qualification to be undertaken during 2025/26.

5.4.2 Animal Health

The animal health team continue to develop as a small supportive team that have received many positive comments regarding their approach with dealing with many difficult situations. The Trading Standards and Animal Health Manager as strategic lead nationally for animal health matters, continues to be heavily involved in working with WG, to develop and deliver the Partnership Delivery Plan (PDP) and with key Programme for Government commitments. PDP funding was reduced by 50% for 2024/25 and impacted on all local authorities with markets and collection centres in their areas. The programme is based on a regional approach and mirrors the footprint of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. Monmouthshire has approximately 50% of the critical control points and animal related premises within this region.

Two animal welfare prosecutions continue to sit within the judicial system with delays pushing them beyond this reporting period. There were a couple of fly grazing incidents on private land where the team were instrumental in supporting the land owners and facilitating the removal of horses by their owners, before more formal action was required.

The Trading Standards Wales (TSW) Local Authority Enforcement Project, now formally known as Animal Licensing Wales continues to be being led by Monmouthshire. It underpins the delivery of some of the Programme for Government commitments identified in the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales. During 2024/25 the team had further disruption through turnover in staff due to the uncertainty over longer term funding and maternity leave. Further funding (slightly reduced) was announced late in the financial year until the end of March 2026. This will impact heavily should it cease, as currently the team are there to provide specialist

support for all Local Authorities in Wales. Priorities are still being determined to progress the commitments including the regulation of establishments not currently caught by legislation such as sanctuaries. This has been impacted by the recent greyhound racing ban announcement and will be further impacted by the pending Senedd elections. The end of year update report contains more detailed information on the team's work.

5.4.3 Fair Trading

During 2024/25 work continued to be undertaken to react as quickly as possible to intelligence relating to illegal vapes and illicit tobacco, participating in the national coordinated disruption work known as Operation CeCe. The announcement of a ban on single use vapes was very much welcomed and work on a coordinated approach to ensuring all are aware, will commence in 2025/26.

During December there was a test purchase operation undertaken following allegations of underage sales taking place. This resulted in an enforcement visit and a written warning following one sale. Follow up checks did not result in a sale. As part of the strong partnership approach with Gwent Police, an officer undertook a presentation on under age sales to the police cadets who then participated in the operation.

TS continue to receive complaints regarding children accessing vapes. It's recognised the limited success that test purchase exercises can achieve in certain circumstances, so work has been done with local high schools, community policing teams and the Youth Service to help guide and inform our enforcement work. Safeguarding engagement is also being increased to ensure that understanding and awareness is shared as widely as possible. Targeted advice is planned for the pending single use vape ban.

Over 230,000 illicit cigarettes that were seized from a vehicle at Magor Services and passed to Avon & Somerset Police following intervention by the South Wales Regional Organised Crime Unit, resulted in a successful prosecution at national level.

5.4.4 Consumer Protection

Inspection visits were undertaken at the agricultural shows resulting in advice being given to a number of toy and children's clothing manufacturers, as well as metrology checks at the Abergavenny food festival. The animal health team also attended the agricultural show and advised re animal welfare and other good practice.

One of our officers who undertakes the Lead Officer role on environmental matters (for Monmouthshire and Trading Standards Wales) was heavily involved in work to create a Wales wide toolkit. Assisting officers undertaking the enforcement of the EPC (Energy Performance Certification) and MEES (Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards) regulations across Wales.

A presentation was undertaken in January at the Monmouthshire Citizens Advice AGM on work of TS, building on the long standing approach to supporting and protecting Monmouthshire residents. Funding was received from the Office for Product Safety and Standards for a focussed piece of work offering support to local businesses with an online presence, to provide free training on their product safety and trading obligations.

Monmouthshire have over 30 Cold Calling Control Zones which have been in place for many years. A much needed review of the signs has been undertaken, with numbers updated where they have changed and visibility ensured with cleaning/clearing.

5.4.5 Weights & Measures

Our participation in the Welsh Metrology project was primarily in support of residents affected by the cost of living crisis, particularly where there is a reliance on more traditional fuels. This followed work undertaken by officers in Scotland and North Wales where problems were identified with short weight pre-packed coal. Officers attended a number of premises across the County and weighed coal packed by a variety of suppliers, bags ranging in size from 7.5kg to 20kg. 194 bags of coal were checked and found to be compliant and not short weight.

5.4.6 Product Safety

As part of the trading standards professional qualification, officers have to complete a number of projects and tasks to show competency and understanding. This year work was undertaken on the safety of cosmetics on sale in Abergavenny and led to advice being given. No problems were identified that required more formal action which is reassuring for both consumers and businesses.

5.4.7 TSW Partnership and Income Generation

Work continued on formalising the long standing relationship between all local authorities in Wales. This relates to work undertaken by trading standards through a regional coordination approach, allowing access to additional funding that is utilised more effectively and efficiently. The partnership agreement has been drafted, consulted on and agreed, ensuring;

1. A systematic and robust process exists for the administration and distribution of grants awarded on behalf of Trading Standards Wales.
2. Suitable budget and performance monitoring arrangements are in place and report appropriately to ensure the objectives of the Animal Health Function and Trading Standards Wales are achieved.

In 2024/25 feed work undertaken increased funding to approximately £36,600. Animal Health PDP regional co-ordination, and additional project work, brought in around £6,000.

5.5 Event Safety Advisory Group

A number of Public Protection staff are involved in Monmouthshire's Event Safety Advisory Group, (ESAG). This is a partnership designed to help organisers run safe and successful events. It is recognised a proactive advisory stance is preferable to reacting to problems after events have occurred. 161 events held in 24/25 received ESAG advice, which is significantly higher than the 124 events in 23/24.

This highlights the growing importance of the group to event organisers with advice sought and provided from all our typical organisers of music, sporting, agricultural, food events, etc. Some singular events, eg. a music event with 15,000 in attendance, can take a lot of Officer time via supporting the organiser, liaising with the site provider and other departments and partners. As referenced in sections 5.1.5 and 5.2.2 Environmental Health are heavily involved in providing advice from health and safety and noise control perspectives.

