

# Taking Monmouthshire Forward

Working together for a fairer,  
greener, more successful county.  
Community and Corporate Plan 2022-27



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

@MonmouthshireCC [monmouthshire.gov.uk](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk)



# Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Monmouthshire Now	4
Our Principles and values	7
Our Objectives	9
A Fair Place to Live	10
A Green Place to Live	15
A Thriving and Ambitious Place	19
A Safe Place to Live	23
A Connected Place where People Care	28
A Learning Place	32
Our Council	36
Monitoring and evaluating our plan	38
Appendix - National Policy	39
Appendix – Developing the plan	43



# Welcome

It is with pride that I introduce the Council's Community and Corporate Plan 2022-2027 - our first major plan since our election in May 2022.

*Taking Monmouthshire Forward: working together for a fairer, greener, more successful county* draws on all the resources we have to become a zero-carbon county, while also supporting well-being, health and dignity for all.

Monmouthshire is a wonderful, beautiful place to work, to live and to visit. Our people, our greatest asset, have shown resilience to adversity - the pandemic, flooding and now the cost-of-living crisis. More than that, we have a kindness and neighbourliness, showing support for each other and for refugees given a safe haven in our county. We know how to work together.

But the challenges we face are great. The impact of climate and nature's crises are visible to us all. We can see and feel the change. Our county is the most economically unequal in Wales. We don't have enough affordable homes. Our population is ageing with many needing the care that we, like all other councils, are struggling to provide.

In developing our strategy, we consulted widely and value the expertise and knowledge of those who contributed. We are grateful for their time and effort.

Our plan does not shy away from what matters to our communities: the big challenges of sustainable transport, homelessness and maintaining key services. We have been open to new ideas and ways of working.

Many years of austerity have made the council a lean organisation and increasing budgetary pressures require fundamental change in how services are delivered. More than ever, we need to work in partnership with town and community councils, the police and fire services, businesses, housing and voluntary organisations and sister authorities.

As well as delivery, our focus will also be on prevention, with joined up services to help prevent people falling into greater hardship or failing to thrive in work or education. Our aim is to protect the most vulnerable and to promote healthier, more active lifestyles.

In delivering change we will work with you, identifying the need and sharing the reasoning, opportunities and options. The decisions we all make now will not only affect us but our children and generations to come.

We will continue to listen to your ideas and concerns, as we roll out the plan, working together to find the best way to address the challenges we face. All need to feel they have a voice and that their rights are protected. Only by collaboration and respect can we meet our challenges.

I am aware that our plan takes Monmouthshire into unknown territory. It needs to. But I am confident that the abundant talent and resourcefulness and the characteristics which held us together during the pandemic will allow us now to make Monmouthshire a welcoming, safe and thriving place for everyone.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Mary Ann Brocklesby'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby  
Leader, Monmouthshire County Council



# Introduction

This Community and Corporate Plan sets out our ambition for the council and county of Monmouthshire. It has been written against a backdrop of national and global uncertainty but we remain hopeful for the future of our place. We are confident in the compassion, creativity and commitment of the people who make this county so special.

This is the first plan produced by the council following the elections in May 2022. It has been developed with councillors from all political parties alongside experts and people from different organisations who came together in the months preceding its publication. Together we identified the challenges and opportunities facing the county and sought to reach consensus on the things we will do to address these.

Our ambition, described in this plan as the things we want to achieve, looks to the long-term and is focused on the well-being of current and future generations.

The challenges this plan sets out to address include climate change, income and health inequalities and access to housing and transport. These are complex issues. We cannot pretend that we have all of the answers. We know we must work together as public services, as businesses and as communities to tackle them. None of these issues can be dealt with alone or in the short term. We need to think far more about some of the solutions and the long-term impact of the decisions we make.

We will continue to work closely with our partners in Welsh Government, the Cardiff Capital Region and the Gwent Public Services Board. Along with the latter we are committed to making the whole of Gwent healthier, fairer and greener for everyone and we will work closely with the Institute of Health Equity at University College London to do this.

The actions in this plan cover the first steps of our journey. We will continue to review our thinking as we finalise a new medium-term financial plan to make sure that our spending follows our priorities. At time of publication the budget for the 2023 – 24 financial year had not been set by council. As a result, it is not possible to set precise targets for all of the measures we will be using to track performance. A report will be presented to Council at a future date to approve these and those targets will be embedded in this report to ensure transparency and to enable us to be held to account for delivery.





# Monmouthshire Now

Monmouthshire is a fantastic place to live, work and visit occupying a strategic position between the major centres in south Wales and the south-west of England and the Midlands. Many residents take advantage of good road links to commute out of the area for employment opportunities.

Monmouthshire is a predominantly rural county, covering an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with a population of 93,000 and meaning a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare. The dispersed population and the rural nature of the county can present challenges delivering some services. Just over half of the total population live in urban areas.

Our population is ageing with a higher-than-average proportion of older people in the county which is forecast to rise still further. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033. We recognise that our population is made up of many different groups and it is important for us to reflect the diversity of needs and different experiences and background that make our population what it is.

Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous area offering a high quality of life for its residents. None of our communities are in the most deprived 10% in Wales. However, Monmouthshire has the highest level of income inequality in Wales and these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when seen alongside with areas of relative wealth.

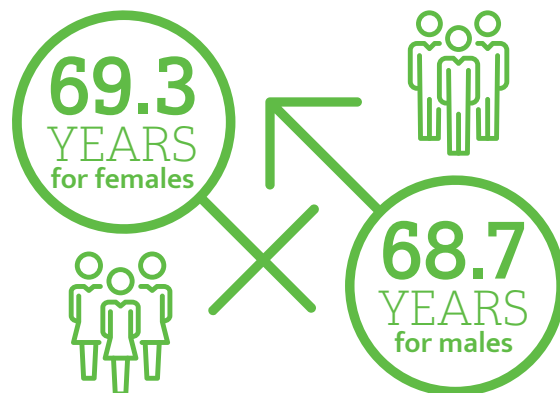
## Some key figures of that highlight the position in Monmouthshire are:

- Rising inflation is causing more people to fall into financial difficulties. 23.4% of children in live in poverty and 10% of people are living in households in material deprivation.
- An estimated 720 kilotonnes of carbon is emitted in the county. This is equivalent to 7.5 tonnes per person, significantly above the UK average of 5.6 tonnes
- An employment rate of 78.4%, significantly higher than the rest of Wales. Gross Value Added per head is the seventh highest in Wales and those working in the county now have the third highest earnings in Wales.
- The local authority maintains four secondary schools, 30 primary schools, one special school and one pupil referral unit.
- Over half of Monmouthshire's working age population are qualified to level NVQ4 and above, compared to 38.6% for Wales and 43.6% for the UK.
- When compared to areas with similar demographics Monmouthshire's crime rate is just above average. Over the past two years there have been notable rises in rapes and other sexual offences.
- Monmouthshire has the highest house prices in Wales averaging £373,000, nearly ten times average the earnings. There are currently 4,201 households waiting for social housing in the county, of which 322 are homeless.
- Average health life expectancy in Monmouthshire is 64.3 years for females and 65.7 years for males, both of which are above the average for Wales and the other local authorities in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area. However, there are significant differences between the poorest and most affluent areas within our county.
- The county benefits from a wide range of community groups and the council is an active partner in groups such as the Gwent Public Services Board, Cardiff Capital Region as well as benefitting from a wide range of collaborative services.



# Our challenges and key information

Average healthy life expectancy in Monmouthshire is:



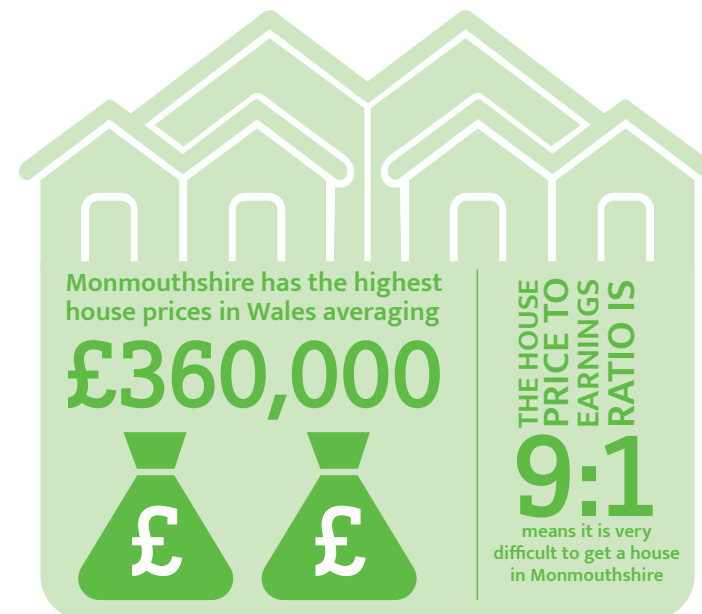
both of which are above the average for Wales

The gap in life expectancy between those in the **most** and **least** deprived areas of the county is:



An estimated **718 kilotonnes** of carbon is emitted in the county

This is equivalent to **7.5 tonnes** per person significantly above the UK average of **5.6 tonnes**



