

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DRAFT SELF-ASSESSMENT

2021/22

FRONT COVER IMAGE

Version Control

Title	Monmouthshire County Council Self-Assessment 2021/22
Purpose	To self-assess the council's goals and arrangements as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
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Introduction

The past five years have been challenging for public services throughout the UK. Monmouthshire has been no exception. The self-assessment which is the foundation of this report evaluates what we have done during this time and how we have done it.

Our direction was set by a corporate plan which covered the period 2017-22, setting a clear purpose and objectives to achieve this. The plan is available at www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/improvement. The diagram shows the relationship between our goals and those we work with partners on. Our activity reflects the ways of working and national goals established by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.



These were underpinned by our core values of teamwork, openness, fairness and flexibility. We recently added a fifth value of kindness, which was central to how we, and the communities in our county, have worked over the recent period.

During this time we have continued on our path of collaborative working between health and social care. We've developed approaches which are focused on keeping people well in their communities, reducing the demand on costly one-size-fits-all statutory services and instead focused on the needs and well-being of individuals. There remain challenges such as an absence of private care providers meaning some needs go unmet.

We have continued to invest in new schools with the £40 million Monmouth Comprehensive opening in 2019. While we still need to raise the attainment of pupils in receipt of free school meals, Estyn's most recent inspection concluded that the authority had a clear vision for education, strong standards of well-being and a good track record of improvement.

During this time there have also been challenges. We have seen rising levels of homelessness, exacerbated by a shortage of affordable homes. We have made good progress reducing our carbon emissions by retrofitting our buildings with solar panels and introducing more electric vehicles, but we still have some way to go before we can achieve our ambition of being a net zero organisation.

We have delivered financial savings and operated within the financial budget set by council during each of the past five years.

During the past two and a half years some of our plans had to take a back-seat while we adjusted to the challenges of the pandemic. This period was covered by five interim strategies, covering different phases in our recent history, from full lockdowns, through re-openings and finally learning to live with the virus.

Our culture, values and use of digital technology meant we were rapidly able to transition to remote working when the country went into lockdown in March 2020 and were one of the first councils in the UK to introduce online Cabinet and Council meetings.

Early in the pandemic, we set a goal of ensuring that every person or family in crisis that we were aware of received support. This meant redeploying staff into front-line roles and drawing on an army of volunteers, many of whom were already working with us as a result of many years developing the *A County That Serves* approach, to provide services such as shopping and prescription deliveries.

We provided support to businesses throughout the year to help them through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic and issued over 6,500 payments of grants amounting to almost £40 million. We also worked with the NHS to deliver contact tracing, redeploying public health professionals to provide an efficient and cost-effective solution to slow the spread of the virus. In the latter stages of the pandemic our purpose evolved as we began to focus on re-opening and learning to live with the virus and the next phase in the evolution of our council and our county.

Our Self-Assessment

New legislation in Wales, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, requires councils to keep their performance under review through self-assessment, with the need to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once every financial year. This is the first self-assessment report of Monmouthshire County Council and looks back over the past five years with a particular focus on 2021-22

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

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

This is integrated with our annual reporting arrangements on the progress and impact we have made in meeting our well-being objectives, which is a requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Self-assessment is a new requirement for Welsh local authorities and helpfully, comes at the start of a new council term allowing newly elected councillors to evaluate our recent history and use this to inform the direction we will chart, and the way we will work over the next five years.

Further details on the process of the self-assessment are in Appendix 2

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

 improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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 @MonmouthshireCC

Our Conclusions

The self-assessment process has identified areas in which the council is progressing well and areas for development. In gathering the evidence, we have also identified some overall key conclusions to the question we asked through the self-assessment process:

- How well do we understand our local context and place and has this informed our purpose and priorities?
- How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?
- How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities?
- How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes?

The action plan details what and how the council will do better in response to the findings.

Place

We have a good understanding of our place. Our understanding of residents' experiences and views on challenges and opportunities needs to remain current to ensure we are in tune with evolving needs and demands in the county. Our understanding has informed our policy development and priorities and enables us to benefit from the incredible social capital that our county is blessed with, enabling place-based working that reduces the demand on statutory services.

Outcomes

We have made good progress in delivering most of the outcomes set in the Corporate Plan 2017-22, which have contributed to the well-being of residents and communities. Over the past two years, some objectives were paused or scaled back as we re-purposed services to address the challenge of the pandemic. We successfully, and rapidly, adjusted our plans during this period, which helped us to meet our interim purpose of keeping residents safe and supporting those who needed our help. The contemporary policy challenges we face are complex and evolving, these include the rising cost-of- living, health inequalities and transition towards net- zero carbon and we need to adapt quickly to respond.

Enabling functions (Resources)

We have sound arrangements in place to enable and support service delivery. Officers have always delivered services within the budget set by Council. Our estate has been rationalised to reduce the amount of money spent on buildings, and we are implementing an extensive retrofit programme to lower our carbon footprint. We have adopted technology and flexible working approaches, that predated the pandemic, evolving how we deliver services. The organisation has one of the lowest staff-to-resident ratios, which can create capacity challenges, particularly when we have to bid for external funding. Other challenges include developing a scenario planned medium-term financial plan and recruiting in sectors including social care, engineering and transport. We need to strengthen our use of data as one of the most important resources when planning our services.

Partnership

We have built and sustained valuable relationships with formal and informal partners and have built networks with individuals and organisations across the UK to inform our thinking and practice. We have a legacy of effective partnership working across health and social care and play a leading role in the Cardiff Capital Region. We are also becoming more involved in the Western Gateway. We were instrumental in the creation of a Gwent-wide Public Service Board and benefit from collaborations in key service areas such as ICT provision, procurement and education support. We need to develop our thinking and plan for

the longer term working with Monmouthshire's community groups, public service partners including Welsh Government, service users and residents.

Living our values

We are a values-based organisation. Long-standing values of teamwork, openness, fairness, and flexibility were recently supplemented by a fifth value of kindness, these values were evidenced throughout the pandemic. Supporting a workforce to act in accordance with these values is a vital part of our culture, promoting staff retention and recruitment.

Understanding our local place

Public Services are facing a range of complex challenges including climate change, income and health inequalities, access to housing and transport. A clear and current understanding of the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being in Monmouthshire, is essential for the council to inform its purpose and priorities.

Local place

How well do we understand our local context and place and has this informed our purpose and priorities?

We have a good understanding of our places and the people who live here through a range of assessments and research including the well-being assessment, population needs assessment, and research for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP).

The contemporary policy challenges that we need to meet, working with our communities, are complex and evolving. These include transitioning to net zero, tackling the determinants of health inequality, making sure our children do well, and social care reform. We need to ensure that our understanding of these in the county remains up-to-date and current to inform our priorities.

The organisation is outward-looking, building relationships with formal and informal community groups enabling the council to progress its priorities in collaboration, where appropriate. The networked approach is also evidenced through a variety of projects including being the lead authority on the Cardiff Capital Region InFuSe programme, which builds skills and capacity for innovative future public services.

Building on the social capital in the county a range of place-based approaches have been developed and services focussed on the strengths and challenges in a place. Place-based approaches have been developed and continue to evolve, including in social care and supporting volunteering. The 'Community Action Network' is another example of a targeted place-based approach.

The council has a track record of understanding local communities through Area Committees which have provided an interface between local and strategic issues. They have helped to shape major proposals in the area based on the local context of the place.

Evidence has been used to inform the development of the council's purpose, Corporate Plan and well-being objectives. Through the Coronavirus pandemic the council set a series of strategic aims, on plans on a page, that evolved based on the evidence of challenges of the pandemic. This ensured that the council had clarity of purpose throughout the pandemic and accountability for delivery.

There is a need to develop our thinking and ideas as we plan for the longer term. The involvement and participation of and engagement with Monmouthshire's community groups, public service partners, service users and residents will need to be strengthened to understand what matters, and to ensure programmes are bold and ambitious.

How do we know?	Area for development
Well-being Assessment Population Needs Assessment Replacement Local Development Plan research Cardiff Capital Region InFuSe programme Audit Wales Covid-19 learning project	Keep an up-to-date understanding of well-being, including participation of residents and service users. Develop thinking and ideas to plan longer term alongside Monmouthshire residents, community groups and public service partners.

Our Outcomes

The Corporate Plan 2017-22 contained five goals, the council’s well-being objectives, and 22 commitments, which focus on the longer-term future of the county and aim to address complex challenges, in line with the Future Generations Act.

The long-term nature of some objectives means that the effects of some activity may not be clearly demonstrable over short timescales, and some activity will have an impact over the longer term. In assessing each of our 5 goals, we have considered the extent to which:

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

It is important that the 22 commitments to action are not considered in isolation since they can affect each other and need to be considered in an integrated way. How they integrate with each other is shown in Appendix 1.

We have included the following icons in each commitment to action to illustrate their contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals:



Informed by the evidence gathered, we have assessed each of our goals on a scale of 1-6 based on the following principles:

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

Goal A: Best possible start in life

WHY WE FOCUSED ON THIS?

Research shows that improving outcomes for children and young people relies upon a ‘life course’ approach i.e. each stage of life builds to the next. We aim to work with children, their families and communities, recognising everyone has strengths as well as needs. We will work across professions and agencies and will be led by data and evidence from emerging good practice.

As an organisation, we recognise the importance of well-being, and people’s safety and security as a part of that. We will promote safeguarding and ensure that it is everyone’s business and encourage active lifestyles for children and young people through a broad range of activities.

We will work to ensure that children and young people choose to attend school in the county. We will invest in all of our children’s learning and development, ensuring they have the environment, skills and support to flourish and be prepared for the work of the future. We want our children and young people to be industry ready, able to contribute locally and globally, to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Evaluation rating: 4 - Good

THE COUNCIL INVESTS IN FUTURE SCHOOLS



How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?

The council has built a brand new, state-of-the-art school in Monmouth, along with a newly renovated leisure centre on site. We are developing plans for a new through school in Abergavenny, which will accommodate pupils aged 3-19. It will offer wider community provision including two nursery schools, a Special Needs Resource Base and adult education. The council has invested £1.1m in Chepstow school, which has improved the learning environment for pupils, and the shared site is receiving a further £1m investment from MonLife, which will improve leisure facilities.

This demonstrates the council’s commitment to invest in future schools and provide learners and residents with contemporary learning environments and modern leisure facilities, supporting both education and well-being.

How do we know?

MonLife impact
School buildings
Plans for the development of Abergavenny school

Area for development

Provide further Welsh medium school provision
Review of primary and secondary education estate in Chepstow

THE COUNCIL HAS A PLAN FOR RAISING STANDARDS IN SCHOOLS

Estyn’s report into Local Government Education Services in Monmouthshire County Council concluded that the authority’s education service does not give cause for significant concern and identifies many strengths. The inspection did identify a requirement to improve outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals, and a

Estyn’s report into Local Government Education Services

Deliver improvements identified by Estyn.
Respond to the longer-term effects of the pandemic on education and



strengthened focus on increasing the number of pupils achieving excellent standards.

During the pandemic, the council implemented new ways of learning, including distance and blended learning approaches, which increased flexibility in provision and promoted collaboration between schools and other key partners. While there were challenges in consistently establishing this provision across all schools, it enabled learning to continue through periods when schools were closed to the majority of pupils. Attendance levels have been amongst the highest in Wales, particularly at primary level through the pandemic.

The council has increased well-being support for children and young people during the pandemic to try and mitigate the potentially negative impact of lockdowns and the disruption this caused. The longer-term effects on the well-being and mental health of children and young people needs ongoing support.

Monmouthshire schools have prepared well for the new secondary curriculum and schools will be ready to teach the requirements from September 2022.

The inability to provide school academic performance information in the last few years limits the ability to effectively evaluate progress and achievement in Monmouthshire schools.

The council has completed a review of school place allocations and secondary school catchment areas and as a result, the number of children choosing to attend school in the county has increased. Further reviews on catchment areas are needed to encourage more learners to gain their education within the county.

We have implemented a new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Strategy, which is helping to build sustainable and resilient provision for pupils with additional learning needs. There is an increasing demand for support for children with additional learning needs, and this needs to be met. The council's proposal to delegate the school action plus

School feedback during the pandemic

MCC Coronavirus strategic aims

School attendance data

School & Education Achievement Service (EAS) feedback

well-being of children and young people.

