



Caerphilly Council Borough
**Well-being Objective
Report 2023/24**



CAERPHILLY
COUNCIL
CAERFFILI

Team Caerphilly
Better Together

Well-being Objective Report 2023/24

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Well-being Objective Report 2023/24

Section 1: Introduction

We have a five-year Plan 2023-2028 which has five Well-being Objectives. They are:

Well-being Objective 1: Enabling Our Children to Succeed in Education

Well-being Objective 2: Enabling Our Residents to Thrive

Well-being Objective 3: Enabling Our Communities to Thrive

Well-being Objective 4: Enabling Our Economy to Grow

Well-being Objective 5: Enabling Our Environment to be Greener

The Well-being Objectives are how the Council contributes to making the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of our communities better, and they are based on the areas that our communities told us mattered to them and their well-being.

This section describes how we have performed in delivering our Well-being Objectives in the last year of the five-year Plan. Section 3 provides the data on the priority indicators. You can find more detail and background to the Well-being Objectives in the [Corporate Plan 2023-28](#).

We would welcome your feedback and opinions and if there is any further content you would like to know about. You can find contact details at the back of this document on page 43.



Well-being Objective 1:

Enabling Our Children to Succeed in Education

What this will look like:

- We will have built effective leadership to maintain our aspiration for all learners to achieve high standards and make strong progress on their educational journey
- We will have safe and inclusive provision that will support the progress of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners
- We will have improved literacy (English and Welsh), numeracy, digital, physical and wider skills to provide our learners with better life chances
- Learners will have received effective support to ensure that post-16 destinations are appropriate and sustainable
- We will have built new and refurbished schools and settings thereby creating learning environments that engage and inspire

Overall Summary

This year we believe we have made some good progress in the outcomes and our evidence shows we are making **effective** choices to deliver this objective with all 6 of our priority indicators improving (see appendix).

The Education Directorate leadership, supported by colleagues across the council, have a strong vision that encourages all stakeholders to pursue excellence in the interests of all children and young people. This makes an effective contribution to the wider well-being objectives intended to promote better futures for all residents.

We can demonstrate good outcomes for pupils as a product of effective and purposeful relationships with school leaders, the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and other stakeholders. This relationship includes a healthy combination of support and challenge to enable schools and services to further improve.

Between March 2022 and June 2024, Estyn inspected nearly 36 schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in Caerphilly totalling 47% of the profile of education settings. The number of schools that require any form of follow-up is broadly in line with the national picture. Following an Estyn inspection, all schools receive recommendations that are expected to be addressed. Officers work well with schools to provide the appropriate support to address any identified shortcomings. Most schools that are identified as requiring significant improvement or are placed in the category of 'special measures', make rapid progress against specific recommendations.

Six non-maintained settings were also inspected by Estyn during this period. No non-maintained setting required any level of follow-up.

There remains a strong culture of promoting excellent safeguarding practice across the education service with a duty to support all pupils' well-being.

The education service has a robust culture of monitoring, reflection and evaluation of the provision and support that is provided for children and young people. This has resulted in notable improvement over the last twelve months, e.g. pupil attendance, support for Early Years and the implementation of Additional Learning Needs reform. However, further refinements are required to ensure that evaluation leads to improvement across all services, e.g. exclusion rates.

What went well this year and why

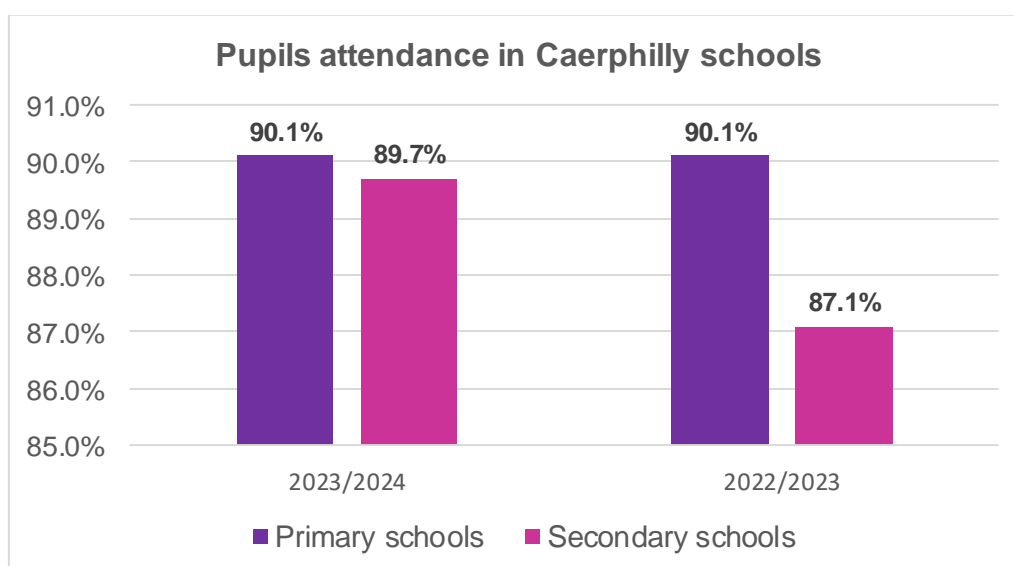
Support for school improvement has delivered positive results for the pupils and young people. The valuable relationships between the local authority and schools have led to productive discussions that have led to appropriate support and challenge.

The strategy for school improvement is clear and effective and based on the following principles:

- Knowing schools well
- Providing early intervention support
- Ensuring schools in difficulty make accelerated progress against recommendations.

As a result of the above, a number of schools in follow-up categories made strong progress and were considered to no longer require further intervention from Estyn.

The local authority's strategy for increasing school attendance has led to an improvement in attendance rates across the majority of indicators. This includes the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals. Activities to improve attendance includes sharing monthly attendance data between schools and working closely with school leaders to support their self-evaluation of attendance and associated planning for improvement. Feedback from schools on the attendance strategy is very positive. Approximately 20 schools have improved attendance above pre-pandemic rates. Rates of persistent absenteeism (90% or below) have reduced slightly over the last two years but remain too high, particularly for pupils eligible for free school meals in secondary schools.



Our mission to mitigate the impact of poverty on education outcomes remains a central concern and priority. Officers have developed new innovative practice to achieve this ambition. For example, the Community Focused Schools team have worked alongside the Sustainable Communities for Learning team to adapt a community room in Idris Davies 3-18 that is used both for learning and as a base for agencies to connect with families. This includes the ‘Multiply’ project, which supports adult’s acquisition of numeracy skills, with the potential for additional accreditation. As part of the Community Focused Schools initiative, some pupils eligible for free school meals can access free music tuition and a wide range of sporting opportunities to help them become more creative and active. This example of innovative practice is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils’ well-being and attendance.

The local authority’s Additional Learning Needs (ALN) service has provided helpful support to schools in adhering to the statutory duties associated with the ALN and the Education Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018. This includes providing a wide range of services that effectively support children and young people with additional learning needs, their families and schools.

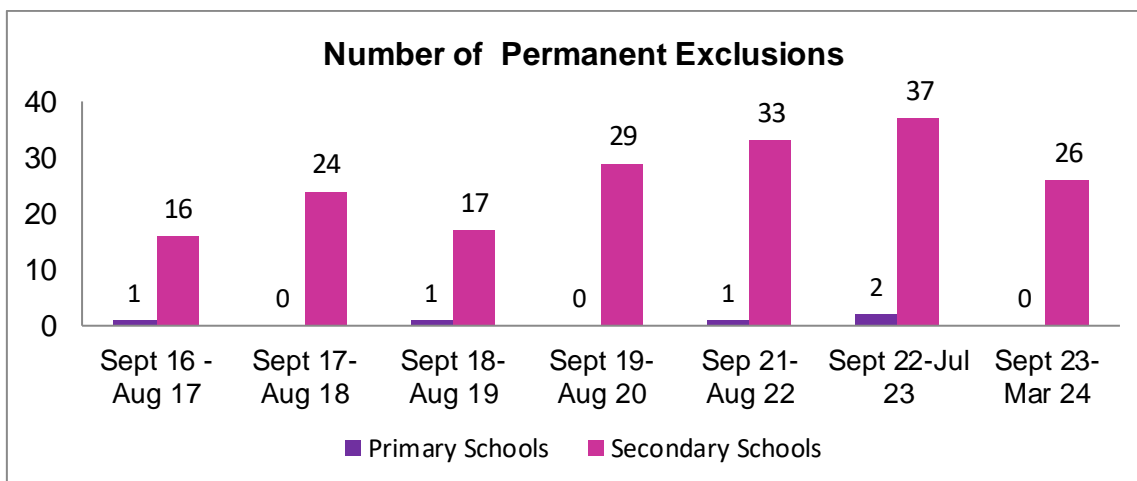
What did not go so well this year and why

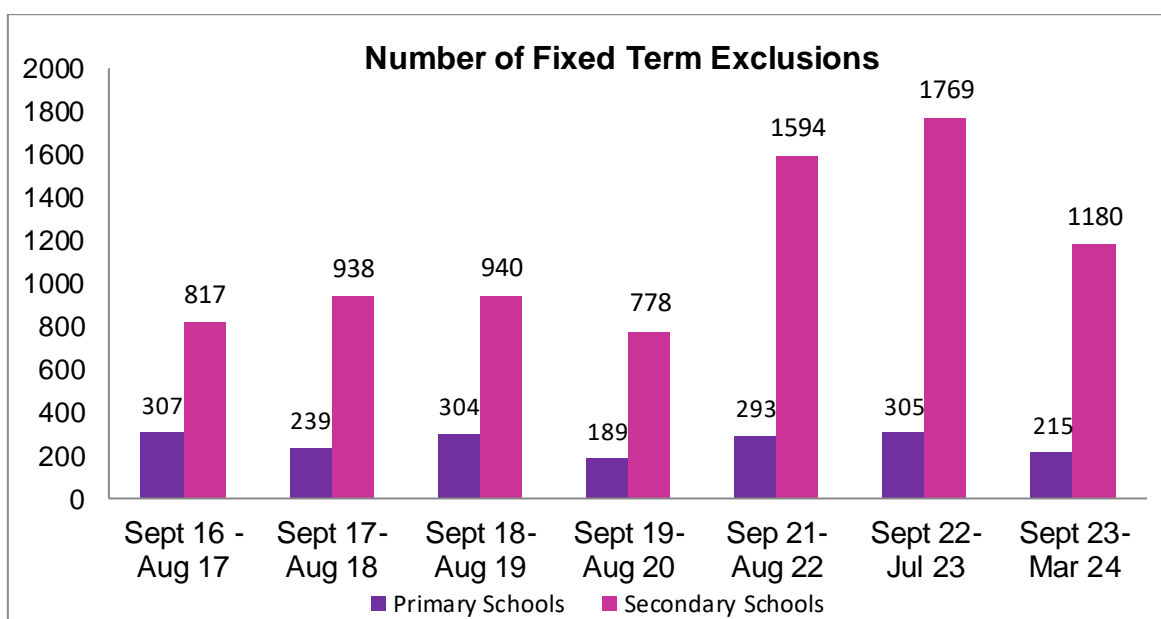
Despite the positive outcomes from the school improvement strategy, there remains a few schools in a follow-up Estyn category. This is currently:

- 1 school in special measures
- 2 schools in significant improvement
- 2 schools in Estyn review.

Therefore, further work is needed to ensure that schools requiring intervention and support are identified earlier and supported to improve. The current middle tier review will evaluate the current school improvement model and consider any additional amendments. The revised model is due to be implemented in September 2025.

Exclusion rates across all indicators remain too high. As an example, rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusions of five days or less have increased across the local authority in recent years. The processes and strategies for reducing rates of exclusions have had limited impact, require review and are identified as the main priority for improvement in 2024-25. This will include strengthening accountability processes for schools and LA education teams.





Improving the work of school governors has also been identified as an area for improvement. Activities to support governing bodies have included providing bespoke courses for clusters of schools and additional guidance on headteacher reports to governors. However, this work remains ongoing and required further development over the next twelve months.

