



C O U N C I L S U M M O N S

To all Members of Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

to be held at 2.00 pm on

8 January 2025

in the

**MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT
& MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**ALL MOBILE TELEPHONES TO BE SWITCHED TO SILENT FOR THE
DURATION OF THE MEETING**

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--- A G E N D A ---

PART A

1. Mayor's Announcements
2. Leader's Announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Public Question Time

Questions must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services democratic.services@npt.gov.uk no later than noon on the working day prior to the meeting. Questions must relate to items on the agenda. Questions will be dealt with in a 10 minute period.

PART B

5. Annual Presentation to Council from South Wales Police
6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 25/26 (Pages 5 - 20)
7. Corporate Plan Annual Report 23/24 (Pages 21 - 110)
8. Establishment of a Modernisation Group (Pages 111 - 116)
9. Governance and Audit Committee- Appointment of Voting Lay Member (Pages 117 - 120)

PART C

10. Notice of Motion under Section 10 of Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) the Council's Constitution

Notice of Motion:

Proposed by Cllr Nathan Goldup John.

Seconded by Cllr Laura Williams.

The profit made from natural resources in Wales should be no different than that of Scotland. Revenue generated from the Crown Estate in Wales was valued at over £600m at the end of 2022, this has grown since. The revenue generated by this asset directly flows into the UK Treasury.

This money, especially in these times of uncertainty, could be used to help create well-paid green jobs, further research and development solutions in all sectors and work to bring down domestic energy costs. Noting the opportunity we have here with the development of the Celtic Freeport, there could be benefit to the local community by devolving the Crown Estate.

Profits made from Wales' natural resources should be kept in Wales to boost our economy. The revenue from Scottish assets go straight to the Scottish Government and we should be no different, here in Wales.

This Council should support the campaign to devolve management of the Crown Estate and assets in Wales to the Welsh Government and that funds raised from this

used to support the social needs of the Welsh people.

Accordingly it is resolved that:

- *the Leader of Neath Port Talbot Council write to the appropriate Secretary of State and the First Minister of Wales outlining our support to persuade Westminster on the terms included in this motion to devolve the Crown Estate as a matter of urgency.*

11. Questions from Members, with Notice, under Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules
12. Urgent Items
Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).



Chief Executive

**Civic Centre
Port Talbot**

Monday 23 December 2024

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

8th JANUARY 2025

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

SECTION A – MATTERS FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED – ALL

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2025/26

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26 which needs to be adopted by Council by 31st January 2025. It also makes proposals relating to discretionary areas within the proposed scheme.

Background

2. Council Tax Benefit was replaced in April 2013 by a Council Tax Reduction Scheme more commonly known as Council Tax Support.
3. As Members are aware the UK Government funding for the scheme was reduced by approximately 10% as compared to their funding level for the previous Council Tax Benefit Scheme. However, since 2013/14 the Welsh Government has continued to provide an additional £22m on top of its base funding of £222m to enable financial support up to 100% of the council tax bill to be made available for eligible claimants.
4. The Welsh Government made regulations for a national scheme for Council Tax support. However, the obligation remains upon the Council to “adopt a scheme”.

Current Position

5. The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme ends on 31st March 2025 and a new scheme must be adopted for 1st April 2025.
6. As Members are aware the Council provides Council Tax support to approximately 15,300 households within the County Borough, of which approximately 12,450 receive full support and pay no Council Tax. The remaining 2,850 households receive partial support to pay for their Council Tax.
7. Although the Local Government Finance Act gives Welsh Ministers discretion to allow Welsh local authorities to determine the contents of schemes themselves, the Welsh Government have approved an extension to the existing national framework for the provision of Council Tax Support in Wales. This is to avoid what has been termed a "postcode lottery" whereby eligibility for a Council Tax reduction and the size of the Council Tax reduction for particular groups could be different in different council areas. This extension provides up to a "100% support scheme" for 2025/26.
8. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme in Wales is set by Regulations made under Schedule 1B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as inserted by the Local Government Finance Act 2012). On 26th November 2013 the Wales Government approved the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
9. The scheme is subject to the annual up-rating of certain figures used by authorities to assess individual customers' entitlement and is also subject to periodic technical adjustments. These amendments are contained in The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.
10. These regulations have been laid in Welsh Government on the 10th December 2024 and are due to be debated/approved by Welsh Government in January 2025. It is proposed that the Council also

adopts the proposed changes that will be made by the Welsh Government, which include:

Upating figures for 2025-26

Personal allowances in relation to working age, pensioner age, carer and disabled premiums will be updated as will non-dependent deductions.

Additional Amendments

In addition to upating the financial figures, there are also a number of other amendments to the 2013 CTRS Regulations, which make provision for the treatment of the following, which ensure the 2013 Regulations remain up-to-date and fit for purpose.

Use of Universal Credit data as an intention to claim

The Welsh Government consulted between 12 March and 6 June 2024 on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme with the aim of making it easier to access and simpler to administer.

The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with the proposal that a person in receipt of Universal Credit may be recognised by a local authority as having made an application for a council tax reduction. The proposed amendments will ensure that where a person is in receipt of Universal Credit, and where relevant information in relation to that entitlement has been shared with a local authority, then that authority may treat that as an intention to apply for CTRS and to process that application in accordance with the 2013 CTRS Regulations.

The Department for Work and Pensions has laid regulations to ensure that displaced persons arriving in the UK from conflict in Sudan are able to meet the residency conditions for income-related, disability and carer benefits.

The proposed amendments will allow displaced persons from Sudan access to the CTRS in Wales.

The consequential amendment is being made to ensure that this group of people are not exempt from those counted as persons not being in Great Britain. The same changes have been made to the scheme in England.

Displaced Persons from Israel, Palestine or Lebanon

The Department for Work and Pensions has laid regulations to ensure that displaced persons arriving in the UK from conflict in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories or Lebanon are able to meet the residency conditions for income-related, disability and carer benefits.

The proposed amendments will allow displaced persons from Israel, Palestine and Lebanon access to the CTRS in Wales.

The consequential amendment is being made to ensure that this group of people are not exempt from those counted as persons not being in Great Britain. The same changes have been made to the scheme in England.

Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation payments

The Department for Work and Pensions has laid regulations to ensure that the Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme is added to the list of compensation schemes, for which payments are disregarded as capital for the calculation of income-related benefit entitlements. This will ensure compensation payments, including those paid to the family members of victims of terrorist attacks in Israel, are disregarded indefinitely as capital when calculating entitlements to income-related benefits.

The proposed amendments will ensure that no CTRS applicant living in Wales is negatively impacted because they have received a payment made under the Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme.

Removal of requirement to pay Class 2 National Insurance Contributions

From 6 April 2024 self-employed people with profits above £12,570 (the lower profits threshold) are no longer liable to pay Class 2 NIC's and instead are treated as having paid Class 2 NIC's. The Department for Work and Pensions has laid regulations to make various changes to legislation to remove references to Class 2 NIC contributions, including to the CTRS in England, to remove references to the lower profits threshold.

The proposed amendments will ensure that the provision mirrors the changes made in England to omit references to the Lower Profits Threshold for National Insurance Contributions.

The suggested changes will bring Wales in line with the adjustments made and implemented in England.

Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession

From 16 February 2024, the Home Office changed the name of the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) to the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC). This concession allows individuals who were previously granted leave to stay in the UK as the spouse or partner of a British citizen or someone settled in the UK, and whose relationship has broken down due to domestic abuse, to apply for three months 'Leave Outside the Rules', which allows recourse to public funds. Amendments to the CTRS Regulations will be required to change references from DDVC to MVDAC.

The proposed amendments will ensure that they reflect the updated title of the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession.

Minor technical and consequential amendments

A further minor technical amendment has been made to update a previous reference in relation to statutory parental bereavement pay.

Integrated Impact Assessment

11. The Welsh Government has previously compiled an Equalities Impact Assessment following its consultation. A local Equalities Impact Assessment has previously been carried out by this Council in 2012 and 2013. Those consultations assisted the Council in satisfying the public sector equality duty as set out in the Equality Act. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix 1, has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.
12. The approved national scheme, within the Prescribed Requirements Regulations, provides some limited discretion for the Council to apply additional elements that are more generous than the national scheme.
13. As the Welsh Government has introduced a standard scheme other than for 3 discretionary items as set out below they have determined there is no need for each Council to carry out a separate consultation process in relation to individual schemes. This is provided that there is no proposed change in relation to the discretionary elements. It is confirmed that there are no proposed changes to the discretionary elements for the 2025/26 Council Scheme as set out below.
 - (a) The ability to backdate the application of council tax reduction with regard to late claims prior to the standard period of three months before the claim;

that there is no increase in the backdated period for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard 3 months contained within the prescribed scheme.

- (b) The ability to increase the standard extended reduction period of 4 weeks given to persons after they return to work where they have previously been receiving a council tax reduction that is to end as a result of their return to work;

that there is no change to the standard 4 week extended reduction period contained within the Prescribed Scheme.

- (c) Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and War Widower's Pensions which is to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant;

The National Scheme provides for the first £10 per week of this income to be disregarded.

to continue to disregard the above-mentioned pensions income in full.

Financial Implications

- 14. This Council's total budget for Council Tax Support in 2024/25 is £20.784 million. The budget for 2025/26 will be determined by Cabinet in March 2025.

Legal Implications

- 15. The Council is obliged to make a Council Tax Reduction Scheme under the Prescribed Requirements Regulations. Although the legislation provides for a default scheme to apply in the absence of the Council making a scheme, the Council is nevertheless under a statutory duty to adopt its own scheme, even if it chooses not to apply any of the discretionary elements.

Risk Implications

- 16. The Council needs to manage the cost of Council Tax Support within its budget. The amount of Welsh Government support is provided on a fixed basis rather than the demand-led basis of

support to council tax benefit. Any variation in Council Tax support costs will have to be met by this Council.