Public Protection Officers are well placed in providing holistic advice to event organisers and can signpost to different disciplines for specialist advice. This includes liaising with Gwent Police on reducing crime and disorder and counter-terrorism measures, Wales Ambulance Service on medical provision, Fire and Rescue regarding fire safety and evacuation, together with various other Council departments dependant on the type of event, eg. MonLife, Grounds, Environment, Highways and Emergency Planning.

5.6 Local Toilets Strategy

This involves mapping out all publicly available facilities via Data Map Cymru, updating what's available at each venue (disabled facilities, baby changing, opening times, etc.), liaising with Landlord Services on proactive maintenance work and incorporating comments from the public and Members. Environmental Health inspect the 18 publicly available 'traditional blocks' annually and report to those who manage the toilets, Town and Community Councils, etc. Progress is reported annually via Place Scrutiny Committee. Standards were found to be generally very good at the time the facilities were inspected.

2 new facilities have become available at churches which are on the Offa's Dyke path in Lanfangel Yestern Lywern and Llantilio Crosseny. Access to the Welsh Government Data Maps Cymru toilet 'layer' has been provided which means we can amend our own data.

6 SUMMARY & LESSONS LEARNT 2024/25

- 6.1 **Prioritisation** remains key with all services experiencing pressure following substantial increases in workload and expectations in recent years. With new legislation and additional responsibilities either commenced or due to, it is likely this pressure will be maintained or indeed increase further. Effective planning is crucial with regular evaluation of performance throughout the year against the targets set. The vast majority of Public Protection activities are statutory duties but there is some flexibility to enable a clear focus on the range of these duties to ensure that high value public protection outcomes are delivered. The individual Service Business Plans set out the planned actions and the outcomes achieved.
- 6.2 Full use of the **digital tools** available to assist officers keep on top of the flow of customer demands and be efficient in their reporting so they can get out on site visits, inspections and deliver on the front line. The team is moving to a new (cloud-based) software system, the implementation of which needs to be properly resourced so it can provide the much needed efficiency savings in the day to day work of officers. In recognition of this, an additional Systems Administrator was recruited on a temporary 12 month contract early 2025 to help drive the implementation forward.
- 6.3 **Collaborative and partnership working** is essential to provide an efficient public protection service. The problems faced in our communities are often multi-faceted where effective solutions can be provided by close working with the range of other external public services, Town and Community Councils, local working groups etc. Continuing to build on the existing trust, relationships and the good reputation of the service at all levels is vital. The links made with Public Health Wales and the Aneurin Bevan Health Board can continue to be developed and help the service better understand and focus on key health improvement objectives such as better living conditions, improved animal welfare, etc.
- 6.4 **Innovative working** continued to be progressed in the year, not least with the implementation of the Special Procedures work under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 with the Commercial team responsible for procuring and implementing the national online register.

7 **2025/26 AND BEYOND**

- 7.1 The services will continue to deliver statutory responsibilities, prioritising activity to areas most needed. Our Service Business Plans 2025 – 28 endeavour to encapsulate the actions, performance and outcomes, reflecting on and integrating with the Council's Community & Corporate Plan 2022/28.
- 7.2 Public Health Wales and HSE national priorities focus on health outcomes and wider determinants for health for 2025/26, which will see the Commercial Team engaged in legionella and an asbestos duty to manage interventions, as well as targeting some local safety trends such as hot urn safety (following RIDDOR investigations of work-related accidents).
- 7.3 The Public Health team will progress the Housing Above Takeaway (HAT) project, proactively inspecting residential accommodation in multi – use buildings, where potentially some of our most vulnerable persons are living in homes posing the greatest risks. This fits in with aspects of the proposed Building Safety (Wales) Bill which will see local authorities taking on additional responsibilities for the regulation of multi – occupied residential buildings in Wales.
- 7.4 Trading Standards will have responsibility for ensuring new legislation is implemented appropriately across the authority's area. This includes the Environmental Protection (Single Use Vapes) (Wales) Regulations 2024, The Environmental Protection (Single-Use Plastic Products) (Wales) Regulations 2023 and The Food (Promotion and Presentation) (Wales) Regulations 2025.
- 7.5 The services enjoy an excellent reputation regionally and nationally and will continue to contribute to the wider agenda and core responsibility of public protection. The Head of Public Protection role, vacated September 2024, has not been directly back filled, which will need to be evaluated.
- 7.6 The Public Protection team will need to be involved in Exercise Pegasus, the government's UK wide pandemic response exercise, anticipated autumn 2025. The exercise is a whole system test. As Category 1 responders, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, local authorities will be core participants. The UK government is leading on the design, scenario and sequence of the exercise.
- 7.7 Officers are confident they can sustain our high-quality, well-respected services, and PP will continue to report progress to DMT's, Members via this scrutiny committee and external national oversight bodies.

PP June 2025

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SUBJECT:	REGISTRATION SERVICE PERFORMANCE 2024-2025
MEETING:	PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	10th JUNE 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

To undertake scrutiny of the Registration Service for the financial year 2024/25.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To consider and comment on the contents of the attached report – Appendix One, titled ‘Monmouthshire Registration Service Performance Report 2024/25’.
- To require that an annual performance report is presented to this Committee in future years.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The Registration Service is a key function of the Council providing statutory public services. Members of the public encounter the Registration Service at significant points in their lives.

3.2 The purpose of the Registration Service is as follows:

- The registration of all births, deaths and stillbirths occurring within the County
- Taking notices of intended marriages and civil partnerships from persons resident within the County
- Conducting and registering all civil marriages and civil partnerships (including conversions from civil partnership to marriage) taking place in any venue registered or licensed for the purpose, including prisons and hospitals or private residences in certain circumstances
- Registering religious marriages where required
- Conducting citizenship ceremonies for Monmouthshire residents who make successful applications for British nationality
- Safe custody of all historic records of births, deaths, civil partnerships and marriages dating back to 1837 and issue of certified copies of these records on demand
- Inspection and registration of new venues for marriage and civil partnership
- Giving assistance and advice to all customers on all aspects of registration, citizenship and nationality
- Providing data for vital work on population statistics and medical research

- Management of data; including protection of both physical and electronic data and assisting with public protection and counter fraud by reporting suspicious applications and sham marriages as well as suspicions about immigration abuse and other crimes
- Safeguarding secure stock and accounting for fees
- Promote and contribute to the Home Office priorities

3.3 The General Register Office (GRO) sets targets and key performance indicators on statutory time frames and customer service priorities. Each month the GRO publishes the performance data for each District on our system so we can monitor our own performance and compare it to similar districts and nationally.