What difference are we making

Our self-evaluation processes take account of a range of quantitative and qualitative data. This has included work alongside peers in other local authorities, in addition to external validation from Estyn and Welsh Government. This evidence demonstrates that we made a difference across a range of measures:

- Pupil attendance across a range of indicators has improved. This is particularly notable for pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The number of young people achieving a national accreditation through the Youth Service has increased significantly
- There has been an increase in the number of young people accessing support through the Youth Service
- Most schools can demonstrate that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Most schools can demonstrate that pupils' acquisition of skills (literacy, numeracy and digital) is good.
- Nearly all schools can demonstrate that provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good.
- Most schools can demonstrate strong support for pupils wellbeing.
- The number of families receiving early intervention support continues to increase with clear data indicating the impact of support.
- Adult education and library services can identify positive levels of engagement with stakeholders accessing appropriate support.

Although the above indicates a range of successes, the education senior leadership team now need to sharpen focus to ensure the outstanding barriers to improvement or upcoming challenges are addressed in a timely manner. These include:

- Implement the findings of the middle tier review to further improve the school improvement strategy.
- Reduce exclusions across all indicators.
- Continue to improve pupil attendance so all schools are above pre-pandemic levels.
- Revisit the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) strategy, with particular emphasis on the Cwmpawd (compass) model,.
- Procure and implement a new education management information system to enhance support for vulnerable pupils.
- Provide support to schools and education service to ensure effective financial management against current budget pressures.

The above areas for improvement will be addressed through the ongoing monitoring and evaluation programme and associated strategic planning. However, further refinement to the directorate performance assessment and risk register will prove a useful tool to quickly evaluate the impact of strategies and make any necessary changes. Amendments to the performance management process (MyTime) will also help senior and middle leaders in education to set targets for improvement and consider progress against the agreed objectives.

Resources to deliver this objective

Education and Lifelong learning have a revenue budget **173m** which includes schools. At the end of financial year 2023/24, the collective balances position for our 86 schools was a surplus of £5.3m. and it's important to note that the balances position will look different for each of our schools. However, there is a risk that our schools will be reporting a deficit balance at the end of the year. Established processes are in place to support schools at this increasingly challenging time for Local Government.

To continue to save costs we are reviewing school improvement, and the outcome of this review will identify how resources across the school improvement team will be remodelled to enable progress

Working within the Mobilising Team Caerphilly model will identify how we can adapt the service, and therefore, improve our efficiency. This will also include support for schools to consider the effectiveness of their own financial management.

Some the activities undertaken by the education team are reliant on grant funding, e.g. the attendance strategy, Community Focused Schools, elective home education. Removal of the grant funding will pose a significant risk to many of the ongoing activities across the directorate.



Well-being Objective 2:

Enabling Our Residents to Thrive

What this will look like:

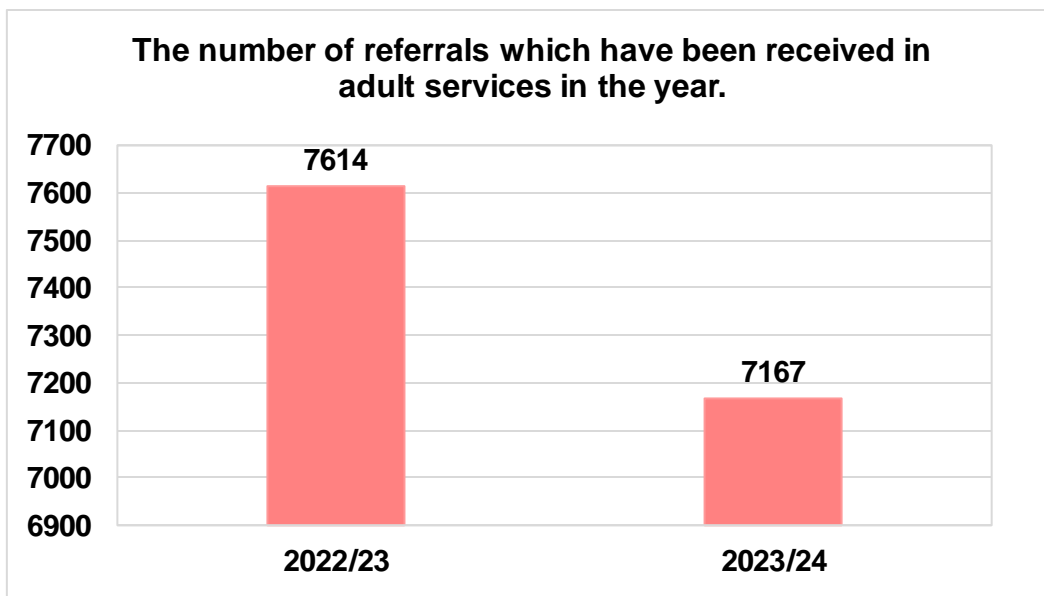
- We will have responded to our ageing demographic including creating age friendly communities
- We will have met the needs of our most vulnerable children and adults
- We will have enabled the Community and Voluntary Sector to support our residents
- We will have supported residents through the cost-of-living crisis
- We will have built new Council houses, provided more affordable homes, brought empty properties back into use and worked towards the prevention of homelessness

Overall Summary

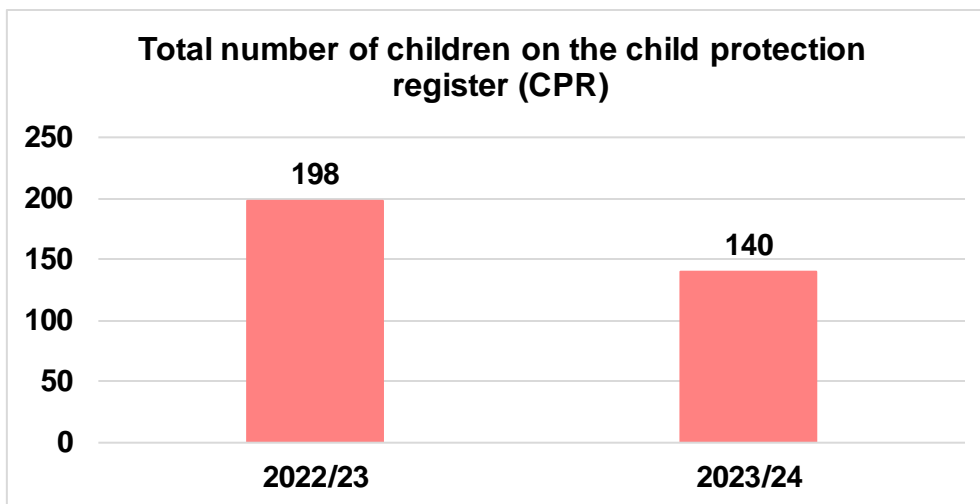
We have assessed the first year of this objective and believe the evidence shows we have been **effective** this year. We have undertaken many activities set out in the Corporate Plan 2023-2028, allowing us to take positive steps in enabling our residents across Caerphilly to thrive.

Within this outcome, we have a set of priority indicators, the majority of these indicators are improving compared to the performance of the previous year. Overall performance across the Social Services has continued to be strong despite the increasing complexity of children and adults being referred in need of care and support and the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges across front line services.

The number of referrals that have received by adult services during the year has slightly decreased compared to previous years.



The number of Children Looked After (CLA) rose during the year but has returned to the 2022/23 rate at year end with an overall increase of just 5 children. This is in a context of increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) being placed through the National Transfer Scheme. The number of children included on the Child Protection Register (CPR) has reduced quarter on quarter with an overall drop of 58.



We are aiming to expand our Flying Start areas and offering joined up support in partnership across Gwent to more families than before. As a result, more than **50%** of the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Caerphilly borough are now eligible for Flying Start funded Childcare placements. Further expansion will be subject to further Welsh Government investment. Early Intervention elements under Flying Start are available across the whole of the borough.

We pledged to increase the value of financial savings generated as a direct result of support on the effects of cost-of-living crisis. As a result, we have generated approximately **3.5m** in savings in 2023/24. This represents the additional income received by a total of 4,800 supported households through support provided by Caerphilly Homes staff. In total, the team has processed 606 Hardship Grants. The team also continues to support tenants and residents providing sustainability support, working closely with partners along the way.

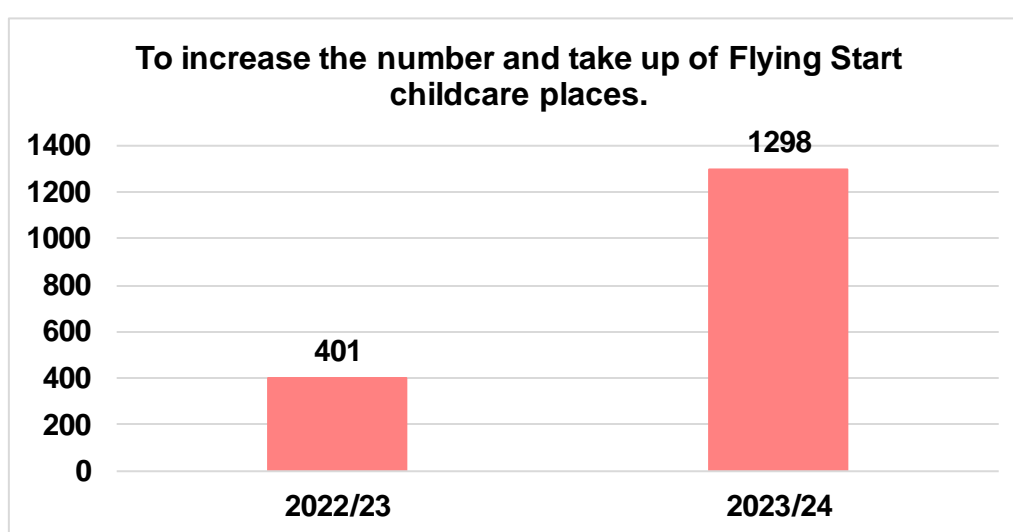
The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is in progress and additional temporary accommodation units have been secured. The new Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme provides the funding where possible. The Common Allocations Policy review is underway, which will be finalised by the Autumn 2024. Also a specialist offender officer has been appointed. The Development Team continue to identify and bring new sites forward for consideration. 77 sites have been identified but a third have been discounted. 28 sites were submitted as part of the first call for candidate sites and 10 were discounted by Planning Policy.

We continue to promote and work with landlords from the Private Rented Sector (PRS) where our Caerphilly Keys scheme is concerned. In conjunction with our Caerphilly Keys Scheme and to maximise access to affordable suitable housing, to discharge our statutory homeless duties, the Housing Solutions Team are in the process of seeking Cabinet approval to adopt the Welsh Government (WG) Leasing Scheme Wales Model. If this is supported by Cabinet, then the team will work with Welsh Government to launch the Leasing Scheme Wales PRS model in Caerphilly.

What went well this year and why

We continue to expand in-house children's residential care and supported accommodation options by developing an additional single bedded children's home, which was opened in Aberbargoed and has now been fully used. Demolition of the old gymnasium in Pontllanfraith has been completed, the site is currently being prepared for two new respite homes, one for adults and one for children.

The number of children taking up Flying Start childcare placements during 2023/24 showed a spike in increase during the first term. This is due to the major expansion in Flying Start childcare eligible areas from April 2023. During the year 1,298 children aged 2-3 years old took up funded Flying Start childcare placements, which is a saving of £3.8million to families. In addition, there were 78 funded childcare placements for children aged 2-3years with emerging developmental needs in non-eligible areas funded under Families First.



In 2023/24 the Caerphilly Essential Skills team ran **23** literacy courses. In addition, a specific provision aimed at adults with additional learning needs delivered 30 courses including literacy, numeracy, digital skills, gardening, journalling, art, history, pottery, cooking, employability/enterprise, health & wellbeing, singing & drama. We are constantly assessing whether adult community learning has helped the learner to progress to the next steps. On a positive note, to date, Caerphilly Adult Community Learning have enrolled **1,473** residents onto courses ranging from entry level Literacy to level 3 International Computer Driving Licence.

Our Cost-of-living Hardship Grant was established in 2023 in response to identified need across the council frontline support services, for those who need urgent financial support but who are not eligible or have exhausted existing grant schemes, in particular those that might be working but are experiencing in-work poverty. The fund provides either direct financial assistance (up to £700) or equivalent white goods (if that is the specific need). Referrals to the grant are made by a range of partners including Citizens' Advice, Holistic Hoarding, Housing staff, Resettlement Team, POBL. In 2023/24 grants totalling **£376,538** were awarded.