Recommendations

17. Having given due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment. It is recommended that Council approve the following in relation to establishing its Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2025/26 financial year:

(a) Adopts the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 as further amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 and any subsequent amendments that may be required by legislation in relation to The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.

(b) Approves the retention of the existing discretionary elements in relation to the Prescribed Scheme:

- (i) That no increase in the backdated period for all claimants be applied from the standard 3 months contained in the Prescribed Scheme.
- (ii) That no increase in the extended reduction period for all claimants be applied from the standard 4 weeks currently contained within the Prescribed Scheme.
- (iii) Apply a 100% disregard for War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and War Widower's Pensions for all claimants.

Reason for Proposed Decision

18. To establish a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26 in line with legislation and regulations.

Implementation of Decision

19. The decision is for immediate implementation.

Background Documents

20. Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 as amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (“Uprating Regulations”), amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (“Uprating Regulations”) and further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. Further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. Further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. Further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. Further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. Further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Further amended by The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.

21.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Impact Assessment – First Stage

Officer Contact

For further information on this report item, please contact:

Mr Huw Jones – Director of Finance

E-mail: h.jones@npt.gov.uk

Mr Stuart Mason – Principal Benefits Officer

E-mail: s.c.mason@npt.gov.uk

Impact Assessment - First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25.

The Welsh Government has previously consulted and put in place a universal scheme across Wales for the provision of financial support to the most financially disadvantaged citizens to help them pay their Council Tax. Since 2013/14 the Welsh Government has provided £244m to the 22 Local Authorities in Wales to adopt a standard scheme of financial support. This is to avoid what has been termed a "postcode lottery" whereby eligibility for a Council Tax reduction and the size of the Council Tax reduction for particular groups could be different in different council areas. The continued extension of this scheme into 2025/26 provides up to a "100% support scheme" for eligible taxpayers. As in all years since 2013/14 Neath Port Talbot Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme (or support scheme) will be in line with the standard Welsh Government Scheme and does not propose any change to the 3 Discretionary elements of the scheme as are set out in paragraph 13 of the report.

Service Area: Council Tax/Benefits

Directorate: Strategy & Corporate Services

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users (council taxpayers)	X	
Staff	X	
Wider community	X	
Internal administrative process only		X

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age				X		<p>Council Tax is payable by people occupying non domestic properties. These include owner occupiers, tenants and owners of properties (if they are vacant). There are a number of exemptions and discounts available for council tax payers and these along with the Council Tax Support Reduction scheme are applied to each property/taxpayer in line with Government legislation and regulations.</p> <p>The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) set out in this report was consulted on by Welsh Government prior to its adoption in 2013/14. CTRS is provided to all eligible taxpayers to help them pay their Council Tax. This report shows that the cost to the Council exceeds the share of the £244m funding made available. The cost of the scheme has to be found from within the Council's total resources available. The Council Tax database does not identify the specific characteristics of taxpayers. All eligible taxpayers receive the appropriate financial support in line with the scheme's criteria and do not treat any people with protected characteristics any differently.</p>
Disability				X		
Gender Reassignment				X		
Marriage/Civil Partnership				X		
Pregnancy/Maternity				X		
Race				X		
Religion/Belief				X		
Sex				X		
Sexual orientation				X		

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language	X				H	Applications for support can be made in Welsh
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English	X				H	Applications for support can be made in Welsh

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity		X				
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.		X				

6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people	X		The scheme provides assistance to people on benefits and low income to help them pay their Council Tax. This is a continuation of a standard uniform scheme introduced by Welsh Government in 2013/14. In line with Regulations the council must determine annually before the end of January the Council Tax Reduction scheme that it will have in place for the next financial year i.e. 2025/26.
Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives	X		It assists to provide a sense of community and helps people live locally without having to be concerned about paying all or part of their Council Tax.
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative		X	The scheme has been in existence since 2013/14 and is proposed to continue unchanged in 2025/26. If the Welsh Government proposes any changes to the scheme they will be subject to full consultation.
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions		X	The Council is applying the standard scheme of financial support as provided by the Welsh Government
Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	X		It prevents people having tax arrears and having to pay their Council Tax when they are on the appropriate benefits and/or low incomes

7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	X
Reasons for this conclusion	
This is a continuation of the Council Tax Reduction scheme that has been in existence since 2013/14. In line with regulations the Council's is required to approve its scheme for the forthcoming financial year by 31 January of each year.	

A full impact assessment (second stage) is required	
Reasons for this conclusion	

	Name	Position	Date
Signed off by	Huw Jones	Director of Finance	11.12.24

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

8th January 2025

Report of Director of Strategy & Corporate Services

Mr N Daniel

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Corporate Plan Annual Report 2023/2024

Period: 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Corporate Plan “Reset, Review, Recover” Annual Report for the period: 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 to Council for adoption.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Report provides an account of progress made against the four well-being objectives and actions set out in the council’s Corporate Plan 2022/2027: “Recover, Reset, Renew” for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.
3. The report is required to meet statutory duties set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Part of the requirement asks councils to consider whether the well-being objectives remain relevant or whether changes to those objectives should be considered.
4. Following consideration, the well-being objectives remain relevant. However, the council’s three year aims have been reviewed and updated as part of the reset Corporate Plan 2024/2027: Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT, along with the introduction of 9 new transformation programmes for the remainder of the political term.
5. Following officer assessment of the work undertaken during 2023/2024, overall we have progressed well in delivering the work to contribute to the four well-being objectives. With over 60% of our aims currently being on






track to be delivered by 2027. For the aims off-track or with more work to be completed, actions plans have been included in recently launched strategies or further work included in 2024/2025 delivery plans.

Background

- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires all councils to set well-being objectives which seek to maximise the council’s contribution to the national well-being goals, whilst also embracing the sustainable development principle. The council is further required to report each year on the extent to which the well-being objectives it has set have been achieved.

Our progress and performance

- Across each of the four well-being objective there are 63 aims for which we planned to deliver improvements during 2023/2024. Of the 63 aims, 40 are currently on track. The table below provides a further breakdown against the well-being objectives, full explanation of progress can be found in Appendix 1: Corporate Plan Annual Report 2023/2024.

 Delivery against the aim is not on track.	2023/2024 Progress			
 Delivery against the aim is achieving and/or succeeding against its agreed targets	Total number of aims			
Well-being Objective 1	20	0	7	13
Well-being Objective 2	9	0	2	7
Well-being Objective 3	14	0	5	9
Well-being Objective 4	20	3	6	11

Some of our key achievements during 2023/2024 include:

- 2393 full day childcare places provided and 1463 children ages 3 and 4 accessed part-time childcare via the Childcare Offer;
- Launch of ‘Miss School, Miss Out’ campaign to support the improvement of attendance. From work already undertaken during the 2022/2023 academic year attendance figures have improved for both primary and secondary schools on 2021/2022 figures;







- Continued to significantly support residents and organisations struggling with cost of living;
- Launched the Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan 2024/2027: A Place To Call Home; in recognition of rising homelessness and lack of affordable housing;
- Established the Decarbonisation Energy and Climate Change (DECC) team within the Environment and Regeneration;
- Launched both the Culture and Heritage Strategies along with the Destination Management Plan, identifying priorities for long-term investment in Neath Port Talbot and managing sustainable conservation of our historic and natural environment.
- As a result of UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, launched the Business Growth and Innovation Fund and Local Business Priority Fund, with over £6 million of grants being offered to businesses. In addition, delivered 52 'Let's Talk Business' engagement events, to hear from and work with our local businesses to continue to drive forward the local economy; and
- Continued to progress Swansea Bay City Deal projects and the delivery of Celtic Freeport full business case.

It is recognised there is more work to do to:

- Lower the number of fixed and permanent exclusions in schools;
- Remodel home to school transport, with an emphasis on developing children and young people's independent and safe travel skills;
- Expand the range of foster carers, supporting children with the most complex needs;
- Further improve the approach to supporting adults with disabilities and complex needs;
- Ensure we establish a prioritised action plan for delivering on our Climate Change, decarbonisation and nature emergency priorities with a focus on reducing our energy consumption and costs; and
- Support residents and local supply chain with the Tata transition.

In addition to the qualitative data we use to monitor the delivery of the Well Being Objectives we have 48 Performance Measures that allow us to track progress made to date. Of these 48 measures, 18 are on track with comparable 2022/2023 data. 12 measures are included for monitoring as

they are new measures or do not have comparable measures. Finally, 8 of the performance measures either do not have data available or the data has not been collected / information is not yet available.

 Delivery against the aim is not on track.	2023/2024 Progress					
 Delivery against the aim is achieving and/or succeeding against its agreed targets	Total number of measures	Data not collected /not yet available				
Well-being Objective 1	9	1	2	2	4	0
Well-being Objective 2	13	2	0	2	5	4
Well-being Objective 3	16	4	0	2	6	4
Well-being Objective 4	10	1	2	0	3	4

The Corporate Plan Annual Report has been presented to the following committees.

- [Cabinet – 13th November 2024](#)
- [Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny – 28th November 2024](#)
- [Education, Skills and Well-being Scrutiny – 5th December 2024](#)
- [Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny - 6th December 2024](#)
- [Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny – 12th December 2024](#)

Comments and suggestions made at these meetings have been noted by officers, and will be considered in readiness for quarter 3 performance monitoring.

Financial Appraisal

8. The council’s net budget for 2023/2024 was £361m. The actual net expenditure, or outturn position for the council excluding schools, shows a net underspend of £0.94m after ring fenced reserves.

Integrated Impact Assessment

9. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment for the Corporate Plan Annual Report.

Valleys Communities Impact:

10. The Annual Report provides an update on the progress made in delivering projects to support valley communities.

Workforce Impact

11. The progress described in this report was achieved whilst the workforce responded to the increased demand in service need and the introduction of hybrid working.