Evaluation of progress and achievement in Monmouthshire schools

THE COUNCIL CARRIES OUT A STRATEGIC EDUCATION REVIEW



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School Access Data

ALN strategy

Chief Officer Children & Young People annual report

Catchment area reviews

Implementation of ALN strategy and meeting increasing demands for support.

Development and support for school leadership.

funding allows schools more flexibility around the support and funding available for ALN pupils.

The council has supported and developed the resilience of school leadership throughout the pandemic to provide the leadership that schools required in such uncertain times. Challenges remain to support school leaders to guide schools through remaining challenges and longer-term direction.

**THE COUNCIL
IMPLEMENTS A MODEL
OF EARLY
INTERVENTION AND
PREVENTION FOR
CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES**



Children’s Social Services have implemented a co-ordinated approach to early intervention and prevention providing support to children and families who need it as soon as possible, and to ensure that the right help is provided at the right level of intensity. Evaluation and feedback of family support services indicates clear and positive outcomes for families. For example, during 2021/22, out of 140 families, 84% reported a positive outcome from the ‘early help’ intervention.

The council has implemented services to manage early identification and pre- and post-statutory children services intervention with families. There has been a significant increase in demand for these services in the last year, particularly due to the impact of the pandemic. The number of contacts for children not already in receipt of care and support received by statutory Social Services during the year increased from 4,329 to 5,776. Services are under pressure trying meet this demand and providing appropriate and timely support is challenging.

Services have developed and increased the support available for children, young people and their families through the pandemic, including within the school setting. This has provided additional support for well-being and mental health at a time of great uncertainty. There is a significant need for mental health and emotional well-being support, which has been exacerbated by the challenges many have faced during the pandemic, and this increased provision has contributed to dealing with the growing demand.

Despite disruptions due to the pandemic, MonLife has delivered sport and physical activity provision at leisure centres and schools across the

Children’s services performance data

Director of Social Services Annual Report

Chief Officer Children & Young People annual report

MonLife ‘impact page’ and data

Capacity and arrangements to meet increased demands for early help and preventive services.

Meet demand for mental health and emotional well-being support

THE COUNCIL ENSURES PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT FOR LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN



county through a variety of schemes, such as the Monmouthshire Games. 899 children took part during 2021, and 99% said they would come back again. There has been a high level of participation within this programme, which has supported children and young people to be active, improving their well-being and contributing to a healthy lifestyle.

The council is supporting 208 children who are looked after (31st March 2022). The number has risen substantially in recent years but has recently stabilised, although it remains higher than the average of children who are looked after across Wales. Children's Services have focused on working with families to support their strengths, manage risks and achieve good outcomes. There are 74 children in the Achieving Change Together team; during 2021/22, 81% were supported to remain at home, 91.5% have improved school attendance, and 100% reported increased family resilience. Some of the support to families was adapted during the pandemic, although direct care and responding to safeguarding referrals remained in place.

Nevertheless, the impact of the lockdown has meant that some families may not have received the support they needed to reduce harmful behaviours, abuse and neglect at an early stage. The potential risk that child welfare concerns were not recognised or referred early enough continues to be a contributory factor in the increased complexity of support required from Children Services and is an on-going pressure on the service.

The council is working with Foster Wales to run active campaigns to increase the rates of in-house foster carers to provide accommodation and support to children requiring it, which launched in September 2021. To date, the transition from local to national campaigns has not had the anticipated impact in Monmouthshire and no new foster carers were recruited during 2021/22. Overall, the number of in-house foster carers has increased over the last 4 years from 24 to 40. There is also a critical shortage of specialist fostering and residential placements, with considerable instability within the provider market, which could result in adverse outcomes and reduced well-being for children requiring support.

Director of Social Services Annual Report

Whole authority strategic risk register

Rate of children who are looked after

Meeting demand and increased complexity of support required from children services

Suitable and safe placements to support children requiring them.

Foster carer recruitment

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

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

The long-term nature of this goal is intrinsic to its success. Working with and involving children and young people, as early as possible, to identify their needs will give them the best chance of achieving their maximum potential. Preventing problems before they start will provide our young people with the best chance to develop. By focusing on prevention, we will aim to reduce the number of children who rely on statutory services and should support them in a way that provides them with a better outcome. Using a collaborative approach and aligning services provides a rounded resource, with the right people in the right place at the right time. It also reduces duplication, avoids the need for multiple referrals and provides a complimentary methodology of care that works in harmony for the young person. Overall, this approach integrates the needs of our young people, ensuring they have the best opportunity to achieve their goals.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target	Comment
Percentage of children and young people at the end of KS2 in Monmouthshire primary schools who move to a secondary school in the county	82.3%	Not yet available	Increase	Latest is summer 2020 data
Percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational learning need who are educated in mainstream setting within the county	65.3%	66.9%	Increase	
Percentage of Year 11 leavers not in education, training or employment (NEET) ⁱ	1.4%	2.0%	1.0%	
Percentage of children who are looked after that experience non-transitional school moves	10.9%	5.4%	<10%	

Percentage of families supported by early help services who report being helped with what matters to them:				Pre statutory is early intervention prior to receiving statutory children's social services
Pre statutory Services	i) 84%	i) 84%	Increase	
Statutory services	ii) 87%	ii) Not available	Increase	Statutory services are early intervention through prevention into care
Percentage of children placed with generic/kinship foster carers	41.3%	41.3%	Increase	
Percentage of pupils who take part in sport on three or more occasions per week ⁱⁱ	45%	Next survey 2022	Next survey 2022	Previous data - 2018 survey, Sports Wales. Next survey postponed to Spring/Summer 2022
Number of young people trained in the playmaker award	920	910	900	

Goal B: Thriving and well-connected county

WHY HAVE WE FOCUSED ON THIS?

Monmouthshire has the second highest number of businesses per head of population in Wales. It has a relatively low business start-up rate compared to the Wales average and that of the Cardiff capital region, however, the business death rate is also below average, and the five-year survival rate is comparatively high. Nevertheless, between 2014 and 2019, Monmouthshire saw only a 9.4% increase in the number of active enterprises, compared to an increase of 17.2% for the Southeast Wales Region and 12.3% for Wales overall^{vi}. As the closest point for business relocation from England and in particular Bristol, post cessation of the Severn bridge tolls, we need to seize the opportunity to boost research and development capacity. We will develop a clear strategy that articulates our distinct strengths and goals for enhancing competitiveness, innovation and productivity.

We want Monmouthshire to be a place to be – not just a place to be from – so we will review our local development plan to ensure it is meeting our needs. The delivery of quality, sustainable and affordable housing will help to enable the retention of young people, helping combat ‘brain drain’ and managing the social and economic challenges associated with a rapidly ageing population.

We will tackle the barriers to productivity and focus sustainable infrastructure and connectivity. Externally, developing such foundations will enable businesses and community enterprises to deliver employment, growth and prosperity. This will enable businesses to look beyond our shores for customers. Internally, we will unlock the value of our own procurement spend, developing data-driven, enterprise and commercial mindsets and more innovative approaches to local market creation.

Evaluation rating: 4 - Good

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

THE COUNCIL DEVELOPS AND DELIVERS A NEW ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE STRATEGY



How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?

In 2019, we prepared the *Vision Monmouthshire 2040: Economic Growth and Ambition Statement*. This sets the economic ambition for the county and is supported by the Inward Investment Prospectus, which identifies and promotes suitable employment sites and premises.

We have established business support networks. These enabled better communication with the local business community and Chambers of Commerce. Attendees have benefitted from adoption of technology enabling more people to attend remotely. We have developed better knowledge of the county’s businesses from the work we did administering the COVID-19 business grants programme. This has enabled the council to work more closely and effectively with the local business community.

We used the Business Resilience Forum to unite businesses during the pandemic and there is potential to learn from this approach to improve

How do we know?

2019 Vision
Monmouthshire 2040:
Economic Growth and
Ambition Statement

Business support network participation

Businesses assisted by Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise Team and referrals to partners

Area for development

Build on the strong network and engagement platform to create a new business engagement model.

Enhance economic development services for businesses and build on the success of the Business Resilience Forum.

how we engage with other groups. We established employment fayres to bring local employers together with those seeking employment opportunities.

We produced an Apprenticeship, Graduate and Internship strategy and appointed a coordinator to lead this work. They have promoted careers with the council resulting in ten apprentices being recruited, along with four graduates. Alongside this, we have used the Kickstart scheme to help 39 young people into employment.

Monmouthshire has secured investment and funding through the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) city deal. This includes Metro Plus funding for the Severn Tunnel junction car parks and £5m from the Housing Site Investment Fund. Investment in the Cardiff Capital Region will benefit the economy in the whole area, including Monmouthshire.

Generally, there is a lack of understanding around regional governance structures. Consequently, there is a risk that scrutiny of funding mechanisms and their associated benefits is not as effective as it could be; this is an area that requires development.

The council has invested in Severn Tunnel Junction, Abergavenny and Chepstow stations to improve transport links and accessibility to public transport for visitors, residents and businesses.

We invested £3m in 2021/22 to develop new active travel routes and enhance existing routes. It is anticipated that this will encourage residents and visitors to consider alternative forms of transport. We have submitted almost £8m of grant applications to continue the existing schemes in Abergavenny, Caldicot and Monmouth.

We have produced a Highways infrastructure plan. This includes a three-year forward programme for resurfacing, to improve the condition of roads.

Digital infrastructure works have not been progressed at the pace intended because of the pandemic. The latest reported digital deprivation rate still stands at 12.5%. We are reviewing 5,600 premises with poor

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal reports

Improve communication on the benefit and impact of the CCR city deal, and other regional governance structures

Road condition performance indicators

Implement the Highways Infrastructure Plan

Digital deprivation rate

Use updated digital deprivation data to target solutions to areas suffering poor connectivity.

**THE COUNCIL
MAXIMISES ECONOMIC
POTENTIAL THROUGH
DELIVERING THE CARDIFF
CAPITAL REGION CITY
DEAL**



**THE COUNCIL DELIVERS
BETTER
INFRASTRUCTURE
CONNECTIVITY &
OPPORTUNITY**



broadband, with the possibility of Altnets supplying services. However, 2,400 premises still have no potential suppliers available.

In 2018, we worked alongside the Cabinet Office to encourage technology companies to develop digital solutions to rural transport. Although, it has faced delays due to the pandemic, our partner, Transport Design International, has developed a digital transport platform, which includes a journey planner, provides access to demand responsive transport and community car scheme bookings, and a secure lift-share scheme.

We have reviewed The Local Development Plan and determined that Monmouthshire needs a replacement LDP. We started work but this has been delayed, largely because of the pandemic and publication of the updated/corrected WG population and household projections. The current LDP ran until 31st December 2021; it will remain the principal development plan for decision-making purposes until the adoption of the RLDP. This does not change the urgent need for the council to make timely progress on its RLDP and to adopt it as soon as realistically possible to address key issues and challenges, and to meet the future needs of the county.

We adopted the Usk Town Improvement in December 2021 and established a steering group to oversee its implementation.

We are continuing to deliver projects identified in the 2018 Caldicot Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan and engaged residents on designs for the town centre and Newport Road West.

Work began in early 2022 on the development of a Placemaking Plan in Chepstow, with further engagement planned for later in the year.

The council has worked with residents and stakeholders on regeneration proposals for Monnow Street in Monmouth, and a Placemaking Plan for the town is expected to be developed in 2022/23.

We entered a collaboration with Cardiff Council to provide the council's procurement services. The focus is to keep the council's pound within the county boundaries and its neighbouring authorities, whilst ensuring compliance with the procurement rules and regulations. We have begun

RLDP progress reports

Usk Town Improvement Plan

Caldicot Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan

Address the relationship between a shortage of business sites and low business start-up rates in the county linked to the restrictions in the RLDP (challenge from WG).

Procurement strategy

Broaden the organisational understanding of the power of the local pound, and how it can benefit local businesses.