We have been successful in the return to use of empty properties, using a range of interventions to increase the percentage return. Interventions include delivering Welsh Government grants, delivering landlord loans, general advice, proactive engagement, undertaking enforcement action resulting in enforced sales and council buy backs. As a result, the number of empty private sector homes brought back into use during the year through direct action was **106** which is an improvement of the previous year's figure.

The National Empty Homes Grant was launched in April 2023 and is currently ongoing. The first enforced sale has been completed, the website has been launched, and the team are continuing to engage with residents of the borough to tackle the big issue and reduce the number of empty homes in the borough.

In 2023/24 we had 11 cases with their risk of homelessness prevented by being assisted to remain in their existing accommodation (Section 66), compared to 18 cases the previous year. This is an important note as the Caerphilly Homes team aim to help people remain in their existing accommodation in the first instance. The total number of households in other forms of temporary accommodation was **117** at the end of the year.

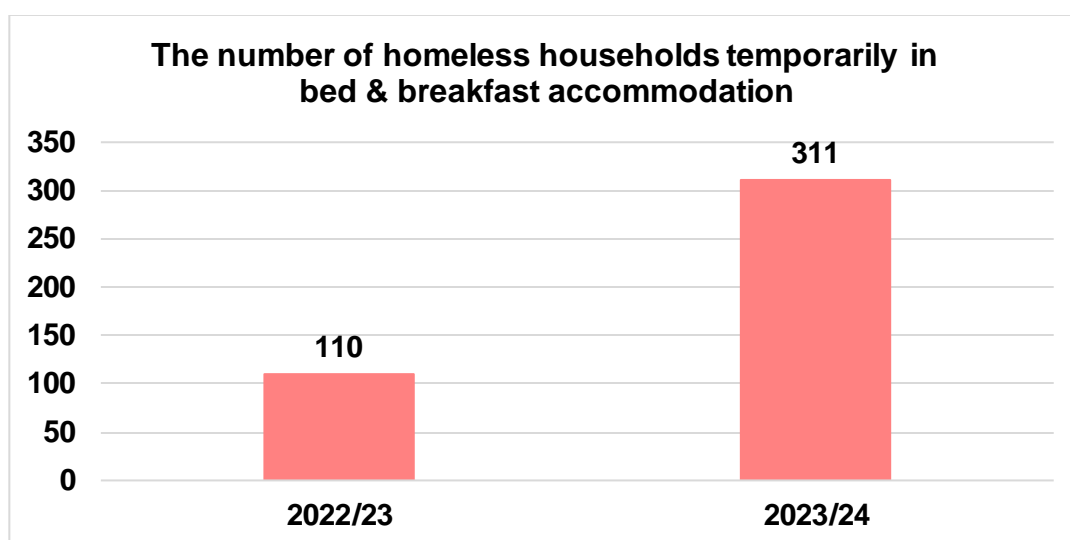
We will have built new Council houses, provided more affordable homes, brought empty properties back into use and worked towards the prevention of homelessness. Under this outcome the Caerphilly Homes team have also achieved the following:

- Full planning permission achieved for circa **130** new homes at Oakdale & Ty Darren.
- Published 'Building Together' our Development and Governance strategy to build 1000 new homes over the next 10 years
- UK award nomination recognition with APSE and CiH Welsh Housing Award winners 'Housing Team of the Year – Empty Homes Team' and strategic partnership with United Welsh 'STAR' project
- The first enforced sale was completed by the Empty Homes Team.
- Approval from Welsh Government of Empty Property Enforcement Agenda Action Plan
- Funding was secured for participation in the Nation Empty Homes grant scheme

What did not go so well this year and why

The continued fragility across the care sector, particularly in domiciliary care, can be challenging at times but the overall hours of care waiting have reduced over the year. Recruitment and retention issues continue to be a significant challenge with an increasing number of examples of CCBC falling behind neighbouring local authorities in terms of salaries.

The number of homeless households temporarily in bed & breakfast accommodation, has increased from **110** in 2022/23 to **311** in 2023/24. Temporary accommodation placements continue to increase as a result of the housing crisis and due to lack of suitable move on options within the borough and as a result of other housing pressures within the private rental sector and owner occupier market.



Caerphilly Homes still have a significant backlog of repairs and void properties, which will be addressed over the coming months. There are numerous ongoing individual measure schemes, including window and door upgrades, void retrofits, roof renewals and external wall insulation underway. We have a major solar pane (PV) and roof renewal sheltered housing retrofit scheme at Oaklands, and further major schemes underway but due for completion by March 2025.

Turning to Private Housing, we offered support to owner occupiers and private rented households, resulting in 212 advice requests and delivery of 31 Energy Crisis Grants. The ECO Flex* scheme has been widely promoted, resulting in 145 leads being referred to City Energy for support, leading to 13 signed declarations, with a further 35 in progress.

*The Energy Company Obligation Flexible Eligibility (ECO Flex) is a new government initiative to allow more people to benefit from energy company grants.

The number of leads progressing to declaration stage is low due to installers prioritising rural off gas properties. Efforts are being made to address this issue in collaboration with Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) and Welsh Government (WG).

In housing we are struggling to recruit surveyors, this is putting added pressure on the existing workforce. There is also a risk of further pressures due to retirement age and many are leaving for higher salaries in housing associations. There is a significant proportion of the

workforce that is over 55, nearly 30%. The risk of retirement and knock on impact to the efficiency of the team will put pressure on recruitment particularly for trades staff.

The maintenance of empty properties continues to be demanding due to tenant damage; increased Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) specification and new regulations which are due in 2024/25 will contribute to longer lead times and higher costs.

Arrears from our current contract holders (CHs) have increased by 128% since March 2019, to £3.7M. Arrears from our former CHs are £962k. Total arrears therefore represent about 8.4% of the total rent debit in 2023/24. These arrears comprise Welsh Water debt, which from April 2023 we no longer collect. Other social housing providers have been affected by the same challenges and rent arrears have risen across the sector.

The biggest impact on future rent collection is the further migration of CHs to Universal Credit (UC). We have recently set up a Rents working group with 3 other stock holding local Authorities, to share best practice and benchmark performance.

What difference are we making

Affordable and available single person accommodation within the borough is having an impact on successful discharge of duty and placements in time spent and move on from temporary accommodation.

The Caerphilly Cares Service, which seeks to support individual well-being and resilience, is now well established as a central point of contact for volunteering related queries and associated work in the organisation. The number of approaches from different departments internally and external organisations, as well as members of the public, about volunteering continues to grow. A total of 30 community members interested in becoming a volunteer contacted the team between September 2023 and end of March 2024.

Over 43% (13) of these related to becoming a volunteer befriender with Caerphilly Cares, of which 92% (12) went on to fully enrol as volunteers in the service. Of the remaining 17 people, 11 were signposted to other volunteer roles within CCBC; Environmental (4), Culture Sport and Leisure (3), Children, Young People, Schools (4) and 6 were signposted to GAVO/community projects.

Between September 2023 – March 2024, (29) employees participated in volunteering activities across the borough as part of the Council's Employee Volunteering Scheme. Opportunities included tree planting as part of decarbonisation work, sessions supporting ecology and maintenance at our country parks and support for Penallta Reuse shop.

Resources to deliver this objective

- The Regional Partnership Board have supported a bid for Regional Integrated Capital funding to address the short fall in funding due to increased building costs for property refurbishments to expand children's residential care and for the two new respite homes. Bid will now go to Welsh Government.
- Work closely with corporate finance to identify demographic pressures and other cost pressures for consideration within the medium term financial plan. Lobby Welsh Government via ADSS Cymru and the WLGA for additional long term funding to address the pressures in the social care market. Every opportunity is being taken to access any grant funding and to lobby Welsh Government for additional long term funding to stabilise the market.
- There is a 20% vacancy rate within our trades staff this will necessitate a more fundamental review of the way we do business if this continues, given that recent recruitment drive has not delivered the right level of applications that we require.
- National Empty Homes Grant launched in April 2023 - ongoing. First enforced sales completed. Website launched. Introduction of Council Tax premiums for long term empty homes approved by Full Council in March 2024
- The Council's new build programme offers the opportunity to support the foundational and circular economies through the provision of opportunities to upskill, offer training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities. With the Oakdale and Ty Darran developments there is an opportunity to develop a comprehensive social value programme linking employment and training opportunities created as a result of the Council's investment to the Welsh Government funded employment programmes delivered by the Regeneration Team thereby ensuring that those furthest from the labour market are able to access the opportunities created. The new build programme seeks to create a local supply chain which will ensure that Council's investment into new homes creates more spend in the local economy. The Council's Building Maintenance team created a further 9 apprenticeships during Q2 2023/24 to support the ongoing asset management programme.



Well-being Objective 3:

Enabling Our Communities to Thrive

What this will look like:

- Our physical infrastructure and digital connectivity will have improved to help people access towns, communities and services
- We will have worked with partners to improve access to public and other alternative modes of transport to keep towns connected and enhanced active travel opportunities between communities
- We will work with partners from across the Public Service Board towards improving the well-being and healthy life expectancy of our communities
- We will have created conditions that enable our communities to be healthier and more active
- We will have attractive open spaces that enhance quality of life

Overall Summary

We have assessed the first year of this objective and believe the evidence shows we have been **effective** this year. We have undertaken many activities set out in the Corporate Plan 2023-2028 allowing us to move forward in enabling our communities across Caerphilly to thrive.

Of our seven priority indicators four have increased performance including resident satisfaction with their local environment or community, and the number of our visitors to sports facilities and country parks. One has maintained its level and two slightly declined (see appendix) and the action plan has made good progress.

We held a wide-ranging consultation within the community to develop the services residents wanted to see run from the Rhymney library hub, in addition to the traditional library offer. The refurbished space now delivers a range of Council services taking a comprehensive approach to the problems residents need help with. From Caerphilly Cares, Housing Benefits, Council Tax, adult education, Aneurin Bevan Health Board, to Caerphilly Homes who offer various housing support services, and Employment Support who work from libraries across the borough, take up figures are positive with **1700** visits.

Improvements in digital infrastructure is making good progress, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has helped our principal towns to be significantly enhanced with various projects that provided benefits to town centre users and the communities. It also delivered many smaller street scene improvements to walkways and seating. Biodiversity collaborations are working well and the number of visitors to our sports and country parks has increased showing the value residents place on these assets.

What went well this year and why

Digital connectivity and confidence are essential in the delivery and consumption of many services (both public and private) for individuals and households. To support digital connectivity, we have introduced free Wi Fi in seven of our key Town Centres.

We introduced a new technology grant through the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund in conjunction with the Shared Prosperity Fund programme to support local businesses to adopt digital technology solutions to improve their productivity, supporting local business growth.

We collaborated with Near Me Now Ltd to bring the 'Smart Towns App' provided by a company called VZTA to the county borough's five principal town centres, (Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach and Risca). The app provides a digital Highstreet that makes it easy for people to shop local with local product listings, events, and services at the click of a button. The [VZTA Smart Towns App - Visit Caerphilly](#) is free to download and use.

We have collaborated with the broadband provider OGI to introduce new multi-gigabit-full fibre broadband speeds to the Tredomen Business Campus, currently over **30** businesses are located at the campus, benefiting from full fibre network. Launched in 2023, OGI Pro is the Wales-based business delivering part of a £200 million first phase rollout of new full fibre services across all parts of Wales. We are also working with OGI to install broadband in remote and deprived areas of the borough

To meet the requirements of the [Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 | GOV.WALES](#), we must consider how we can alleviate digital exclusion amongst tenants as access to fast and reliable broadband is an essential part of modern life. In 2023/24 we worked with BT requesting they review postcodes, where we own housing stock, and they check against their records showing those locations where fibre to the premises (FTTP) compliance is likely to be problematic.

During academic year 2023/24 we delivered several accredited and non-accredited computer courses, including the **45** International Computer Driving License (ICDL) in levels 1 to 3 and **149** residents enrolled on lower-level essential skills courses to support, enhance their employment opportunities, or just wanting to upskill their computer and digital device skills in everyday life. We have delivered several drop-in digital skills sessions in conjunction with the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funded Employability Team.