Legal Impact

12. This Annual Report discharges duties in Section 3 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Risk Management

13. The Corporate Plan Annual Report must comply with provisions within Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Failure to produce a compliant report can lead to a Certificate of Non-Compliance by Audit Wales and statutory recommendations the council would be obliged to address. The risk of non-compliance is considered low as the Report follows the same format as previous years when a Certificate of Compliance has been achieved.

Consultation

14. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that Council adopts the Corporate Plan “Reset, Review, Recover” Annual Report for the period: 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.
16. It is recommended that the Leader of Council be given delegated authority to make such changes as may be needed to the Annual Report prior to publication, provided that such changes do not materially alter the content of the document considered by Council.

Reason for Proposed Decision

17. To meet the statutory requirements set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Implementation of Decision

18. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices

19. Appendix 1 –Corporate Plan “Reset, Review, Recover” Annual Report 2023/2024.

List of Background Papers

20. Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2022-2027: Recover, Reset, Renew

21. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Officer Contact

Noelwyn Daniel, Director of Strategy & Corporate Services

E-mail: n.daniel@npt.gov.uk

Caryn Furlow-Harris, Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support

E-mail: c.furlow@npt.gov.uk

Louise McAndrew, Corporate Strategic, Planning and Governance Officer

E-mail: l.mcandrew@npt.gov.uk



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

CORPORATE PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

RECOVER, RESET, RENEW

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

If you require this information in larger print or in an alternative format, please contact the
Corporate Policy Team : policy@npt.gov.uk

www.npt.gov.uk

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

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Foreword

The Corporate Plan Annual Report 2023-2024 demonstrates how the council has been able to continue to deliver quality services whilst under significant financial pressures.

We have witnessed more and more people seeking help and advice from both adult and children's social services and more people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness. Like the majority of council's across the country, post-Covid we saw a significant shift downwards in pupils regularly attending school coupled with an increase in behavioural related exclusions. We have worked hard with our schools and partner agencies to reverse these trends with much success, however, we acknowledge that there remains a lot more work to be done in both areas, not only to return to pre-Covid levels but with our drive and determination to exceed them.

These pressures on our council paired with ageing infrastructure and assets, and funding made available by Welsh Government in the last two years falling significantly short of what we need to respond to the needs and wants of our communities, means that we continue to face challenges.

The announcement by Tata Steel UK Ltd of a decarbonisation programme meaning a move to new technologies, adds a further strategic dimension to this sustainable landscape, plus an end of traditional steel making at Port Talbot and changes for many of its dedicated workforce and supply chains.

Whilst we have endured these challenges over the last few years we successfully secured a large amount of investment funding from both UK and Welsh Government to regenerate our communities. We have welcomed major projects that have the potential to grow a large number of sustainable jobs into future years, including the Freeport status for the port of Port Talbot.

As a major employer ourselves, we were delighted to be recognised for our work to drive forward the equality agenda and win Chwarae Teg's Fair Play Employer award. We were also one of eight UK councils - and the only one in Wales - to be shortlisted for the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Overall Council of the Year Award 2023. This recognition continues to drive the work we do.

As we move forward, we have taken the opportunity to take stock and refine the council's priorities within the Corporate Plan for 2024-2027, in light of the new context we are working within. We will have a more focused approach through 9 key transformation programmes, and some of the priorities originally outlined in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027: Recover, Reset, Renew will be included within delivery plans or other strategic plans.



COUNCILLOR STEVE HUNT,
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

“ Whilst there is no doubt that there are many challenges in front of us, as always we remain optimistic and ambitious for our county borough. ”

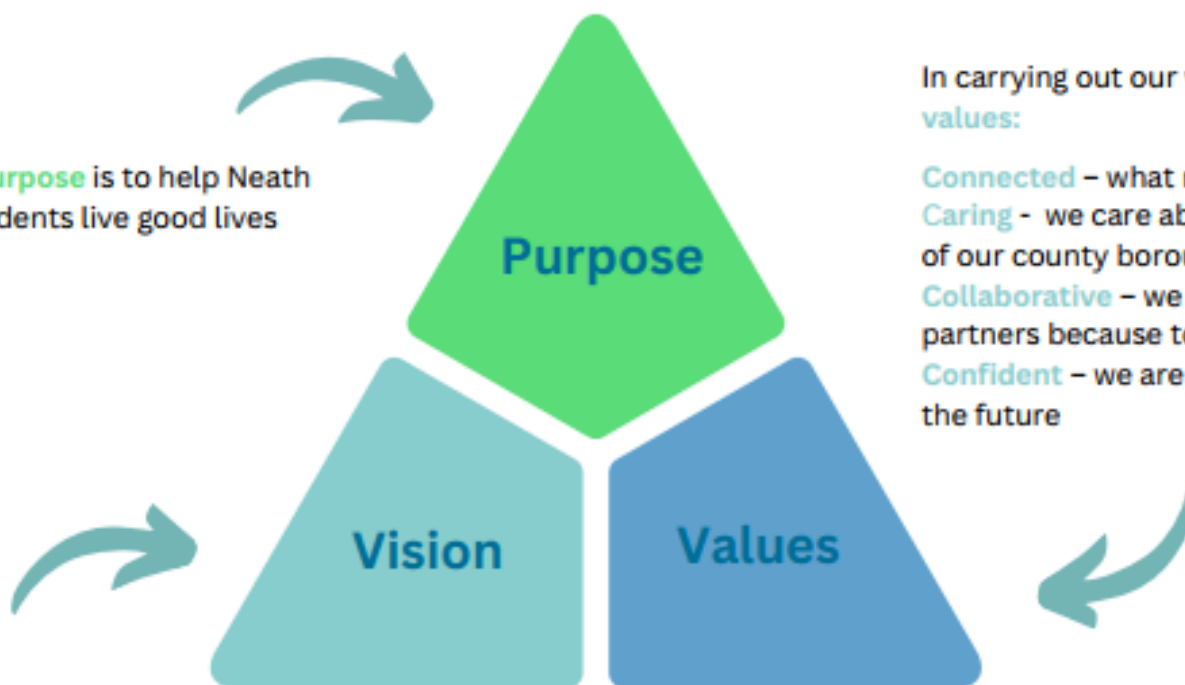
INTRODUCTION

The Corporate Plan Annual Report for 2023/2024 provides a well-balanced overview of the progress made by the council against each of the four well-being objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and takes into account our purpose, vision and values.

Neath Port Talbot Council’s Purpose, Vision and Values

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The council’s **purpose** is to help Neath Port Talbot residents live good lives



In carrying out our work we hold the following values:

- Connected** – what matters to you matters to us
- Caring** - we care about you, your life and the future of our county borough
- Collaborative** – we work with our citizens and partners because together we can achieve more
- Confident** – we are optimistic and confident about the future

Our **vision** is to give every child the best start in life; that every community is thriving and sustainable; that our environment, heritage and culture can be enjoyed by future generations; and that local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy.

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Report forms part of our statutory duty to report under the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

Whilst reviewing our progress for 2023/2024, and taking the decision to reset our Corporate Plan for 2024/2027, we reflected on our well-being objectives. We took feedback from the Let's Keep Talking campaign undertaken during 2023 into consideration and other impacting factors, and agreed that the well-being objectives are still relevant.

Our well-being objectives enable us to demonstrate the contribution we make to the seven national well-being goals. More detail on this can be found on page 7.


The Strategic Change Programme that sat within the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 set out a number of actions and measures to be delivered during 2023/2024, alongside our medium term aims and longer term ambitions.

Whilst the council has moved out of its recovery position as a result of the pandemic, there is still a legacy that can be felt with many of our services continuing to be stretched. This has been further impacted by the availability of funding, increasing energy prices and the cost of living crisis.

Our four well-being objectives

- All children get the best start in life
- All communities are thriving and sustainable
- Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations
- Local people are skilled and access high quality, green jobs


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**RECOVER,
RESET,
RENEW**

Corporate Plan
2022-2027

This document is also available in Welsh and Easy Read.



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU IN 2023/2024

During 2023/2024 we made a commitment to focus on five key areas:

Maintaining a clear focus on recovery from Covid-19.

As a result of Covid-19, the response period, and associated policies that emerged, there has been a higher volume of demand/need presenting in social services, housing, and education with an increase in the complexity of need. It is still not clear when the rise in demand/need will peak, nor the implications of any longer term impacts. As the council has many statutory duties to fulfil in relation to the people that have been impacted, it is crucial that we remained focused on our recovery work to avoid more cases escalating to a point of crisis when much more expensive solutions would need to be found.

Supporting our communities through the cost of living crisis.

At the beginning of the 2022-2023 financial year, we were already seeing signs of financial hardship across communities. The energy crisis and huge increase in inflation has meant that many more residents and businesses have experienced financial hardship. The council continues to play a significant role in making sure that individuals are aware of what financial support is available for those eligible, and the council has continued its partnership with Warm Wales, to assist those experiencing the greatest hardship, but are unable to seek help from other sources. Additional practical support has been provided through the re-purposing of over 30 council buildings to help people access a warm place and support; working with partners to promote all other forms of help and support available to those who need it; and putting an increased focus at community level to seek out those most vulnerable and to connect those to help and support near where they live.

Facilitating and Enabling Economic Growth - We are proud to be dealing with a growing portfolio of major economic development initiatives. These include: a £250 million proposed investment in an adventure resort in the Afan Valley; a £200 million proposed investment in a Global Centre for Rail Excellence in the Dulais Valley; the Celtic Freeport covering the ports of Port Talbot and Milford Haven which would attract seed capital of £25 million and potentially £0.5 billion in retained business rates for investment in hard and soft infrastructure over the programme life cycle; a £32 million investment programme through the UK Shared Prosperity and Multiply Funds: the ongoing delivery of the City Deal programme; together with the success with our Levelling Up Fund bids. The council has performed well in continuing to support these initiatives but will need to increase investment in its economic growth functions to secure the successful delivery of this portfolio and to maximise the benefits to local people and local supply chains, especially in wake of Tata Steel's decarbonisation plans for its plant at Port Talbot.