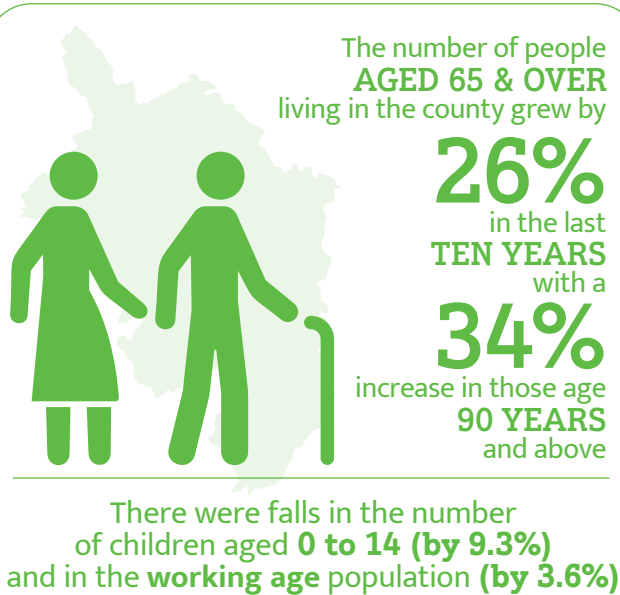
**69.5%**

of waste is reused, recycled or composted

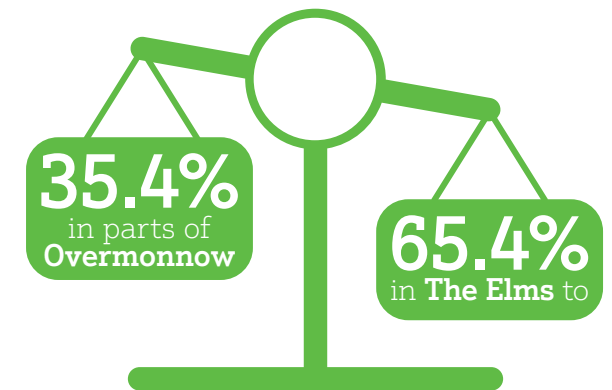


This is in line with Welsh Government targets





There are marked variations in **deprivation between communities** within Monmouthshire. For example, the **percentage of households not deprived** in any dimensions varies from:



### MCC income includes:

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

**£77.5M**

BUSINESS RATES

**£34.8M**

COUNCIL TAX (MCC element only)

**£62.6M**



### MCC spending includes:

EDUCATION

**£59.0M**

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

**£57.9M**

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

**£23.2M**

LEISURE, CULTURE & TOURISM

**£4.4M**



# Our Principles and Values

Our ambition is backed by the principles which will always drive us; Tackling inequality and protecting our environment and adapting to a world being reshaped by climate change. These will be specific programmes of work and also principles that anchor everything we do.

Values matter to us. They set out our expectations of ourselves, each other, as well as the people and the organisations that we work with on your behalf. Our organisational values are:



## Teamwork

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.



## Openness

We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.



## Flexibility

We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.



## Fairness

We provide opportunities for all people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently recognising that we will sometimes need to take positive action to overcome some of the innate challenges faced by people with different protected characteristics.



## Kindness

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

Continued involvement and engagement with Monmouthshire's community groups, public service partners, service users and residents is essential to understand what matters, and to ensure programmes are bold and ambitious.

Our ambition subsequently outlined in the document looks to the long-term and is focused on the well-being of current and future generations. The actions cover the first steps of the journey and will be reviewed alongside the development of the council's new medium-term financial plan to make sure that our spending follows clear priorities.

## We will use the Marmot Principles to inform our approach to becoming a healthier, more equal and greener county. This means:

- giving every child the best start in life
- enabling all children, young people and adults to maximize their capabilities and have control over their lives
- creating fair employment and good work for all
- ensuring a healthy standard of living for all
- creating and developing sustainable places and communities
- strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention
- tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes
- pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

There is more about this later in the plan.

# Developing the Plan

Our motivation is to make Monmouthshire a fairer, greener place where all our people and communities are empowered, safe and respected. Our organisation, and our county, are facing some big challenges and we need to ensure our that our understanding of well-being in the county remains up-to-date and current to inform our priorities. To meet our ambition we need clear priorities that can be delivered within the confines of a balanced budget and financial plan.

We began by gathering a wide range of information to help us understand the issues that are most important to people. We have developed our understanding of our places and the people who live here through assessments and research.

We then held a series of Cabinet member led collaborative workshops, which reviewed the evidence and involved a range of representatives with an interest in Monmouthshire and expertise including; Council staff, elected members, partners and external experts/ community members with knowledge and lived experience to develop the strategic direction, main outcomes and priorities for the corporate plan.

We have also worked with our partners on the Gwent Public Service Board in becoming a region committed to being a healthier, greener and more equal region. This means putting these things are the centre of developing all of our approaches including education, transport, housing, places and spaces, and the economy.

These actions have informed the way we have set our objectives for Monmouthshire. For each objective we have identified the issues we face, what the evidence is telling us and what we want to achieve to deliver them.

Further information on the process we undertook to develop the plan is in Appendix 2.

## Our Objectives

We have established a clear purpose to:

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

To deliver our purpose the objectives we set ourselves are for Monmouthshire to be a:

- **Fair place to live** where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- **Green place to live** and work with reduced carbon emissions, making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- **Thriving and ambitious place**, full of hope and enterprise;
- **Safe place** to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure;
- **Connected place** where people feel part of a community, are valued and connected to others;
- **Learning place** where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.





# Our Community and Corporate Plan – at a glance

## OUR PURPOSE

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

## OUR OBJECTIVES

### Fair place



to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced

### Green place



to live and work with reduced carbon emissions, making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency

### Thriving and ambitious place



full of hope and enterprise

### Safe place



to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure

### Connected place



where people feel part of a community, are valued and connected to others

### Learning place



where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

## OUR VALUES



Teamwork



Openness



Fairness



Flexibility



Kindness

## OUR OBJECTIVES

## A Fair Place to Live

Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count. We will work with our partners and you to improve the ways we tackle poverty and inequality, always seeking to include people with lived experience.

**The issue we face**

The Covid-19 pandemic was not just a health crisis but an inequality crisis, reinforcing and exacerbating inequalities that already existed. Having started to move into recovery and out of the pandemic, residents have now been faced with another crisis - an economic shock felt all around the UK.

Poverty is experienced by many groups with in-work poverty becoming increasingly prevalent as household struggle with rising inflation and higher living costs. In Wales currently, 28% of people are behind on a bill or payment, with this most likely being council tax, water or energy bills.<sup>1</sup>

Within Monmouthshire poverty is dispersed across the county and there are areas of poverty situated amongst affluence. Poverty affects different groups in different ways.

Women are at the centre of the cost-of-living crisis, often due to the strong link between caring responsibilities and financial insecurity. Women who experience intersecting discrimination, including disabled women, ethnic minority women, trans women, and women with no recourse to public funds, are being hit hardest by rising costs. Even before the pandemic and cost of living crisis, women were more likely to be in low-paid jobs, at a higher risk of poverty and food insecurity and had fewer savings and more debts than men. These inequalities have increased during the pandemic.

Monmouthshire has always welcomed refugees and we have seen the arrival of over a hundred families from Ukraine since the outbreak of the war. This has been possible thanks to the generosity of local people who have opened up their homes and provided support. However, there will be challenges providing housing and longer-term support to this group, other refugees and the share of asylum seekers entering the UK who will end up in the county.

Welsh Government defines poverty in three dimensions: access to income; access to services and the ability to participate in social, leisure and cultural activities and decision-making. As a council, we don't have direct control over residents' incomes, but we can, for example, re-direct discretionary fund cost of living payments to those on the lowest incomes and ensure that people get the maximum financial support and benefits that they are entitled to by providing strong, timely advice, thus increasing their incomes. We can also improve access to services, and increase participation in decision-making, as well providing social or leisure opportunities to families. We should also be able to intervene to reduce loneliness and help families thrive.

*Monmouthshire has always welcomed refugees and we have seen the arrival of over a hundred families from Ukraine since the outbreak of the war.*

<sup>1</sup> Running on empty: why we need reform in the cost-of-living crisis | WCPP



## Improved access to advice and benefits for people on low incomes

More than £15 Billion of benefits go unclaimed in the UK each year. Figures are not available locally but based on population size this could mean over £20 million of unclaimed benefits in Monmouthshire. As a result many people are needlessly struggling when support is available to them. We will provide timely, accessible high-quality debt advice on what benefits people are entitled to as well as providing financial support to organisations like Citizens Advice Monmouthshire.