For communities across the county borough to thrive we must provide both the physical infrastructure and digital connectivity to improve access. In 2023/24, the Transport Interchange: design work has progressed to RIBA Stage 4 with the planning application receiving consent in February 2024. Complementary transport, traffic, parking and active travel studies are also being undertaken to support the aspirations of the Interchange project and encourage modal shift towards public transport, cycling and walking, and secured funding up to and including stage four, technical design stage. Initial public consultations for active travel plan proposals for Bargoed, Caerphilly town, Risca and Ystrad Mynach have taken place and have been developed. Although it must be noted this does not mean they will all become reality as this is dependent on future funding. Alongside the implementation of a minor works improvements programme for Active Travel, a further **400** possible routes have been identified.

To improve access to public transport we reviewed the local public bus service network in 2023/24 through regional local authority coordination, in liaison with the bus industry and operators. Successfully completing a tender of supported bus services, securing Welsh

Government Bus Transition funding, which will support resilience given the continued decline in bus passengers post the Covid pandemic. Many bus services have been protected and have continued to operate since April 2024, supporting the promotion of an Integrated Public Transport and Active Travel.

We are continuing to invest in the learning environment, creating Community Focused Schools, co-locating key services, and securing stronger engagement with parents and carers outside traditional hours. As part of the Community Focused Schools Grant, we have developed **10** Community Rooms and **2** Skills Development Hubs in 2023/24, spending 100% of £998K funding provided by Welsh Government. With further developments planned for 2024/25.

To develop a modernised service provision, using our assets we piloted the Rhymney library hub with the support of Welsh Government funding, matched by Caerphilly Place-shaping funding commencing in January 2024, Part of the hub refurbishment increased the digital connectivity at the site to offer faster and more reliable Wi-Fi speeds to provide enhanced digital facilities and a full IT Training Suite, allowing more ICT training opportunities.

Our libraries and the Rhymney hub pilot enabling community groups to run sessions such as Knit & Natter, Reading Groups, and Cwtsh sessions run by the Cwtsh organisation, which is a key part of the Integrated Wellbeing Networks (IWN) programme. Cwtsh aims to support and strengthen health and wellbeing to improve people's quality of life, to reduce the strain on healthcare services. [Cwtsh Wellbeing Network - home | Cwtsh](#)

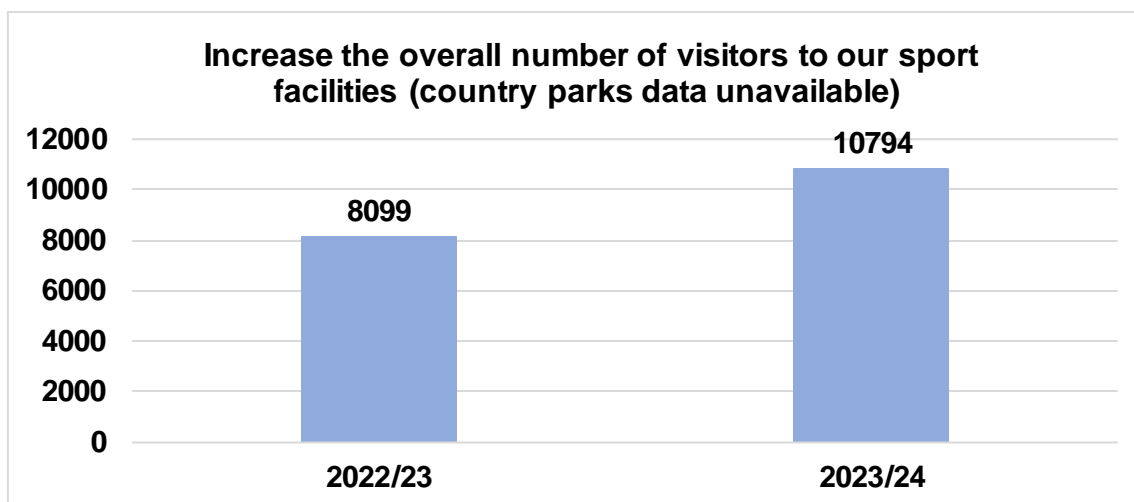
We are currently holding several Housing surgeries across the borough, following centralisation of landlord services at Ty Penallta offices. Surgeries are promoted via phone calls and home visits and Caerphilly Cares with varying levels of attendance/success to date, with use of these hubs, which have seen a mix of owner occupiers, private tenants, homeless and Housing Association tenants.

We undertook a full tenant satisfaction survey in the Autumn 2023. **76%** of Caerphilly Homes tenants were satisfied with our services overall. There were several key factors identified overall within tenant satisfaction. Repairs and maintenance, whether tenants find us easy to deal with, quality of their homes, safety and security of the home, whether tenants felt listened to, involvement in decision making, and grounds maintenance. An action plan is currently in development to respond to outcomes of the survey.

The adoption and implementation of the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy has provided a robust policy platform upon which further efforts in support of these aims can be achieved. Evidencing the positive impacts of engaging with and leading a healthy lifestyle in areas such as personal health, educational attainment, mental health, regeneration, community cohesion and social wellbeing. There were more than two and half thousand extra visits to our leisure centres in 2023/24, compared to the previous year.

- We have invested £390,000 to provide a new hockey hub at Sue Noake Leisure Centre, in Ystrad Mynach and a 3G pitch at Idris Davies School.
- Replaced the outdated Artificial Turf Pitch and supporting infrastructure, which included fencing, lighting, and changing rooms at Bedwas Leisure Centre with a modern, dual use rugby and football 3G pitch, investing £315,000.
- Replaced the outdated Artificial Turf Pitches at St. Cenydd Community School, Lewis School Pengam and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymney with three new dual use 3G football and rugby pitches, investing £295,000.

- We invested £73,000 in a project at Trinity Fields School to provide the Cruyff Court (Aaron Ramsey), a safe place where children and young people can interact with each other socially and develop healthier lifestyle.
- We redeveloped the Fitness Suite, a new Dance and Group Cycling Studio, new pool play equipment and a changing room refurbishment in Newbridge Leisure Centre investing £875,000 at the site. Alongside £100,000 refurbishment of the Fitness Suite at Heolddu Leisure Centre



In 2024, we worked with **137** community groups throughout the County Borough, to support and maintain local community organisations delivering local services for residents, focusing primarily on the Community Support Fund. We set up **50** Welcoming Spaces throughout the borough offering spaces for people to have a warm, hot meal, increasing the number of Welcoming Spaces by 12 in winter 2023/24 on the previous winter to help with isolation.

Residents want a high-quality environment on their doorstep, and we have received a number of positive comments from residents and visitors relating to our country parks. The provisions of country parks are important to the health and well-being of residents and visitors. In 2023/24 we secured grant funding to undertake a number of biodiversity and habitat enhancement schemes which will contribute to halting the biodiversity loss within our borough and contribute to visitor experience by undertaking wildflower meadow creation, hedge laying, orchard creation, woodland management, and tree planting. We have been collaborating with school groups within our country parks and looking for opportunities to further collaborate with local schools on a hedgerow project and birdbox project.

We are delivering the remaining projects included in the Welsh Housing Quality Standard Environmental Programme, such as the Blackwood Skatepark and the Nelson Pump Track due to be delivered in 2024/25. We have two environmental officers who are dedicated to identifying environmental opportunities in our social housing areas and several community environmental wardens, who help to ensure that our open spaces and places are clean and well maintained.

With the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) we acquired a facility called 'Meanwhile Space' in Bargoed with plans to provide courses, training, community information, community activities, trading opportunities for new and existing businesses as well as co-working spaces. We have enhanced seating across our town centres with **32** new seating and an additional 19 due for replacement when resources permit coupled with deep cleansing of our principal towns which has contributed to the atmosphere of these areas.

We've enhanced the entrance to Pontymister town providing a haven for the community with wildflowers, edible fruit tree to encourage bees and butterflies, along with benches and an alternative walkway away from the roadside. In Blackwood we removed dilapidated hoardings and planted shrubs to improve curb appeal. We planted wildflowers and trees, to enhance a piece of waste ground in Bargoed with picnic benches and pebble seating. Providing the community and town centre users with a place to sit and relax and enjoy the surrounding views.

What did not go so well this year and why

Although funding is secured up to and including stage 4 of the proposed infrastructure planning stages for the new Caerphilly Interchange, we still require funding for delivery stage. The rising costs of bus travel, and cuts to bus routes and contracts risk more instability in the provision of public transport.

Even though attendance at Housing surgeries has been slow and steady to begin with, we will work to push up attendance numbers in 2024/25.

In working with our partners from across the Public Service Board towards improving the well-being and healthy life expectancy of our communities, it will take time to address the long-term concerns laid out in the Building a Fairer Gwent report. However, the building blocks to address those concerns, are currently being worked through with our partners in order to upscale existing good practice. The Local Delivery Group is working on a joint action plan.

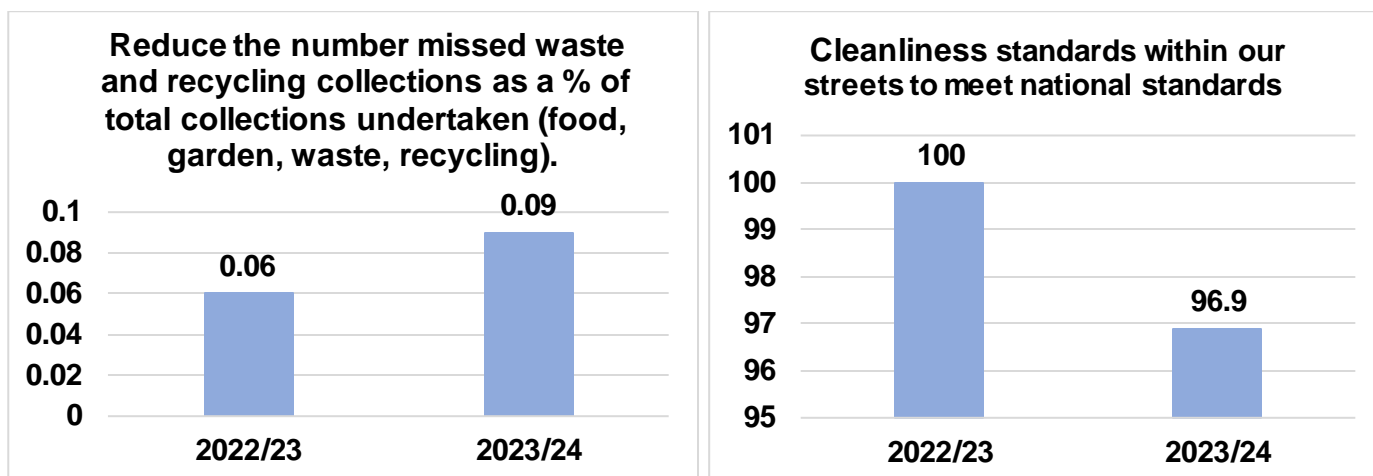
Due to an ongoing technical problem with software used to count visits to our Country Parks we are currently unable to access the information required.

An aging waste collection fleet and street access issues are causing more downtime, leading to complaints related to delayed collections rather than missed collections.

Fly tipping is becoming more prevalent, but burden of proof is a criminal matter and difficult to enforce, leading to an impact on our countryside. We have not been able to review our enforcement activities in 2023/24 with a view to developing a more coordinated and comprehensive approach across the county borough as we would have wished. We will be reviewing this action in the Autumn of 2024.

The decrease in street cleanliness standards is due to a reduction in staff and vehicle levels due to budget constraints. Unfortunately, this won't be easy to resolve going forward with the additional savings to be made.

We are currently collaborating with the developer VZTA to overcome technical issues with the 'Smart Towns' app and to increase the number of businesses engaging with the app, as numbers plateaued.



What difference are we making

The setting up of different services within the Rhymney hub helped **172** individuals supported through 'What Matters?' conversations to receive support from these services at the Rhymney hub, which has now received over **17,000** visits. Footfall in Rhymney has increased by **9,470** since the hub pilot opened in January, bringing more foot traffic to the town and supporting one of the higher deprivation areas in the borough. The hope is that the model can be rolled out to other town centre locations.

The approach used to develop the Rhymney Hub seems to have been a success. The model of providing more services in strategic community locations as piloted in the Rhymney will now be explored further to see if it applies to other areas of the county borough over the coming months. Even though visitor numbers to the Rhymney hub were slow to start, numbers overall for the first 5 months, January to May saw an increase with over **8,000** more visits in 2024, based on 2022 visitor numbers.