THE COUNCIL PROVIDES MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL LIVING, WORKING & LEISURE



THE COUNCIL UNLOCKS ECONOMIC VALUE OF ITS SPENDING POWER



projects to encourage local businesses to compete for authority contracts. Our tender processes now focus on social value as well as cost.

The council is developing objectives for its Procurement Strategy from 2022 onwards. Additional resources are required to develop actions, performance indicators, and to establish ownership to increase the accessibility of procurement opportunities to SMEs and the third sector. The strategy needs to be disseminated throughout the organisation to ensure the measures and metrics are adopted.

Training will be provided to inform technical officers of their role in understanding local markets and where possible, promote more local spend

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

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

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

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Current	Target	Comment
Gross Value Added (£ per head) ⁱⁱⁱ	£21,458	Not available	Increase	Gross Value Added estimates the total output of an economy. Previous data is from 2020
Difference in average pay between men and women ^{iv} :	£11.00	£146.00	Reduce pay difference	Average weekly earnings for employees working in Monmouthshire. Current is 2021/22. Data for the previous two years, 2019/20 and 2020/21, significantly lower than recent years' trends.
Men	£579.70	£615.20		
Women	£568.70	£469.20		
Average weekly earnings of people who work in Monmouthshire ^v	£574.90	£576.30	Increase	Based on calendar year; current is 2021 data.

Number of active business enterprises in the county ^{vi}	4240	4200	Increase	Data is recorded on a calendar year basis; current is 2020 data
Number of businesses assisted by Monmouthshire Business and Enterprise Team and referrals to partners	6478*	88	75	* Previous year figure relates to total number of support payments made to businesses, including support grants during Covid-19
Total income generated from tourism ^{vii}	£81.16 million	Not yet available	10% increase by 2020	Data is recorded on a calendar year basis; previous is 2020 data. The original target set in the corporate plan has since been impacted by the pandemic.
Number of market and affordable housing units built	419 (of which 71 affordable)	361 (of which 35 affordable)	488	
Number of premises with access to high-speed broadband through the Superfast Cymru 2 scheme	549	618	2113 (over 3 years)	Current is from June 2021. (This is a cumulative figure and includes the 549 from 2020/21)
Number of white premises gaining access to high-speed broadband	970	1095	0 white premises	Includes the 618 premises provided with access to high-speed broadband through WG's Superfast Cymru 2 programme as of June 2021 (This is a cumulative figure)

Goal C: Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment

WHY HAVE WE FOCUSED ON THIS?

Monmouthshire has a spectacular natural environment, a unique heritage value and a culturally rich identity. We believe that necessary growth, development, and expansion of our place need not compromise our distinctive offer – indeed, it should complement and enhance it. As an agricultural and food-producing county, we recognise the moral and economic impetus around reducing food waste and the impact on greenhouse gases. We support the principles of the ‘circular economy’ and the recycling and restoration of goods and want to work with businesses and organisations that subscribe to these too.

We have declared a climate emergency and are committed to delivering the strategy and action plan to reduce the council’s carbon emissions. We will maintain the internal corporate systems, policies and asset management plans that emphasis carbon reduction, energy resilience and a green council culture. Connected to this, we will safeguard the wider environmental interests of our rural communities through developing multi-agency approaches to road safety.

We will continue to recognise the value of our culture and heritage in enhancing the livability of our county. We will work with partners and communities to enhance our high quality recreational and cultural facilities to provide opportunities for people to learn, develop and enjoy themselves, and help to attract the talent which is key to driving a strong economy.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Evaluation rating: 3 - adequate

THE COUNCIL DEVELOPS & DELIVERS A SUSTAINABLE PLAN FOR ENHANCING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT



How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?

The council has implemented nature recovery plans that enhance wildlife, insects and plant species in the county. These include Nature Isn’t neat and the Local Places for Nature Programme, which encourages habitats for wildlife, and a tree planting programme, which has seen 6,274 trees planted during 2021/22, taking the total to 14,630 since 2019. A large number of trees infected with ash dieback are being removed. We are seeking the views of residents on the current projects underway to enhance the local environment.

We work effectively in partnership to deliver programmes that support nature in the county. These include the Wye Valley AONB, Living Levels. Gwent Green Grid Partnership and the Monmouthshire and Newport Local Nature Partnership. We have implemented Green Infrastructure projects that deliver pollinator friendly management and access improvements. We have raised residents’ awareness via nature learning events and activities, and provided grants for community groups to run projects, including barn

How do we know?

Nature recovery plans
Area of Managed Grassland plan
Number of trees planted

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership and the Monmouthshire and Newport Local Nature Partnership

Area for development

Explore public perception of the plans underway to enhance the local environment
Integrate nature recovery and decarbonisation programmes for maximum impact

owl nest boxes, help for hedgehogs, bat activity monitoring, and orchard biodiversity enhancement.

The integration of nature recovery and decarbonisation needs to be strengthened at all scales to maximise the progress and impact they have on the local environment.

THE COUNCIL WILL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT CLEAR PLANS TO REDUCE ITS CARBON EMISSIONS TO NET ZERO BY 2030 AND WORK WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS TO REDUCE EMISSIONS ACROSS THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE



Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and has developed a climate emergency strategy and action plan to respond to this. The action plan was updated in 2021, informed by extensive community engagement and the latest evidence, including the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, ensuring actions remain up to date. We have made good progress on some of the actions in the plan. We have baseline carbon emissions data for 2019/20 and 20/21, but there is not enough detailed understanding about the extent to which some of the actions in the plan reduce emissions to understand the precise impact some of the work we are undertaking is having. This makes it difficult to ensure activity and resources are focused in the right areas.

The council has developed or improved 15 active travel routes that allow residents and visitors to use walking or biking as a means of travel. £3.9m has been awarded for 11 strategic and 3 core active travel projects. A digital tracking system is being trialled to monitor active travel participation, and increased levels of public-facing information is being shared, such as an updated website and active travel maps, to support modal shift.

The authority has 26 ultra-low emission vehicles but does not yet have the infrastructure to fully decarbonise its fleet. Progress is limited by grid capacity and the lack of availability of suitable electric vehicles for our rural county. An electric vehicle strategy and action plan is being developed.

We have established reuse shops and are effectively supporting the circular economy in the county and contributing to reducing waste. We are engaging and educating young people on climate change through projects such as the Playmaker Programme, Make Your Mark Surveys and Engage2Change, and enabling them to take positive action themselves.

Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan	Understanding carbon emission and focus of resources
Active travel funding and monitoring	Increasing amount of waste being generated in the county and move to net zero waste.
Playmaker Programme, Make Your Mark Surveys and Engage2Change	Better understanding of who is working to address river pollution, and how the council can contribute to addressing the river phosphate levels. Also need to understand the impact on development plans
Recycling rates	Incorporation of climate and decarbonisation into strategic procurement collaborations

The council is meeting Welsh Government recycling targets, due to resident participation in recycling and changes to support a move from the use of civic amenity sites to kerbside collections. 68.99% of waste was reused, recycled, or composted in 2021/22 which puts us in line with Welsh Government targets. However, the total amount of waste generated in the county has increased, which needs to be addressed. We have implemented changes to the garden waste collections process successfully and as a result, reduced the subsidy required by the service.

High levels of phosphates have been measured in two of the county's rivers associated with agricultural runoff and sewage affecting water quality in these areas. This could have significant implications for the progression and implementation of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP).

The council is developing its Procurement Strategy for 2022 onwards. We need to focus on the importance of making sustainable procurement decisions that have a positive impact on the environment as well as the economy, and this will have an important role to play in reducing the council's carbon impact.

**THE COUNCIL KEEPS
ROADS AND AREAS
SAFE**



The Council has implemented 12 20mph road schemes across the county to help make town centres safer and to contribute to the implementation of the active travel initiative. Other road safety initiatives being implemented include pilot school street closures during drop off and pick up times, and the Green Cone Scheme, which is a Welsh Government initiative to help keep school children safe as they arrive at and leave the school grounds.

20mph have been implemented

Communication with residents on the benefits of the 20mph scheme

Resident feedback suggests a mixed response to the new 20mph zoning scheme. We will need engage further with road users.

**THE COUNCIL
ENHANCES LOCAL
HERITAGE AND
DEVELOPMENT OF
ARTS AND CULTURAL
SERVICES**



Monlife have focused on staff training to build knowledge and confidence of the different heritage sites across the county. Staff are now working together across sites to create a better experience for visitors by bringing consistency into the breadth and quality of information held about each heritage asset. Since MonLife's inception in January 2020, 300,000 visits have been recorded to heritage attractions, and over 53,000 visitors have been welcomed to Monmouthshire museums.

MonLife Impact webpage

Longer term planning and improved feedback loops to understand what visitors want.

We are developing an overarching five-year Heritage Strategy and action plan to bring structure and concise direction for development across all heritage assets and services. Audience Data Capture needs development, as an important tool in understanding how the heritage and arts are meeting the expectations of visitors, and in shaping the future provision.

We have undertaken an investment programme in the Borough Theatre, including external funding, to ensure it is an accessible, professional, artistic amenity that, alongside the recently refurbished library, community learning space and market, provides an exciting and realistic cultural focus. The £1m refurbishment work has been a significant undertaking and is on schedule for completion in October 2022. It will enable the theatre to provide quality customer service and experience, whether presenting international performers, local community groups or a primary school celebration. It will be flexible to the needs of our audiences, visitors, and artists to enjoy performances, participatory arts sessions, and arts encounters in a number of different ways.

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

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

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

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Current	Target	Comment
Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted	68.88%	68.99%	64.0%	Current is provisional 2021/22
Average number of days taken to clear fly-tipping incidents	5.55	4.69	<5	
Percentage of streets that are clean	Not available	98.8%	97.5%	
Percentage reduction of council carbon dioxide emissions	Not available	Not yet available	Net zero by 2030	
Capacity of renewable energy in the county driven by the council	Not available	Not yet available	Increase	
Levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) pollution in the air (µg/m ³) ^{viii}	8	8	Decrease	Current is data from 2019
Number of trees planted	7790	6274	10,000 (by 2022)	Target exceeded
Number of new active travel routes	13	15	12	
Number of rural communities in which speed safety initiatives are supported	6	12	Increase	
Percentage of roads in poor condition:				
A roads	2.7%	Not yet available	<3%	
B roads	5.2%	Not yet available	<5%	
C roads	7.7%	Not yet available	<8%	
Total amount of Rural Development Plan funds committed to projects in Monmouthshire	£98,256	£171,261	£1,674,000 (Dec 2021)	

Goal D: Lifelong well-being

WHY DID WE FOCUS ON THIS?

Developing well-being and adopting community-focused approaches is about changing practice and lives. The Corporate Plan 2017-22 committed to the personalisation of care and true collaboration with people who had care and support needs and carers.

Making deep relationships the norm is challenging but we believed it was the right thing to do. Developing really effective partnerships and supporting individual family and community resilience was key to this.

Creating good social support systems relies on more than just the economic and wealth creation aspects of our work. We worked to create prosperity for all, which meant taking into account economic and social well-being.

The focus of this goal was social justice, addressing inequalities and improving outcomes for the county's people and communities. We set out to cultivate social capital and promote access to opportunity, and in so doing, work towards better physical and mental health and social care outcomes. Our approach took a strengths-based approach to encourage independence, self-care, support, learning, and engagement.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Evaluation rating: 3 - adequate

THE COUNCIL ENABLES CONNECTED AND CARING COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY



How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?

The council is developing place-based approaches to support people's well-being. We are building networks that enable people to connect with groups and activities in their local community maintaining their well-being, reducing the likelihood of them requiring formal services. An example of this is the *Early Help Panel* within Children's Services or *Community Conversations* in Adult's Services, which help ensure people have access to the right help before needs and vulnerabilities escalate. We take the approach of prevention and de-escalation at all levels of need, for example, the Community Nights Service, which has reduced calls for ambulances and helps to support people living in their own homes and communities for longer.

Despite this, we have seen increased demand for services. Some of this is attributable to the effect of lockdown as people experiencing reduced confidence and physical frailty. This is compounded by the challenges we have experienced across social care in the last decade such as

How do we know?

Director of social services annual report
Social Services service user questionnaire
CIW Assurance Check (Feb 2021)

Area for development

Develop a sustainable care sector to meet ongoing demand and achieve people's personal outcomes.