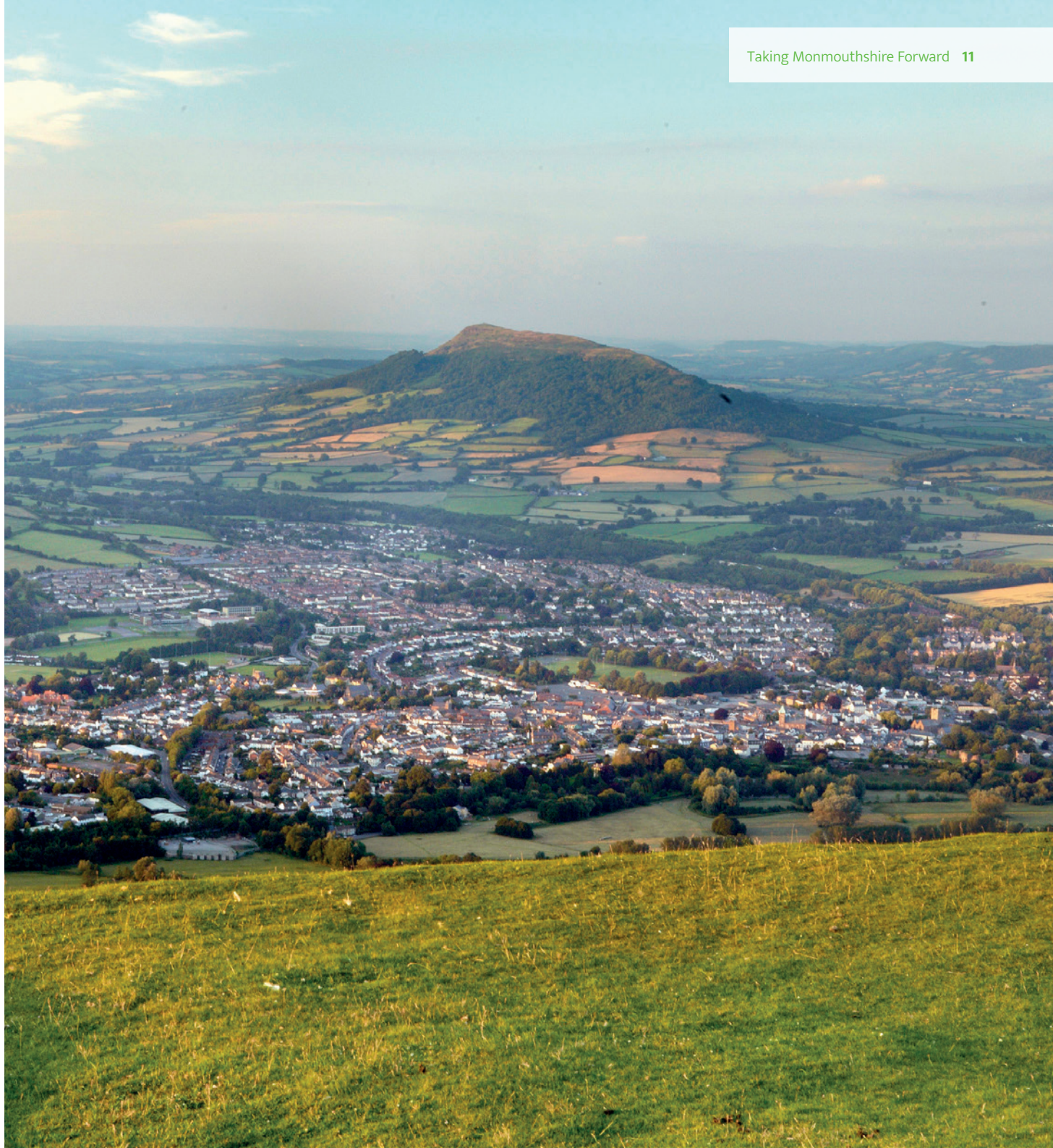
We also see poverty via the three-pronged approach and our interventions and work over the next five years, building on the previous Social Justice Strategy and Poverty Action Plan, will reflect that. Our aims are to increase peoples' access to income, increase their access to services and enable them to more fully participate in society.

## What the evidence tells us

More and more people are falling into poverty with inflation going up quicker than incomes. Fuel and energy costs have risen significantly in 2022 and the Resolution Foundation has estimated that to afford the increase in energy bills forecast in January-March 2023, the poorest fifth of households will have to cut back 24% of non-essential spending.

Data shows that 23.4% of children in Monmouthshire live in poverty<sup>2</sup>, 9,500 households earn below 60% of the GB median income and 10% of people are living in households in material deprivation. However, poverty is

<sup>2</sup> End Child Poverty - Campaigning for an end to child poverty







not simply a lack of income. It is also an inability to participate in experiences and in decision-making, and a lack of ability to access services. Other evidence shows that:

- Across Wales 46% of single parent households are in poverty – twice as high as the overall poverty rate in Wales at 23%.
- 86% of single parents in Wales are women
- The house price to earnings ratio is 9:1 means it is very difficult to get a house in Monmouthshire. There are more than 2,200 people in need on the waiting list for social housing and there is a shortage of private rental properties available

As well as the research evidence cited above, we convened a workshop including community groups, agencies and councillors from all political groups so we could identify gaps, priorities and success stories. The group identified that much excellent work is already

going on at MCC, from the Community Development team, the housing team as well as in our schools. In fact we found that in almost every sphere of the council's work, poverty and inequality can be reduced if our actions are focused on that. Our challenge, therefore, is to ensure that there is a strategic approach and all our actions lead to a reduction in inequality and poverty in the next five years.

Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count. We will work with our partners to improve the ways we tackle poverty and inequality, always seeking to include people with lived experience.

A more detailed table of evidence is contained later in this document. Regular reports will be published showing progress against these to enable the authority to be held to account for delivery.

*Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count.*

### Universal Free School Meals for Primary Pupils

The Welsh Government announced in June 2022 all primary schools would have universal free school meals by 2024. A recent study by Sustain showed that every £1 invested in universal school meals now could deliver a return of £1.71 - or £41.3 billion over 20 years - as a result of improved educational attainment, health and wellbeing, and wider economic contribution.

The benefits of free school meals are three-fold:

- Boosts attainment and attendance, and increases a child's lifetime earnings
- Improves food security and helps families save on food costs
- Improves diet quality and helps combat childhood obesity, saving the NHS money in the long term

Before this funding became available 1,747 pupils in Monmouthshire primary schools had free school meals. The roll-out to further pupils started in September 2022 beginning with reception, year 1 and year 2. This will increase attendance and attainment and reduce stigma. School holiday provision will also be implemented.



What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
Improved life chances for people regardless of income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement universal free school meals for all primary school children with support in the school holidays for those who need it</li> <li>• Ensure access to advice services so that people get the maximum financial support they are entitled to</li> <li>• Support children, young people and families through provision of free or low-cost activities through MonLife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children receiving free school meals</li> <li>• Percentage of children living in low-income households</li> <li>• Amount of additional income generated for families</li> <li>• Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</li> </ul>
All residents have access to the services and support they need to live a healthy life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners across the Public Services Board to provide mental health support and well-being services</li> <li>• Provide employment support advice to help people find jobs</li> <li>• Ensure targeted support to people who need additional services</li> <li>• Promote healthier lives and increased physical activity through the provision of sports and leisure facilities and access to open spaces under the MonLife brand</li> <li>• Provide pathways to positive lifestyle and exercise choices through referrals to the exercise referral scheme</li> <li>• Work with partners to reduce food insecurity and help people access places to keep warm in winter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of households given financial support by the Housing Gateway</li> <li>• Number of people successfully supported to find jobs</li> <li>• Percentage of care experienced young people who have completed at least 3 months in education, training or employment</li> <li>• Percentage of people eating 5 or more fruit and veg each day</li> <li>• Percentage of people successfully completing the exercise referral scheme at week 16</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</li> </ul>
A diverse and inclusive workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become a Level 2 accredited Disability Confident Employer</li> <li>• Work with local employers across the county to encourage take up of the Disability Confident pledge</li> <li>• Ensure that we play our part in delivering the Race Equality Action Plan for Wales; The Disability Action Plan; the LGBTQ+ action and Gender Equality plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability confident level 2 status attained</li> <li>• Difference in average pay between men and women working in the county</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</li> </ul>

What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
<p>Citizens should be able to participate in all aspects of life including culture, sport and democracy and have the ability to determine their own futures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a participatory budgeting programme to enable all citizens to have greater influence on how we spend money</li> <li>• Launch and establish a citizens' panel to inform our work</li> <li>• Increase and support the number of people who volunteer</li> <li>• Become an accredited county of sanctuary for those fleeing war and persecution</li> <li>• Provide more opportunities for people to speak and learn Welsh</li> <li>• Support children and young people's voice by promoting the completion of national surveys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area</li> <li>• County of Sanctuary status attained</li> <li>• Number of Welsh speakers i) in the county and ii) employed by the council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</li> </ul>



## OUR OBJECTIVES

# A Green Place to Live

We will work with others in Monmouthshire and beyond to protect the environment, support nature recovery, reduce our carbon emissions and promote the circular economy.

**The issue we face**

We are in a climate and a nature emergency. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirm that:

- Human activity has already made irreversible climate change inevitable,
- This brings severe consequences that we will need to adapt to, and which we will see increasingly in coming years, and
- If we do not take urgent action to mitigate further climate change, we are on a path towards making the planet unliveable for future generations.

At the same time, the Environment Agency have indicated that the biodiversity crisis joins the climate crisis as an existential risk to our survival, with almost a fifth of UK plants threatened with extinction, and a third of British pollinator species in decline. The UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. In Wales, the 2019 State of Nature report confirmed that 30% of wildlife is found in fewer places than it was in 1970 with 1 in 6 species being at risk of extinction.

*The health of our rivers is a particular area of concern. Phosphate targets for the Usk are being failed at a rate of 88% and the Wye at 68%*





### What the evidence tells us

The need for nature recovery in our local area is clear. The Greater Gwent State of Nature report identified 34% of species showing a decline in their numbers, and the Wildlife Trusts 'Bugs Matter' survey identified a 40% decline in flying insects in Gwent since 2004.

The health of our rivers is a particular area of concern. Phosphate targets for the Usk are being failed at a rate of 88% and the Wye at 68% - with algal blooms smothering other life in the rivers, especially in hot weather. The condition of rivers has a direct impact on the species that it provides habitat for – and a Cardiff University study showed a substantive decline in otter populations in 2021 for the first time since the 1970s. The health of our rivers is also impacted by litter, in particular plastics, the horrific extent of which can be seen on riverbanks

and beaches, and with microplastics found in fish and other species, including people.

We declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and our Climate Emergency Action Plan recognises the importance of managing green spaces to reduce energy use, absorb carbon and be resilient. When the plan was updated in 2021, the emphasis on nature recovery was strengthened, in recognition of the nature emergency, and an action on addressing water quality was added. We have also recently declared a motion for the rivers and ocean which contains an action plan setting out how we can play our part in realising clean, healthy and productive rivers and oceans, and also how we will work with a wide range of partners and organisations such as Natural Resources Wales and Dŵr Cymru to improve the health of our rivers.