3.4 The main objective for the service over the coming year, is to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction for our residents whilst managing and responding to public demand and providing an excellent, value-for-money service.

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

4.1 The Registration Service has safeguarding responsibilities; for example, reporting possible sham marriages, identifying vulnerable persons within the community and identifying fraudulent applications for the issue of certificates. The service is the custodian of the records of all Births, Deaths and Marriages which have taken place in Monmouthshire since 1837. They are all stored and safeguarded within the strong room.

4.2 The statistical information which is submitted to the Office for National Statistics about births and mortality assists in allowing the Council to make informed decisions about priorities for the future, be it school provision, or targeting specific health issues in specific areas, which in turn allows the council to contribute directly to the well-being goals in Wales.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Not applicable

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

As set by the General Register Office

7. REASONS:

To allow members to scrutinise the performance of Monmouthshire's Registration Service.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None as a consequence of this report.

9. CONSULTEES:

- Public Protection Service Managers
- Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11. AUTHOR:

Jennifer Walton – Registration Service Manager

JenniferWalton@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Is my report exempt?

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

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

Local Government Act, Schedule 12A, Part 4;

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meeting and Date of Meeting: Insert date and meeting

Report: Insert report title

Author: Insert author

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

Exemptions applying to the report:

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

Factors in favour of disclosure:

Openness & transparency in matters concerned with the public

Prejudice which would result if the information were disclosed:

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

My view on the public interest test is as follows:

Factors in favour of disclosure are outweighed by those against.

Recommended decision on exemption from disclosure:

Maintain exemption from publication in relation to report

Date: Insert date

Signed: Signed by report author

Post: Insert post

I accept/I do not accept the recommendation made above

Signed: [Signed by Chief Officer / Head of Service / Chief Executive]

Date: Insert Date

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MONMOUTHSHIRE REGISTRATION SERVICE

PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE 10th June 2025

1.1 Purpose

Scrutiny of the Registration Service and its' performance during the 2024/25 year.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To consider and comment on the content of this report. The report serves to outline the services provided by the Registration Service (set out at Appendix 1), describe current performance and highlight future challenges.

2.2 An annual performance report, to be presented to this Committee in future years. In this way, Members can assess performance over time for this crucial element of the Authority's work.

3. Key Issues

3.1 To maintain a high level of customer satisfaction for our residents whilst managing and responding to public demand and providing an excellent, value-for-money service.

4. Performance during 2024/2025:

4.1 The General Register Office sets targets and key performance indicators on statutory time frames and customer service priorities. Each month GRO publishes the performance data for each District on our system so we can monitor our own performance and compare it to similar districts and nationally. Any District that is perceived to be failing to meet the standards will have meetings with their Compliance Officer to look at ways to improve performance. Monmouthshire has not required any such meeting this year.

Type of appointment	Total for year 2024-2025	% within statutory time-frame	Last year's figures for comparison
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Births (births registered for another district – not in KPI)	21 (633)	95% (below target, one birth registration outside target time)	23
Deaths	1019 (497 within criteria for KPI)	94% (below target – 29 registrations out of target time)	1034
Still-births	0	N/A	0
RO & AP Marriages (all marriages registered in Monmouthshire)	704 (786)	N/A	652 (760)
Civil Partnerships	14	N/A	15
Notices of marriage/CP	692	N/A	766
New British citizens	30	N/A	38
Customers seen within 10 mins of appointment/arrival time	All customers	100%	100%
Appt.s offered within time-frame guidelines	All types	100%	100%

4.2 Marriages and Civil Partnerships: 704 marriages and 14 civil partnerships registered between 34 approved premises and the register office. The total number of marriages registered within Monmouthshire is also included, these additional ceremonies are religious. GRO have set a 7 day target for marriages to be registered on the national system following the ceremony (2 days for CPs) Over the summer, due to the high number of ceremonies, it continues to be a struggle to meet these targets. We monitor this closely to try to ensure sufficient time is allocated to staff to manage this task and it is an improving picture.

The Office for National Statistics published a report in June 2024 year on marriage statistics for 2022. This report confirmed that throughout England and Wales, Monmouthshire had the highest percentage increase in ceremonies from 2019 to 2022 at 67.4%.

[Marriages in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

There were also news reports confirming that per capita of population, Monmouthshire had the highest rates of marriage in Wales, and 5th highest in England and Wales.

4.3 Birth numbers in Monmouthshire remain low following the closure of the maternity unit at Nevill Hall Hospital. The low numbers mean that each individual birth has a significant impact on the percentages for the target.

The figures in the table above include a figure for birth registrations completed for other Districts across 'Gwent' through partnership working. Partnership working contributes to the figures for Torfaen's birth registrations which is currently at 98% of target.

The figures for Welsh Districts range from 93% to 100%, the overall figure for Wales as an area is on target 95%

4.3 Deaths – The process for registering deaths changed significantly in September when the Medical Examiner's role became statutory. The new process takes longer than the previous process and additional difficulties have been encountered in embedding the process, which have caused further delays. We have regular meetings with the Medical Examiners office so we are aware of the steps they are taking to try to reduce the time and resolve the problems they have encountered.

The target for the registration service changed to registering a death within 5 days of the Medical Certificate being signed. At 94% Monmouthshire is 1% below target and would expect to hit target next year, after a full year of the new process.

The figures for Wales range from 88% to 99% and the overall figure for Wales as an area is 96%, above target.

4.4 Audit – The Register Office had a financial audit in the autumn and received a '**Reasonable Assurance**' opinion rating reflecting that generally a sound system of governance, risk management and control exists.

4.5 Oversight: We have had our annual meeting with our compliance officer to highlight and discuss legislative changes in the pipeline and our response to the introduction of the statutory Medical Examiner process. This meeting also introduced the new Proper Officer to the Compliance Officer.

4.5 Customer feedback – we regularly receive feedback from couples following ceremonies however we are still developing the mechanism for feedback to be requested following birth and death registrations.