Delivering local and Welsh Government policy priorities. 2023/2024 saw the third year of the current Senedd term and the second year of the local government term. The Welsh Government has set out an extensive programme of policy commitments that will impact on councils. Through our work to achieve our well-being objectives we are meeting the requirements set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Socio-Economic Duty. The Neath Port Talbot Coalition also has its own policy priorities which are being progressed as part of the Corporate Plan's Strategic Change Programme.

Ensuring a sustainable council - There has been a material change to the council's operating environment over recent years. The much changed budget outlook, the workforce constraints and the pace of change combine to challenge the existing operating model. Over the medium term, the council will need to continue to pursue a robust strategy that will transform the way services and functions are delivered within a clearly defined framework of priorities, whilst also ensuring financial sustainability and good governance.

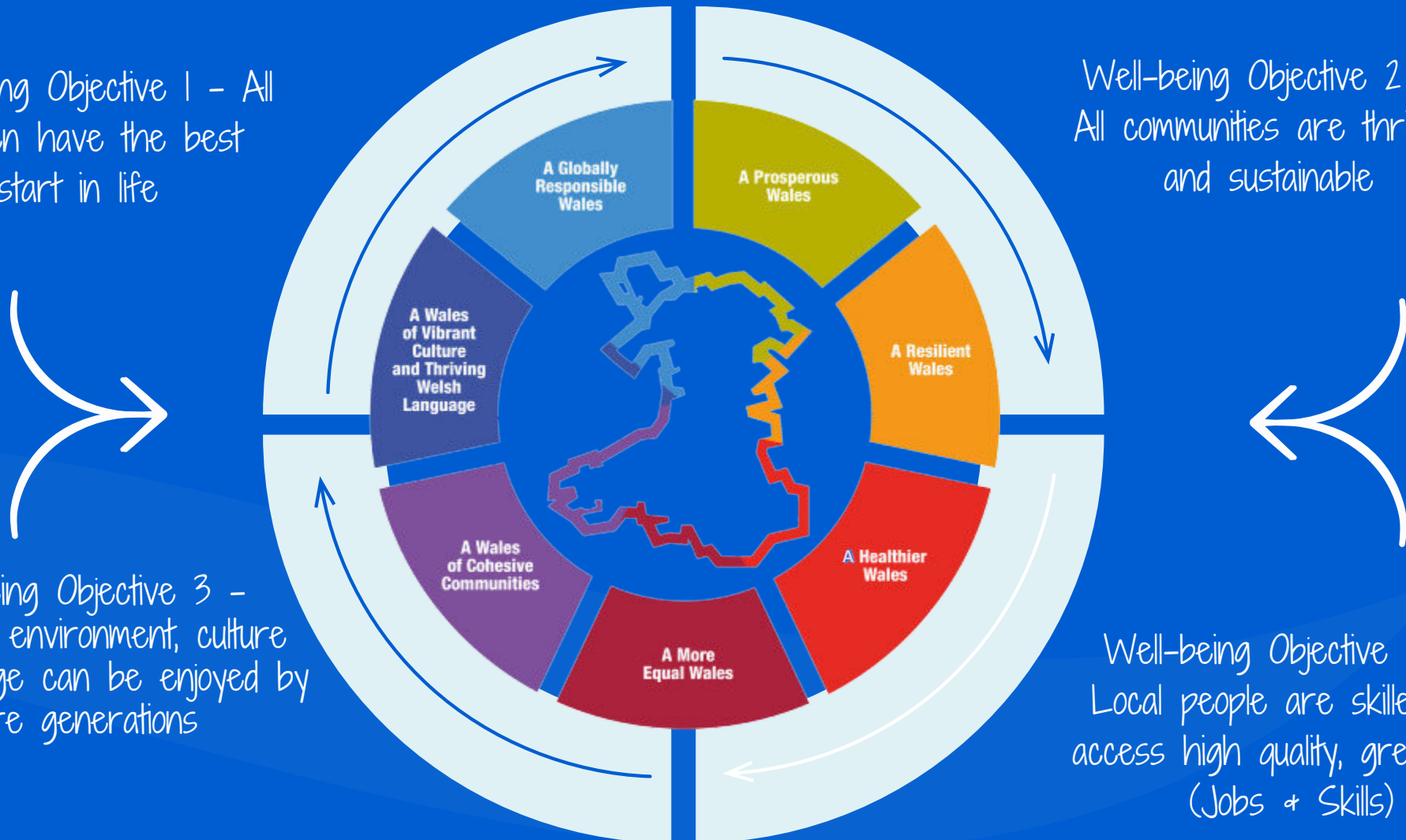
How our Well-being Objectives contribute to the National Well-being Goals

Progress achieved across our 4 well-being objectives cross-cut through the 7 national well-being goals

Well-being Objective 1 - All children have the best start in life

Well-being Objective 2 - All communities are thriving and sustainable

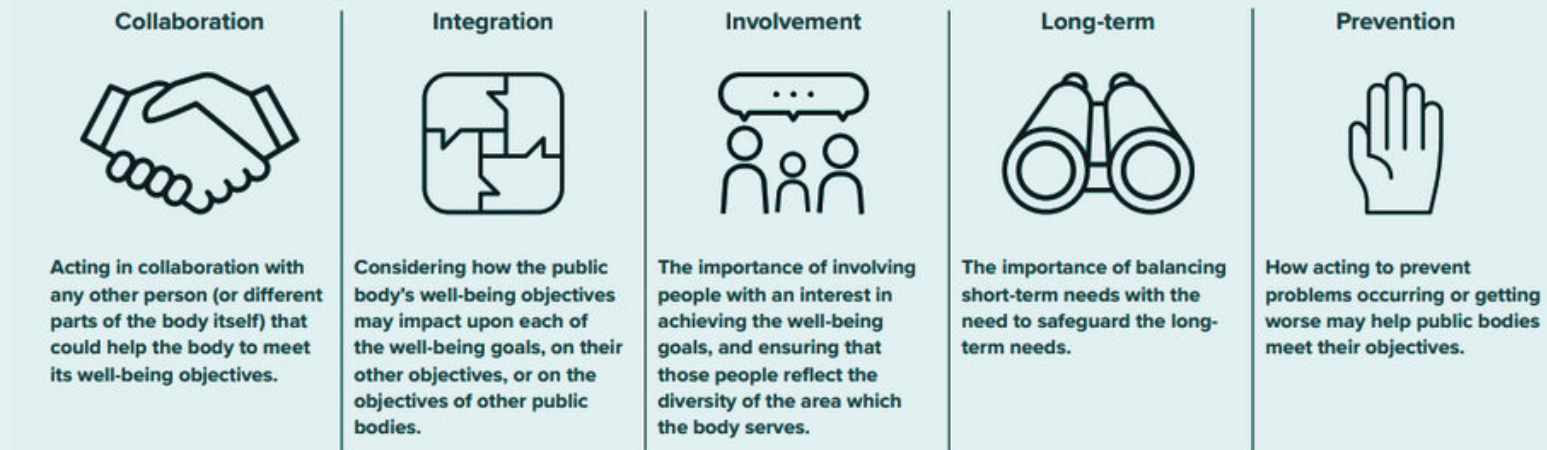
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Well-being Objective 3 - Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

Well-being Objective 4 - Local people are skilled and access high quality, green jobs (Jobs + Skills)

How our Well-being Objectives embed the Sustainable Development Principle



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The Act is designed to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with sustainable development principle. The work we do to achieve our corporate vision takes into account sustainable development principle and the five ways of working and is embedded across the council to contribute to the vision.

Strategic level - The initiation of the strategic change programme ensures we are embracing a ‘one council’ strategic approach to achieving the vision.

Corporate level - Realignment of corporate strategies to support the achievement of the vision and the delivery of the strategic change programme.

Operational level - Every service and function within the council has aligned their service recovery plans to maximise their contribution to achieving the vision that we have set.

Individual level - All employees feel valued and motivated and understand how they play a part in our strategic and operational approaches. Training and development is available for all employees, supporting the delivery of the corporate plan, focusing on the key priorities and making best use of the training resources available.

Well-being Objectives

The following pages provide an overview of progress and key achievements during 2023/2024.

1 All children have the best start in life - Summary

There has been significant progress made during 2023/2024 to work towards achieving the well-being objective of **'All children have the best start in life'**.

Progress continues with promotion of both Flying Start funded childcare programme places and the Childcare Offer, encouraging the successful transition between early years and school.




Our schools all primary and Years 7 and 8 in comprehensive schools have begun working under the Curriculum for Wales framework. Alongside this transition work, attendance continues to be a priority for all and we continue to work hard in supporting our schools to try and reduce exclusions. We are utilising the Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) and reduced timetable process to put plans in place that are built around the pupil.

Compared to the previous academic year, attendance saw an upward trend of 90.97% for primary schools and 87.60% for secondary schools. However, attendance rates remain lower than pre-pandemic levels and we recognise there is further work to do.





For those leaving education, the Youth Service Legacy Youth Workers provide support to those young people identified by their schools as being most at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). They have supported 194 young people move from school into a positive post-16 destination of further education, employment or training. This work further supports the decrease in the percentage of Year 11 leavers who are NEET, which has decreased from 2.41% in 2022/2023 to 1.3% in 2023/2024.



Total Number of Aims: 20














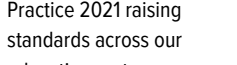







-  13 on-track
-  7 with more work to do
-  0 off-track

Total Number of Performance Measures: 9

-  4 on-track
-  2 with more work to do
-  2 off-track
-  1 data not collected / not available

Well-being Objective 1 All Children Get the Best Start in Life

The 20 aims detailed below were approved as part of the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and have provided a direction of travel for the work undertaken during 2023/2024. The Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status provides an overview of our progress and the following pages highlight some of our key achievements between April 2023 and March 2024.