Build on the 'Turning the World Upside Down' model to increase place-based/locality approaches to care provision

reduced funding and difficulties recruiting as well as increasingly complex needs.

The demand and complexity of support in Adults' Services has increased over recent years. Due to the fragility of the social care market, the number of providers leaving the market, and a lack of care staff, there are delays in provision. Access to care and support is not always timely, and at times, our weekly unmet need within home care has reached 2000 hours.

Social Services provided advice or assistance to 4,215 adults who were not already in receipt of care or support during 2021/22. This was over 250 more than the previous year indicating increasing levels of demand. Similarly, Social Services provided 3,379 children not already in receipt of care and support with advice or assistance, an increase of almost 680 on the previous year

87.9% of adult social care survey respondents who were asked about their care and support felt that it met their needs. During 2021/22, 240 packages of reablement were completed allowing people to live independently in their homes. Of those, over 50% did not require any further support indicating they had been successful in preventing higher levels of dependency, which is a reduction from the previous year.

The council has developed a Social Justice Strategy which includes action plans on Tackling Poverty and Inequality, Food Development and Homeless Transition. Despite our efforts, there will be points in people's lives at which they experience financial hardship. We have undertaken extensive data analysis and qualitative research and now have a far better understanding of inequality at a local level and how it affects people's lives. We have begun to develop interventions in response to this analysis and need to implement these and evaluate the impact.

Homelessness is a significant challenge in the county, with the number and type of homeless accommodation unsuitable to meet demand. We have worked with housing association partners to make additional social housing available for homeless households, and the proportion

Social Justice Strategy

MCC Coronavirus Strategic aims

'Money Matters' web resource

Develop interventions based on what our analysis is telling us and track the impact of these programmes of work

The requirement for suitable accommodation for homeless people, including specialist provision for those with additional needs

THE COUNCIL WORKS COLLECTIVELY TO DELIVER ON SOCIAL JUSTICE, ENABLING PROSPERITY AND REDUCING INEQUALITY BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES



has increased from 38% in 2020/21 to 47% in 2021/22. We have remodelled housing support to include high-need accommodation for young people, dedicated substance misuse support, temporary accommodation support and re-settlement support. We have also expanded private sector accommodation under the Monmouthshire Lettings Service.

There remain challenges that need to be addressed including the lack of temporary, supported and permanent accommodation, and the need to introduce either new support schemes or expand existing schemes for homeless applicants, particularly in respect of young people and those with mental health and substance misuse needs. Support is needed for those households in temporary accommodation, which there are currently 191.

We have created The Community Action Network which is a targeted place-based approach with a new focus on 'Participatory Budgeting' and maximising the inclusivity of marginalised groups. These networks provide vital support to communities.

The council has established a 'Money Matters' web resource and associated campaign, in partnership with other providers across the county. This provides information and advice on the cost-of-living and in the first six months of the year, the site received over 1,600 visitors.

**THE COUNCIL ENABLES
BETTER LOCAL
SERVICES THROUGH
SUPPORTING
VOLUNTEERS AND
SOCIAL ACTION**



We have developed a network of community volunteers through the *A County That Serves* and Be.Community Programmes. This is built on a foundation of existing social capital and meant we were rapidly able to mobilise volunteers during the pandemic. They provided support such as connecting shielding people with others who could help with shopping or collection of prescriptions. There are currently 538 active volunteers registered on the volunteer database, all actively linked to a volunteering opportunity within the county.

The Be.Community learning and development programme for volunteers has run 19 courses attended by 294 volunteers, with a further 10 bespoke courses provided to meet specific group needs.

Be. Community programme	Continue to work with volunteers to ensure social capital supports community well-being
Connect Monmouthshire	
Volunteer Kinetic system	
Our Monmouthshire	

**THE COUNCIL BOOSTS
LEISURE, RECREATION
AND WELL-BEING**



The council has made significant investment to improve the leisure offer in Monmouth, Abergavenny and Chepstow. We have made a resubmission to the Levelling-Up fund, with plans to invest in Caldicot Leisure Centre. There have been 863,000 visits to the four Active leisure centres since MonLife’s inception in January 2020. Leisure services lost 40-45% of members through the pandemic, but this is recovering through ongoing targeted promotions and campaigns to encourage people back to our sites. In April 2022, memberships were around 85% of pre-pandemic levels.

MonLife has created a range of programmes to support active lifestyles for children and young people in the county, and to enhance the well-being benefits it brings. 423 children were supported through the Food and Fun Programme, which makes children more active, improves their diet, and helps parents meet the costs of school holidays. The Shift project has offered non-clinical support to 170 young people aged 11-25 in Monmouthshire who are experiencing issues which are impacting on their mental health and/or emotional wellbeing. 90% perceive an improvement in their mental health/emotional well-being.

MonLife recognises the importance of the outdoors in boosting leisure, recreation and well-being. We have improved active travel through the year with considerable investment, but we need to identify who uses our active travel routes in order to continue to improve them. Following the closure of outdoor education services during the pandemic, we have reopened all facilities to full capacity. During 2021/22, the service provided outdoor learning to elected home-educated young people and held disability-specific outdoor education sessions.

The National Exercise Referral scheme was impacted by the pandemic and the restriction on face-to-face meetings. We provided live stream classes online and pre-recorded classes on Monmouthshire’s customised Fitness and Health app. The digital solutions have proved so successful that we have kept them for both consultations and classes, despite returning to face-to-face delivery. This has been most advantageous for clients who are reluctant to return to the leisure

MonLife ‘impact page’
and data

Leisure services
memberships

Use and participation in leisure
facilities

Monitor active travel usage to
determine who uses it in order to
make targeted improvements

Promotion of the outdoor
education service, and its benefits
for young people

Integrated approach to sport
development, youth service and
play to ensure a coordinated offer
and support for children and
young people’s wellbeing

centres. Of the 2021/22 referrals, 70% reported an increase in fitness and 64% reported a lower BMI/weight loss.

Well-being of Future Generations Act impact

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

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

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target	Comment
Old measure: Percentage of people living independently at home 6 months after reablement			75%	
New measure: percentage of packages of reablement completed during the year which mitigated the need for support	58.8%	50.8%	Increase	
Percentage of adult services users who are happy with the care and support they have had	89%	87%	90%	
Percentage of adult services users who feel they are part of their community	52%	51%	Increase	
Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation ^{ix}	10%	Not available	Decrease	National survey for Wales indicator; data from 2019/20
Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/access the facilities and services they need ^x	Not available	88%	Increase	National survey for Wales indicator, 2020/21
Number of volunteers directly supporting Monmouthshire County Council	1072	538	Increase	Previous year not directly comparable to current. New methodology for data capture to improve accuracy and transparency
Percentage of people participating in sport 3 or more times a week ^{xi}	36%	Not available	Increase	National survey for Wales indicator; data from 2019/20

Percentage of people participating in the exercise referral scheme still active after 16 weeks	Not available	52%	>50%
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Goal E: Future-focused Council

WHY HAVE WE FOCUSED ON THIS?

Our operating environment is a changing and challenging one. Demographic shifts, increasing demand and fiscal uncertainty all require an understanding that 'business as usual' is no more. We will continue to rapidly adapt, develop foresight capability and enable the service changes and countywide transformations that best meet the aspirations of our communities. This outward-facing approach will mean reducing the reliance on traditional public services and having more genuinely collaborative local relationships. Digital will feature strongly in this, allowing 'fit for future' service models and enabling the sharing of approaches and resources to addressing crosscutting problems.

Our goal is to continue to build an engaged, responsive and adaptive council, able to provide effective leadership, in collaboration with other local partners. We will develop and sustain a dynamic, healthy and rewarding work environment that develops, attracts and retains top talent and enables them to perform at their best.

Good governance will be at the heart of what we do, and we will ensure that the right information gets to the right people to inform decision-making. We will integrate a service focus into all dealings with customers and ensure they are well informed and engaged in decision-making. We understand the best public servants see themselves as not working for the council but for the county.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Evaluation rating: 4 - good

	How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?	How do we know?	Area for development
COUNCIL ENABLES AND PROVIDES GOOD SUSTAINABLE LOCAL SERVICES WHILST DELIVERING AN EXCELLENT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ACROSS ALL CHANNELS 	<p>The council has developed digital channels that have increased the ability for customer requests to be addressed. These include the development of a Welsh and English bilingual Chatbot that is enabling contact 24/7 on a broad range of subjects, the first council chatbot in the UK. The My Monmouthshire app is enabling customers to arrange the services they need more easily at a time of their convenience.</p> <p>The Council increased resource at the contact centre during the pandemic, which met the increasing demand for customer services, particularly while face-to-face service delivery was closed.</p> <p>A customer service review has been established to review how to meet customer service demand efficiently and effectively and the integration of the Councils' processes and systems to respond.</p>	<p>Chatbot and My Monmouthshire App data</p>	<p>Improve self-service capabilities and reduce telephony reliance by customers</p>

**COUNCIL OPENS UP
DEMOCRATIC
ENGAGEMENT &
COLLECTIVE DECISION-
MAKING**



The Council has implemented live streaming of democratic meetings and provides all meeting papers on its website. This has increased the transparency of democratic arrangements for our residents. Arrangements were adapted quickly and effectively during the pandemic allowing all council meetings to operate remotely, allowing democratic scrutiny and decision making to continue. Learning from the arrangements during the pandemic, we have now implemented hybrid meeting technology, accommodating both remote and physical attendance at meetings.

We have recently reviewed our scrutiny arrangements following a self-evaluation and have established four new role-based scrutiny committees in place of the existing committees. Two of the new committees play a key role in engaging the public in developing policies, shaping services and reflecting the public voice to decision makers in advance of decisions being taken. In addition, we have revised our Public Open Forum process to enable the public to attend meetings in person or remotely, and to submit representations to scrutiny committees by video, audio or in writing. We have a Scrutiny website that provides clear accessible information to the public on the role of scrutiny and advises how to get involved.

More needs to be done to increase public participation in scrutiny. A wide-ranging piece of work has been commenced for a wholesale review of all engagement with a view to the production of the council's Public Participation Strategy as required by the Local Government and Elections Act 2021.

The council has carried out a range of engagement and consultation exercises to seek the views of local people, including on subjects such as financial arrangements, active travel routes and well-being. The council must develop its thinking and ideas as it plans for the longer term. The involvement and participation of, and engagement with, Monmouthshire's community groups, public service partners, service users and residents will need to be strengthened to understand what matters, and to ensure programmes that are agreed meet needs in the county.

Democratic meeting minutes and agendas website.

Public participation in scrutiny and decision making

Involving Monmouthshire residents, community groups and public service partners in longer term planning.

**THE COUNCIL DELIVERS
A SUSTAINABLE AND
RESILIENT
ORGANISATION AND
RELEVANT, VIABLE**

The Council's financial planning arrangements have enabled it to continue to resource services, monitor spend and agree budgets for forthcoming years. The pandemic has had a significant effect on the council's finances, with additional costs and loss of income. The authority made claims to Welsh Government who have provided a significant level of funding through its COVID Hardship Fund to cover these costs. For 2021/22, the council has delivered a positive revenue outturn of £5.62m and that has

Financial reports
Commercial strategy

Financial planning with the uncertainty of pressures facing the council and residents

AND VALUED PUBLIC SERVICES



been brought about significantly by specific WG grant funding. This in turn has allowed for a transfer to earmarked reserves of £4m that will allow for additional reserve cover to deal with budgetary risks in 2022/23 and beyond. A robust budget setting process enabled the Council to agree a balanced budget for the forthcoming year, 2022/23.

The pandemic has also significantly affected the council’s medium-term financial planning. This medium-term financial plan needs to be developed, reflecting realistic and accurate funding requirements, to allow a structured and planned approach to service delivery in the medium term, in line with corporate priorities and responsiveness to challenges, such as the cost-of-living.