'Hi J and team,

E and I wanted to extend our deepest gratitude for the outstanding support and assistance you provided in organising our wedding. Your professionalism and amazing support made the entire process seamless and stress-free. From guiding us through the necessary paperwork to accommodating our requests with kindness, your efforts ensured that our special day was perfect. We are incredibly grateful for everything you did for us, and we will always remember your kindness and dedication. Thank you once again for making our wedding day so memorable.

E & E'

'Dear MCC ceremonies

I just wanted to say thank you to the registrar for the lovely service on Saturday for our wedding. We are just watching the video now and it reminded me to message you.

It was perfect.

D and S P'

'Hello,

We just wanted to say a HUGE thank you for leading our ceremony on Sunday! N, you were more than we could have wished for, passionate and fun getting our day off to the perfect start.

Thank you so much,

S & J'

Hi N , I don't think we had a chance to thank you properly on the day after our marriage but thanks so much for the great way you conducted the legalities :) You set the tone for the whole day . We had a great day from start to finish - nothing could have gone better really so thanks again

Best wishes

D & E x

Hello!

We had our wedding at Llantilio House back in the summer, 24th August and I just wanted to send you this picture as it's one of my favourites, and I hope it reaches the lovely Registrar who conducted our ceremony. I can't recall her name I'm afraid

but she was the loveliest, warmest person and I think that's shows in the photo!
Please pass on our heartfelt thanks! She read a beautiful Welsh blessing to close our ceremony, and I love it so much, it's being printed and framed in our new home!
Kind regards,
H and J B

5 Challenges/Future Proofing:

5.1 Partnership working continues across 'Gwent' for birth registrations, enabling us to meet demand and support each other if any office is facing specific pressures.

5.2 We have to be very flexible, to meet the demand for registration appointments, which can change on an almost daily basis. The biggest challenge within Registration is to keep on top of the constant developments in legislation and changes in the local environment.

5.4 It remains a balancing act to ensure that we have sufficient staff to conduct the ceremonies without too much pressure on individual availability as most of our ceremony staff have other jobs Monday to Friday. Plus, there has to be enough work for each individual to ensure that we meet their expectations and maintain their skills during quieter periods.

5.5. There has still, to date, been no response from the Government to the Law Commission report on marriage therefore we don't know what changes if any, might be coming down the line to marriage law. It is still the case currently that only Registration staff can conduct civil marriages so we are trying to attend as many wedding fayres at our venues as possible to explain to the venues and our couples exactly what we are able to do for them.

Appendix 1:

Register office remit and purpose

A1.1 Civil registration has been mandatory in the UK since 1837. Initially Registration Officers were employed by our Head Office, the General Register Office but that changed in 2007 and we are now employed by the Local Authority. Monmouthshire became the District that it is now for the purposes of registration in 1996 as part of the Local Government restructure, prior to that it was Abergavenny, Monmouth and

Chepstow and was occasionally partly in England. Boundaries historically have changed regularly which has often resulted in registers moving around between Offices, and Churches and Hospitals suddenly reporting to a different area. We are the custodians of the records of all Births, Deaths and Marriages which have taken place in Monmouthshire since 1837. They are all stored and safeguarded within our strong room.

A1.2 The Registration Service currently sits within Public Protection, under Social Care and Health and this fits well with our remit, which has expanded over the years to become more customer focussed, and to take on additional duties on behalf of the Home Office, for example reporting possible sham marriages, vulnerable persons within the community, fraudulent applications for the issue of certificates, and sending statistical information to the Office for National Statistics about births and mortality. All of this information allows the Council to make informed decisions about priorities for the future, be it school provision, or targeting specific health issues in specific areas, which in turn allows the council to contribute directly to the well-being goals in Wales

A1.3 Each year we prepare an annual report to GRO and a Seasonal Variance Plan as well as our Monmouthshire Service Improvement Plan and Business Continuity Report.

2. The purpose of the Registration Service is as follows:

- The registration of all births, deaths and stillbirths occurring within the County
- Taking notices of intended marriages and civil partnerships from persons resident within the County
- Conducting and registering all civil marriages and civil partnerships (including conversions from civil partnership to marriage) taking place in any venue registered or licensed for the purpose, including prisons and hospitals or private residences in certain circumstances
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- Inspection and registration of new venues for marriage and civil partnership
- Giving assistance and advice to all customers on all aspects of registration, citizenship and nationality

- Providing data for vital work on population statistics and medical research
- Management of data; including protection of both physical and electronic data and assisting with public protection and counter fraud by reporting suspicious applications and sham marriages as well as suspicions about immigration abuse and other crimes
- Safeguarding secure stock and accounting for fees
- Promote and contribute to the Home Office priorities

3. Premises:

5.1 We are based next door in the Old Parlour, we employ a team of 23, 15 on a casual basis for ceremonies only. The staff are made up of me, the Superintendent Registrar, one Registrar, Jenny Luciani, and 6 Deputies who can all register births, deaths and marriages and also take notices of marriage (6 FTE). Most also conduct ceremonies. The staff are all deliberately trained to the highest level to provide the maximum flexibility and resilience to the service.

5.2 As well as the Old Parlour we have 3 out-stations, at Nevill Hall and at the Hubs in Chepstow and Monmouth, to help us provide the best possible service to residents. During the pandemic we stopped attending the out-stations and held all appointments in the Register Office so that we could better control our environment, however we are now attending all 3 on a regular basis.

5.3 The Approved Premises, which are venues which have chosen to licence rooms for marriages and civil partnerships, cover the length and breadth of Monmouthshire, there are 32 in total at the present time, and we are very fortunate to enjoy a very good relationship with them all. Covering such a large area and striving to provide the chosen days and times for each couple can be a challenge but it is vital that we all work together to give each couple the best service possible and promote Monmouthshire at every opportunity.