<p>1</p> <p>Worked with partners to ensure our youngest children are better prepared for transition to school.</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Completed the Welsh Government Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) roll out for all primary pupils.</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>Enhanced facilities for young people including improved play and leisure services.</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Services for children & young people are aligned so that the needs of children and families are identified early & support is joined up across agencies and improving.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Children know and understand their rights and responsibilities.</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>A co-ordinated approach to meeting the mental health and well-being needs of our children and young people.</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Strong safeguarding and support procedures in place for children and young people.</p> 
<p>8</p> <p>Increased number of pupils in Welsh medium schools in line with our targets within the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Reduced the number of children and young people excluded from school.</p> 	<p>10</p> <p>Improved attendance of pupils.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>More young people will have registered to vote and will be using their vote in Welsh elections.</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>All young people leaving care will have access to sustained appropriate accommodation.</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Support young carers to access opportunities.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Fully Implemented the Additional Learning Needs & Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice 2021 raising standards across our education system.</p> 
<p>15</p> <p>Provided opportunities to enable all learners, families and carers to benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Education reforms related to the curriculum and support for pupils with Additional Learning Needs that are embedded and these changes will raise standards across our education system.</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Progressed our Strategic Schools Improvement Programme increasing the number of 21st Century learning and teaching environments available for children and young people.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Implemented a teaching programme so that every school is able to access the programme creating an exciting and innovative communities of teachers who can support each other and learn together.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Development of a leadership programme and a long-term view of 'talent spotting' and nurturing future leaders with a programme of individual coaching and mentoring.</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Arrangements for supporting young people when they finish their statutory education are improved with all young people going on to training, education or work.</p> 	

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Children's Services

We are an ambitious council and there is much we want to achieve to make sure children and young people get the best possible start in life, the right support when they need it, and have positive life experiences.

Helping families stay together is a key focus of Children's Services as children's needs are best met by their own families, if this can be safely supported. Early intervention and prevention services can reduce the number of children and young people reaching the threshold for care and needing to become care experienced or support them to return safely to their families in a timely manner. We must manage risk effectively with families that are approaching the threshold for care, and work to ensure we only provide care to those children who need to be looked after outside of their family and are supported to remain in the family home when it is safe to do so. We will continue to provide and develop a range of interventions which support families to make changes whilst always ensuring that children and young people are kept safe and ensure that the plans for care experienced young people are regularly reviewed.

We believe that children and young people who are placed in residential care would be best placed within the local area closer to the family, friends, and communities they come from. Currently, all our residential placements are commissioned externally. Therefore, we are seeking to develop a small three bed step-down residential provision which will follow a trauma recovery model (TRM) to achieve better outcomes for our children and young people. Ideally, we also want to see the number of young people living in a residential home decrease, therefore we are focusing on recruiting 'step down' foster carers to be able to support children and young people to transition from residential care to foster care when appropriate to do so.

For children and young people who are looked after by NPT, where family reunification, adoption or special guardianship is not a viable option, we want them to live in loving and caring fostering homes, where they are safe, protected, and able to be themselves. However, there is currently a lack of sufficiency within fostering. We need to increase the number of short and long-term foster carers for older children and for short break foster carers. This includes the development of Foster Plus which focuses on children and young people with complex needs.

It is important to understand, plan for and meet future demand and the individual needs of children. Workforce stability is crucial for practitioners' ability to build relationships with children and families. We continue investing in our social workers by being competitive and attractive in relation to recruitment and retention by exploring the potential of a pay supplement (currently known as a market pay supplement). This will help to reduce the need to employ agency staff within our workforce.



Progress of Corporate Plan 2023/2024 Actions Supporting Children & Young People

During 2023/2024 we commenced the partnership development of the NPT Early Years, Children and Young People's Plan 2024/2029. This plan incorporates considered engagement with stakeholders which has articulated strategic priorities and actions for making a positive difference to lives of children, young people and their families in Neath Port Talbot. The final partnership Plan is due to be issued autumn 2024.

Early Years

Effective transition support is available for all children. This includes support from Early Years teams for children, families, childcare settings and schools to ensure transition into childcare and education is effective. Transition for children with Additional Learning Needs is managed effectively by the council, with a clear focus upon meeting the developmental needs of children.

The expansion of the Flying Start funded childcare programme for two year olds has been supported by the Early Years and Flying Start childcare team. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of childcare settings who offer high quality funded Flying Start childcare places.

The council facilitates the delivery of the Childcare Offer in line with Welsh Government requirements ensuring parents can apply easily. The Childcare Offer team engages with parents and carers to promote the offer and address barriers to engagement. The team also engages with childcare providers and encourages participation in delivering the Childcare Offer and supports sustainability in the childcare sector.

44 childcare settings and 4 childminders are working with us as part of Flying Start expansion.



1129 children accessed Flying Start funded childcare, this includes **322 children** eligible for childcare via the Flying Start expansion programme

2393 full day childcare places provided during 2023/2024

1463 children aged 3 and 4 accessed funded, **part-time** childcare via the Childcare Offer.



Children's Services

Working collaboratively, NPT Council continues to build resilience amongst children and families, and prevent problems escalating by providing early offers of help and support.

We continue to invest in supporting families at the earliest opportunity, through the strengthening of support services and the recruitment of a full-time principal officer with responsibility for prevention and family support. Working in partnership with colleagues in Adult Services, we're able to respond to challenges such as the current cost of living crisis and ensure that families have access to support when they need it.

To support our approach to Outcome Focussed Practice, particularly in terms of what matters to children and families and to understand the impact we have and the difference we make, we have a dedicated Strategic Lead for Participation and Engagement. Listening to and understanding the voice of the child is paramount in all the work we do. We also promote Children's Rights through the development of Children's Rights Champions across the service by working to the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

NPT Council has an established programme of work to develop practice response to need, harm and risk. In 2023/2024 the council reviewed its response to Care and Support and Domestic Violence and Abuse and the findings of these reports have been converted into action plans respectively.

As Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is the most prevalent harm and risk factor across NPT, we have invested in training delivered by the Centre of Expertise for CSA. All Children's Services Teams now have a Practice Lead for CSA. A rapid review of our response to Harm Outside the Family Home is underway for 2024, and this will ensure those Practice Leads are fully utilised to further enhance practice in this specific area. The council is supporting Welsh Government to develop the next CSA National Delivery plan.

Those children identified as at risk or who have been harmed are now transitioning to Adult Safeguarding and work is underway to ensure these transitions are seamless. The SAFE Strategic Partnership Group continues to oversee the partnership response to harm outside the family home, thus ensuring response is early and joined-up and new and emerging trends identified for development - for example, online risk and harm has been identified as needing development.

Responses to persons of interest and places of concern continue to develop.



Family Support

NPT Family (previously Family Information Service) engages directly with parents, carers and local agencies to promote early help and support. The NPT Family Outreach Worker is a familiar face at community events across the county to raise awareness of local services and information available for children and families. Social media is used to share details of local events and support, including financial support, activities for children with additional needs, and emotional health and well-being services.

At the end of 2023/24, NPT Family branding was updated to include information on early help information, Flying Start, Early Intervention and Prevention panel to provide further clarity for families and agencies on the support available.

Early intervention support for children and young people is provided through the multi-agency Early Intervention and Prevention panel. The panel has reported an increase in complexity of need in referrals, placing additional pressures on early intervention services to meet these needs.

During 2023/2024, an Early Intervention and Prevention review was completed following engagement with children, young people, families and professionals, with a focus on understanding barriers for children, young people and families accessing support.

The outcomes of the review will be used to inform and develop the work of the panel and support services. The continued successful development of the Early Intervention and Prevention panel support service is a key priority for the service.

Family Information Service

Teulu CNPT NPT Family

Welcome to NPT Family

NPT Family Information Service (FIS) is a one stop shop where parents, carers, young people and professionals can obtain a range of information for children and young people aged 0-25 and their families.

[Find Services that can help you](#) [Join our Family Directory](#)

- Childcare**: Find out about childcare services in NPT.
- Flying Start**: Funded Programme for families of children under 4.
- Help for Families**: Support for families in NPT.
- What's On**: Find out what's going on locally.
- Fun Things to do**: Find Play ideas, parks, playgrounds and other useful links.
- Schools and Learning**: Information for parents and carers.

Through the work of the Early Intervention & Prevention Team:

100% (34/34) of young people supported demonstrate an improvement in their speech, language & communication skills

84.3% (166/197) young people have stated that their family relationships have improved.

85.8% (169/197) young people demonstrate an improvement in emotional/mental well-being

Education

Curriculum for Wales

Following the introduction of Curriculum for Wales, all primary schools and secondary schools Years 7 and 8 have begun working under the framework. This process is being supported at local, cluster and national levels and has directly impacted upon over 40 teachers in 20 schools across the county borough in its first year.

Along with the teaching and learning programmes, all schools in NPT are making good progress in terms of pupils realising the four purposes because of teaching evolving.

This is based on a programme of sound self-evaluation carried out by schools with council support to evaluate the progress pupils are making. Initial findings demonstrate that the older pupils are the more teaching narrows to focus on acquiring knowledge. As a result, teachers are evolving how they plan for progress in terms of knowledge, skills, understanding, capacities and attributes. This is beginning to result in pupils developing their knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes.

The development of teaching is happening in NPT schools. There are greater levels of professional learning, a greater focus on the evaluation of teaching and a wide range of opportunities which are well attended by all schools. However, it is too soon to see the impact.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

There is ongoing quality assurance of local authority and school maintained Individual Development Plans (IDP) and regular training and support is provided to all schools in NPT. Inclusion Service Managers are working with Swansea Bay University Health Board to undertake a quality assurance exercise in relation to Health Additional Learning Provision. The mandated cohort of learners who have Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) are being moved across to Individual Development Plans (IDPs) within the specified timescales.