We have worked hard to ensure help and support is provided to vulnerable households, whilst also working to ensure that council tax collection rates are maintained within expectations. The 2021/22 collection rate is 97.4% and was 97.8% prior to the pandemic. Examples of support include ensuring claims for benefits/Universal Credit were processed quickly; awarding Discretionary Housing Payments; ensuring households are claiming all eligible reliefs for their council tax; and agreeing flexible payment plans for any council tax arrears. We have developed or built systems and processes to ensure the timely payment of Welsh Government support including Winter Fuel Payments, Self-Isolation Payments and Business Support Grants.

The council has developed and is implementing a Commercial Strategy, which has generated income to support services and developed an approach to commercialising assets and creating a commercial culture and ethos. Through the strategy, an investment portfolio has been built on. We have adjusted our commercial risk appetite to take account of the pandemic and uncertainties in the investment and property markets at this time. Going forward, we will need to focus on a commercial approach being taken to enable the policy aims and ambitions of the council to be delivered.

The rising cost-of-living and impact on residents.

THE COUNCIL PUTS PEOPLE AT HEART OF ALL IT DOES AND INSPIRES EXCELLENCE IN WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYEES

The council has created networks and arrangements for staff feedback that are being used to shape the organisation’s focus, direction-setting and staff support. Arrangements have been adapted and maintained that were implemented through the pandemic to support staff communication and wellbeing, this includes the regular all staff forum the ‘Digital Cwtch’ and People Leader Question & Answer session, which hosts an average of 30 leaders on a weekly basis. The feedback from these sessions demonstrates they are valued support mechanisms for staff. People’s Question & Answer sessions have been held, allowing people services colleagues to meet with over

People strategy

Updated People strategy

Recruitment system and arrangements

Training and development system



500 members of staff across all directorates. There has been a reduction in casework because proactive mechanisms are being encouraged and facilitated throughout the organisation.

Throughout the pandemic, the workforce adapted quickly and effectively to continue to deliver services to residents, visitors and businesses in the county. We are reviewing and adjusting working arrangements, informed by the learning and feedback during this time. For office-based staff, we have established a desk-booking system and collaborative working areas enabling staff to choose to work where they feel most comfortable. The People Strategy needs to be updated incorporating the learning from the pandemic to set the direction and activity to support and develop staff.

We have adjusted recruitment arrangements, with a focus on flexibility and individualisation. This has led to successful recruitment campaigns in some service areas. Recruitment challenges remain, partly impacted by national skill shortages, and learning and arrangements need to be shared and developed consistently throughout the organisation.

The organisation’s training offer needs development to meet the current and future skills required and support leadership and development. We are implementing a learning management system to support this.

implementation and offer

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

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

The long-term nature of our goal is evident – shaping our services to meet the needs of our communities now, and into the future, is essential if we are to remain relevant and viable. Utilising data more effectively to plan preventative approaches and enhancing our digital capabilities are just some of the ways we intend to do this. Involving people in decision-making and scrutiny will ensure our direction of travel is collaborative and fit for the generations to come. Integrating our approach will make sure that our resources are used in the places they are needed the most, and as efficiently as possible. Making our reducing financial resources stretch as far as possible is vital for future sustainability.

Measures of progress

Measure	Previous	Latest	Target	Comment
Over/underspend of council revenue budget (£)	£0	£1.62m	£0	
Percentage of targeted budget reductions achieved	85%	93%	95%	Latest is Month 9 forecast 2021/22
Income generation from commercial investments (£)	£159,018	£614,882	£609,355	Actual outturn for the investment properties
Percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area ^{xii}	Not available	Not available	Increase	National Survey for Wales and National well-being indicator under the well-being of Future generations Act. Latest data not published
Number of open data sets published	9	9	10	
Number of apprentices on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes per 1,000 employees	Not available	Not available	Baseline	
Average days lost to sickness absence per FTE employee	11.0	13.1	10.5	
Percentage of staff turnover	10.0%	14.4%	Track	Any significant variation in turnover will indicate a need to explore

Using Our Resources

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

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

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

Corporate Planning, Performance and Risk Management

How effectively are resources being used?

The council's performance management framework ensures planning is integrated and everyone is pulling in the same direction to deliver real and tangible outcomes. The application of the Well-being of Future Generations Act throughout the framework ensures application of the sustainable development principle and the ways of working within it.

The Corporate Plan 2017-2022 sets a clear direction for the council and its well-being objectives. The plan has met the council's requirements under the previous Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and Well-being of Future Generations Act. Annual reports demonstrate that the council has made good progress in delivering its objectives, and Audit Wales has issued certificates of compliance stating that the council has discharged its duties. The contemporary policy challenges required, working with communities, are complex and evolving. There is a need to ensure that the council's understanding of these remains up-to-date and strategic plans evolve to address them.

Through the pandemic, the council set a revised purpose and strategic aims that were updated in accordance with the changing situation. Arrangements were put in place to track and evaluate progress. This has provided clarity of direction and ensured accountability of delivery for the council through the uncertainty of the pandemic. In a review of arrangements through the pandemic, Audit Wales identified the development of the strategic aims as a key strength.

A new service business plan process has been implemented, focused on self-assessment and applying a 'Plan on a Page' approach, learning from the strategic aims implemented during the pandemic. This has facilitated services to set their direction, performance manage delivery, manage risk, and assess progress and impact. There is variation in the quality of service business plans and the timely setting and updating of them. There is also variability in the use, overall quality and completeness of performance indicators and service risk assessments. This limits the ability of services to robustly set a clear direction and assess their performance.

The council's Strategic Risk Management Policy and Strategic Risk Register have ensured that strategic risks are identified and monitored, regularly reviewed, and updated based on the latest information. This continued throughout the response to the Coronavirus pandemic, ensuring

emerging risks were considered and managed accordingly. In its review, Audit Wales noted the robust risk management arrangements implemented during the pandemic.

The council has implemented a self-assessment process, which has facilitated an assessment of performance in the 2021/22 financial year in this report. The process has been integrated within the council's existing performance management arrangements, ensuring that it is embedded as part of the council's arrangements. An evaluative mindset based on clear evidence is not consistently applied in the council's performance management arrangements to facilitate ongoing improvement. To ensure that self-assessment is embedded in practice, there is a need to further develop challenge and embed a more evaluative mindset.

How do we know?	Area for development
Overview of Performance Management arrangements report	Ensure strategic plans evolve to address challenges and opportunities in the county
Audit Wales Certificate of Compliance	
Coronavirus Strategic Aims and progress reports	Quality and completeness of service business plans
Audit Wales Covid-19 learning project	
Service Business Plans and appraisals	Develop self-assessment arrangements and embed an evaluative mindset
Whole authority strategic risk register	
Self-assessment report	

Financial Planning

How effectively are resources being used?

The council has a good understanding of its financial position and is seen to have effective financial arrangements in place. A well-established budget setting process has enabled Council to agree a budget for 2022/23. Controls are in place to monitor the budget position through the year and take action to produce a balanced budget. For 2021/22, the council has delivered a positive revenue outturn of £5.62m, which has been brought about significantly by specific WG grant funding. This in turn has allowed for a transfer to earmarked reserves of £4m that will allow for additional reserve cover to deal with budgetary risks in 2022/23 and beyond. Internal Audit opinions during 2021/22 have indicated a level of assurance on effective financial control arrangements in place in service areas. There is variability in financial planning and budget controls by responsible budget holders in service areas. This needs to be strengthened to ensure robust financial management arrangements are consistently applied across services.

The pandemic has had a significant effect on the council's finances, with additional costs and loss of income. To understand the full financial impact, detailed financial sustainability assessments have been undertaken. Welsh Government has provided a significant level of funding through its COVID-19 Hardship Fund to meet additional costs and income losses as a result of the pandemic. The budget outturn 2020/21 allowed the council to increase its earmarked reserve balances by £4m, to provide some one-off limited cover against the pressures to be faced over the medium term.

The authority has maximised the short-term grant funding opportunities available to full effect and secured significant short-term investment to support and re-design services, where available. There are significant challenges going into 2022/23, and investment will be needed to replace short-term funding to offset known and emerging post-COVID pressures and to allow the Council to deliver the new administration's Corporate Plan.

Prior to the pandemic, the council was already facing significant financial challenges heading into the 2020/21 financial year. The pandemic presented its own additional financial challenges and uncertainty both in terms of additional cost and significant loss of income. There remains short- and longer-term uncertainty, with some services having an improved financial position and others having significant budget pressures. As well as the direct effects of the pandemic, the wider and

longer lasting indirect impact on services needs to be assessed and planned for, such as on homelessness, Children’s Services and Adult Social Care, along with wider economic and social factors including increasing inflation and the rising cost of living.

The pandemic has significantly affected the council’s medium-term financial planning. This needs to be developed, reflecting realistic and accurate funding requirements, to allow a structured and planned approach to service delivery in the medium term, in line with corporate priorities.

How do we know?	Area for development
Audit Wales Financial sustainability review Audit Wales Statement of accounts Council budget setting and out turn reporting Internal Audit opinions Strategic risk register	Financial planning and budget control arrangements by responsibility holders in service areas. Ensure that the medium-term Financial Plan reflects realistic future cost pressures as accurately as possible, based on known information and informed by up-to-date and accurate service-based data, and facilitates a budget setting process over the medium term to allow a balanced budget to be set that delivers on agreed corporate priorities.

Workforce Planning

How effectively are resources being used?
 National recruitment and skill shortages are affecting the ability of some council services to recruit the workforce and skills they need to deliver their services. Challenges that have been identified include salaries, the geography and demographic profile of the county, and skills.

The People team have put arrangements in place to strengthen recruitment procedures, such as adapting the recruitment process, whilst still maintaining safeguarding and safety requirements, promotion of opportunities and recruitment of graduates, apprentices and work experience. This has led to successful recruitment campaigns in some service areas. Recruitment arrangements need development to meet remaining challenges.

Many services are seeing an increase in demand. The workforce capacity to meet this and deliver the required services is limited in some areas, indirectly putting increasing pressure on other service areas. The ability of the organisation to plan the workforce it needs to meet current and future demands, and to implement this, requires development, especially given recruitment and national skill challenges.

The development and retention of existing staff is an essential component of workforce planning. The organisation’s training offer needs development to meet the current and future skills required, with capacity identified as a barrier to staff attending training. Some services have undertaken a skills audit, reviewing role profiles, the recruitment process and training. By delivering the right training, at the right time, in the right place, departments have been able to offer a meaningful learning pathway, ensuring better recruitment and retention in the long term. A team with a specific focus on workforce planning and development has been established, incorporating recruitment, retention, Apprenticeship, Graduate and Internship and training. It is too early to evaluate the effect that the development of these arrangements has had.

Throughout the pandemic, the workforce adapted quickly and effectively to continue to deliver services to residents, visitors and businesses in the county. Arrangements were implemented to support clear communication to staff to support their well-being. These included the regular all-staff Digital ‘Cwtch’, People Leaders Q&A session, a dedicated staff website, ‘SUPPORTALL’, and

People Leaders support site. Services were implemented for all colleagues to support their well-being via the Health, Welfare & Information group.

Staff well-being is affected by a range of factors, including additional work pressure and demand, personal factors and societal factors. Learning from, and building on, arrangements from the pandemic, staff well-being needs continual support. Developing and enabling a supportive approach to engagement and communication with staff has been effective in supporting clear communication on workforce matters. The use of networks and communication digitally, surveys and feedback loops to senior managers, has extended the reach of contact with the workforce. This has also created the conditions for a wider system of self-supportive networks sharing practice, ideas and support.

The staff appraisal process, Check In-Check Out, needs to evolve to meet the varying needs of the organisation based on learning that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective for the varying services the council delivers. Colleagues need to be given the 'right' to seek meaningful 1-1s on a regular basis, and there needs to be a focus on improving the skills of line managers to enable a variety of different approaches to the process so that performance development is realistically achieved. There is also a need to ensure feedback loops are in place to evaluate whether this is happening effectively, and to determine if they are informed by other enabling arrangements such as Service Business Plans, and staff training and development needs.

How do we know?	Area for development
People service plan Strategic risk register Coronavirus strategic aims	E-recruitment system and the recruitment process
Feedback loops – Digital 'Cwtch', surveys, exit interviews, People Q&A and People Leaders Q&A session Audit Wales Covid-19 learning project	Learning management system and subsequent wholesale training and development needs analysis and provision
People workforce data	Enable the improvement of workforce planning and develop workforce planning arrangements
	Support staff well-being
	Meaningful staff/line manager engagement and communication by right

Procurement

How effectively are resources being used?