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Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Report Title	Cabinet member	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner
Cabinet	Deferred	Pavement Café Policy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the pavement café policy as the basis for making decisions on applications for licences	Carl Touhig	4-Oct-22
Council	23-Oct-25	RLDP for Adoption	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Rachel Lewis	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Review of Monmouth Cluster and proposed statutory consultation	Laura Wright - Education		Matt Jones	3-Mar-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Cultural Strategy	Sara Burch		Tracey Thomas	20-May-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	County of Sanctuary Strategy	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To approve a county of sanctuary strategy which establishes clear principles which will run through all council services and which promotes inclusion	Sharran Lloyd and Jane Harvey	27-May-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Destination Management Plan	Sara Burch & Paul Griffiths		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Review of Housing Support Grant Programme.	Sara Burch		Ian Bakewell	23-May-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Shire Hall Delivery Stage - Financial Approval	Ben Callard - Resources		Tracey Thomas	25-Mar-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Appointments to Outside Bodies	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	23-May-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Separation of Licensing Functions	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Linda O Gorman	28-May-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Licensing Act Policy 2025	Angela Sandles - Engagement	Policy has to be approved by Full Council and it needs to be in place by 1 st July 2025	Linda O Gorman	10-Jan-25
Cabinet	25-Jun-25	Play Sufficient Assessment	Angela Sandles - Engagement	Play sufficiency assessment update.	Nick John	28-Mar-25
Cabinet	25-Jun-25	Nature Recovery Action Plan & Green Infrastructure Strategy	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25

Cabinet	21-May-25	Placemaking Grant 25/26 & 26/27	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Craig O Connor	29-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Marches Forward Partnership	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Peter Davies / Cath Fallon	1-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Active Gwent Sports Partnership	Angela Sandles - Engagement	For Monmouthshire County Council to formally enter into the Active Gwent sport partnership.	Nick John	28-Mar-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Y Prentis Update	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	26-Feb-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Digital, Data and Technology Collaboration	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To develop proposals to build on existing collaborative arrangements in place for the provision of technology services through the Shared Resource Service. Expanding on these to include digital and data services will generate	Peter Davies & Matt Gatehouse & Sian Hayward	14-Mar-25
Council	15-May-25	SAC Membership Report	Martyn Groucutt - Education	To inform Council of SAC recommendations to appoint members of SAC	Sharon Randall-Smith	16-Apr-25
Council	10-Apr-25	Constitution Review	Angela Sandles - Engagement		James Williams	25-Mar-25
Council	10-Apr-25	Senior Pay Review	Ben Callard - Resources		Julie Anthony	3-Mar-25
ICMD	09-Apr-25	PSPO Lane Closure to prevent fly tipping & off roading	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Mark Cleaver	13-Mar-25
ICMD	09-Apr-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4	Ben Callard - Resources			

Cabinet	02-Apr-25	Marches Forward Partnership	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Peter Davies - Lead (Cath Fallon)	3-Mar-25
Cabinet	02-Apr-25	Reponse to Boundary Commission Electoral Review Consultation	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	12-Feb-25
ICMD	26-Mar-25	Proposal to increase the fee payments to Monmouthshire Foster Carers	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Charlotte Drury	4-Feb-25
ICMD	12-Mar-25	Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 16	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment			
Council	06-Mar-25	Appointment of Chief Officer - Head of Transport - Exempt info	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Deb Hill Howells	21-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	Publication of the Councils Pay Policy	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act.	Matt Gatehouse / Pip Green	17-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	Contract Procedure Rules	Ben Callard - Resources		Scott James	9-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Budget sign off including CT resolution	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Capital Strategy & Treasury Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	Approval of a Discretionary Policy for Council Tax Premiums	Ben Callard - Resources		Ruth Donovan	27-Jan-25
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24

Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 WCF/Mon Farm Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
ICMD	26-Feb-25	County of Sanctuary: Homes for Ukraine	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To confirm future support arrangements for Ukrainian's living in Monmouthshire as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme following changes to the national arrangement for both funding & visas	Richard Drinkwater/Matt Gatehouse	7-Feb-25
ICMD	26-Feb-25	Housing Allocations Policy				
Cabinet	19-Feb-25	2024/25 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Month 9	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	19-Feb-25	UK Shared Prosperity Fund post March 2025 – financial implications and impact	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	10-Jul-24
ICMD	29-Jan-25	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts final	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	17-Dec-24
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Diary 2025/26	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	
Council	23-Jan-25	GWENT REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD (RPB) AREA PLAN AND RPB ANNUAL REPORT 23/24	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Natasha Harris (Torfaen)	
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	Business case for the purchase of a property in Abergavenny to develop supported accommodation for care experienced young people	Ben Callard - Resources		Jane Rogers	7-Jan-25
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24

Cabinet	22-Jan-25	Education Middle Tier	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Will McLean	20-Nov-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Decision to transfer Dixton Archive from Monmouth Museum to Herefordshire Record Office			Rachael Rogers	9-Dec-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 3	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	13-Jun-24
ICMD	18-Dec-24	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts draft	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24

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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
SPECIAL 3rd June 2025	Additional Learning Provision / Specialist Resource Bases	Annual follow up: Scrutiny of MCC Additional Learning Provision / Specialist Resource Bases in line with the expectations of the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021.	Morwenna Wagstaff Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
	Supporting Vulnerable Learners	Annual follow up: Scrutiny of the effectiveness of approaches in supporting the needs of vulnerable learners.	Morwenna Wagstaff Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
	Risk Register Update	To update members on the Council's Risk Register and to agree any future areas for scrutiny.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter Matt Gatehouse	Performance Reporting
10th June 2025	Welsh Language Annual Report 24-25	To scrutinise the Council's performance.	Nia Roberts Pennie Walker Cllr Sandles	Performance Monitoring
	Public Protection Performance 24/25	To review the performance of the service area.	Huw Owen Alun Thomas Cllr Sandles	Performance Monitoring
	Registration Services Annual Report 24/25	To review the performance of the service area.	Jennifer Walton Huw Owen Cllr Sandles	Performance Monitoring
Scrutiny Workshop – 16th June 2025, 10am	Social Care – prevention and resilience	To explore if more can be done to build prevention and resilience re: life expectancy vs. healthy life expectancy	Jane Rodgers Nicola Needle Jenny Jenkins	Policy Review/ Development