Moving Forward 2024/2027

The conversion of Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) to Individual Development Plans (IDPs) is a key focus for the service. The aim is that all learners will have had their IDP issued or will be in development by the start of the new academic year (September 2024). It is recognised that this is a risk area and in order to mitigate this, the Additional Learning Needs Support Service (ALNSS) has utilised ALN Grant funding to increase capacity and ensure statutory processes are adhered to.



Education

Curriculum for Wales

As we focus on supporting the Curriculum for Wales and develop opportunities out in the community for children to engage, we have provided opportunities for children and young people to learn about their local environment, heritage and culture.

- 100 teachers attended 2 ‘cynefin cluster’ training sessions at the Baglan Education Centre on a variety of support services from Menter Iaith to Library Museum Service.
- 1770 participants involved in school visits, young archaeologists and hands-on history library sessions were delivered between April 2023 and March 2024 September.

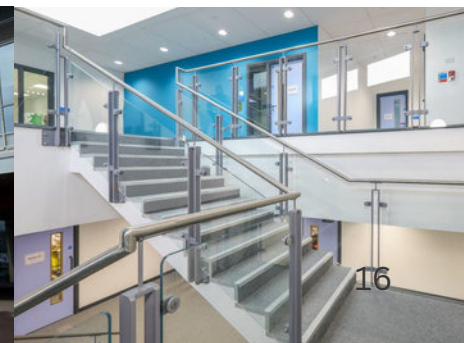
Our School Buildings

A series of major school building and refurbishment project plans have been undertaken as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning (21st Century Schools) Programme.

During 2023/2024, Neath Port Talbot Council submitted to Welsh Government a Strategic Outline Programme detailing proposals to:

- Build additional capacity to support young people with complex needs;
- Develop a skills based vocational skills provision;
- Further progress the proposal to build a new English medium primary school in the Swansea Valley;
- Progress a replacement facility for Llangatwg Comprehensive School;
- Progress a replacement for Tywyn Primary School, incorporating a 48 place facility for young people with severe learning difficulties;
- Further develop proposals for a new Welsh-medium primary school in the east of the county borough; and
- Progress proposals to develop a St Joseph’s 7-18 Middle School.

Approval of the Strategic Outline Programme will enable the tender process to take place, in order to appoint contractors for the projects as part of a 9 year rolling programme.



Education

School Attendance

Attendance is a priority for all and we continue to work hard in supporting our schools to try and reduce exclusions. We are utilising the Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) and reduced timetable process to put plans in place that are built around the pupil. During 2023/2024, the Case Assessment and Progression (CAP) team was established. The team is intended to enable early identification of children who may be at risk of permanent exclusion and to pull together all partners involved to plan the most appropriate package of support for each individual. The use of PSPs has given schools more choice in the actions they can take to support those children at risk of exclusion.

The Community Counsellor continues to support the emotional health and well-being of children and young people disengaged from school, or at risk of disengaging. Referrals for children and young people with low attendance (below 80%) are received through Early Intervention and Prevention Panel, with the aim of exploring the barriers to attending school and a view to helping the child/young person to re-engage in education, work or training.

Attendance compared to the previous academic year saw an upward trend, however, attendance rates remain lower than pre-pandemic levels. We have introduced Solution Circle meetings. Working in partnership with our colleagues from other departments such as Additional Learning Needs/Social Services/Emotionally Based School Avoidance/Education Psychology Service. Discussions with Headteachers have improved engagement with the Education Support Officer Service. The first National Education Welfare Officer event was held in Neath Port Talbot in conjunction with Rhondda Cynon Taff and Welsh Government to help improve attendance at school with a particular focus on Additional Learning Needs, free school meals and children missing education. Joint training/solution focus/solution circles/sharing good practices are to continue with Rhondda Cynon Taff who have similar levels of deprivation as Neath Port Talbot.

Attendance Support Officers have been appointed from Welsh Government Grant to support the improvement of attendance between the 70-80% range. We have launched our attendance campaign '**Miss School, Miss Out**', involving all Neath Port Talbot schools. The council offers a dedicated Education Welfare Service to assist parents and guardians facing challenges with getting their children to attend school regularly. This service focuses on providing advice and support to parents of compulsory school-age children, aiming to promote consistent attendance and enhance the overall educational experience. The campaign emphasises the role of parents and guardians in preventing school absences. It encourages families to establish a consistent routine from an early age, explaining the benefits of good attendance and punctuality, and engaging actively in their child's education by participating in school activities and discussing school work.



Education

Emotional Health and well-being

The Welsh Government Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and well-being is being embedded in schools across Neath Port Talbot, supported by the Public Health Wales Local Area Coordinator and multi-agency forums.

This multi-disciplinary problem solving approach continues to empower the trusted adults in the lives of young people and has been cited as a good example of the Nurturing, Empowering, Safe and Trusted (NEST) framework in action.

Half termly Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) supervision, joint termly planning across inclusion services for schools, and the community model of service delivery all highlight the collaborative work that is currently underway to support the emotional health and well-being needs of pupils.

The school Based Counselling Service (SBCS) continues to support the mental health and emotional well-being of pupils through both the Secondary and Primary School Based Counselling Service Therapy Service. Therapists within the SBCS collaborate with other professionals around the child/young person in order to best meet their needs.

The manager of the SBCS has held a conference for all schools in collaboration with the local area coordinator for the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and well-being. At the conference the focus was around staff well-being.

Free School Meals

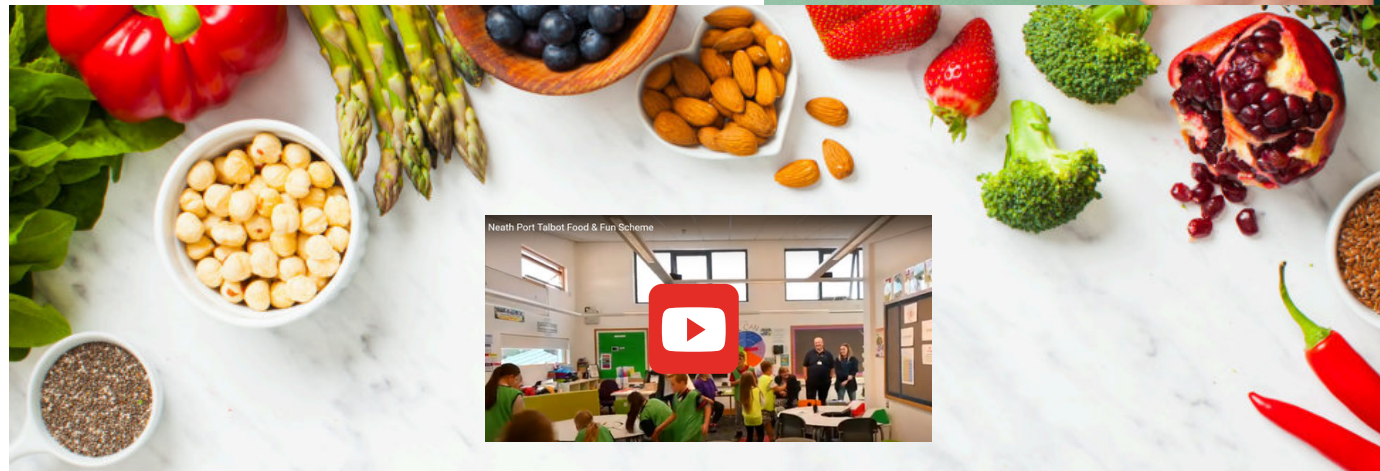
We have successfully rolled out access to free school meals to all primary school year groups.

This rollout has resulted in **a daily average of over 7,235 school meals being served.**

52 primary schools (98.1%), 8 secondary schools (100%), and 2 special schools (100%) are on board with the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health & Well-being.



39 schools have signed up to participate in the staff well-being programme



Food and Fun, run by Neath Port Talbot Council's Youth Service, gives children the chance to take part in various fun and physical activities, learn about food and nutrition, as well receiving a healthy breakfast and lunch. The scheme is funded by Welsh Government and delivered by local authorities in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to provide support to those from disadvantaged areas.

Education & Family Learning

Delivery of school-based parenting groups encourages parental engagement with schools and helps develop community networks.

Support offered includes enhancing school stay and play session by providing six weeks of Language and Play sessions, delivering baby massage groups, ensuring early engagement between parents and schools. Parenting workers are encouraged to facilitate groups in the school environment for parents of children of all ages, including Talking Teens and Parent Nurture.

Family Learning sessions have been delivered by Adult Learning across Blaendulais, Awel y Mor, Creunant, Alltwen and Croeserw primary schools. Parents in all schools have completed at least one accredited unit. Session topics included:

- Phonics
- Story Sacks
- Science
- Cooking on a Budget
- Homework Help
- Numeracy
- Additional Learning Needs awareness courses: Autism, ADHD (Attention-deficit/young people Hyperactivity disorder) and Dyscalculia and digital skills.

The Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022/2025 outlines how we will increase participation opportunities and ensure they are meaningful and inclusive. The Strategy was developed with children and young people through workshops during which we captured what was important to them.

The Strategy has been finalised and includes an easy read version and a children/young person friendly version, supported by a training framework which is available to all teams.

All services have a much better understanding of what good participation looks like and children and young people who wouldn't usually engage are having their voices heard on what impacts them.



Education

Developing Our Teachers

The teaching and learning programme is developing well. There has been the delivery of:

- 6 Teaching & Learning sessions with bespoke support for schools between each session – 4 out of 6 sessions completed for 2 cohorts so far this year.
- 2 cycles of training running simultaneously each academic year - approximately 40 individuals, 20 schools per year

Attendees have reported the following impact as a result of the programme:

“
Deeper understanding
of the Curriculum for
Wales and progress.”