Various departments across the Council have linked-up to ensure a better 'offer', of wide-ranging services throughout the Welcoming Spaces. Such as the Arts Development Multiply project, which breaks down barriers to support the offer of personal and family support. Increasing the diverse range of activities offered to fit community need, delivering various activities across the borough and in community centres. Listening to the community's needs brought more than **1000** people through the door. We are supporting smaller charities across the borough to work, such as the Community Volunteers Wales (the old Risca CV19 group), Trethomas Care, TLC community café in Ty Sign, St. Gwladys in Bargoed as well as the grassroots community organisations

The Community Budget allowed us to carry out a community orchard project on Twyn School fields in Caerphilly to improve biodiversity, and enhancement work on Abertridwr Square. We carried out a range of infrastructure improvements such as resurfaced pathways at the Newbridge school in Newbridge, work at Senghenydd Miners Memorial contributing to the overall work on the site and supported the installation of a small community playpark in Pwllypant with a small allocation from the Area Forum which ceased in 2023/24.

Resources to deliver this objective

To continue delivering this objective:

- We have secured a further £1.79 million for Community Focused Schools projects in 2024/25.
- We are engaging with Cardiff Capital Region and Smart Towns Cymru to explore opportunities for investment in footfall analytics and digital towns.
- Although funding is secured up to and including stage 4 of the proposed infrastructure planning stages for the new Caerphilly Interchange, we still require funding for delivery stage, together with the rising costs of bus travel, and cuts to Bus routes and contracts leading to instability for public transport.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) provided the funding for many improvements to the street realm.



Well-being Objective 4: Enabling Our Economy to Grow

What this will look like:

- We will have worked towards ensuring we have the necessary infrastructure in place to enable our economy and communities to grow.
- We will have worked in partnership to support businesses with a range of interventions aimed at stimulating the local economy
- We will have a stronger relationship with our Business Community through town centre regeneration
- We will continue to work with the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) to increase the availability of quality employment opportunities in the area and enhance our economy
- Our local workforce will have the skills that employers need locally and regionally

Overall Summary

We believe the evidence shows we are making some real improvements to this objective. Four of the priority indicators in relation to employment have done well, however two have data that is not yet available. Some data is new such as the Multiply programme so there are no comparators at this time, however so far, are progressing well.

Some of the outcomes such as town centre regeneration and enhancing employment opportunities and transport actions for the infrastructure improvements require long term building blocks to be put in place. We have assessed that in the first year of the 5-year plan has been successful and we will start to see the results of that activity in the following years.

Transport for Wales continued to develop and deliver the Core Valley Lines transformation programme, which was completed in 2024, where all new trains were introduced on the Rhymney Valley line. Phases 2 of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) regional Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure delivery programme was completed with the installation of public EV chargers at 16 sites across the county borough

Helping people into employment activity has gone particularly well supporting **263** residents into employment. We developed a robust, single employment support model through the coordinated delivery of Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) People and Skills Pillar. CfW+ acts as the employability support function within our employability team for those who are ready or available for work, or who have been assessed as near work readiness. Mentors support all unemployed customers with barriers to employment - Economically Inactive, Short Term Unemployed, Long Term Unemployed, 20–24-year-old NEET's, across all Caerphilly postcodes.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has seen a range of town centre enhancements, which are targeted at a local level, You can read more about the successes of the UKSP fund on the link here [UKSPF Yearly Summary \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/ukspf-yearly-summary) We believe based on this year's assessment that we will see future improvement across 2024-2025.

What went well this year and why

Using our town centre place plans, to maximise opportunities, re-energise our towns, through a mix of retail, small business retention, new business start-ups, leisure and housing has made good progress this year. The Caerphilly 2035 Place Making Plan has helped to bring in significant amounts of external funding and our new 10-year Economic Regeneration Strategy is going to Cabinet in Autumn. We have 5 projects planned over the next 5 years and 1 has been completed.

Ffos Caerffili is Caerphilly's own shipping container-style market, a cornerstone project within the Caerphilly Town 2035 Place Making Plan. This is one of the first projects to be developed within the plan and will provide the stimulus for further investment throughout the town. The market opened to the public on 5th April 2024.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the former UK government's levelling up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. Caerphilly forms part of a Southwest Regional Group but we also have our own local investment plan with an original allocation of £34m.

We have invested in a minimum of **70** rural businesses initiatives that support the enhancement of Caerphilly's Rural Economy. Investment examples include marketing and staff investments to increase rural competitiveness, shorten supply chains and to introduce new products. We have made physical investments into equipment and machinery to diversify farm businesses, boost social enterprises and support businesses to invest in new products and new food businesses, increased drink makers production, supported new manufacture of land-based products and supported rural businesses to increase productivity and overcome barriers.

We have run a range of events throughout the year; Caerphilly Food and Drink Festival (approx. 78k visitors), Ystrad Mynach Winter food and craft fair (5,500k visitors) Blackwood Winter Food and Craft Fair (7,600k visitors) and Caerphilly Pride (7,700 visitors).

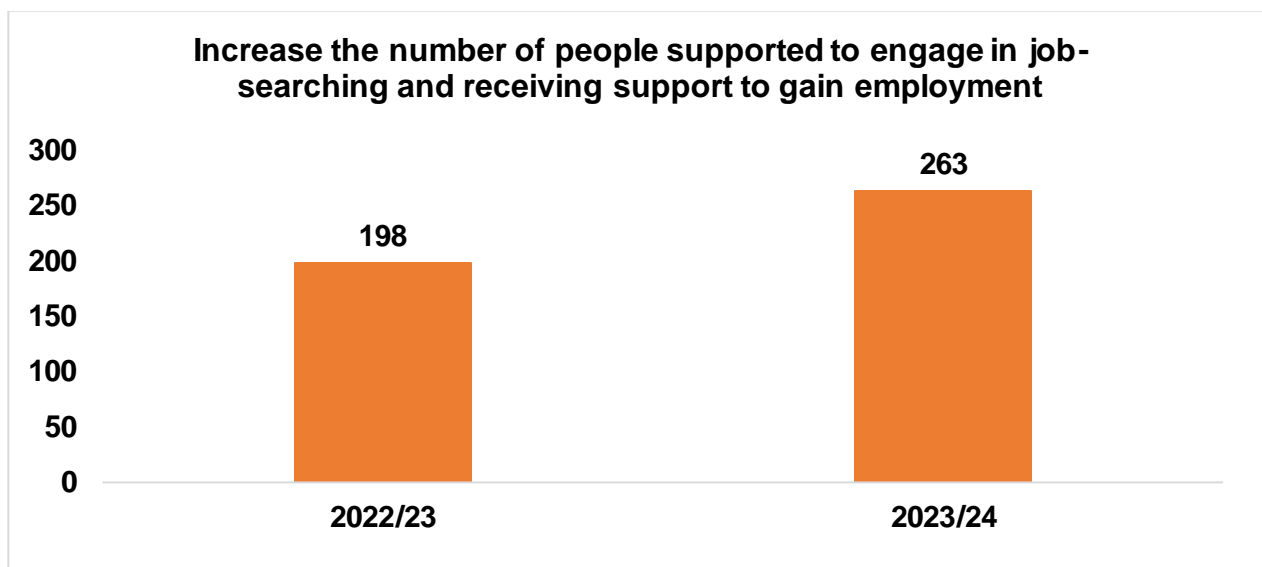
Procurement (and purchasing power) is an important part of enabling our economy to grow by the way we use our spend. We have done some good work since 2022/23, in relation to the level of engagement with our suppliers to increase our pool of supplies and have worked on improving our data.

During 2023/24 a total of forty-one contracts have been awarded to contractors/suppliers based within Caerphilly which equates to fifty-six contractors/suppliers. Engagement with our suppliers is on-going to ensure knowledge and understanding of the Council's objectives around the application of Social Value is developed and that our third party spend is being used to bring greater social and economic regeneration to the community.

An important part of the economy is access to towns and villages. Through retendering we, securing funding from the Welsh Government Bus's Transition for supported bus services to support them given the continued decline in bus patronage post Covid pandemic. Most bus services were protected and have been operating since April 2024, however, we have to be mindful that this may not remain going forward in future years. We are contuning to promote the revised bus services and review the local public bus service network through regional local authority coordination in liaison with the bus industry/operators.

Improvements to uncontrolled road crossing continues to be delivered through the Council's Active Travel Network Map delivery programme. In 2023/24 this included minor works at the Pontygwindy Road/Green lady junction, completion of outstanding works at A469 Pontlottyn and Islwyn Road/Maindee Road junction in Cwmfelinfach.

Helping the local workforce to have skills they need has been positive this year. To reduce the number of economically inactive people the Employment Team supported over **205** economically inactive people to access key worker support to date and **263** residents supported into employment, which is an increase of 65 people compared to 2022/23. The statistics show a positive improvement across a range of measures.



We have supported 135 people to gain a qualification or complete courses since, 45 people achieve vocational licenses (for HGV, construction, security workers and train track safety), and 21 people into employment following support since September 2023. In addition to supporting residents into employment, we were able to support another 357 underemployed residents in the borough to sustain their employment between January 2023 to April 2024, with funding from the UKSPF people and skills funding stream. We are aiming to increase this to 500 by the end of March 2025. To date 143 of those, gaining qualifications, 99 participating in education and 63 retraining. We increased the number of residents we helped from 519 to 762 in 23/24 via the communities for work programme.

The Multiply programme is off to a good start; its purpose is to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population across the county borough. The purpose is to have more adults achieving maths qualifications or participating in numeracy courses (up to and including Level 2/ SCQF Level 5). Also to improve labour market outcomes for example fewer numeracy skills gaps reported by employers, and an increase in the proportion of adults that progress into sustained employment and/or education.

Increased adult numeracy across the population will go beyond achieving certificates or qualifications, we will track both the perceived and actual difference taking part in the programme makes in supporting learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives, at home and at work and to feel more confident when doing so. Our partners, Coleg-Y-Cymoedd, and their partners are focusing on interventions that mainly focus on maths modules embedded into other vocational courses and innovative programmes

delivered together with employers to cover specific numeracy skills required in the workplace. We will also deliver Multiply through the medium of Welsh.

What did not go so well this year and why

Research commissioned by the CCR Regional Cabinet, and the Welsh Government has illustrated that good quality sites for employment are in short supply and there is now a very limited availability of all sizes and types of speculative, ready to occupy premises ranging from space for small businesses and start-ups right through to large scale manufacturing projects. (Source: "CCR City Deal Strategic Business Plan Wider Investment Fund 2020-2025"). As a larger number of our businesses start out as sole traders, we need to unlock land for new development for a range of businesses and this will be a feature of the City Deals Local Investment Plan.

In terms of the condition of our roads, which is an important factor in transportation and access around the borough, the Council has approved temporary savings, as the capital budget has decreased by a million-pound year on year. This has significantly affected our infrastructure. The Council received £1M from Welsh Government however this year there is no funding from WG, so we will not have the funding to put into the maintenance of roads. At this time the quality of the network could worsen and there will be limited funding to improve this.