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
			Cllr Chandler	
SPECIAL 9th July 2025	Domiciliary Care Procurement (with People members)	To scrutinise the process of domiciliary care procurement.	Jane Rodgers Jenny Jenkins Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
15th July 2025	Revenue & Capital monitoring outturn	To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit, including an early update on 2025/26.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Enabling Strategies (including Procurement)	To include Procurement, Digital and Data, Asset Management, Finance and People. (Audit Wales work)	Richard Jones Hannah Carter	Performance Reporting
	Self-Assessment 24/25	To scrutinise the self-assessment and identify areas for further scrutiny.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter	Performance Reporting
23rd September 2025	Revenue Monitoring Update 1	To scrutinise the revenue position for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Chief Officer for Social Care AMR	To scrutinise the progress and strategic direction for the service area.	Jane Rodgers Jenny Jenkins Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
	Safeguarding Annual Report	To scrutinise the performance of safeguarding arrangements.	Jane Rodgers Diane Corrister Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
18th November 2025	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

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	Complaints Process	To scrutinise the performance of the Council's complaints process, and issues raised by it.	Annette Evans Cllr Sandles	Performance Monitoring
	Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy action plan update	To update the committee on the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy action plan.	Hannah Jones Will McLean Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
10th February 2026	Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals	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	<i>Development of Children's Placements</i>	<i>To update the committee following scrutiny in May 25.</i>	<i>Morwenna Wagstaff Will McLean Cllr Wright</i>	<i>Performance Reporting</i>
	<i>Investment and Commercial Interests Update</i>	<i>To update the committee following scrutiny in May 25.</i>	<i>Nick Keyse Peter Davies Cllr Callard</i>	<i>Performance Reporting</i>
21st April 2026				
To be confirmed	Grants item – Joint with People?*	To scrutinise the Council's use of grant money.	Jonathan Davies Hannah Jones	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
To be confirmed	Consultants and Agencies – Joint with People?*	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	Schools Health Research Network	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	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed (15/10/24 – covered by Audit Wales item in July?)	Socially Responsible Procurement strategy	To review progress of the strategy.	Gemma Ellis Scott James John Paxton Cath Fallon Cllr Brocklesby	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed (15/10/24)	WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan) Nov 25?	To scrutinise performance against the plans.	Sharon Randall Smith Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed (19/11/24)	Planning Annual Performance Report Nov 25?	Scrutiny of the annual performance report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Philip Thomas Craig O'Connor Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed (15/10/24, Cabinet Nov 24 – 10th March 26?)	NEET Reduction Strategy	To scrutinise the strategy's performance.	Hannah Jones Louise Wilce Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed	Recruitment and retention	<i>Effect on the Council's performance and ability to deliver.</i>		

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2024-25

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
<i>To be confirmed</i>	<i>Use of Reserves</i>	<i>Future proofing and resilience planning as well as supporting long-term strategic priorities.</i>	<i>Peter Davies Jonathan Davies Cllr Callard</i>	
Social Justice Strategy progress				
Business Monmouthshire Project monitoring				
'Learning led' review of educational provision in Chepstow				
Review of Property Assets				

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Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Action List

29th April 2025

Minute Item:	Subject	Officer / Member	Outcome
4	To bring a report to the committee on the work being done with the Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) led by Cardiff University, providing quantitative data on student well-being	Scrutiny officers, Emma Taylor, Will McLean	Added to FWP.
7	To explore if more information can be included on items in the Council and Cabinet Work Planner; in particular, how reports and decision listed will affect residents	Peter Davies, Matt Gatehouse	Taken forward by Peter Davies to SLT
7	To remind officers of the intention to scrutinise grant funding more widely following the recent call-in to People committee of the decision regarding the Shared Prosperity Fund	Scrutiny officers, Jonathan Davies	Scrutiny scheduled for 9 th July and 15 th July

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Tuesday, 29th April, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill, (Chair)
County Councillor Rachel Buckler, (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Su McConnel (substituting for John Crook)

Also in attendance County Councillors:
Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources,
Ian Chandler, Cabinet member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
and Martyn Groucutt, Cabinet Member for Education

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Peter Davies, Acting Chief Executive
Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Scott Hereford, Service Manager Residential and Resource Management
Nicholas Keyse, Estates Development Manager
Ed Pryce, Assistant Director, EAS

APOLOGIES: County Councillor John Crook

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pavia declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 5 as he works for Practice Solutions Ltd. that holds the business delivery contract for the Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales.

Councillor Neill declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 4 as Chair of the ARIC committee of EAS.

2. Public Open Forum

None.

3. Key Stage 4 Results

Ed Pryce (Assistant Director, EAS) delivered a presentation, introduced the report, and answered the members' questions with Will McLean.

Members' Questions:

- What does it mean for pupils to have base qualifications and how does it affect their life outcomes?

Base qualifications help pupils access the next level of education, such as FE and HE, and are increasingly required for many jobs. Achieving qualifications can improve attendance and engagement, leading to better life outcomes.

- Are we limiting schools by grouping them in families, and how does this affect the support for pupils attaining the lowest third results?

Grouping schools in families allows for comparison and support, but schools also look at other families and focus on individual learners. The aim is to hold leaders accountable and ensure school improvement processes are in place.

- How do we know that the Welsh Government's expectations are good enough for pupils in Wales and Monmouthshire, and how can we change the lower attainment in Wales compared to the UK?

Welsh Government uses international tests like Pisa to compare performance. There are challenges in comparing with other UK countries due to different assessment systems, but qualifications are recognized by UK universities.

- What measures are being done for the lowest third attainment?

Measures for the lowest third attainment include improving attendance, addressing deficits, and ensuring the curriculum is appropriate. Schools focus on individual needs and support through pupil deprivation grants.

- Does relying solely on PISA for international comparisons of young people's performance, and only providing data specific to Wales, limits the ability to confidently ensure that young learners are receiving the best opportunities globally, not just within Wales?

There are challenges in comparing educational performance across borders, particularly between England and Wales, due to differences in grading systems. We need to get to a position of confidence by the end of statutory education, where students' success in vocational or academic paths is determined by employers or standardised exams like A-levels, which are comparable across the UK. Tools like the Alps system help to model prior attainment and A-level performance to add value to specific subject areas. The border counties are in a unique position and there is a need to consider various educational opportunities, such as those in nearby regions like Bristol. Despite the lack of direct comparability, the focus remains on supporting students in making informed choices and maximising their potential.

- Are there any obvious reasons for the slight difference in Caldicot's performance, and are recent difficulties improving?