The authority has entered into a collaboration with Cardiff Council, for mutual benefit, in the discharge and provision of the council's procurement services. The arrangements provide increased capacity and expertise to strengthen the council's procurement arrangements, such as in the use of data, to lead to better informed business decisions and business alignment. The effectiveness and impact of the arrangements will need to be assessed on an ongoing basis.

We are developing the Procurement Strategy objectives for 2022, which focus on contributing to the council's aim to be a carbon neutral county by 2030. We need to make procurement spend more accessible to local small businesses and the third sector, improve fair work and safeguarding practices adopted by suppliers, and increase the community benefits delivered by suppliers. The strategy must also focus on securing value for money and managing demand, ensuring legal compliance, and robust and transparent governance, and promoting innovative and best practice solutions.

There are local challenges, particularly centred around the availability of suppliers to meet the demand and requirements to provide certain services the council needs to deliver e.g. passenger transport and school catering.

Internal audit procedures demonstrated that there is overall good compliance with the council's contract procurement rules. However, there are limited skills and knowledge in the workforce to understand the technical specification and market knowledge required to embed the procurement process as robustly as needed. This must be supported and developed.

How do we know?	Area for development
Collaboration with Cardiff Council. Procurement strategy. Internal Audit contract procedure rules.	Ownership of the procurement strategy by all officers who have a role to play in delivery of the strategic objectives. Understanding how carbon emissions are produced, measured and ultimately reduced as part of the council's third party spend. Processes to ensure all tendered third party spend has a level of oversight and challenge.

Assets

How effectively are resources being used?
 The council has a clear Asset Management strategy to manage its land and property portfolio. The Asset Management plan has been updated and is being implemented. The strategy needs to be reviewed to align with the new Corporate Plan, to assess progress and set the strategic focus.

An updated Capital Budget strategy has been agreed, alongside the Treasury strategy. In preparing the draft capital budget proposals for 2022/23, and the subsequent three years of the Capital Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), regard was given to the underlying principles of the previous strategy that remained fit for purpose. There are a considerable number of capital pressures, including property and highways infrastructure and public rights of way, that sit outside any potential to fund them within the Capital MTFP; this has significant risk associated with it. These pressures are undergoing further review, and risks are being assessed to determine whether further funding is needed to mitigate any significant risks that require more immediate action. There is a balance between the need to maintain existing council assets alongside achieving the aims and objectives of the organisation. The impact of the pandemic, supply chain issues, rising inflation and cost pressures are affecting the progress of capital projects.

The property and facilities management needs are not clearly understood across the organisation, and the capacity and capabilities available within property services are not always recognised or fully utilised by council services. There are capacity and recruitment challenges when trying to meet project management demands elsewhere in the organisation, and these are not always considered when projects are planned and undertaken. The knowledge and skills within service areas to manage assets effectively also needs development and potential review; collaboration between departments and property services needs to be strengthened, and expectations managed to coordinate property and facilities management across council service areas.

The People Working Group is looking at the future operating model of the workforce and how this will affect the nature of the accommodation that is provided. It is considering how to use the space in our buildings in a creative, collaborative and cost-effective way, how we can be even more agile and flexible, and how digital technology can help even more. This is ongoing and is working with different teams on how to best deliver services into the future. The effectiveness and impact of the arrangements will need to be assessed on an ongoing basis.

How do we know?	Area for development
Asset Management strategy and plan. Capital budget strategy and capital budget proposal.	Revise and update the Asset Management strategy taking into account the council's priorities
Landlord Services Service Business Plan. Changing Spaces project.	Review and assess Asset management risks.
	Understand property services and facilities management needs, strengthen collaboration and strengthen coordination across council service areas.

Digital & Data

How effectively are resources being used?

The Council has invested in the development of its digital and data capabilities and has clear roadmaps that are integrated and informed by service need, focused on Data, Digital design and innovation, and Information management and security. A range of examples demonstrate the impact of the development of arrangements on service delivery and service users' experience, including development of the My Monmouthshire App and Chat Bot.

In the coming years, the council will need to adjust its delivery to meet many challenges and opportunities. At the heart of this will be digital, information and data to meet customers' needs in ways which were unimaginable ten or fifteen years ago. There is a need to keep pace with the latest practice in these field, build on existing networks in place and ensure that capacity is in place to progress at the pace required and that residents expect. This includes recruiting skills needed to deliver the change required, which has been a challenge in these fields. Retaining, developing specialist skills and upskilling in the basics within the council is also essential. We are also working with partners to ensure that our residents are able to access and use the internet and engage with digital technology, confidently and safely, as and when needed or wanted.

The organisation has put effective mechanisms in place to support and enable the development of its digital and information capacity and capability, to raise awareness of its importance, and to communicate its developments. These include the well-established whole authority Digital Champions network (focused on sharing practice and supporting the development of digital capabilities in service areas) and newly formed system administrator network (focused on storing, retrieving, and managing information and data).

There is a risk of loss or corruption of data due to cyber-attack or data mismanagement, which would compromise the delivery of essential council services; this is an ever-evolving risk. To mitigate it, the council has raised staff awareness of the risk and how to manage data securely, along with ensuring the infrastructure is in place to help reduce the risk.

Through the pandemic, the council's rapid development of digital ways of working enabled services to function and make decisions. Examples include facilitating remote working for colleagues who could work from home, a booking system for appointments at household waste recycling sites when they were permitted to reopen, which has been implemented as a permanent change, and regular production and analysis of a range of Covid-19 data to inform decision making.

The use of data to inform the council's decision-making needs to be developed further. There is a focus on growing data capacity and capability within service areas; this will include authority-wide training and development and assessing and developing data maturity.

How do we know?	Area for development
Self-assessment report – Goal E Coronavirus strategic aims reports Audit Wales Covid-19 learning project Data, Digital design and innovation and Information management and security plans Digital Service Standards for Wales	Prioritise digital initiatives that align with corporate and directorate priorities ensuring that we develop and/or procure modern, secure and interoperable systems which in turn deliver better services and outcomes for our residents Cyber security and data management arrangements Use of data to generate insight

Our work with others

To deliver the outcome required for the county we need to work together with a range of partners, stakeholders and our communities. The Council will not have all the answers and we will not be able to deliver the outcomes required on our own. Working efficiently and effectively collaboratively enables us to plan and provide the solutions required.

Stakeholders and partnership working

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

The council works effectively in collaboration to deliver a range of services. Some of the key service partnership collaborations are the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and the Shared Resource Service (SRS) on IT. The council is developing further collaborative arrangements, where it is assessed that there are benefits in doing so, for example implementing the collaboration agreement with Cardiff Council on the council's Strategic Procurement services.

Partnership working has been integral in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic to support residents' well-being in Monmouthshire. The council established a variety of multidisciplinary projects to respond to the pandemic including Test, Trace, Protect, working in partnership with social care providers, and working with businesses to provide support and administer grants. Formal partnership arrangements to support the response and recovery from the pandemic were also effectively implemented.

Covid-19 has brought into a sharp focus the complex, longer-term challenges that communities and public service organisations face. The evidence and learning from the arrangements and relationships developed through the pandemic need to be maximised to support long-term well-being.

The council sits on the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and has contributed to the development of the area plan for health and social care services in Gwent. In line with the plan priorities the RPB has, through investment by the Integrated Care Fund, developed some innovative and creative services and approaches. Supporting social services and well-being requires effective partnership working, both with partner organisations and the community.

Monmouthshire is committed to working in partnership and has a good track record of delivering jointly with health, the police and voluntary sector, amongst others. Under the leadership of the Public Service Board (PSB), the partnership landscape in Monmouthshire fully embraces multi-agency working, to improve outcomes for residents. The outcomes the PSB has been working towards are documented and illustrated in its annual reports.

Following a detailed assessment of options, the Monmouthshire PSB has merged with other local authorities to form a Gwent-wide PSB to strengthen the outcomes partnership working can deliver.

Several elements of the delivery and governance arrangements of the Public Service Board need to be further developed. This includes considering the complex partnership landscape across Gwent and how it works together to deliver shared outcomes.

The formal establishment of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as the Southeast Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) is underway, and transition has begun, with a completion date to be confirmed. The council needs to work with Welsh Government and the Cardiff Capital Region on the transition arrangements for services that will form part of the CJC to ensure effective governance arrangements are in place; an officer group has been formed for this. We are also becoming more involved in the Western Gateway.

The council has developed a range of place-based approaches, involving partners and stakeholders with an interest, skills, and knowledge, to support the social capital in the county and improve well-being. These approaches continue to evolve, particularly in the social care setting and in supporting volunteering. The 'Community Network' is one example of the targeted place-based approach.

The council must develop its thinking and ideas as it plans for the longer term. The involvement and participation of, and engagement with, Monmouthshire's community groups, public service partners, service users and residents will need to be strengthened to understand what matters, and to ensure programmes are bold and ambitious.

Ensuring the council's workforce is supported, and that every employee is clear on their contributions to the council's outcomes, is essential. Workforce planning, corporate planning, along with performance and risk management processes, will assess these arrangements. Councillors play an integral role in shaping and delivering the council's agreed outcomes, and as representatives of their residents. Following the election in May 2022, an induction programme will be provided to support them in their development.

How do we know?	Area for development
Public Service Board Well-being Plan and annual report Regional Partnership Board Area Plan Coronavirus strategic aims Audit Wales Covid-19 learning project Gwent Public Service Board formation	Delivery and governance arrangements of the Public Service Board and local partnership arrangements. Develop thinking and ideas to plan longer term alongside Monmouthshire residents, community groups and public service partners. Effective governance arrangements through Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)

Our Actions

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

The action plan focuses specifically on what and how we can do better for the significant conclusions of the assessment. All of the findings will inform the development of the council's well-being objectives and delivery plans and inform how internal processes and procedures should change to support more effective planning, delivery and decision-making to drive better outcomes, and innovative ways to better deliver the council's functions.

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

What and how can we do better?

Section	What can we do better	How	Who	When
Place	Understand current well-being, including the impacts of the last few years, on people and our communities to keep an up-to-date understanding of well-being.	We will engage with communities to understand challenges and opportunities from their perspective including participation of residents and service users		
Outcomes	Address areas for development, including rising cost-of- living, health inequalities and transition towards net-zero carbon, identified through the assessment of our outcomes.	To use areas for development to inform new corporate plan and service plans		
Resources	Develop self-assessment arrangements and embed an evaluative mindset	Review self-assessment process to inform service plans and next self-assessment report		
Resources	Evaluate and consider medium-term finances of the council, including the impact of the pandemic and rising cost-of-living, including the direct impact on council services and the impacts on residents and businesses in the county.	We will develop a Medium-Term Financial Plan that is based on realistic evidence and planned scenarios, to guide our budget setting in line with agreed strategic objectives		
Resources	Robust workforce planning arrangements to ensure we can develop, attract, and retain the workforce with the skills and experience we	We will develop a robust workforce planning culture that is able to cope with the changing demands of the council and embed a		

	need to deliver services and achieve our outcomes.	recruitment ethos that works locally and independently to meet the needs of different service areas.
Resources	Data is one of the most important resources when planning services and we currently do not have the infrastructure and skills to maximise its use.	Develop the platforms and skills to enable the use of data as an essential planning and performance tool throughout the organisation.
Stakeholder and Partnership	We work well with partner organisations, we need to extend this to include better community engagement to find out what matters most to our residents, businesses and visitors and plan longer term, learning from best practice, alongside residents, community groups and public service partners.	We will engage with communities to understand challenges and opportunities from their perspective including participation of residents and service users Improve the partnerships working between the council, residents, businesses, community groups and other public sector organisations, including the Welsh Government, to maximise the impact of everyone's abilities when applied together
All	Address areas for development and actions, identified through the self-assessment report.	Embed actions in service plans and assess as part of next self-assessment report.