Our workshops made us aware that our aims can only be achieved by working effectively with our residents, businesses and community groups – whether this is in relation to litter, circular economy, re-use, repair and recycling, maximising the use of local produce, sustainable farming practices or the modal shift away from car usage. We need now to build upon the start we have made to address these issues, integrating climate and nature protection into everything that we do, and working with the expertise and energy in our communities, to build a nature-positive response to the challenges we are facing.

A more detailed table of evidence is contained later in this document. Regular reports will be published showing progress against these to enable the authority to be held to account for delivery.



What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem resilience is embedded within decision making at all levels</li> <li>• Maintain and expand Nature Isn't Neat approach and increase community and partner engagement and participation</li> <li>• Work with other local councils, partners and landowners to achieve catchment wide improvements to river quality</li> <li>• Work with partners to support landscape scale action to improve ecosystem resilience and tackle key pressures on species and habitats</li> <li>• Work with partners to promote natural flood alleviation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of land covered by Nature isn't Neat</li> <li>• Demonstrate that we are an active participant in Wye and Usk River Catchment Partnership and Living Levels Partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment</li> </ul>
Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote community access to land for growing food</li> <li>• Support initiatives to help farmers to increase carbon sequestration and adopt sustainable and regenerative farming practices</li> <li>• Work with Welsh Government and The WLGA to capture data on carbon sequestration through sustainable farming scheme</li> <li>• Increase the use of local produce in council services</li> <li>• Promote benefits of local food and reduction in edible food waste to Monmouthshire communities</li> <li>• Work with Food Monmouthshire - the county's sustainable food partnership, suppliers, processors and logistics to support the development of the local supply chain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of land used for allotments or community growing</li> <li>• Quantity of edible food waste in domestic waste stream</li> <li>• New strategies and policies approved by Cabinet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment</li> </ul>

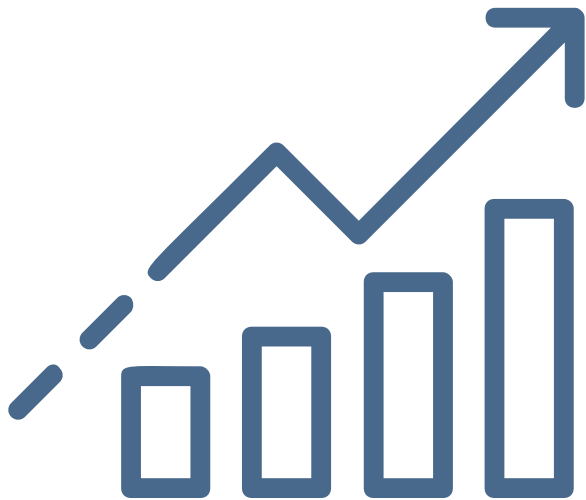


What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
<p>Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the carbon emissions generated from the council's properties</li> <li>• Increase renewable energy generation from council land and buildings</li> <li>• Ensure that our procurement and commissioning processes focus on carbon reduction at each stage of the procurement cycle</li> <li>• Reduce carbon emissions from Council fleet vehicles and staff commuting</li> <li>• Improve walking and cycle routes and integrate with the public transport network. Improve local bus network and work with Transport for Wales to improve local rail network</li> <li>• Expand access to electric charging infrastructure, to support switch to low emissions vehicles</li> <li>• Support residents and businesses to reduce waste and maximise use of low carbon energy sources</li> <li>• Support communities to reuse and repair items through initiatives such as reuse shops, Benthys and Repair Cafes</li> <li>• Reduce use of single use items such as plastics in Council operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon emissions (kgCO<sub>2</sub>e) from the Council's assets and operations</li> <li>• Carbon emissions per capita for Monmouthshire residents</li> <li>• Local Transport Plan supporting modal shift is produced</li> <li>• Number of bus and rail passengers</li> <li>• Number of active travel routes i) in place ii) in development</li> <li>• Residual household waste produced per person</li> <li>• Percentage of municipal waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment</li> </ul>

## OUR OBJECTIVES

# A Thriving and Ambitious Place

We will work with national, regional and local partners to increase investment, improve connectivity and enable an economy which is thriving, ambitious and enterprising. It will achieve success through serving the interests of all our people and communities, increasing equality and matching economic activity with a lower carbon footprint.



### The issues we face

Monmouthshire has significant economic advantages. It is located near growing cities such as Bristol and Cardiff and needs to maximise the gains from this close proximity. Monmouthshire is distinguished by the quality of its towns and landscape and this is the basis upon which it can attract investment, skilled labour and visitors. There are many successful businesses in the County who value their location and their relationship with the County Council and whose growth needs to be accommodated.

The vibrancy of our towns is pivotal to our future success, but they continue to be threatened by economic recession, changing patterns of retail and the aftermath

of Covid. Our towns will need constant and creative re-imagining to retain their role as motors of our county's economy and a visitor attraction. They must also continue to be exciting places for social interaction.

Public transport networks within the county are weak. The bus services that link our towns and the more rural settlements have diminished and struggle to serve the purpose of assisting people into employment and the amenities in our towns. The rail network between the county and its surrounding cities suffers from inadequate frequency and high fares. The result is an over-reliance on car transport and this leads to congestion and contributes to carbon emissions and air pollution.



## The Replacement Local Development Plan

The Replacement Local Development Plan will set out land use proposals for the county, identify how much new development will take place to 2033 and where this will be located.

The plan will the Council's objectives and address the core issues of delivering essential affordable homes at pace and scale, responding to the climate and nature emergency by delivering net zero carbon ready new homes in exemplar places, and ensuring our communities are socially and economically sustainable by attracting and retaining younger people to rebalance our ageing demographic. It will also identify areas to be protected from development and provide policies against which future planning applications will be assessed.

### What the evidence tells us

Monmouthshire has an above average employment rate of 78.4%, significantly higher than the rest of Wales (73.7%) and the UK (75.5%). We have the second highest number of active enterprises per 10,000 population in Wales at 739, just behind Powys. In 2021, 91.6% of enterprises in Monmouthshire employed fewer than 10 people compared to a Wales average of 89.5%. Gross value added per head in Monmouthshire is the seventh highest in Wales.

Around 3,119 people were employed in the tourism sector in 2019 (pre-Covid), circa 8% of the total number of jobs in the county with 2.28M visitors. In 2021, tourism generated an economic impact to our local economy of £183M compared with £245M in 2019.

Sustainable, accessible active travel infrastructure and

public transport remains a key priority to support our communities to access services without a reliance on private vehicles. We have been successful in attracting £4.1M of grant funding for 2022/23 to develop active travel networks across the County and are working with partners such as Transport for Wales and Welsh Government to develop integrated solutions including walking and cycling routes to train stations.

19.5% of the total area of industrial and business sites identified in our most recent Local Development Plan was available for development in 2021. Nevertheless, potential investors continue to refer to a lack of land and a recent Employment Land Review suggests issues with a lack of readily available units for potential businesses to move into and lack of space for existing businesses to expand into. The replacement LDP (RLDP), expected to be adopted in summer 2025, will set out the planning policy framework to enable the provision of approximately 6,240 additional jobs by allocating 38ha of employment land and by including policies to facilitate economic growth. The RLDP will be supported by an Economic Development Strategy, expected to be adopted in summer 2025.

Monmouthshire has an ageing population with a lower proportion of working age people than other areas. The replacement Local Development Plan needs to provide housing that meets the needs of a younger population, with more affordable homes, including more social housing for rent. By working with further and higher education providers to enhance their offer we can encourage more young people to live in Monmouthshire.

There is poor connectivity within Monmouthshire and between our towns and the surrounding cities of Bristol, Bath, Newport and Cardiff. Train and bus services are too infrequent to allow effective connections between the

places where we live and work. We have been successful in attracting £4.1M of grant funding for 2022/23 to develop active travel networks across the County and are working with partners such as Transport for Wales and Welsh Government to develop integrated solutions including walking and cycling routes to train stations. There remains heavy reliance on cars to achieve movement within the county and to the surrounding cities – and this is not sustainable. For some people, agile working from home or from local hubs can reduce the need to travel, but broadband provision is poor in some areas.

*There is poor connectivity within Monmouthshire and between our towns and the surrounding cities of Bristol, Bath, Newport and Cardiff.*





What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
<p>Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reshape and redevelop town centres so that they balance retail with diverse economic activity</li> <li>• Support the amenities, events and experiences that attract people to our towns</li> <li>• Work with property owners and landlords to minimise town centre vacancies</li> <li>• Ensure town centres are accessible via active travel by developing routes up to 3 miles where the key destinations focuses on travel to; schools, town centres, key employment sites, bus and rail stations.</li> <li>• Maintain a sustainable and accessible public bus network (including community transport) that serves our town centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town centre footfall</li> <li>• Number/percentage of vacant town centre premises</li> <li>• Number of tourists visiting the county and income generated by tourism</li> <li>• Use of data to track levels of Active Travel at identified locations</li> <li>• Number of passenger journeys on Grass Routes buses</li> <li>• Number of people using Monmouthshire towns railway stations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy</li> <li>• Active Travel actions &amp; measures: Cabinet Member for Inclusive &amp; Active Communities</li> <li>• Passenger Transport &amp; car park actions &amp; measures: Cabinet Member for Climate Change &amp; the Environment</li> </ul>
<p>People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop better links with further and higher education</li> <li>• Provide more support for people who wish to start their own businesses in the county</li> <li>• Encourage innovation and clustering in sectors such as food</li> <li>• Reduce labour shortages in sectors such as care and construction</li> <li>• Encourage and promote skills to support the transition towards a low carbon economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of start-up businesses assisted</li> <li>• Number of working age population supported into employment</li> <li>• Grass disposable household income per head</li> <li>• Number of school leavers not in education, employment or training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy</li> </ul>