The answers for Caldicot's performance are for the governing body of Caldicot to address, and it is not appropriate to delve into individual school diagnostics in this report.

- Is there any difference expected in the comparisons as a result of the new curriculum coming through the schools?

Differences are expected due to the new curriculum, which will increase the variety and differentiation of provision available to learners. The frameworks for accountability are still being developed.

- Are deficits linked to behaviour, and are we working towards emotionally healthy schools and social and emotional learning and development?

Deficits can be linked to behaviour, and schools focus on attendance, well-being, attitudes to learning, and behaviour. There is significant work on supporting learners' emotional health and development.

- How are you going to use this data with governors, teachers, parents, and pupils?

Data is shared with governors through reports and training sessions. Schools provide simplified digests of the information to their governing bodies, which can be shared in parental reports.

- Are any other – more qualitative – measures taken e.g. the happiness index, parent/pupil satisfaction?

*It is certainly important to understand the overall development of young adults beyond academic qualifications. Schools use various commercially available systems to gather feedback on students' feelings and attitudes, though this data is typically used at the school level and not aggregated upwards. Additionally, the Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) led by Cardiff University provides significant quantitative data on student well-being, involving all schools. – **ACTION: to bring a report to the committee explaining this data and its insights***

- Can true parity be achieved between male and female students?

Achieving true parity between male and female students might be challenging. However, the new curriculum and a wider range of qualifications could provide more flexibility, allowing learners to choose qualifications that highlight their strengths. This approach may create more opportunities for parity, but it remains difficult to predict the outcome.

- Have the weighted formula for free school meals families and the Index of Multiple Deprivation been challenged or reviewed for fairness?

The weighted formula for free school meals families and the Index of Multiple Deprivation have been determined and reviewed by Welsh government statisticians. The data is refreshed regularly, with the last update in 2024 and future updates planned every three years. However, there is no current work being undertaken to specifically review the fairness of the model.

- Was this data shared with Estyn, and how does it relate to recent inspections at, for example, Caldicot?

Estyn has seen the data, along with a broader range of data. They do not give this data more weight than other data. During inspections, Estyn focuses more on firsthand observations of teaching quality, learning, and student progress, rather than second-hand data like qualifications data. Three of our secondary schools have had visits this academic year. In terms of the recommendations that were identified by Estyn at Caldicot, the school has to complete what is called a post-inspection action plan and the local authority also has to complete a statement of action. So there is a huge amount of resource and support going towards Caldicot's improvement journey.

- How confident are we that the current improvement strategies are sustainable, especially given issues with school finances?

It is difficult to ever be fully satisfied with improvement strategies, as there is always room for betterment. However, the outcomes for 2024, which reset to 2019 levels, were broadly pleasing. There is

confidence in the current teaching and learning developments in schools, and the local authority believes there is still room for improvement. Financial issues are recognised as a risk, but the focus remains on maintaining a secure and effective workforce and ensuring schools use their resources efficiently. Despite financial pressures, the commitment to supporting students and improving performance remains strong.

- What mitigation strategies will be put in place, given teachers' concerns about the new curriculum coming in in September?

The new curriculum starting in September will make it difficult to maintain trending comparisons of performance. While this year's exams will be comparable to those from 2023 and 2024, the changes will affect comparisons from 2025 onwards. This will present challenges in understanding performance trends, but the current exams will still provide some continuity for comparison.

- How can teachers use this information in individual schools to improve performance?

Teachers use detailed data within schools to improve teaching and learning practices. The data helps in generating conversations with individual learners and improving future cohorts.

- Are there any plans to have parents' meetings with year 10 and year 11 parents and pupils to help them understand this data?

Schools are encouraged to share performance data in their annual governance report to parents, which is a legal requirement. This helps parents understand the data and its implications.

- Are we contacting the press to ensure they understand this data and avoid any misleading headlines?

The data is publicly available online on the Welsh Government's "My Local School" website, ensuring transparency and accessibility for the press and public.

- Are we encouraging teachers to become GCSE examiners to help improve performance?

Encouraging teachers to become GCSE examiners is a valuable suggestion, as it can provide insights into the examination process and improve teaching strategies.

- Trying to close the gender gap can be frustrating, as measures to improve males can lead to improvement in females as well, so both improve but a gap remains. Is that reflected in the national trends?

Yes, that can be an unintended consequence, but a positive consequence, of interventions that can not lead to closing a gap – but to improve the performance of both groups is positive.

- Is the number of pupils leaving with no qualifications not statistically relevant as the numbers are so low?

The number of pupils leaving with no qualifications is indeed very small. However, the focus is not on the numbers themselves but on the detailed conversations that take place in each school between the school improvement partner and the head teacher. These discussions involve understanding each learner's background, what has been done to support them, the positives, and what can be improved for future learners in similar situations. The quality of these conversations is what truly matters.

- How does the language of "expectation of outcomes" influence schools, particularly in terms of management and teaching staff? Could this language condition attitudes towards the potential outcomes and abilities of young people, potentially being detrimental to them?

It is important to maintain high expectations for all learners to raise attainment levels. The Education Endowment Foundation's work highlights that having high expectations is crucial, especially for learners eligible for free school meals. The RADI (Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters) approach, used effectively in some schools, advocates for a blind approach where all learners are treated with the same high expectations, setting aside preconceived ideas about their potential achievements. There is a need to continue promoting high expectations to ensure learners are not limited by perceived restrictions. The concern is not about high expectations but rather the detrimental impact of low expectations based on grouping.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for the report, the thorough explanation of it, and the responses to the committee's questions. On behalf of the committee, the Chair recognised and expressed appreciation for all of the fantastic work going on in Monmouthshire's schools.

4. Development of Children's Placements

Jane Rodgers introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Scott Hereford and Cabinet Member Ian Chandler.

Members' Questions:

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues for the Cabinet Member's consideration:

- The report at section 3.5 mentions significant changes to the for-profit provider market introduced about 18 months to two years ago. How have these changes destabilised the market and increased placement costs? What do the increased costs look like, and how are they related to the committee's concerns flagged two years ago about excluding for-profit providers?