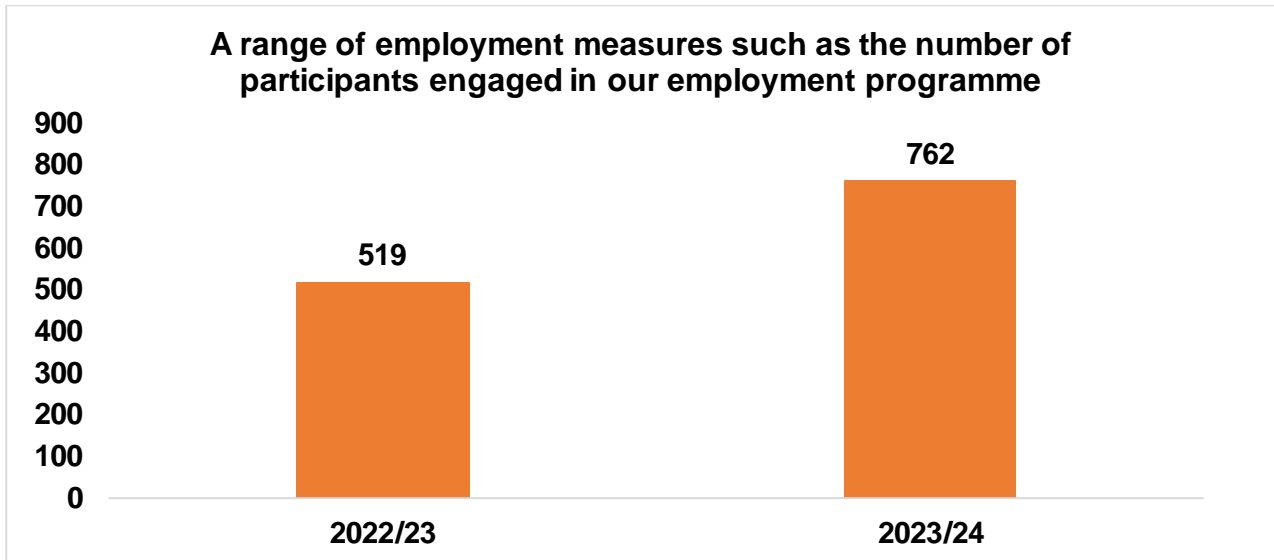
For the year 2024/25 the Council will no longer be using the Social Value Portal to monitor the benefits of our procurement activities and we have decided to develop our own mechanism. However, we will still use our own internal Themes, Measures and Outcomes (TOMs) mechanism so we can record the benefits arising from taking a 'social value' approach to procuring goods and services.

We will continue to promote public transport usage as there is a risk if passenger figures do not increase subsidies may be removed if routes are not viable.

What difference are we making

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund UKSPF fund is making a difference to our communities, and people and there is success in helping people into employment and to upskilling them. The fund has seen a range of town centre enhancements at a smaller but important level for visitors, such as the replacement of 43 accessible benches in all our 5 towns, carrying our remedial works to pavements to access town centres and making enhancements to the areas of the cenotaph and station areas of Caerphilly. These are just a few examples. 'Meanwhile Spaces' are the names for temporary use of vacant units, sometimes referred to as pop-ups, generally at a low-cost rent that can have benefits bringing activity and vibrance to an area, we have completed a 'Meanwhile Space' in Bargoed that will open in 2024/25.

Employment work targets are helping people, into or sustaining employment and our engagement levels are returning to pre-covid levels. This is a positive aspect as helping people overcome barriers with mentors is often best done in a face-to-face environment. Helping businesses is an important part of any economy, and our Business Enterprise Renewal Team has helped with a wide range of grant applications, such as UKSPK – CEF Business Development Grant with 68 Grants to the value of £904,000 awarded, startups over £18,700 where 156 jobs were created, and 431 jobs safeguarded.



Resources to deliver this objective

There are significant financial challenges this year and, in the future, as noted earlier the decreasing of the capital budget by a million-pound year on year and with no additional funding from Welsh Government will impact our ability to improve or even maintain the highway asset, which is highly likely to result in a continued decline.

However, our Blackwood and Bargoed town Place Plans are in their late stages and nearing completion. These will be the catalyst for accessing Welsh Government (WG) Transforming Town funding in the future

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. Investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. Caerphilly County Borough has a conditional allocation of £28,272,298 and an allocation of £5,901,499 for *Multiply (*UK Gov Adult numeracy programme) up to March 2025. In 2023/24 we have spent approx. 74% of the allocation.



Well-being Objective 5: Enabling Our Environment to be Greener

What this will look like:

- We will have worked with our residents to meet our statutory targets in relation to waste reduction, reuse and recycling
- We will have reduced our operational carbon emissions to become a net zero carbon local authority by 2030
- We will have helped our communities transition to low carbon transport
- We will have promoted and explored green energy opportunities for the council, communities and businesses
- We will have protected and enhanced our natural environment to improve biodiversity and make us more resilient to climate changes
- We will have set climate standards for new build Council Homes and worked to improve the green energy credentials and energy efficiency of our housing stock.

Overall Summary

The outcomes for this objective are long-term, but the steps that we have taken this year have helped us to lay solid foundations for the future and we will gradually start to see more and more progress over the 5 years of this plan.

Our Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan was designed to help us to become a net zero carbon local authority by 2030. A review of the action plan in 2023/24 meant that we were able to reduce the number of actions from 122 to 76.

In 2023/24 we have seen a reduction in our CO2 emissions, and we continue to promote and explore green energy opportunities, for example the Cwm lfor solar farm project and the ways in which our fleet can become greener. We have planted 24,350 new trees across the borough, with 3,000 of these planted by volunteers and we are reviewing potential sites for further planting opportunities, initially looking at Aberbargoed tip as a site where we can not only plant more trees, but also help us to enhance our natural environment to improve biodiversity. We have also increased the number of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points throughout the borough.

We've worked with partners to unlock former industrial or other brownfield sites such as the new housing development at the Windsor Colliery Site, Abertridwr, and reviewed our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan helping to make us more resilient to climate changes.

We have drafted a Waste Strategy to help us to reduce, reuse and recycle more household waste, and achieve the Welsh Government statutory targets. We are consulting with our residents and will take their views on board when finalising the strategy as it is vital that we work together to achieve the targets.

Decarbonisation is becoming a consideration in everything we do as we strive to reduce our carbon footprint and therefore enabling our environment to become greener.

What went well this year and why

The development and implementation of a Waste Strategy shows how we will work with our residents to reduce, reuse and recycle household waste.

In its current waste strategy 'Beyond Recycling' (2021), the Welsh Government set statutory targets of recycling a minimum of 64% of waste by 2019/20, and 70% of waste by 2024/25, with the ultimate aim of achieving 100% recycling by 2050. Welsh Government indicate that they will put in place further minimum statutory recycling targets for Local Authorities beyond 2025, potentially at a level of 80% by 2033.

We have developed a Waste Strategy for Caerphilly based on five strategic objectives that sets out how we will work with our residents to help us to reduce, reuse and recycle more household waste. Endorsed by Cabinet in July 2023, the draft Waste Strategy sets out the strategic direction and longer-term plan to ensure the council meets and exceeds its statutory performance targets, while being realistic about the timescales and resources required to meet these ambitions and deliver the changes required.

Under each of these objectives there are a series of actions that will be delivered. These include the introduction of pre-sort requirements and a trial booking system at Household Recycling Centres, continuing to collaborate with partner organisations in the promotion of repair and reuse, the introduction of new a recycling collection service aligned to Welsh Government's Blueprint, a reduction in the frequency of residual waste collections and exploring options to introduce a fleet of ultra-low emission vehicles.

During 2023/24 Working Groups undertook a number of activities to achieve quick wins in various aspects of the service including a new enforcement protocol, a pre-sort stipulation at Household Recycling Centres, development of a digital solution and Workplace Recycling Regulations.

To help us to achieve the ambitions set out in the strategy, the Council and its residents will need to work differently and together as it is clear that we cannot do this alone, and that a collective effort is required. In January 2024 Cabinet endorsed an in-depth 12-week consultation period that ran from 5th February to 30th April to allow residents and other stakeholder groups the opportunity to help shape the proposals within the final version of the waste strategy.

Residents were invited to give their views in a variety of ways included a survey, a dedicated edition of Newslines, informal face-to-face drop-in sessions at libraries and other community venues, and 'pop up' opportunities held in supermarkets and other locations across the county borough.

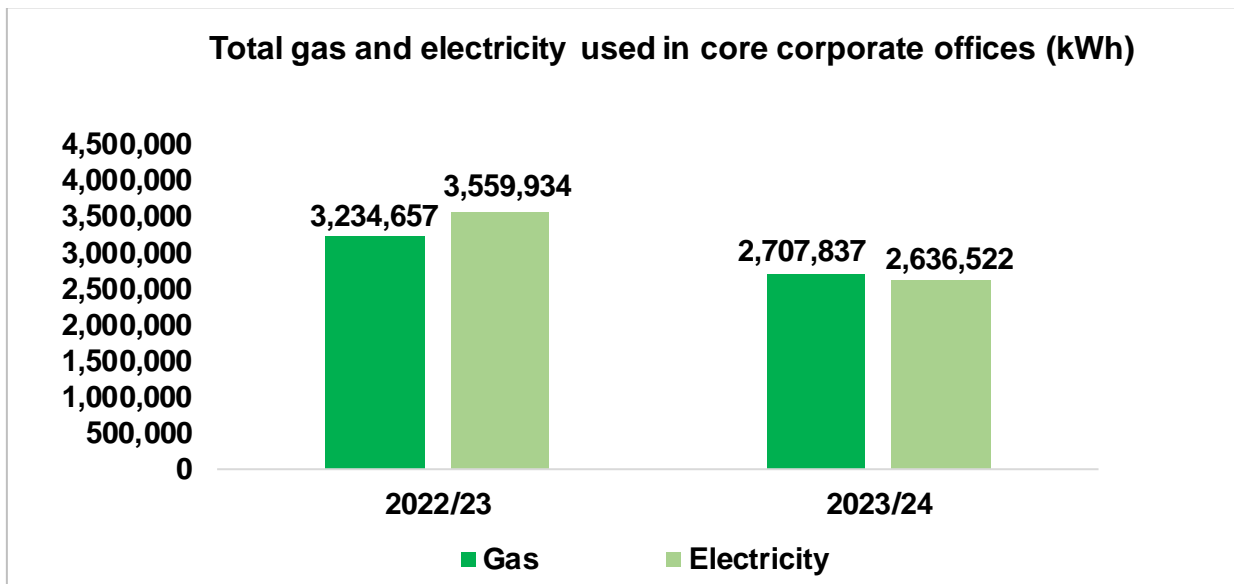
The consultation findings will offer some initial operational recommendations to help mitigate the public impact of some of the proposals and will help us to develop appropriate next steps in shaping the final draft of the waste strategy for Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council consideration during Summer 2024.

Turning to our commitment to making Caerphilly County Borough Council a net zero carbon organisation, our Decarbonisation Strategy and accompanying Action Plan was approved in 2020 and contained 122 actions that will help us to achieve this target by 2030. The

Decarbonisation Action Plan was reviewed over 2023/24 and updated to reflect progress. As a result of this the number of actions reduced from 122 to 76. Of these 76 actions, 12 have been completed, 31 are making good progress, 26 are making reasonable progress and 7 have not yet started.

We have established baselines for each Service Area, commitments to include carbon considerations in all major decision making and procurement processes, the development of a programme of skills development and a continuation of the work to develop specific renewable energy and offsetting projects. In line with one of the recommendations, working groups were established to drive forward the work under 4 pillars – Reduce, Produce, Offset and Buy. Each section of the action plan is being owned and driven by the respective working group and will be live documents, reported on annually each November.

We have seen a reduction in the total amount of electricity and gas used in our core offices compared to last year. The amount of CO2 generated from electricity reduced from 931,100.74 kgCO2e in 2022/23 to 724,672.86 kgCO2e this year, and the amount of CO2 generated from gas reduced from 691,052,12 kgCO2e last year to 577,145.47 kgCO2e in 2023/24.



We have installed Photovoltaic (PV's) panels on the roofs of 63 buildings. In some instances, these are small demonstration arrays on schools, but the authority has also installed larger arrays to good effect and is currently investigating its collective non-domestic roof space for medium sized PV arrays generating renewable energy from these schemes.

We are certified as Bronze level Carbon Literate Organisation and during the last year 39 of our officers completed Carbon Literacy training. The only other authorities in Wales to achieve this certified level are Monmouthshire and Newport. New Carbon Literacy courses will be launched in 2024 are currently under development.

The courses will be accredited by the Carbon Literacy project, and they have a focus on numeracy within Carbon Literacy and will support residents and Council officers in understanding the impact of their actions and decision making on their emissions. These courses will support the continued building of knowledge, understanding and skills across the Council.

We aim to reduce energy consumption in all our existing buildings and any of our new builds. We will explore options to use modern methods of construction that help to reduce CO₂ emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. For example, the new Caerphilly Leisure & Well-Being Hub design will be energy efficient and will include a proposal for a green roof to be part of the building. There will be a landscaping plan, biodiversity management plan, and proposed off-site compensatory tree planting to comply with Planning Policy Wales. It is also proposed that the carpark will include a number of Electric Vehicle charging points.