Our Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

During the past two and a half years some of our plans had to take a back-seat while we adjusted to the challenges of the pandemic. Throughout this period, our Corporate Plan has been supplemented by five shorter-term strategies, covering different phases from full lockdowns, through re-openings and finally learning to live with the virus. Sometimes referred to as the 'plan on a page' they contained a purpose, strategic aims and associated actions and ensured clarity and accountability during the different stages of the pandemic.

The council has adapted, innovated and established new ways of delivering services that supported residents and businesses, assisted community activity and supported staff well-being through the ever-changing environment of the pandemic. Safeguarding the most vulnerable residents, working alongside the incredible volunteers within the county, providing vital contact tracing services to minimise the spread of the vaccine, and supporting local businesses have been at the core of council activity. These, and other activities, have run concurrently with the Corporate Plan aspirations and, with limited resources, there has been a conscious trade-off between these two plans.

The pandemic has also resulted in a range of learning that needs to be evaluated to ensure it is embedded and built upon. We have assessed our delivery against some of the key themes from our coronavirus strategies.

Theme	How well did we achieve our agreed outcomes?
Decision Making and Civic leadership	<p>We rapidly implemented digital technology and held the first fully virtual meeting of Cabinet after six weeks of the first lockdown and established all scrutiny and Council meetings by July 2020. This enabled democratic decision making and accountability to continue. Learning from the arrangements during the pandemic, we have now implemented hybrid meeting technology, accommodating both remote and physical attendance at meetings.</p> <p>We established an Emergency Response Team which also involved working with wider formal Gwent response structures and directly into Welsh and UK Government. This ensured our overall response to the emergency was coordinated and managed.</p> <p>We used our communication platforms to convey local and national messages, and timely and relevant service updates to residents, and became a trusted source of information. The council's Twitter followers have increased from 17,000 in March 2020 to over 19,000, and Facebook followers have increased from 11,000 to 16,000 over the same period.</p>
Childcare and education	<p>We provided childcare for vulnerable learners and the children of key workers via childcare hubs during the first lockdown which, at their peak, provided childcare for over 400 pupils a day. Special Needs Resources Bases remained open, and we established a weekly multi-agency Stable Lives and Brighter Futures meeting to discuss and review support and provision for vulnerable pupils. MonLife provided 'Summer Hub' provision for children with a total of 4,170 attendances, an average of 166 children per day.</p>

Schools adopted a remote learning approach for the majority of pupils during closures in Winter 2020, which was developed into a blended learning approach when restrictions allowed. We provided laptops and MiFi units for learners without access to IT equipment so they could continue to learn.

Schools prioritised the well-being of all their pupils, and this included the adoption of a flexible approach to curriculum delivery, and the availability of additional support to raise standards for priority groups. The Educational Psychology Service and Healthy Schools Team provided advice and support to schools to support the well-being of children and young people impacted by COVID-19.

Support for businesses and town centre re-opening

We issued over 6,500 payments of grants amounting to almost £40 million to provide support to businesses to help them through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic. We delivered an ongoing communications campaign, aligned to the changing legislation and requirements for businesses through the year, and we held livestream events to share support and guidance to local businesses.

We ran various tourism campaigns throughout the year, initially promoting the message to 'stay at home' and 'Visit Monmouthshire – later'. This developed into 'Visit Monmouthshire. Safely.' to make it as easy and safe as possible for visitors to the county. Finally, as restrictions eased, we promoted our Visit Monmouthshire campaign to highlight the services and attractions available for visitors.

The 're-opening towns' projects was implemented to help make our high streets safer during the pandemic, via mechanisms such as one-way streets, widened pedestrianised areas and changing traffic flows. We consulted our residents to seek their opinions and to gather ideas about how Monmouthshire's town and village centres could look in the future. This informed the development and adjustment of schemes.

Support for vulnerable people

Very early in the pandemic, we set a goal of ensuring that every person or family in crisis that we were aware of received support. To achieve this, Social Care moved to a seven-day working week initially to support our frontline delivery in Adults Services, and we adapted our delivery of Children's Services. We also developed a redeployment strategy to ensure staff were available to provide support, where needed.

Front-door social services remained fully operational throughout to support children, young people and adults, and we established the therapeutic services advice line for families to access support, advice and guidance. We received an average of 117 contacts per week relating to supporting children and young people between May 2020 and September 2021, an average of 27 requests per week in Adult's Social Services between May 2020 and August 2021, and 556 families accessed the therapeutic services advice line for support, advice and guidance between April 2020 - June 2021. As pressure on care at home services and reablement services increased, referrals were triaged at point of referral to ensure that those in most need are prioritised for assessment and intervention.

To safeguard residents in care homes, a testing programme was established for all staff members, administered by the council. Staff worked with Public Health Wales and ABUHB to establish clear parameters for residents in care homes being discharged from hospital to minimise the risk of further cases. Residents and staff in care homes for older adults, along with front line health and social care

workers, were in the top priority groups for the COVID-19 vaccine roll out and, as such, were all offered vaccinations early in the rollout process.

We experienced unprecedented housing demand from some of the most vulnerable citizens in our county during the pandemic, at a time when identifying suitable and safe premises was challenging. We identified emergency accommodation and were supporting 161 households in temporary accommodation. We are still experiencing significant challenges and risks in relation to homelessness, with a need to provide suitable long-term housing for all those accommodated in temporary housing, and for those with additional needs.

Safe and clean neighbourhoods

We reconfigured our services at the start of the pandemic including increasing vehicles and facilitating social distancing for staff which ensured domestic waste and recycling collections continued. We stopped the collection of garden waste for a period, but work was quickly undertaken allowing collections to re-start. To assist our communities, we distributed recycling bags to supermarkets and to residents shielding, where possible. We gradually reopened Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) by introducing a booking system so that numbers attending sites could be managed to maintain social distancing, and this continues to operate effectively today. The recycling rate for 2020/21 was 68.88%, an increase from 65.57% in 2019/20. Data was reviewed to determine any learning to further improve recycling figures.

We reduced many of our grounds maintenance services in order to redeploy staff into waste and recycling roles. We kept our roads and cemeteries safe by retaining an essential grounds maintenance team operation. We prioritised activities based on public safety and road visibility requirements, ensuring areas such as grass verges, road junctions and roundabouts were kept clear and safe for road users and pedestrians. When grass mowing resumed, almost a third of areas within our parks and open spaces were left uncut, which saw a positive impact on the flora and fauna of our county. We are reviewing the learning from the changes to our grounds maintenance services to inform how we can enhance the biodiversity and ecology of our open spaces, whilst maintaining the standards expected by our residents.

Trusted partners and collaborative working

As the first lockdown was implemented, we worked with our public sector partners to provide a joined-up response across our area. We also developed closer working relationships with other agencies who supported the social care system to ensure an efficient approach to care provision for some of our most vulnerable residents.

We worked with partners in Gwent to deliver a COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) service to try and help minimise the spread of the virus in the county. We redeployed staff to the TTP services ensure it was well supported and able to respond to the peaks in case numbers. We also supported the vaccination strategy, being delivered by Aneurin Bevan UHB, where required.

Volunteers have been at the forefront of the effort to keep our communities safe. We established the Community Action Volunteer Team to help coordinate requests for help with the offers of support. We also provided access to emergency food parcels for shielded people who could not leave home and created a contact centre, who proactively called over 3,000 shielded vulnerable people in our

communities to check on their well-being. The Connect Monmouthshire community networking platform has since been implemented to provide the digital tools for active citizens to support each other in their communities.

Supporting our workforce and maintaining our capacity and capability to deliver.

Throughout the pandemic response, staff embraced new ways of working to keep themselves, colleagues and residents safe while delivering the many services our communities rely on. We ensured staff had access to a range of support on wellbeing and had access to the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing, if they displayed symptoms. We ensured that staff and resources were allocated to priority services, and that staff being re-deployed had the necessary training, equipment and guidance for them to undertake their new roles in a safe manner. We implemented digital tools and remote working facilities to support services to continue, and quickly rolled out technology to improve how our 1875 office-based staff worked from home. We secured licences for 700 staff who previously did not have access to digital communications so our whole organisation could be kept up to date.

We provided a range of support services to all staff to support their wellbeing via the Health, Welfare & Information group. Communication and engagement with staff continued throughout including an internal staff information portal, weekly staff Digital 'Cwtch', along with a weekly Managers Q&A to answer any questions or discuss general workplace issues.

The pandemic has had a significant effect on the council's finances, with additional costs and loss of income. We undertook detailed financial sustainability assessments to help understand the full financial impact. Welsh Government has provided a significant level of funding through its COVID Hardship Fund to meet additional costs and income losses as a result of the pandemic. The budget outturn 2020/21 allowed the council to increase its earmarked reserve balances by £4m, to provide some one-off limited cover against the pressures to be faced over the medium term. Significant financial challenges remain.

Looking Ahead, Delivering Now

In the last 12 months our focus has been on continuing to deliver services that address the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 and progressing a range of priority areas for the County including decarbonisation, well-being, enterprise and active and healthy lifestyle for our residents and visitors.

Progress includes developing plans for a new through school in Abergavenny, which will accommodate pupils aged 3-19; planting over 6000 trees; developing or improving 15 active travel routes that support residents and visitors to use walking or biking as a means of travel; significant investment to improve the leisure offer in Abergavenny and Chepstow; and working with housing association partners to make additional social housing available for homeless households.

The 'Our Outcomes' section provides a full assessment of the delivery of our priorities.

Performance Measures

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

National indicators have been set as part of the Future Generations Act for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the well-being goals in Wales as a whole. While the national indicators will not measure the performance of individual public bodies or public services boards, it is important that they are considered to track the progress being made to improve well-being in Monmouthshire. Some of the national indicators that are relevant to the priority goals we have set, where an update is available at a county level, are in table 1 below.

Table 1 – Selected national indicator set under the well-being of Future Generations Act

Well-being of Future Generations Act national indicators	Source	Link to Goal	Wales	Monmouthshire Previous	Monmouthshire Current
Average capped 9 points score of pupils (interim) <i>(This interim measure was introduced in 2019, and supersedes the old measure of capped 8 points score)</i>	Welsh Examination database	Goal A	354.4 (2019)	Unavailable	367.4 (2019)
Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked (relative to the UK average)	ONS Regional Economic Analysis: Sub-regional productivity indicators	Goal B	84.1 (2019)	85.4 (2018 - Monmouthshire and Newport)	85.5 (2019 - Monmouthshire and Newport)
Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked (£) <i>(Not a national indicator, included as further context to the "relative to the UK average" national indicator)</i>	ONS Regional Economic Analysis: Sub-regional productivity indicators	Goal B	£29.6 (2019)	£29.7 (2018 – Monmouthshire and Newport)	£30.1 (2019 – Monmouthshire and Newport)
Gross Disposable Household Income per head	ONS, gross disposable household income per head	Goal B & D	£17,263 (2019)	£21,707 (2018)	£21,392 (2019)
Percentage of people in employment.	ONS, Annual Population Survey	Goal B & D	72.2% (year ending 31 March 2021)	79.4% (year ending 31 March 2020)	78.3% (year ending 31 March 2021)
Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation.	National Survey for Wales	Goal B & D	13% (2019/20)	9% (2018/19)	10% (2019/20)

Levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) pollution in the air.	Department for Environment, food and rural affairs	Goal C	9 (2019)	8 (2018)	8 (2019)
Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Goal C	3,589.6 (2020)	85.4 (2019)	86.1 (2020)
Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need.	National Survey for Wales	Goal B, D & E	87% (2020/21)	79% (2018/19)	88% (2020/21)
Percentage of people satisfied with the local area as a place to live.	National Survey for Wales	All goals	87% (2020/21)	92% (2018/19)	84% (2020/21)
Percentage of people who Volunteer.	National Survey for Wales	Goal D	26% (2019/20)	32% (2019/20)	Not available
Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week.	Adult – National Survey for Wales	Goal D	32% (2019/20)	38% (2018/19)	36% (2019/20)
	Children – Sport Wales, school sport survey	Goal A	47.6% (2018)	45.0% (2018)	Not available

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

What we spent in 2021/22

In 2021/22, the council spent £166.7 million providing services for Monmouthshire residents.

The proportion of our spending on different services in 2021/22 is shown in diagram 5. These services are paid for by a combination of central government grants, council tax, non-domestic rates and a contribution from the Council Fund.