What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop active travel routes that encourage people to walk and cycle to towns, schools and local key destinations including ensuring that Replacement Local Development Plan sites are well-connected</li> <li>• Promote the circular economy by growing our network of re-use shops, repair cafes and libraries of things</li> <li>• Invest in additional active travel routes, better bus infrastructure and work with partners to enhance the local railway system</li> <li>• Work with partners to increase the frequency of train services, creating a 'metro' that links Monmouthshire to Bristol, Newport and Cardiff</li> <li>• Work with partners to increase the frequency of the buses that link our towns with neighbouring villages</li> <li>• Develop a county wide digital technology that matches those who need to travel with those who have car spaces</li> <li>• Adopt a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) for the period 2018-2033, which will make provision for approximately 5,940 homes* (including 1,850 affordable homes) and approximately 38 hectares of employment land (B use classes).'</li> <li>• Maintain and improve key highways infrastructure including roads, pavements and bridges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of active travel routes created or enhanced</li> <li>• Number of rail and bus passengers</li> <li>• Number of car journeys shared</li> <li>• Number of new homes and affordable homes built</li> <li>• Number of bus services at railway stations</li> <li>• Number of electric buses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities;</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy;</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Climate Change &amp; the Environment</li> <li>• Active Travel actions &amp; measures: Cabinet member for Inclusive &amp; Active Communities</li> <li>• Passenger Transport actions &amp; measures: Cabinet Member for Climate Change &amp; the Environment</li> </ul>

## OUR OBJECTIVES

# A Safe Place to Live

We will work with partners to prevent homelessness, increase the availability of good quality affordable housing and promote approaches to help homeowners to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions



## The issue we face

House prices across the UK have been steadily rising and Monmouthshire is no exception. House prices here are the highest in Wales, and the ratio of workplace-based earnings to house prices is also the highest in Wales, making it extremely hard for those living and working in the county. This problem also results in many people needing to move out of the area, causing knock on negative effects for the local economy and longer-term viability of our communities. These high house prices, paired with limited availability of privately rented properties has led to a significant increase in demand for affordable housing, a demand that we are unable to fulfil due to limited availability of development land, phosphate issues in the north of the county which has led to development being put on hold, and lack of 'ready to go' sites coming forward in the south of the county.

The cost of living, including rising energy prices, increasing inflation and rising interest rates which increase mortgage and borrowing costs risk adding additional financial pressures to households and limit the affordability of housing. This is impacting on households in the county, particularly those on lower incomes.

Carbon emissions from homes are a significant part of the county's carbon footprint. Improving the energy efficiency of homes in Monmouthshire will not only help to reduce our carbon footprint, but it will also help to alleviate fuel poverty, something that is likely to be experienced by more households given the current economic climate. We will ensure that homeowners have access to tailored advice to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions and ensure that eligible

Monmouthshire residents are able to take advantage of funded improvements through national and regional schemes.

Recent changes to Welsh Government policy have also meant that local authorities now hold more responsibility than before in ensuring homelessness becomes rare, brief and unrepeatable, which has resulted in a significant increase in pressure on our Housing Options Team to provide temporary and permanent accommodation to homeless households. There is a limited supply of suitable accommodation available due to accommodation being at capacity, limited homeless placements and decreasing privately rented properties, and demand is continuing to grow.

## Rapid Rehousing

Monmouthshire is experiencing unprecedented numbers of people in temporary accommodation as we grapple with a shortage of affordable housing. We will be using a rapid rehousing approach to prevent homelessness reoccurring and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

Rapid Rehousing is an internationally recognised approach which ensures that anyone experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.



## What the evidence tells us

Average house prices in Monmouthshire are the highest in Wales at £373k. This is significantly higher than the Wales average of £224k and the UK average of £295k. Overall prices rose 35% between 2016 and 2021, with a jump of £23k in average house prices between September 2020 and June 2021 alone, likely due to greater demand for houses in rural areas following increased ability to work from home as a result of the pandemic. The ratio of house prices to earnings is also the highest in Wales with average house prices at around 10 times workplace-based earnings, compared to the Wales average of 6.5 times. Monmouthshire's high house prices make it extremely difficult to live and work locally, creating problems for young people, leading many to move out of the county.

In addition to high house prices, there are limited privately rented properties available in Monmouthshire. Studies suggest that the rental properties available reduced by almost 50% between 2010 and 2019, with prices increasing by 25% for Monmouthshire as a whole. The private rental market is highly unlikely to be a viable option for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance or Universal Credit. Our most recent Local Housing Market Assessment found that only 5.75% of privately rented properties in Monmouthshire are affordable to those in receipt of LHA.

Given the limited availability of affordable homes there is no surprise that the demand for social housing has increased. There are currently 4,201 households waiting for social housing, of which 322 are homeless. This is a significant increase on the 2020 figure of 3,500. Our modelling predicts that between 2020-25, over 68% of new households will be priced out of the housing market each year. Alongside this surge in demand there have been limitations in the development of affordable accommodation with our latest Local Development Plan

annual monitoring report noting a shortfall of 302 affordable homes for the period 2011-2021. In the immediate future, it has been estimated that 468 additional affordable homes will be needed per annum up until 2025.

Limited availability of social housing, limited supply of accommodation and rising pressures and costs are all likely to contribute to higher numbers of homeless households in the county. Limitations in development and procurement of affordable homes have naturally led to more homeless households being housed in temporary accommodation. We have seen substantial increases over recent years, especially since the pandemic, with numbers increasing from 18 households at the end of 2019 to 182 in November 2022. The number of households unintentionally homeless and in priority need has increased fivefold from 15 in 2020/21 to 78 in 2021/22.

A prominent issue raised during the workshop was the

*Studies suggest that the rental properties available reduced by almost 50% between 2010 and 2019*

need for wider preventative work through focusing on earlier intervention which would help to alleviate pressure on housing demand and reduce the need for temporary accommodation. A Rapid Rehousing approach to homelessness is currently being developed to transform the delivery of homeless services.

A more detailed table of evidence is contained later in this document. Regular reports will be published showing progress against these to enable the authority to be held to account for delivery.



What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
Increased supply of good quality affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a replacement local development plan with affordable housing and exemplar well-connected net zero carbon ready developments at its heart</li> <li>• Ensure delivery of affordable homes on existing sites with planning permissions</li> <li>• Work with partners to develop homes for social rent on public sector land and bring empty properties back into use</li> <li>• Put in place processes for the Council to buy accommodation to rent out and acquire homes</li> <li>• Explore new ways of constructing homes, such as modular builds that are being used by other councils and identify sites for permanent and temporary housing</li> <li>• Review and update the shared housing allocations policy</li> <li>• Explore feasibility of and opportunities for co-operative and community housing in Monmouthshire</li> <li>• Continue to explore whether the Council should act as developer in addition to working with registered social landlords to bring forward new homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of additional units of affordable housing delivered</li> <li>• Ratio of house prices to earnings</li> <li>• Number of property acquisitions for rental/lease</li> <li>• Percentage of social housing allocated to homelessness households</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities &amp; Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Economy</li> </ul>

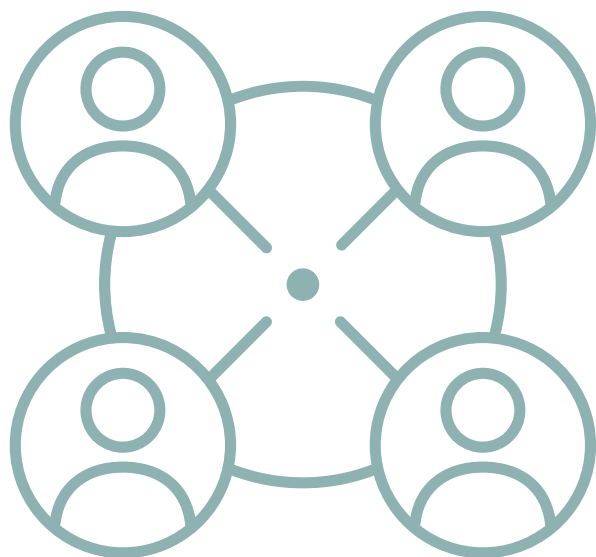
What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
<p>Reduce the number of people who become homeless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a Rapid Rehousing approach to prevent homelessness recurrence and the need for temporary accommodation</li> <li>• Reduce the use of B&amp;B accommodation by acquiring more private leased properties</li> <li>• Eliminate the use of B&amp;B accommodation for households with children and young people</li> <li>• Reduce the use of B&amp;B accommodation to emergency accommodation only and the average time spent in temporary accommodation to under 6 months</li> <li>• Develop a young person's housing action plan</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with social services to avoid care leavers becoming homeless</li> <li>• Work with partners to review how need and the local housing market is changing and respond accordingly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation</li> <li>• Number of additional/new units of homeless accommodation</li> <li>• Percentage of homeless applicants who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless</li> <li>• Number of young people and households with children in B&amp;B accommodation</li> <li>• Number of care experience people who are homeless</li> <li>• Average time homeless households spend in Band 1 with a homeless duty before moving on to settled/permanent accommodation</li> <li>• Number of households moved from temporary accommodation to private leased properties</li> <li>• No. of homeless households moved from temporary accommodation to settled/permanent social housing</li> <li>• Number of households in band 1 with a homeless duty e.g. waiting for social housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities</li> </ul>
<p>A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure access to sources of advice and support for homeowners and landlords to retrofit homes to alleviate fuel poverty, increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions</li> <li>• Establish our energy efficiency baseline for residential properties across the county</li> <li>• Work with partners to maximise the benefits of Ofgem schemes to reduce fuel poverty</li> <li>• Conduct a feasibility study into a purchase-retrofit-rent out approach to bringing empty properties into use as exemplar social homes</li> <li>• Work as a Council and nationally to ensure planning guidance requires carbon zero/A rating/Passivhaus standards for new homes in Monmouthshire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of homes that have a poor/good energy efficiency rating</li> <li>• Average carbon emissions per household in Monmouthshire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities</li> </ul>



What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
<p>Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with police, partners and communities to tackle anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Continue to develop our CCTV network and maintain street lighting</li> <li>• Ensure that schools, police, youth and social services work together and focus on prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling</li> <li>• Rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population</li> <li>• Number of new preventative referrals made to the youth offending service</li> <li>• The proportion of those referred to the youth offending service who subsequently re-offended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Equalities &amp; Engagement</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</li> </ul>

# A Connected Place

We want Monmouthshire to be a place where people feel safe, their contributions are valued, they feel part of a community and are connected to others.