Through the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, decarbonisation has begun to be woven into business cases for decision making, with assessments of emissions included within the proposals for new initiatives. Projects within this programme are identifying opportunities for transforming services including Fleet, Home to School Transport, Leisure Centres and the wider asset management and third party spend of the organisation. By including decarbonisation considerations in these projects, we will be able to directly influence the areas of our organisational footprint that account for our operational emissions and the largest areas of our supply chain emissions.

The number of Electric Vehicles sites throughout the borough has increased as we have delivered Phase 2 of the Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure and are now in active use providing a network of charge points for residents, businesses and visitors of the county borough. We are reviewing our fleet and are working on the development of a vehicle replacement strategy which will facilitate the transition of the fleet to Ultra-low-emission vehicle (ULEV).

As part of the Caerphilly 2035 Place Making Plan, the Caerphilly Interchange will be a new public transport and active travel interchange that will create a safe, integrated, sustainable and accessible new public transport interchange at Caerphilly. The design work has progressed to RIBA Stage 4 with the planning application receiving consent in February 2024. Complementary transport, traffic, parking and active travel studies are also being undertaken to support the aspirations of the Interchange project and encourage a modal shift towards public transport, cycling and walking.

As part of promoting and exploring green energy opportunities for the council, communities, and businesses, the Cwm lfor solar farm project, a 20MW solar farm development received planning permission in May 2024. We will now consider options for the next phase of the project.

Funding has been received through grant opportunities to examine the potential for Hydrogen in the borough using Coed Top Reed Bed Facility as an ethical water source. Early high-level feasibility has shown the project to be very viable and further funding is being sought to take the project forward. There is potential to produce 10MW of hydrogen to fuel larger fleet vehicles owned by CCBC and other Councils within the region as well as the potential to supply to a nearby injection point owned by Wales & West Utilities (WWU).

The authority has undertaken a review of its capacity to generate hydroelectricity from rivers and streams on Council owned land. To date there is limited opportunity to progress projects although Cwmcarn Forest has been identified as offering some opportunity to generate electricity for onsite use at the visitor centre. An assessment has been commissioned to determine costs and potential payback for the scheme. It is estimated that a 27kW turbine

could be installed onsite, which would produce at least half of the visitor's centre annual electricity requirements.

We have a local arrangement in place at Bryn Quarry where council collected food waste is converted into green energy via an anaerobic digester. Discussions have begun with the Bryn Group to identify opportunities, with an initial study being initiated to review options. This has included assessing the best route for any hardwire, to identify any land studies or further ecological studies that may be required.

There are numerous opportunities for renewable energy developments across the borough. Developments can help to support local and national net zero and decarbonisation objectives and improve the natural amenity of the county borough. However, the adverse burden on the host communities should be recognised by developers and should be compensated by long-term and sustainable Community Benefit Contributions. So, we have written Community Benefit Contributions Guidance for projects and developments with the potential for significant community impact which was agreed by Cabinet in February 2024. It recognises the need for such guidance given the numerous potential opportunities for major projects and developments including low carbon energy developments such as wind, solar, hydro-electric and hydrogen and potentially, decommissioning and remedial projects. The guidance is intended for developers seeking to work with, harness and use the resources of the county borough and to ensure that communities derive the maximum benefit from hosting such developments in their locality through the provision of direct voluntary community benefits.

To protect and enhance our natural environment to improve biodiversity and make us more resilient to climate changes We have reviewed our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan (LFRMSaAP) which includes updated guidance and links to other sources of information to help people to prepare for flooding, stay safe during flooding, become resilient to flooding and recover quickly and safely from flooding. The draft strategy was taken to Stage 1 public consultation between 27th June and 28th July 2023 and Stage 2 public consultation between 22nd January and 4th March 2024. The Draft Strategy was then approved by Cabinet on 20th March 2024. The Strategy will be submitted to Welsh Government for ratification in 2024/25. In line with the Welsh Government National Strategy, the updated LFRMSaAP confirms our commitment to Natural Flood Management and Nature Based Solutions wherever suitable.

We continue to work with partners to unlock former industrial or other brownfield sites where financially viable. An example of this is the proposal by United Welsh for 152 new homes on Windsor Colliery Site, Abertridwr which was approved by our planning committee in August 2023. Planning permission was granted for this major housing development, and it will be supported by the Housing Investment Fund. The homes will be built to high levels of energy efficiency, as part of the commitments to reduce our carbon footprint and provide homes that are more cost effective for our residents to live in. It is proposed that there will be three areas of public open space together with improved pedestrian and cycling links to the wider footpath network surrounding the site.

The Council are supporting Keep Wales Tidy in their Urban Long Forest project which is currently in development phase and will identify areas of the borough suitable for improvements to green infrastructure through hedgerow planting. This project also has the possibility of the development of a tree nursery to further support the ambitious tree planting targets of the Council and provide locally sources, native trees.

The 'Nature isn't Neat' approach has continued this year. By letting areas of grassland grow, more wildflowers are left to flower for longer, providing a habitat for wildlife and pollinating

insects like bees and butterflies. Allowing plants to grow longer, bigger roots mean they store more carbon in the soil and help to tackle climate change. This also creates more air in the soil, helping reduce the impact of flooding. Where possible, meadow areas will remain unmown into the summer. However, areas around paths and road junctions will be mown frequently to maintain safety and access. Recreation areas will still be maintained regularly, and patches mown for play and picnics.

As parks and verges have been mown frequently for decades, they are currently lacking many meadow wildflower species. Creating a natural meadow is a process that can take several years of allowing more flowers to set seed and removing cuttings when mown. Over time they will become more diverse and colourful. This project is part of a series of programmes to be delivered under the Gwent Green Grid Partnership Project, which is supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas and is funded by the Welsh Government's Enabling of Natural Resources and Well-being Grant.

To improve the green energy credentials and energy efficiency of our housing stock, all Caerphilly Homes new build developments will use Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) including both 2 and 3D panelised systems. Oakdale and Ty Darran will be built using a panelised steel frame 2D system. Our homes in Bargoed, Crosskeys and Trethomas have a 2D timber frame system and our Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding Programme (TACP) homes a 3D system. Caerphilly Homes has produced a development strategy which clearly sets out the council's intentions in relation to developing new, low carbon, affordable homes. All Caerphilly Homes will be built to building regulations 2025 as a minimum and a fabric first approach will be adopted throughout the programme.

All homes developed by Caerphilly Homes will include the latest technology including combined hot water cylinders and air source heat pumps with MVHR's (Mechanical Heat Ventilation System's) thereby mitigating the impact of climate change, ensuring that homes are as efficient as possible and heating costs are minimal. The steel frame panelised system utilised on the Oakdale and Ty Darran developments is manufactured and built for use on Penallta Industrial Estate thereby resulting in new employment and training opportunities locally. A social value plan is being developed to cover both schemes and to ensure that the Council's investment in homes also acts as an economic catalyst.

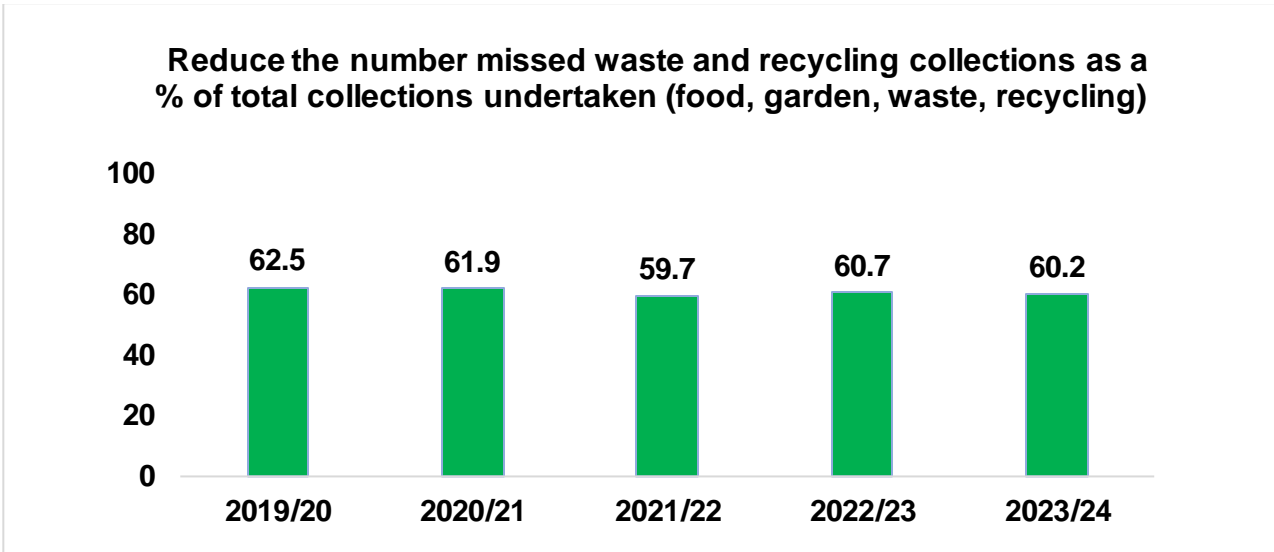
Caerphilly Homes is exploring development opportunities across the County Borough and is aiming to create pleasant and welcoming new developments that feature attractive and usable green spaces that create biodiversity net gain wherever possible. New homes are being designed to be as energy & carbon efficient as possible through a fabric-first approach and by utilising innovative in-home technologies to provide space heating and domestic hot water.

We have installed 480 Aico environmental sensors into properties; AICO environmental sensors offer numerous benefits for us as landlords and for our residents. As a landlord, these sensors help us monitor properties by providing real-time data on environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity, and air quality. This proactive approach helps prevent issues such as mould growth and structural damage, reducing maintenance costs and ensuring a healthy living environment. For our residents, the sensors enhance comfort and safety by alerting us to potential hazards and maintaining optimal living conditions. Overall, these sensors help us create a healthier, safer, and a more cost-effective property.

The major PAS2035 scheme undertaken was Maesteg Sheltered Housing comprising of 27 properties, increasing their Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) from low C's to High B's and A's. We have also completed our first retrofit scheme in a sheltered housing complex in Pentwynmawr and we have completed the remodelling of Britannia Court.

What did not go so well this year and why

We have historically performed well against Welsh Government waste targets, achieving 66.7% in 2017/18, which was significantly higher than the Welsh Government target at the time of 58%. However, over the last three years performance has declined and since 2019/20 we have performed below the Welsh Government target of 64%.

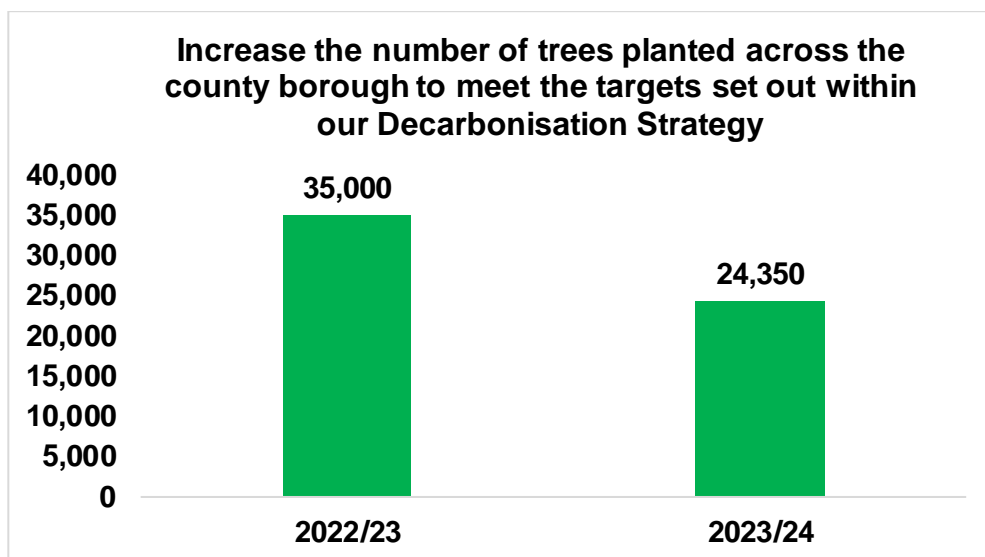


Over 2023/24 we have seen a gradual increase in this figure, however, at the end of the year the figure was still only 60.2%, which is still well below the Welsh Government target for next year of 70%. The implementation of our Waste Strategy will help us to reduce, reuse and recycle more household waste and will hopefully help us to achieve the target of 70% by the end of 2024/25.