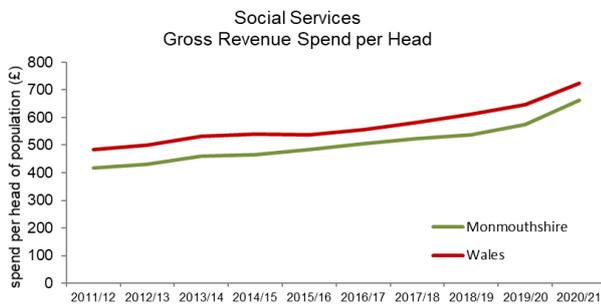
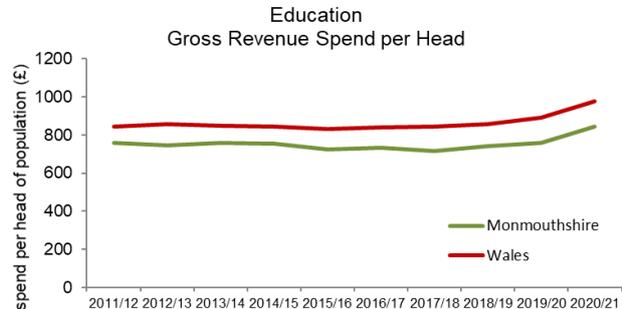
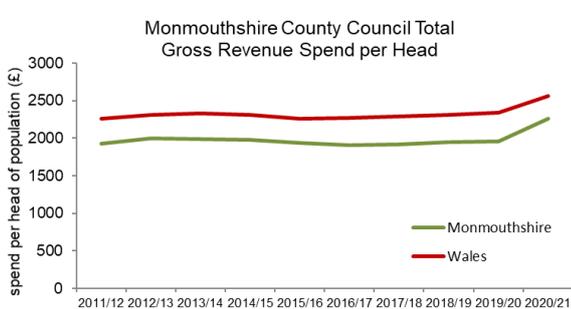
Diagram 5 2021/22 Revenue Spend (£million)



How our revenue spend compares with other areas

Diagram 6 below shows how much we spend per head of population in some of our priority areas. In 2020/21, we spent less on services per head of population than the average for local authorities in Wales and had the lowest gross revenue spend per head of all councils in Wales. However, we also work hard to make sure this money goes where it matters. For 2022/23 we received an increase in core funding, however our budget settlement from Welsh Government continues to be the lowest per head of population of councils in Wales.

Diagram 6



What citizens said

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

Some of the areas we have involved citizens this year include:

Budget engagement: Monmouthshire County Council launched its draft budget proposals for 2022-2023 in January 2022. Residents were invited to register for a special budget livestream. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face budget engagement that would normally take place would not be appropriate at this time, so the process moved online. For those unable to join the livestream, the session was uploaded to the website to watch after the event. As part of the consultation process, residents were also asked to share their thoughts via a feedback survey on the budget proposals.



Youth council, Engage 2 Change: Monmouthshire's Youth Council, Engage 2 Change, (E2C) is a group of young people aged 11-18 from across Monmouthshire who meet to represent the views of their peers, with a view to inform decisions that affect the county's young people. In 2021/22, representatives from E2C attended the Police and Commissions Youth Question Time as part of the Regional Youth Forum work. They decided the panellist's agenda and content based on last year's evaluations and the current years priorities, both regionally and locally, from the Make Your Mark consultation. Their involvement resulted in the services taking part having a better understanding of issues being faced in their local authority by young people. It also allowed the young people to understand the services better, and their role in improving the lives of young people.

Active travel: Legislation is in place requiring all local authorities in Wales to continuously improve their Active Travel routes, and plan how routes will join up to form networks so that people can more easily get around by cycle or as a pedestrian. The legislation requires that councils consult the public during the process of updating their Active Travel Network Map (ATNM), these maps show where walking and cycling routes are identified. The first Phase of the consultation exercise (Engagement Phase) is now complete. It was very successful with over 2,700 people participating. Around 370 routes were identified for consideration of improvement or inclusion in any new maps going forward. An overview of the information collected can be viewed by clicking [here](#). On 4th June, we started the formal 3-month consultation on the proposed ATNMs.

Measuring Individual well-being

The Office of National Statistic's Measuring National Well-being programme also assesses personal well-being as part of the Annual Population Survey. The survey asks the questions:

- **Life Satisfaction** – overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- **Worthwhile** – overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- **Happiness** – overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- **Anxiety** – on a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious', overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

The latest full annual results for Monmouthshire (from 2020/21) for these questions are shown in diagram 7 below alongside the UK and Wales averages. This shows that the responses from Monmouthshire residents score slightly better than both the UK and Wales for all measures.

Diagram 7



Staff engagement

We have carried out staff awareness sessions and provided opportunities for staff to be involved in the self-assessment process. The Leader's Q&A is a weekly meeting, held remotely, for any leaders to join to discuss issues or share information. We have used this platform to share information on the new Act, the responsibilities it places on the council, and what this means for service areas. We have also attended Directorate Management Team meetings to share the same information, targeting heads of service and team leaders.

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

We altered the service business planning process at the start of 2021 to align more closely with the self-assessment process. Engagement took place with staff groups to assist in transitioning to the new way of working, with a particular focus on the outcomes of services, and identifying ways in which services could provide improved outcomes. This needs to be developed as completeness and quality of service business planning varies across the organisation.

Businesses

We have established stronger engagement networks with businesses in our area since the start of the pandemic and we are working to improve these connections. We have a better understanding of the types of businesses in our area, and the Business Resilience Forum presents a helpful 'two-way' platform for feedback and

information sharing. We will build on this platform, and others, to improve the feedback we receive from business to make sure we are capitalising on the conversations that are taking place and can improve our service to businesses as a result.

Trade Unions

We engage well with Trade Union colleagues to achieve our outcomes and a draft of the self-assessment will be circulated to seek their views.

What regulators and inspectors said

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

Each year, Audit Wales publishes an Annual Audit Summary, which shows the work completed since the previous year's summary. The audit summary, published in December 2021, concluded:

“The Auditor General certified that the Council had met its remaining Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 duties for the financial year 2020-21, as saved by an order made under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.”

Further reports produced by Audit Wales are available to download on the Audit Wales website (www.audit.wales/publications). This includes local government national reports produced by Audit Wales.

We underwent an Estyn Inspection into Local Government Education Services in February 2020. The inspection recognised the clear vision and strong focus on ensuring ‘the best possible start in life’ and also identified the commitment to partnership working that has resulted in a good track record of improvement. It also identified areas for development, such as the performance of children eligible for free school meals, and a lack of clarity in how services for learners with special educational needs will be strengthened. Work is underway address the recommendations. The report can be found on www.estyn.gov.wales

Care Inspectorate Wales carried out an assurance check in February 2021 to review how well Social Services were helping and supporting adults and children during the pandemic, with a focus on safety and well-being. They found that we made our strategic intent clear in relation to responding to the pandemic, and leaders maintained a line of sight on the changing COVID-19 landscape, resulting in clear plans to address the issues presented. Inspection reports about social services by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) can be found on www.careinspectorate.wales

Equality and Diversity

The council has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity, with our Social Justice Strategy demonstrating our commitment to address inequalities and improve outcomes for the county's people and communities. This dovetails neatly with our third Strategic Equality Plan, produced under the Equality Act 2010. This latest plan was approved in March 2020 and sets the council's objectives to ensure we deliver better outcomes for people with protected characteristics. This is clearly aligned with the evidence provided by the Well-being Assessment, and also evidence provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report “Is Wales Fairer 2018”.

As well as this, it is important to us as it is the right thing to do. Annual monitoring reports provide updates on progress on the action plans in the Strategic Equality Plan and evidence good practice being carried out across the council departments. These can be found [here](#).

The Welsh Language

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

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and accompanying Welsh Language standards, place a legal duty on councils to treat Welsh and English equally, to promote the Welsh Language and provide services to the public through the medium of Welsh. The council has been allocated 175 standards that we are required to comply with. This is a significant challenge, but systems have been put in place to ensure compliance. One of the standards set was to write a Welsh Language Strategy for 2017-2022, which identifies a vision of how the language will look in Monmouthshire in five years and is accompanied by targets to help achieve it. The annual monitoring reports reflect our progress against our Welsh language commitments under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards. These can be found [here](#).

Appendix 2 – Self-assessment process

Legislation

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

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

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

Why

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

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

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

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

Process

The council has developed a process to undertake its first self-assessment under the Act, assessing performance in the 2021/22 financial year. The main component parts of the process and timeline are:

Feb – April Desk-based evidence gathering	April - May Directorate self- assessment Workshops	May – June Council self- assessment report drafted	July Draft report to Scrutiny and Governance & Audit Committee	September Self-assessment agreed in line with council process.
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This timeline ensures that the self-assessment can inform and be informed by the policy direction of the council and how it uses its resources efficiently and effectively, particularly the budget setting process.

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



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

Self-assessment workshops

Directorate workshops	Enabling functions workshops
Children & Young People	Policy & Governance – Workforce planning
Social Care & Health	Resources – Financial planning
Communities & Place	Resources – Assets
	Communities & Place – Procurement
	Resources and Policy Performance & Scrutiny – Digital and Data
	Policy Performance & Scrutiny - Corporate planning, Performance and Risk Management

The workshops were facilitated through the following questions:

- How well do we understand our local context and place and has this informed our purpose and priorities? (Need)
- How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes? (From the Corporate Plan)
- How do we know? (Evidence)
- How effectively are resources being used to deliver our priorities? (Enablers)
- How effectively does the council work with stakeholders and partners on agreed outcomes? (Partnership working)
- What could we do better? (Actions)

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

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

progress it has made in meeting its well-being objectives for the preceding financial year (2021/22) under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The report will be structured under these headings:

- Understanding our local place
- Outcomes (progress against Corporate Plan goals):
 - How well are we achieving our agreed outcomes?
 - How do we know?
 - Areas for development
- Enabling functions
 - Corporate planning, performance and risk management
 - Financial planning
 - Workforce planning
 - Procurement
 - Assets
 - Digital and data
- Our work with partners
- Our Actions

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

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- ⁱ Careers Wales, Annual Survey of School Leavers <http://destinations.careerswales.com>
- ⁱⁱ Sport Wales, School Sport Survey data <http://sport.wales/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/statistics.aspx>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Stats Wales, Gross Value Added <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/Regional-Accounts/Gross-Value-Added-GDP>
- ^{iv} Stats Wales, Average (median) gross weekly earnings <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Earnings>
- ^v Stats Wales, Average (median) gross weekly earnings <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Earnings>
- ^{vi} Stats Wales, Active Business Enterprises <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/Businesses/Business-Demography>
- ^{vii} The total economic impact of tourism, STEAM data. The economic impact of Tourism is indexed each year.
- ^{viii} Professional, scientific and technical activities industry review, 2016, final report www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/methodologies/professionalscientificandtechnicalactivitiesindustryreview2016finalreport
- InfoBase Cymru: Monmouthshire Economy www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/themes/employmentandbusiness/employment/profile?profileId=4569
- Future Monmouthshire – Economies of the Future, Economic Baseline Report (2018) <https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/s19319/1b%20Appendix%20C%20-%20Economies%20of%20the%20Future%20Economic%20Baseline%20Report.pdf>
- Monmouthshire Business Counts 2021 www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157403/report.aspx?town=monmouthshire#tabidbr
- ^{ix} Stats Wales, Air quality <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/Air-Quality>
- ^x Stats Wales, National Survey for Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/National-Survey-for-Wales/Well-being-and-Finances/percentageofpeoplelivinginhouseholdsinmaterialdeprivation-by-localauthority-year>
- ^{xi} Stats Wales, National Survey for Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/National-Survey-for-Wales/Local-Area-and-Environment/percentageofpeoplesatisfiedwithaccesstofacilitiesandservices>
- ^{xii} Stats Wales, National Survey for Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/National-Survey-for-Wales/Sport-and-Recreation/percentageofpeoplewhoparticipateinsport3ormoretimesaweek-by-localauthority-year>
- ^{xiii} Stats Wales, National Survey for Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/National-Survey-for-Wales>