“
Becoming increasingly self-reflective,
with review and improvement
becoming an integral part of their
professional development.”

“
Aware of the PLP and how it
can be used to capture their
professional development.”

“
Evolved their own
pedagogical approaches.”

“
Evolve teaching through
collaboration within and
across schools.”

“
Evolved as leaders
in their schools.”

Developing Inspirational Leaders

A Future Leader’s programme has been shared with all headteachers and they have been invited to nominate potential senior leaders who they believe will benefit from this programme. Aimed at deputy and assistant headteachers who do not currently have National Professional Qualification for Headteachers, this programme sees individuals allocated an Education Support Officer who will use coaching and mentoring strategies on a one-to-one basis.

Funded by the council, using Welsh Government funding for leadership, means that participants meet their mentor once every half term in the first year and once a term in the second year to work through a bespoke programme aimed at supporting their development via the leadership standards. Nominations for the next cohort are due in on the 27th October 2024 and we are expecting to be over-subscribed.



Vocational Training

Pathways to Progression – school pupil vocational skill development (delivered through UK Shared Prosperity Fund)

The Pathways to Progression Project has been developed to provide vocational knowledge, skills and qualification opportunities to Year 10 and Year 11 comprehensive school pupils in Neath Port Talbot.

The vocational sectors align with emerging and future regional skills needs in Neath Port Talbot, including the supply chain sectors.

Vocational sectors include green construction skills, hospitality and tourism, administration and customer service, land-based studies, health and social care and childcare. Skills & Training have worked directly with school leaders to identify suitable vocational sectors that complement the school existing curriculum as well as supporting those pupils who would find vocational learning engaging, helping to maintain attendance within mainstream and alternative schooling.

Education links to Local Employers

NPT Employability team have recruited several local employers to send representatives to visit a local secondary school in support of the Regional Skills and Learning Partnership Pilot, 'Teacher Encounters'. The pilot project is centred around bringing teachers and businesses together to align learning and to enable teachers to enthuse students with the local opportunities available to them.

In addition, excellent feedback has been received from the work experience project, all secondary schools bar one have taken up the opportunity to work with our Work Experience Coordinator to allow all Year 10s the chance to have work experience. 3 participants have taken up the welding taster sessions run by JES and hope to progress them onto a welding qualification once the Skills Academy is accredited at JES.

Schools and Pupils Curriculum and Enhanced Support

In 2023/2024, Skills & Training worked with the following schools and departments to support young people:

- Ysgol Bae Baglan – providing support on the main curriculum for year 10 & 11 pupils to achieve a Level 2 in Hair Services qualification, as part of the school timetable. 100% pass rate predicted for year 11 pupils in June 2024.
- Ysgol Hendrefelin – Groundworks and Construction Skills training for year 11 pupils.
- Ysgol Dwr Y Felin – 7 pupils supported to learn hairdressing skills 1 day per week, 5 pupils achieving the full qualification certificate.
- Child & Family Team – commenced a class for 5 pupils excluded/at risk of exclusion to support pupils.
- Youth Service – centre-based taster sessions delivered to year 11 pupils being supported by Youth Service teams in Hairdressing and beauty.

Children's Services

Care Leavers

As Corporate Parents, we ensure our intervention in this area starts well before young people leave care. For those care leavers who require ongoing support from adult services, we have established an operational group for early indication, so that the transition between services is as seamless as possible.

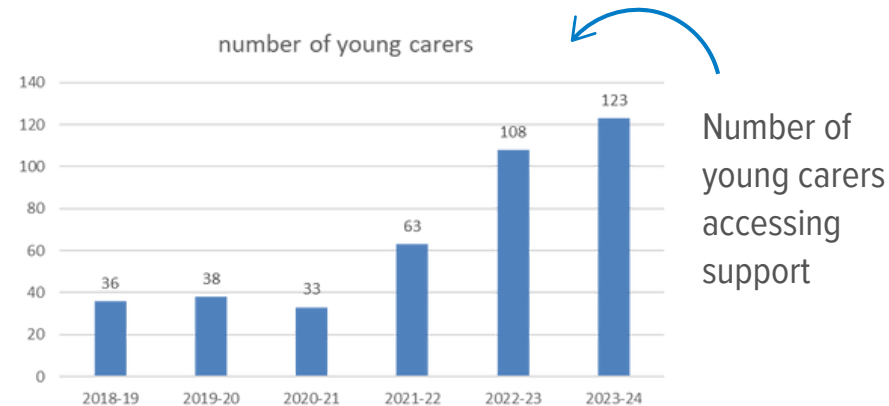
We are actively working with young people and foster carers in relation to areas of independent living, to ensure our young people have the necessary skills to support them into the future.

We continually review our accommodation needs for our young people who are leaving care to ensure that they are supported to obtain and then sustain appropriate accommodation.

Working alongside colleagues in Housing, we are also developing a specific supported housing scheme for care leavers with appropriate levels of support in respect of managing a tenancy.

Young Carers

A Young Carers transition worker post has been established following a successful UK Government's SPF bid completed in partnership with Adult Services. The role will work between youth and adult services to support an identified gap in service delivery where the number of young carers is increasing year on year.



During 2023/2024, 118 of young people were referred to the Young Carers group and Young Carers awareness sessions were delivered to secondary schools.

More young people are aware of the issues around being a young carer and where to go for support. The Youth Service deliver young carers awareness raising sessions to schools within NPT.

The young carers who attend the Youth Club sessions are given a break from their duties and are able to speak to a youth worker to see if any additional help or support is needed.



Youth Services

NPT Youth Service run 14 local youth clubs (*blue pinpoint below*), which remain free to young people, in Blaengwynfi, Cymmer, Bryn, Glynneath, Bryncoch, Sandfields, Cimla, Seven Sisters, Croeserw, Taibach, Crynant and Cwmllynfell. In addition, the Youth Service has worked with partner organisations to open additional provision in Caerwern, Neath and Pontardawe (*green pinpoint*). The Youth Service has also opened Welsh language youth clubs in Trebanos and another delivered in partnership with Canolfan Maerdy, Tairgwaith (*pink pinpoint*).



Youth Services have developed 9 community provisions

1371 young people attended council run youth clubs during 2023/2024

10,470 youth club sessions were attended during 2023/2024



Youth Clubs have also been established for LGBTQ+ young people and young people with speech, language and communication needs. The Youth Service also provides Young Carers with group work sessions providing opportunities to access social, educational and recreational activities.

The Youth Services SPF Community Team have been working in areas where there is no youth provision or there is a need identified, such as anti-social behaviour. Three Community Youth Workers are now in post and working with the Boys & Girls Club of Wales. New provisions have been established in 6 areas - Caerwern, Trebanos, Pontardawe (a voluntary sector youth club support and a Community Hwb supported), Briton Ferry and Neath. A bowls project has also been developed in Port Talbot which is being delivered to additional communities soon.

15 communities were supported with a range of support and activities. This included Detached Youth Work, Activity Days, supporting community provisions and supporting community events.

Young People in Employment, Education or Training

Legacy Youth Workers

The Youth Service Legacy Youth Workers provide support to those young people identified by their schools as being most at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) - Legacy Youth Workers are in all secondary schools.

Legacy Youth Workers supported **194 young people** move from school into a positive post-16 destination of further education, employment or training.

Workers continued to provide opportunities for young people to achieve accredited outcomes, we have had one of our most successful years with 11% of those engaging with the youth service achieving an accredited outcome. Accredited outcomes have been achieved by a range of provisions including the post 16 teams, youth clubs and young people attending targeted groups such as young carers, LGBTQ young people and through our Welsh Language provisions.

Horizons Project

The Youth Service’s Shared Prosperity Funded Horizons Project has provided outreach enrichment activities for socially isolated young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and who do not leave their homes. This includes developing confidence and social skills, supporting young people to leave the house and engage in activities to help them progress further.

Horizons Project achieved the following:

- Engaged with 117 young people
- 41 young people gained qualifications, licences or skills
- 82 young people engaged in life skills
- 34 young people stated that they had Increased understanding of employers’ expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace
- 79% of young people engaged achieved at least 1 successful outcome.
- 76% of young people (89 out of 117) felt more confident about entering into education, employment or training
- 77% of young people (90 out of 117) felt more positive about themselves (well-being)

Keeping in Touch Team (KIT)

The Youth Service Keeping in Touch Team (KIT) provide lead worker support to targeted groups of young people who are not in education, employment or training. This included young people who are Electively Home Educated (EHE), young people from the traveller community and those young people who haven’t transitioned from schools.

KIT Team managed to locate 141 out of 164 young people whose employment, education or training status were unknown.

26 young people with multiple barriers were supported, of whom:

- 12 entered further learning;
- 2 entered paid employment;
- 6 entered work based learning

Duke of Edinburgh Award

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme has grown from strength to strength and is now being delivered in all secondary schools. This has resulted in 356 young people achieving the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.



Young People in Employment, Education or Training

The Skills & Training Unit undertake projects and programmes that enhance and support the council's aims to reduce unemployment and poverty and support young people and adults to enter employment, education, and/or training.

During 2023/2024, Skills & Training continued to operate several projects and programmes including:

Jobs Growth Wales + (JGW+)

150 Young people (aged 16-19) started on the programme during the year and 53 of these young people participated a newly developed sub-project 'Get Ready'.

The Get Ready element of the programme allowed Skills & Training to engage and motivate those young people who have a significant barrier or need, and support was put in place to help them to build confidence, self-esteem and overcome barriers in attending more mainstream employability provision.

Young people participated in activities such as gorge walking, paintballing, canoeing, and surfing as well as mental health and well-being enriching activities such as yoga, graffiti art and walking.

Overall, Skills & Training supported 190 young people on the project to develop their skills and employability with over 147 achieving a vocational or employability related qualification. 125 young people left the programme during the year with 64% progressing into further education/training, employment, or starting an apprenticeship.