## The issue we face

The health and social care system is facing significant challenges and statutory services are struggling to cope with the volume and complexity of demand. Budgets are contracting and recruiting and retaining key staff is becoming more challenging. This means that people cannot always access the support they need. Modelling shows that the number of those most likely to require publicly funded services will increase relative to the number of economically active people who are able to provide tax revenue.

We recognise that well-being is about far more than treating people when they get sick. There are many factors that can have an impact on our health from the environment, housing, what we do for work, how much we earn, our lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These wider determinants of health, sometimes called the social determinants, can impact in either a positive or negative way on physical and mental health.

## My Mates

My Mates is a group of 345 members who are self-directing and shaping the way people with a learning disability live their best life.

The focus is on non-paid friendships and the creation of close personal relationships that value and promote choice, well-being, education, and independence.

The group have held daily get togethers including: a Christmas ball, Bowling, Nightclubbing, Pubs, Coffee Shops and restaurants.



## What the evidence tells us

Over the past ten years the growth in life expectancy in the UK has stalled following five decades of improvement, this has not been seen in other developed nations. Increasing healthy life expectancy, through increased physical activity and healthier diets could help people to have more years of good health, reducing the demand for social care and health services. At a county level, Monmouthshire residents experience better health than those of neighbouring parts of Wales, but this can often hide inequalities at a local level with the gap in life expectancy between those living in the most and least affluent parts of the county being more than seven years. The area also has an ageing population with 12.1% of the population aged 75 or over which is the highest in the Cardiff Capital Region area.

We recognise the importance of working closely with partners to develop enhanced community and primary care through local Neighbourhood Care Networks or NCNs.

The number of people providing unpaid care is on the increase across the UK. Research shows that carers are providing tens of billions of pounds of unpaid care in the UK. These people are vital and without their efforts the health and social care system would become overwhelmed. Research shows that without carers

Research shows that care leavers, also called care experienced young people, often have much poorer outcomes in adult life than their peers. They are more likely to not be education employment or training and they are more also likely to be homeless. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy and Panel are key opportunities to promote and further the needs and interests of this group.

At our engagement workshops participants stressed the importance of partnership working with statutory bodies and the third sector, the importance of clear communication, good support for carers and making more use of assistive technology and digital solutions.

Other evidence shows that:

- Average healthy life expectancy in Monmouthshire is 64.3 for females and 65.7 for males, both are above the average for Wales and the other local authorities in the Aneurin Bevan Health Board area.
- The gap in life expectancy between those in the most and least deprived areas of the county is 7.4 years for females and 7.8 years for males
- 87% of adults receiving care and support are happy with the services they receive compared to 89% in the previous two years
- The rural nature of Monmouthshire means a large proportion of people will have difficult accessing services with 27% of wards in the bottom decile according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
- 23.4% of children are living in poverty and that access to preventative and early help services targeted at those needing them the most is integral to our ambition to help children get the best start in life
- The numbers of children who are looked after by the Local Authority has risen in recent years and remains at just above the Welsh average at 120 per 10,000 population. There is an even male/female split in the year ending March 2022
- The local authority supports an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Last year there were 60 care leavers between the ages of 16 and 25 who were connecting with the LA for advice and support

A more detailed table of evidence is contained later in this document. Regular reports will be published showing progress against these to enable the authority to be held to account for delivery.



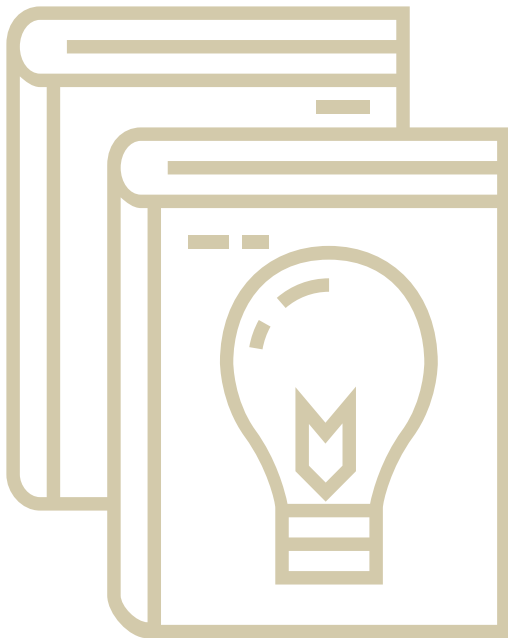


What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
<p>High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to enable people to stay in their own homes and communities wherever possible</li> <li>• Provide early help and preventative services that reduces the likelihood of children and families requiring long-term support</li> <li>• Reduce avoidable hospital admissions and continue to support effective discharge from hospital by facilitating further opportunities for integration between health and social care including increased in-reach into hospital settings.</li> <li>• Expand the number of not-for profit placements for children who are looked after</li> <li>• Increase in county placement options and work with partners to ensure that care will be provided without profit</li> <li>• Continue to ensure that information, advice and assistance is available to provide timely access to social care</li> <li>• Provide a high-quality residential care facility for people with dementia</li> <li>• Expand the availability of carers for those who wish to receive direct payments to arrange their own care and support needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of assessments completed within statutory timescales</li> <li>• Number of children supported to remain living with their family</li> <li>• Number of children who are rehabilitated home after a period of being looked after</li> <li>• Number of children who remain at home following a period on the Child Protection Register</li> <li>• Percentage of families who do not need long term support after Building Stronger Families intervention</li> <li>• Percentage of placements with in-house foster carers</li> <li>• Number of new in-house foster carers recruited</li> <li>• Number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital for social care reasons</li> <li>• Percentage of adult service users who have had the right information or advice when they needed it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</li> </ul>

What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with public sector partners across Gwent to improve the social determinants of health inequality such as; income; health and access to green space</li> <li>• Provide direct care which is flexible and supports people to achieve their personal outcomes</li> <li>• Maintain and develop early help and preventative services for children and families</li> <li>• Promote whole school approaches to support the mental well-being of children and young people</li> <li>• Work in partnership with carers to provide a range of services that are responsive to their needs</li> <li>• Provide a varied range of activities in a safe environment for children, young people and adults to participate in physical activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy life expectancy at birth</li> <li>• Difference in healthy life-expectancy between men and women</li> <li>• Percentage of adult service users who are happy with the care and support they have had</li> <li>• Percentage of people who have had a positive outcome following a period of reablement</li> <li>• Percentage of families reporting a positive outcome following a building stronger families team intervention</li> <li>• Number of carers and young carers supported by the carers team</li> <li>• Number of people attending i) MonGames ii) Food and Fun iii) Active Play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</li> </ul>
A professional and passionate social care workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote social care as a career of choice and find innovative ways of growing recruitment of the best people</li> <li>• Encourage diversity and inclusion within the workforce with representation of more people from different ethnic minorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of job vacancies in social care workforce</li> <li>• Percentage of the workforce from ethnic minority backgrounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</li> </ul>

# A Learning Place

Monmouthshire will be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn; developing the skills and knowledge they will need throughout life to reach their potential.



## The issue we face

The pandemic had a detrimental effect on schools and pupils, with learning moved online or hybrid and many students struggling to adapt to the changes. Since then, schools have reopened, however there is still work to be done to effectively 'catch up' on learning that was missed or delayed. The pandemic also widened the gap for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, especially those with limited access to IT equipment, leading to increased absences and disengagement with schoolwork. Learners with additional needs were also at a disadvantage during the pandemic due to limited access to support. The

mental health and well-being of pupils was consequently affected, with many experiencing heightened feelings of anxiety, loneliness and depression.

The current economic climate we find ourselves in will mean that the cost of sending children to school will increase, putting a strain on many families and posing a risk to mental well-being, meaning those feelings of anxiety are likely to continue, for both pupils and parents. As costs increase and budgets tighten, schools will be under pressure to deliver high quality performance with limited resources, putting a strain on both pupils and teachers.

## Getting Children Back to School

Pupils have suffered an unprecedented disruption to their learning over the past few years as a result of the pandemic. It is vital that we support schools to secure high levels of attendance and minimise levels of persistent absence. We also need to reduce the numbers of home educated pupils through engagement with families and schools to minimise any potential barriers to school experiences.





### What the evidence tells us

Monmouthshire's adult population generally are more qualified, on average, than other counties in Wales. Over half of Monmouthshire's working age population, or 52.6%, are qualified to level NVQ4 and above, compared to 38.6% for Wales and 43.6% for the UK. A much smaller percentage of the population hold no qualifications compared to Wales and the UK; 3.1% of working age adult have no qualifications compared to 8.3% and 6.6% for Wales and the UK, respectively. However, Monmouthshire has the third lowest number of people attending community learning activities in Wales. Continued learning as adults not only contributes to development and increases opportunities, but it can also benefit mental well-being.