We need to ensure the right balance is found between nature and recreation by hearing residents' feedback on how the 'Nature Isn't Neat' approach is being maintained in the local green spaces and we have used this feedback to help us improve and make change to the approach where appropriate. The no-mow May initiative received a number of negative comments, particularly in relation to Housing Estates and Parks, so as a result we needed to re-evaluate our approach to grass cutting. We successfully did this and obtained cross party-political agreement for a revised approach which commenced in March 2024.

During 2023/24 we used more electricity for our street lighting, and overall, we saw an increase in our CO₂ operational emissions raising to 23,150,345 kgCO₂e compared to 22,110,491 kgCO₂e in 2022/23. Improvements to data collection has led to more accurate data being reported and the inclusion of water related emissions in the operational total. Increase in emissions also due to increase in business travel, improved commuting methodology and an increase in agriculture emissions from increase in livestock. There is more about our Decarbonisation progress in our Self-Assessment 2023/24 and in the Decarbonisation Report published every November on our website.

A Cabinet commitment was given to set a target of planting 300,000 trees by 2030 where land availability allows. During 2023/24 we planted 24,350 new trees across the county borough, 3,000 of these were planted by volunteers across two sites in Wyllie and Parc Cwm Darran, helping us to achieve the targets set out within our Decarbonisation Strategy. Although this was less than the 35,000 trees planted in 2022/23, a total of 105,350 trees have been planted since the approval of the Decarbonisation Strategy. Land reviews have been undertaken and identified 10 housing sites which may be suitable for planting, three of these are waiting for ecological studies to check suitability for planting projects. Tips, initially looking at Aberbargoed, are being also being reviewed for further planting opportunities.



What difference are we making

To achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2030 it is fundamentally important we focus on measuring and understanding organisational emissions so that actions for emissions reductions are targeted and measurable. We need to involve everyone with the organisation and ensure that information and knowledge is shared, so we have a program of awareness raising and skills development, which will be key to ensuring that decarbonisation is embedded into the organisation's ways of working. The shift to working in ways compatible with achieving Net Zero Carbon requires a cultural and behavioural change throughout the organisation. Carbon literacy training and other skills development will provide the knowledge and understanding, whilst other strategic policies will determine the application of these skills and guide Team Caerphilly to embedding low carbon considerations.

Although we have had 3000 volunteers involved in tree planting this year, we would like to improve our communication in the future in the hope that we will see more people volunteering.

The number of Electric vehicle chargers (EV) available across the borough has increased improving the attractiveness of using electric vehicles. Providing more EV chargers will help to get more electric cars on the road, which will help to reduce CO₂ emissions.

Our refined approach to grass cutting is having a positive effect on biodiversity and the level of public interest stimulated, with both positive and negative feedback received. We have acted on customer feedback to improve our approach and we have also raised awareness of the issue and its importance.

Resources to deliver this objective

There are opportunities as well as challenges when looking at the options to replace vehicles within our fleet with Ultra-low-emission vehicle (ULEV) alternatives as this would require significant investment, as would the installation of infrastructure and resources to overcome the logistical challenge of the transition.

There is no corporate budget for maintaining the number of trees and hedgerows that have been planted, so there may be budget pressures in the future when we need to maintain them.

There are also cost pressures on us in relation to diseases such as ash dieback and invasive species, this will have an impact on our green infrastructure.









The total capital cost in relation to the Waste Strategy stands at £53.946m, however, this includes capital costs for replacement of existing vehicles so when this is removed the total capital funding requirement stands at £45.586m. There is also currently a revenue gap of £1.247m up to 2029/30 (thereafter it would be an annual gap of £0.577m to address each future year). This is the revenue position before any borrowing costs. Welsh Government have made it clear that they would not be able to provide any revenue support for the project but have offered assurances regarding capital support. Whilst the level of support is yet to be confirmed the assumption has been made that it would be a 60/40 split with Welsh Government providing 60%. Discussions with Welsh Government are ongoing.

The updated flood risk management strategy has been developed through application of the Welsh Government Flood Revenue Grant, which was hypothecated up to the 2023/24 financial year. Welsh Government have previously committed to the current level of the Flood Revenue Grant (£225k) being the new benchmark. However, from 2024/25 financial year onwards, the Flood Revenue Grant is being subsumed into the general Revenue Support Grant (RSG). For 2024/25, this grant will be ringfenced for use on flood risk management activities only. From 2025/26 onwards, the grant will no longer be ringfenced within the RSG. The total cost of delivering the Strategy has been estimated at £16.2M over the 6-year Strategy period, equating to an annual spend of £2.7M. The funding split is anticipated to be 77% Welsh Government Grant in Aid, 14% CCBC contributions and 9% CCBC contributions are estimated at an average of £389,308 per year and is considered affordable under the current budget apportionment. Business as Usual type activities, such as gully cleansing and routine maintenance activities are not included within these figures and are anticipated to continue with inflationary increases annually.

Section 3: Performance Indicator Performance 2023/24





Well-being objective 1: Enabling our children to succeed in education

Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
<p>Improve attendance for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>FSM Attendance 84.1%</p> <p>Primary Attendance 87%</p> <p>Secondary Attendance 79.8%</p>	<p>FSM Attendance 86.1%</p> <p>Primary Attendance 89.1%</p> <p>Secondary Attendance 82.3%</p>	<p>↑</p> <p>↑</p> <p>↑</p>
<p>Reduce or ensure the number of schools placed in a follow up category by Estyn remains low</p> <p>(lower figure is better)</p>	<p>1 Secondary school in special measures</p> <p>1 Primary school in special measures</p> <p>1 PRU in significant improvement</p> <p>3 Primary schools in Estyn Review</p>	<p>1 Secondary school in special measures</p> <p>2 schools in significant improvement</p> <p>2 schools in Estyn Review</p>	<p>↑</p>




Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
Reduce the percentage of 'at risk' NEET young people at the point of leaving compulsory education (lower figure is better)	2021/2022 2.8%	2022/2023 2.46% 46 pupils out of 1917	
Reduce the number of surplus places (lower figure is better)	2021/2022 Primary schools 17.15% Secondary schools 15.63%	Primary schools: 18.7% Secondary schools: 15.5%	 
Reduce the number of permanent exclusions and the number of fixed term exclusions (lower figure is better)	Academic Yr 2022/23 Permanent Secondary 37 Primaries 2 Fixed term Secondary 1769 Primaries 305	Academic Yr 2023/24 Permanent Secondary 26 Primaries 0 Fixed term Secondary 1180 Primaries 215	 
Increase the percentage of attendance of all pupils (higher is better)	Sep 22 - Mar 23: Secondary 86.8% Primary 91.1%	Sep 23 - Mar 24: Secondary 88.1% Primary 92.3%	
People that achieve local accreditation and national accreditation (higher accreditation)	Local Accreditation 72% National Accreditation: 5.70%	Local Accreditation 72% National Accreditation: 7.8%	 

Well-being objective 2: Enabling our residents to thrive

Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
<p>How many referrals have been received in adult services in the year.</p> <p>The number that has proceeded to assessment in the year.</p> <p>(lower figure is better)</p>	<p>7614</p> <p>7651</p>	<p>7607</p> <p>7014</p>	<p>↑</p> <p>↑</p>
<p>Total number of children on the child protection register (CPR)</p> <p>(lower figure is better)</p>	<p>198</p>	<p>140</p>	<p>↑</p>
<p>% of Child Protection conferences and reviews on time</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>97%</p>	<p>96%</p>	<p>↓</p>
<p>Total number of children looked after (CLA)</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>467</p>	<p>472</p>	<p>↑</p>
<p>Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) being supported in the year.</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>↑</p>
<p>Increase the number of new homes built directly or in partnership</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>149</p> <p>88 Affordable housing</p>	<p>↑</p>

Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
		13 Low-Cost Housing ownership 48 Privately owned	
Continue to expand in-house children's residential care and supported accommodation options (higher figure is better)	9 beds	10 beds	
The amount of savings (£) to parents through funded childcare places. (higher is better)	£4,879,708	£6,162,900	
The increased number and percentage take up of Flying Start childcare places (higher figure is better)	401	1298	
Number of residents who were assisted with the hardship fund (higher figure is better)	0 (new initiative)	536	

Well-being objective 3: Enabling our communities to thrive




Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
Increase the healthy life expectancy of Caerphilly residents (higher figure is better)	2020-22 76.7 yrs. Males 80.5 yrs. Females	Data not available at time of publishing*	
Increase the percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/access the facilities and services they need (higher figure is better)	2021/22 85%	Data not available at time of publishing*	
Reduce the percentage/number of people who are lonely (lower is better)	2022/23 10%	Data not available at time of publishing*	
Reduce the number missed waste and recycling collections as a % of total collections undertaken (food, garden, waste, recycling) (lower figure is better)	2022/23 0.06%	0.09%	
Cleanliness standards within our streets to meet national standards (higher figure is better)	2022/23 100%	96.9%	
Increase the overall number of visitors to our sport facilities and country parks (higher figure is better)	2022/23 8099	10794	
Increase resident satisfaction with their local environment or community (higher figure is better)	2021/22 88%	Data not available at time of publishing*	

[*Home - InfoBaseCymru](#)

Well-being objective 4: Enabling our economy to grow

Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
Increase the number of jobs created (net impact across the region) (higher is better)	198 residents supported into employment	263 residents supported into employment	↑
Reduce the number of economically inactive people (higher is better)	January 2023 – April 2024 SPF data - W34 from project inception in	205 people supported (start January 2023)	↑
Increase the number of people supported to engage in job-searching and receiving support to gain employment (higher figure is better)	198 residents supported into employment	263 residents supported into employment	↑
Improve our economic performance as defined through the UK competitiveness index (higher score better but ranking lower is better) Source Appendix 4 Report (cforic.org)	2019 79.3 Ranked 345	2023 80.8 Ranked 335	↑
Increase the proportion of the working age population with an NVQ Level 4 or above, equivalent qualification. (higher figure is better) source ONS 2021	2021 Census 25.3%	N/A	
Improve the average wage across the county borough relative to Wales/UK – (higher figure is better) Source Office for National Statistics Gross median weekly pay - ONS	2022 502	2023 530	↑

Well-being objective 5: Enabling our environment to be greener

Priority Indicators	Baseline (previous years)	Performance (2023/2024)	Direction
<p>Increase the % of municipal waste collected by local authorities and prepared for reuse and/or recycled, including source segregated biowastes that are composted or treated biologically in another way</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>2022/23 Yearly: 61.94%</p>	<p>2023/24 Yearly: 59.54%</p>	
<p>Increased the number of net zero homes built by Caerphilly Homes and its RSL partners</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>Requested from Housing</p>	<p>Requested from Housing</p>	
<p>Increase the number of trees planted across the county borough to meet the targets set out within our Decarbonisation Strategy</p> <p>(higher figure is better)</p>	<p>35,000 trees planted in 2022/2023</p>	<p>24,350 new trees planted 2023/24</p>	
<p>Reduce our CO2 operational emissions</p> <p>(lower figure is better)</p>	<p>2022/2023 22,110,491 kgCO2e</p>	<p>2023/24 21,271,509 kgCO2e</p>	

Section 4: How to contact us

Your views and opinions on the content of our reports and plans are important to us. We welcome your input so that we can continue to provide meaningful information that helps inform you of the service focus, ensuring that we are working on the things that are important to making a difference to you, our citizens, and our communities.

You can contact us by:

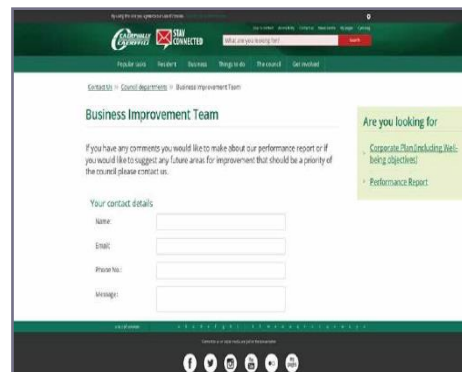
Email: BIT@caerphilly.gov.uk or via the Council Performance webpage and follow the instructions on screen.

Alternatively, please contact:

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You can contact us via social media.



This document is also available in different languages and formats upon request.

Further information can also be found on our website: www.caerphilly.gov.uk.