The market for residential children's homes and placements is complex, making it difficult to determine cause and effect. Even before the Welsh government's policy changes, there were already indications of placement shortages and high competitiveness, with both Welsh and English children in Welsh placements. The market has become more competitive and destabilised further, coinciding with the policy changes and local authority developments. Despite this, there remains a high demand for for-profit private placements. The costs have risen significantly, with average weekly costs increasing from around £5,000 per child a couple of years ago to around £9,000-£10,000 per child now.

- Given the increase in costs from £5,000 to £9,000 per week over two years, which is a significant rise in a short period, how have you managed your budgets to cope with these unanticipated changes?

The strategy involves safely reducing the number of children requiring placements, recruiting and retaining sufficient in-house foster placements, and developing their own placements. Despite these

efforts, managing high-cost placements remains difficult. The challenges are shared by all local authority children's services in Wales. The strategy emphasises increasing in-house foster placements, noting that residential placements involve a small number of children compared to fostering.

- Do we have any further sense of which providers will stay, convert, or exit the market following the new legislation?

It is too early to predict which providers will stay, convert, or exit the market, as many are keeping their business plans confidential. Efforts are being made to engage with providers to understand the situation better.

- What alternative strategies are being considered for sourcing suitable properties in the north of the county, including potential cross-border provision?

Developing and sharing placements with other regions and local authorities is being considered, though it is complicated. Mechanisms for exchanging placements and ensuring no voids are being discussed at regional levels.

- What are the contingencies if we cannot secure further grant money for placements?

The business cases for placements have been made considering scenarios with and without capital grants. Even without grants, there is a strong business case for accessing borrowing through the Council.

- Are there any lessons learned from the success of Caldicot that can inform the development in Monmouth?

The success of Caldicot is noted, and lessons learned include the importance of engaging with local residents and ensuring smooth transitions for young people. Specific operational details and staffing structures are being reviewed to inform future developments.

- Regarding the delays in Monmouth due to structural work, have we checked with the initial surveyor to see if there were any oversights that could be addressed commercially?

The issue of structural work delays in Monmouth is acknowledged, and it is suggested that any potential oversights by the initial surveyor should be addressed to mitigate costs.

- Do you think transitioning to non-profit care will save money, given the significant costs of providing care?

The business cases presented to the cabinet have demonstrated the potential for cost savings through non-profit care. The focus is on providing high-quality placements in a cost-effective manner, without the need to generate profit.

- How is the non-profit angle working with cross-border collaborations, especially with areas like Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and Bristol?

Cross-border collaborations are complex due to registration requirements, but efforts are being made to share placements regionally and improve mechanisms for regional cooperation.

- How are you monitoring and keeping control of the impact on young people, particularly care leavers, during this transition period?

The impact on young people is managed through close engagement, honest communication, and support during transitions. Social workers are trained to handle uncertainties and ensure that young people are well-supported throughout the process.

- Are we able to measure the success of the placements beyond occupancy and cost metrics, such as educational attainment and transition to independence?

Success is measured through various criteria, including stability in placements, readiness for independent living, and direct feedback from children and young people. External evaluations by CIW also play a role.

- Do we have many children currently in profit placements, and how will we transition them to non-profit placements in time for Welsh Government deadlines?

The number of children in profit placements is significant, especially in independent fostering agencies. Transition plans are in place for each child to ensure compliance with future non-profit rules.

- What plans are in place to ensure that third-party providers used for supported accommodation will comply with future non-profit only rules?

Compliance with non-profit rules will be ensured through legal requirements for both placement and provider registration, monitored by CIW and Welsh Government.

- Are we seeing any uptick in fostering to reduce the number of children in care?

There has been a net increase in fostering households, and efforts continue to recruit more in-house foster carers, which is crucial for reducing the number of children in care.

- Do you think transitioning to non-profit providers will save money?

The business cases presented to the cabinet for each project have demonstrated the capacity to save money. Over time, the financial impact will be more evident, but the primary focus is on providing quality placements for children and young people.

- How are we monitoring and keeping control of how the transition period is affecting the young people we are here to provide care for?

Monitoring the impact on young people involves evaluating placement stability, planned versus unplanned ends, and direct feedback from the children themselves. Additionally, external evaluations by CIW will provide an independent overview of placement effectiveness.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for the report and their responses to the committee's questions and wished the team every success in implementing the new strategy.

5. Investment and Commercial Interests Update

Cabinet Member Ben Callard introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Nick Keyse.

Members' Questions:

- At what stage does MCC look at investments like Castlegate Business Park and decide they are no longer working and take action?

The decision to review investments like Castlegate Business Park is based on the asset investment policy, which sets a 2% return on investment target. The ongoing management involves assessing risks and attractiveness of the space. If tenants vacate, the space is considered for re-letting based on demand. The decision to take further action would depend on the continued assessment of these factors.

- Regarding the farms, is the policy still for the Council to hold on to Council farms?

The policy is to hold on to Council farms as they are considered valuable assets for delivering various policy objectives, such as locally grown food and regenerative agriculture.

- How do we feel about the stability of Cineworld as a tenant for Newport?

The stability of Cineworld as a tenant for Newport Leisure Park is being monitored, and the report reflects adjustments in projections based on their current situation. Specific details about their stability are commercially sensitive.

- Do you feel there is more potential for risk from arrears for rental, either farm or commercial from Castlegate or Newport?

Rent arrears are being managed, with ongoing negotiations and actions to recover payments. The report indicates that arrears are within a manageable range, and steps are being taken to address non-payment issues.

- Where would the EV charging be in Newport Retail Park?

The EV charging bays are expected to be located between Cineworld and Harvester, as this area has the best frontage and visibility.

- Has there been any progress in moving MCC business to the site adjacent to the Solar Farm?

The land surrounding the Solar Farm is being promoted as part of the replacement LDP. Any future development for MCC business will depend on the planning process.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for the report and their responses to the committee's questions.

6. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

Councillor Bond requested that more information be included on items in the Planner; in particular, how reports and decisions listed will affect residents. She also reminded officers of the intention to scrutinise

grant funding following the call-in to People committee of the decision regarding the Shared Prosperity Fund – **ACTIONS**

7. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

A reminder of the Special meeting on 3rd June and Members' workshop on 16th June.

8. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were agreed.

9. Next Meeting: 3rd June 2025 (Special), 10th June 2025

The meeting ended at **1.23 pm**

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