Across Wales, the number of pupils persistently absent increased during the pandemic and has remained high at around 10%, compared to less than 3% pre-pandemic. In addition, the attendance gap between pupils eligible for

free school meals and those not was exacerbated by the pandemic, increasing from 6% to 16%. Persistent absence in primary-aged pupils has increased to 5%, compared to 1.6% before the pandemic. Research has found that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people, with many reporting increased feelings of depression.

Something we learned in our workshop was that the strain on mental well-being has continued. The rising costs are causing stress not only to parents who are having to spend more on uniforms and school supplies but also to schools who are facing increased energy and travel costs. Pupils' anxiety levels are also higher now than before the pandemic, stressing the importance of the health and well-being education that will be included in the new curriculum. Another important point made clear in the workshops was that some pupils do not have

access to necessary equipment to access often used platforms, however students felt sure that schools would support them. It is vital that we work closely with schools to bridge the widened gap for disadvantaged learners and to ensure all pupils are able to maximise their potential.

A more detailed table of evidence is contained later in this document. Regular reports will be published showing progress against these to enable the authority to be held to account for delivery.

*Monmouthshire's adult population generally are more qualified, on average, than other counties in Wales.*

What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an approach to inclusion that recognises the challenges brought about by the pandemic</li> <li>• Develop holistic approaches to attendance management focusing on early identification of need to address all barriers to school attendance'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of attendance</li> <li>• Number of exclusions</li> <li>• Engagement of schools in professional learning and resources around Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)</li> <li>• Percentage of young people experiencing an improvement in attendance through the Re-Engage programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Education</li> </ul>
The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a consistent and uniform approach to ensure that excellent teaching and learning is the bedrock of all classroom interactions</li> <li>• Develop a broader 14-19 offer including more collaboration between comprehensive schools and tertiary partners</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities to hear the voice of the learner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of courses available to reflect the needs and interests for 14-19 year olds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Education</li> </ul>
A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners starting points, strengths and educational needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that our provision meets the needs of a wide range of learners including vulnerable groups and those with additional learning needs</li> <li>• Universal provision effectively supports all learners to achieve their potential</li> <li>• Develop a broader educational offer to include both academic and vocational pathways and engage partners from public and private sectors</li> <li>• Develop more support, such as coaching and mentoring for pupils</li> <li>• Ensure those at financial disadvantage have access to IT equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress of vulnerable learners is good.</li> <li>• A good range of appropriate provision to meet the needs of vulnerable learners</li> <li>• Additional Learning Provision (ALP) meets the needs of vulnerable learners in the county and is of good quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Education</li> </ul>

What we want to achieve	Some of the actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is Accountable
A county where people can develop their well-being; be it emotional, mental or physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the affordability and accessibility of adult education courses</li> <li>• Continue to provide a wide range of outdoor experiences and cultural attractions for residents and visitors</li> <li>• Promote healthier lives and increased physical activity through the provision of sports and leisure facilities and open spaces under the MonLife brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of adult learners enrolled</li> <li>• Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week</li> <li>• Percentage of people who attend or participate in arts culture or heritage activities three or more times a year by local authority</li> <li>• Number of schools successfully engaging with the statutory framework for whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Education</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue our programme of school modernisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a new, carbon neutral, 3 – 19 school in Abergavenny</li> <li>• Increase Welsh medium primary school provision including a newly refurbished school on the site of Deri View and the opening of a seedling provision in Monmouth</li> <li>• Develop a strategic review of all schools and their catchments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All measured by attainment of key milestones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Education</li> </ul>



# Our Council

We want to be a council that works effectively for you and gives the best value for money

We need to ensure the Council remains 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.

## Financial Planning

Council's in more affluent areas receive less central government funding than those in poorer areas and as a result, are required to raise more from local sources like Council Tax. As a result, Monmouthshire County Council receives the lowest level of central government grant funding of any local authority in Wales. We have always delivered services within budget while maintaining a prudent level of financial reserves. We've done this by being as efficient as possible, pursuing innovative approaches and acting with a commercial mindset. Graph/spend graphic

This plan has been produced against the backdrop of economic uncertainty. We face rising energy costs, inflation and escalating borrowing costs alongside increased demand pressures in areas such as children's services, adult social care, homelessness, additional learning needs and home to school transport.

Demands on us have grown which means we will need to adjust our practice and do things differently. We will enact our plan with a financially responsible approach so that we deliver the best services within our means as a county. Based on assumptions we have modelled, and pressures in our service area we have identified an unprecedented £23m budget shortfall that needs to be addressed for the 2023/24 financial year. We will develop a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that allows a balanced budget to be set that delivers on our agreed corporate priorities.

## Workforce

We have a good track record of innovation but our challenges are on a scale we have not seen before. We are fortunate to have a passionate and dedicated workforce who deliver a wide range of services and are always open to new ways of working.

Many services are seeing an increase in demand. The workforce capacity to meet this and deliver the required services is limited in some areas, which can also indirectly put increasing pressure on other service areas. We will develop a people strategy to facilitate the organisation to deliver the workforce it needs to meet current and future demands, especially given recruitment and national skill challenges.

## Assets

We have a diverse land and property portfolio, and we need to actively consider how our assets will meet our needs now and in the future. We will develop a new Asset management strategy that aligns to meet our needs and the objectives set out in this plan, this includes, our placemaking agenda, supporting town centre regeneration, carbon reduction plans and future workplace requirements. This will also take account of key challenges including flooding, affordable housing and accommodation for homeless people.

## Digital & Data

In the coming years, the council will need to adjust its delivery to meet many challenges and opportunities. At the heart of this will need to be digital, information and data to deliver services and 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 our residents expect.

## Stakeholders and partnership working

The things we want to do also require collaboration. We deliver the commitments in the plan alongside may partners such as the Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region, Gwent Public Services Board and community and town councils. We will also continue to lean into the expertise and enthusiasm of the many volunteers and community groups that make this county so special.

## Procurement

Our new socially responsible procurement strategy will be vital in making sure our budgets are used effectively to deliver our priorities, reduce carbon, while delivering community benefits and social value. We will strive to maintain quality and promote equality across our services and will begin to use gender responsive budgeting to ensure an equitable use of our resources

## Participation and Engagement

The contemporary policy challenges that we need to meet, working with our communities, are complex and evolving. We need to ensure that our understanding the county remains up-to-date and current to inform our priorities. We will develop a public participation strategy focussed on involvement and engagement with Monmouthshire's community groups, public service partners, service users and residents to understand what matters, how well we are currently doing and to ensure programmes are bold and ambitious.

Our approach will continue to be people focused and in line with our purpose, principles and priorities to ensure that Monmouthshire continues to be a place that you are proud to call home.

## Customer Services

We aspire to be a council that is council responsive to the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. During the first 12 months of this plan we will review our customer service channels (online, phone and in person) to ensure that all enquiries get a prompt response and are dealt with by the most appropriate person.

# Monitoring and evaluating our plan

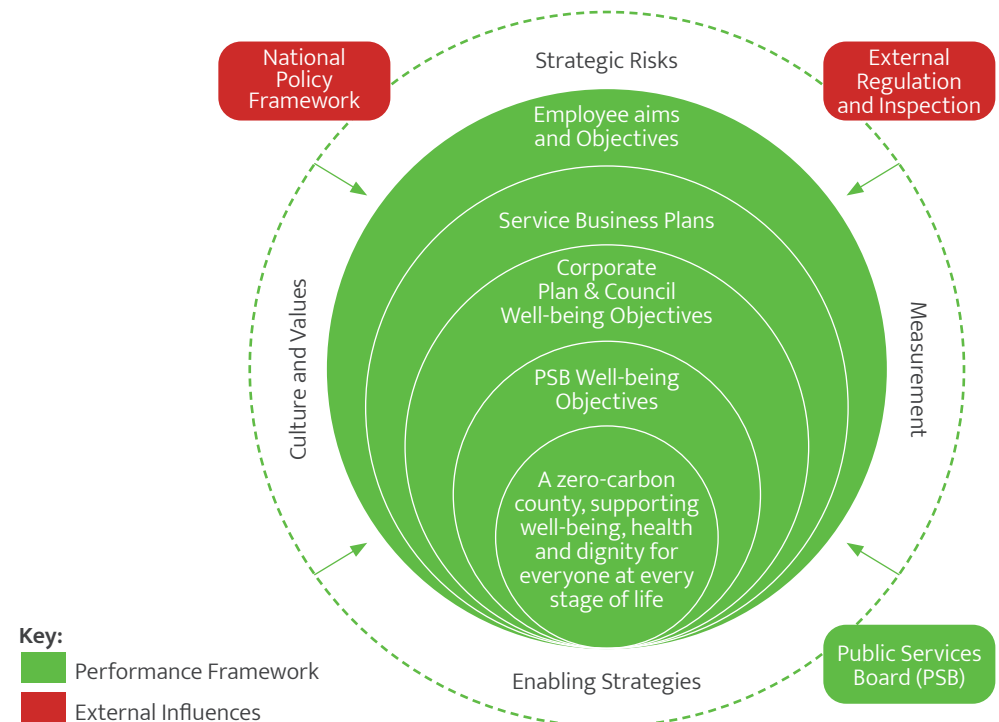
The Community and Corporate Plan sits at the heart of our performance management framework. This ensures there is a shared understanding of what needs to be achieved and makes sure that it happens. All other plans will be built from the Community and Corporate Plan. These include the high-level enabling strategies that form the council's policy framework and the strategic plans that provide the detail that brings this strategy to life.

We are a partner in the Public Service Board, which is responsible for setting well-being objectives for Gwent and the county. The council's own well-being objectives are set by Council and form the backbone of the Community and Corporate Plan. We produce an annual report self-assessing our progress against the objectives. Each of our teams has a service business plan that aligns to deliver these objectives. We have a range of performance measures that we use to keep track of our progress. Our risk management policy enables us to manage strategic risks to our delivery. Our employee aims and objectives show the contributions that individual colleagues make to these objectives and delivering our vision in accordance with our values.

Underpinning our performance management framework is a suite of measures that enable us to understand how well processes are working and more importantly to track progress against the things that matter.

Each objective identifies some of the measures we will use to evaluate our progress. The Measurement framework provided in appendix 3. Provides the mechanisms we will use to monitor these.

When we are dealing with complex issues it isn't always easy to measure progress quarterly or annually in a single number. In the plan we've highlighted some of the more accessible metrics and milestones but behind all major programmes of activity we have a separate project plan or service business plans that describe the specific actions we will be working on to deliver the objectives. We will use these alongside a range of other evidence to self-assess our progress through an annual self-assessment report. This will clearly identify How well are we doing, how do we know? (The evidence we have used) and what and how can we do better?

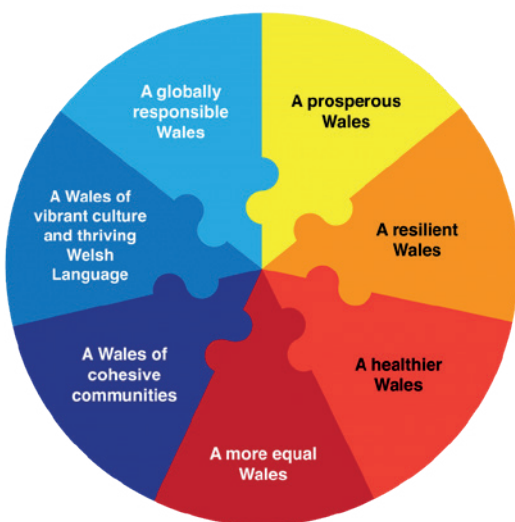




# Appendix - National Policy

## The Well-Being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act is the fundamental legislation that requires us to carry out sustainable development, this should ensure that present needs are met without compromising future generations in meeting their own needs. When carrying out sustainable development, we have to publish well-being objectives which are designed to maximise our contribution to achieving each of the seven national wellbeing goals and take all reasonable steps to meet the objectives. The seven wellbeing goals are shown in the diagram below while our own well-being goals are incorporated within this plan.



The contribution our local objectives make towards the seven national objectives has been assessed and is shown in the table below

Contribution of Council Well-being Objectives to National Well-being Goals

MCC Well-being Objectives	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
Fair place to live 	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Green place to live 		✓	✓		✓		✓
Thriving and ambitious place 	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe place to live 		✓		✓	✓		✓
Connected place 			✓	✓	✓		
Learning place 	✓		✓	✓		✓	

In planning our services and taking action to meet our well-being objectives we must consider, but also demonstrate that we have applied, the following sustainable governance principles in our decision-making:

### **Balancing short term needs with long term needs**

Through the plan the priorities and actions agreed are forward looking and aim to have a positive long-term impact. The focus on reducing carbon emissions and the health of biodiversity and the environment is incredibly important in fighting the effects of climate change which will be around for many years to come. Increasing the energy efficiency of homes is also important to alleviating fuel poverty in the short-term but also has a positive long-term contribution in the form of reduced carbon emissions

### **Using an integrated approach, balancing social, economic and environmental needs.**

The Council works closely with business, communities and partners to deliver its goals. The seven wellbeing goals are central to the Council's goals and run throughout everything that we do. The table above highlights which of the objectives impacts on each of the seven national wellbeing goals. How what we want to achieve in the community and corporate plan integrate with each other is set out below. The Council will work together with other partners to help deliver many aspects of the objectives.

### **Involving others and considering their views.**

A range of information has been used to inform the development of the plan and workshops held with a range of those with an interest in the County. Monmouthshire aims to involve community members wherever possible. For example working with landlords and property owners to minimise town centre vacancies and setting out plans to maximise opportunities to hear the voices of learners in schools to ensure that the new curriculum is working for them.

### **Working in collaboration with others.**

Collaboration is important to Monmouthshire County Council and can be seen within every goal. The council looks to work with public service partners across Gwent to improve social determinants of health; work with partners to ensure that all homes have good digital connectivity; work with partners to ensure people are able to stay in their own homes and communities wherever possible; and to create better links with further and higher education.

### **Putting resources into preventing problems**

The plan has a strong focus on prevention, with resources going into preventing problems occurring or getting worse. There is a focus in social care services on trying to prevent crisis and that avoidable hospital admissions are reduced and also setting out to maintain and develop early and preventative services for children and families.

The table below illustrates how what we want to achieve in the plan integrates with other commitments.

[illegible]



# The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

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 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 mechanism for a council uses 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 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.

## **Equality and diversity**

All the current decisions made by the council and its cabinet are assessed using an Integrated Impact Assessment which ensures equality and sustainable development are considered fully in the decisions we take.

The council has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. We have a Strategic Equality Plan, produced under the Equality Act 2010, which sets the council’s objectives to ensure we deliver better outcomes for people with protected characteristics. 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](#).

## **Socio-Economic Duty**

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions. Almost any decision the Council makes has some socio-economic impact. This is because of the nature of our responsibilities and the extent to which some groups, communities and vulnerable people rely on public services. Our aim is to properly understand this impact so that we can identify how we can maximise our support, where possible, and try to minimise any negative impact on people in greatest need.

## **The Welsh Language**

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. We have a Welsh Language Strategy for 2022-2027, 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 - Developing the Plan

## Identifying the evidence

We began by gathering a wide range of information to understand the issues that are most important to people. We have developed our 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). We also utilised a range of existing sources of information and knowledge including our whole authority self-assessment, cabinet priorities and engagement feedback.

Some of the key issues we identified include:

### Economic

- Monmouthshire has a competitive economy with excellent potential for growth. There is, however, a low rate of business start-ups compared to the capital region and Wales as a whole.
- The house price to earnings ratio in the county makes it difficult for young people and future generations to live and work locally.

### Social

- There are significant income inequalities within communities, with wealth sitting alongside relative poverty on a scale not seen in other parts of Wales.
- We have an ageing population; while this has many advantages, it will create additional pressure on health and social care.
- There are significant differences in life expectancy, and action is required to address health inequalities and ensure that a range of programmes are in place to increase the opportunities people have to live healthy lives
- There are good levels of educational attainment in the county but some groups, such as those eligible for free school meals and vulnerable children, are not achieving at the same level as the wider population and the gap is not narrowing.

### Culture

- The pandemic has reduced visits to cultural attractions that play an important role in well-being, such as museums and theatres, which will affect their viability.
- Monmouthshire enjoys high levels of social capital. Large numbers of people volunteer which helps build connections and is a major contributor to well-being.

### Environment

- The rural nature of Monmouthshire means that transport is a significant contributor to the county's carbon emissions, with some areas also experiencing poor air quality.
- The effects of climate change are becoming apparent in Monmouthshire, particularly flooding, which has impacted many communities in recent years.

## Responding to the evidence

As an organisation we are outward-looking, and focussed on building relationships with formal and informal community groups enabling the council to progress its priorities in collaboration, where appropriate. As part of this we have held a series of Cabinet member led collaborative workshops cabinet member led workshops which reviewed the evidence and involved a range of representatives with an interest in Monmouthshire and expertise to help including; Council staff, elected members, partners and external experts/ community members with knowledge and lived experience to develop the strategic direction, main outcomes and priorities for the corporate plan. In broad terms these workshops focused on:

- A strong, fair and local Economy
- Health and Social Care
- Climate Change and Environment
- Excellent education for life
- Homelessness and housing
- Tackling Inequalities and Poverty

The contemporary policy challenges that we need to meet, working with our communities, are complex and evolving. The plan has been produced against the backdrop of economic uncertainty with the council facing rising energy prices, inflation and escalating borrowing costs alongside increased demands in children's services, adult social care, homelessness, additional learning needs and home to school transport. These challenges are on a scale we have not seen before.

We will also continue to look at future trends to make sure we consider the things that will affect how we work in the longer-term and are able to capitalise on the benefits of emerging technology. These include in areas such as transitioning to net zero, tackling the

determinants of health inequality, making sure our children do well, and social care reform.

Recognising the inequality that exists in our communities the Gwent Public Service Board has agreed to become a 'Marmot' region with the intent to implement this approach to undertake evidence-based action to reduce inequalities in Gwent. This will re-focus and accelerate progress towards reducing the root causes of health and related inequalities across Gwent. As part of this, the PSB is using the eight Marmot Principles as the framework for action to reduce inequalities through its Well-being Plan.

- giving every child the best start in life
- enabling all children, young people and adults to maximize their capabilities and have control over their lives
- creating fair employment and good work for all
- ensuring a healthy standard of living for all
- creating and developing sustainable places and communities
- strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention
- tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes
- pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

As a partner on the Public Service Board we are working with our partners across Gwent and the vastly experienced support of Professor Marmot and the University College London Institute of Health Equity Team to develop actions in response to the challenges faced across Gwent. This work is informing the development of the PSBs Gwent well-being plan and the action we need to take locally in Monmouthshire in our Community and Corporate Plan.

An important part of this approach is working together as public services and as communities, to build on the assets we have and develop the solutions to the long-term challenges we face.