Apprenticeship Programme








Skills & Training continue to run a growing and successful Apprenticeship programme in partnership with Skills Academy Wales Consortia of work-based learning apprenticeship providers.



Skills & Training offer Apprenticeships within the sectors of Hairdressing /Barbering and Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development. This delivery has grown and developed in 2023/2024, with apprenticeships also being offered at Level 3.

During 2023/2024, Skills and Training enrolled 36 apprentices across the different sectors, with a total of 50 apprentices receiving their training and qualifications from Skills & Training.

Commercial Training

We continue to deliver commercial skills and knowledge-based courses internally and externally to businesses to support skills development and help businesses to be effective in what they do.

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
Number of full day childcare places provided.	2426	Increase	2373 
% of 5 year olds receiving education through medium of Welsh.	19.7%	Increase	19.4% 
% of year 11 pupils studying Welsh first language.	13.06% 2021/2022 Academic Year	Increase	14.69% 2022/2023 Academic Year 
% year 11 leavers who are NEET.	2.41%	Decrease	1.3% 
% pupil attendance in primary school.	89.23% 2021/2022 Academic Year	Increase	90.97% 2022/2023 Academic Year 
% pupil attendance in secondary school.	85.52% 2021/2022 Academic Year	Increase	87.60% 2022/2023 Academic Year 
Number of pupils permanently excluded.	19 2021/2022 Academic Year	Decrease	37 2022/2023 Academic Year 

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
Number of days pupils have been given a fixed exclusion.	2543 2021/2022 Academic Year	Decrease	3850 2022/2023 Academic Year 
Number of 16-18 year olds registered to vote.	1833	Increase	N/A no elections took place in 2023/2024 



Well-being Objectives

The following pages provide an overview of progress and key achievements during 2023/2024.



2

All communities are thriving and sustainable

To work towards achieving the well-being objective of ‘**All communities are thriving and sustainable**’ we have worked alongside our communities to regenerate our physical environment, encouraged residents to become more involved in their local area and provided support to those living in, or at risk of poverty.




During 2023/2024 a number of projects were launched as a result of UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government funding. This funding has enabled us to provide financial support to a large number of residents and third sector organisations.

Bringing services closer to where people live and helping to sustain key local facilities has remained a priority. This can be seen through our work with warm hubs, digital inclusion and enablement. In addition, our engagement with residents and partners has helped to develop the Loneliness and Social Isolation (Adults) Strategy, will help shape the grant criteria for distribution of Welsh Government funding.






The council has also developed a three-year Housing and Homelessness Strategy which sets out a number of key actions we will take forward with partner organisations to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeated. Since 2022/2023 we have seen an increase of 4.2% to 57.9% in 2023/2024 of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless.

Physical regeneration of our communities has been visible with a number of children’s playgrounds being refurbished and investment made across our valleys, villages and towns - which will be further influenced by the development of Place Plans and an overarching Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy for Neath Port Talbot.

Total Number of Aims: 9

-  7 on-track
-  2 with more work to do
-  0 off-track

Total Number of Performance Measures: 13

-  5 on-track
-  2 with more work to do
-  0 off-track
-  4 for monitoring
-  2 data not collected / not available

Well-being Objective 2 All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

The 9 aims detailed below were approved as part of the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and have provided a direction of travel for the work undertaken during 2023/2024. The Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status provides an overview of our progress and the following pages highlight some of our key achievements between April 2023 and March 2024.

1

Enhanced support is given to those who are at risk or living in poverty.

2

Improved the range and quality of informal and formal support for elderly and vulnerable residents, including unpaid carers.

3

Worked with the community to prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

4

Supported the development of more community groups with an increase in the number of volunteers.

5

Developed our valleys, villages and towns.

6

Council staff will understand the principles of community development and have the skills and confidence to put those principles into practice.

7

Improved digital connectivity across Neath Port Talbot.

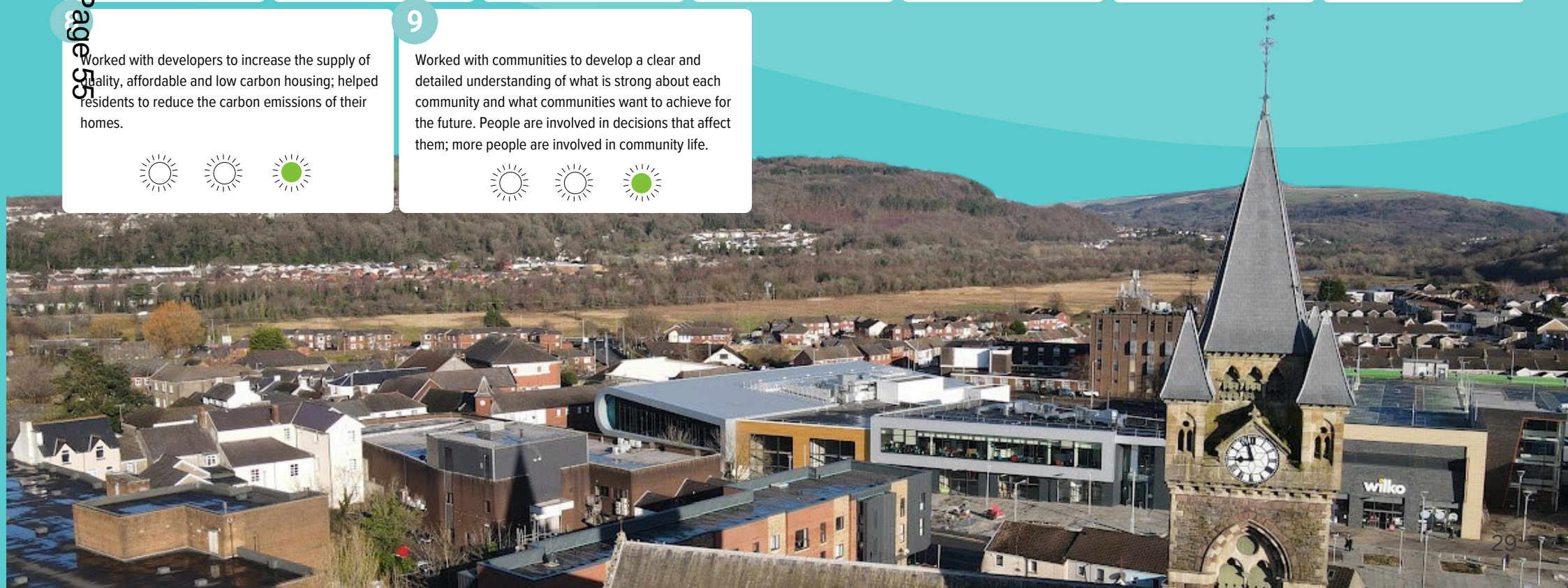
8

Worked with developers to increase the supply of quality, affordable and low carbon housing; helped residents to reduce the carbon emissions of their homes.

9

Worked with communities to develop a clear and detailed understanding of what is strong about each community and what communities want to achieve for the future. People are involved in decisions that affect them; more people are involved in community life.

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Cost of Living / Poverty Prevention

The work of the Cost of Living & Poverty Prevention Partnership's Steering Group is a key area of focus for Neath Port Talbot Council. During 2023/2024 the Partnership revisited the work begun prior to the pandemic with The Bevan Foundation to support the Steering Group as they develop a longer-term Action Plan to tackle the impact of the crisis across NPT.

A report has since been produced providing information about what the Partnership had achieved to date, as well as an overview of the current areas of concerns identified by attendees of the March 2023 Partnership workshop (e.g., food, energy, housing, mental health and well-being). This report has been shared with partners as evidence of impact across our communities.

A Cost of Living & Poverty Prevention Partnership Workshop (October 2023) brought together over 65 individuals from across the council, Neath Port Talbot CVS and third sector representatives. The feedback from the workshop informed the development of the Steering Group's 'Winter Action Plan,' a series of prioritised actions which were focused on between mid-November 2023 and January 2024.

In November 2023, the first, and only Amnesty UK event to be held in Wales was held in NPT. The event focused on lived experience of poverty, with three sessions held to enable discussions with: people with lived experience of poverty; support / practice workers with experience of helping people experiencing hardship; senior leaders whose work requires decisions in respect of resource, funds etc.

Communications remains a priority in the response to the cost of living crisis, promoting available help and support via the councils' dedicated webpage.

In 2023/2024, there were

42,356 views

of the webpages, the most viewed sub-pages were *Household Bills, Emergency Support, Claiming Benefits, Money and Debt.*



Help with the cost of living

We want to make sure all Neath Port Talbot residents are aware of the financial help and household support available to them. See what support you could be eligible for to help with the rising goods and energy costs, inflation and cost of living pressures.



Development of the QR code linking to the 'Help with the Cost of Living' webpage; this was incorporated into the Council Tax bill for 2024/2025.

Funding Community Organisations - Food Poverty Grant



Neath Foodbank, part of the Trussel Trust – an organisation who support a network of Foodbanks around the UK, are just one of the organisations who have been allocated funds by the **Neath Port Talbot Council Food Poverty Grant** due to the high demand in service and are still struggling and relying on donations to keep their service running.

They are supporting around 200 people a week, supplying families and individuals with food packages for up to 3 days. Neath Foodbank work with supermarkets such as Tesco who collect donations that their volunteers collect on a weekly basis.

The Foodbank also has a small community shop where referrals can “shop” as they want using vouchers. Neath Foodbank received two allocations of the Food Poverty Grant, with the money being used to purchase food. They have referrals sent from a variety of organisations including housing associations, doctors, schools and drug & alcohol treatment charities etc.

Those visiting the foodbank are all welcomed with a warm or cold drink. While at the foodbank there was an individual from Citizen’s Advice who attends the chapel during opening hours as a drop in for individuals who may need support. John does a lot behind the scenes. We not only learned how the process worked but also spoke to the volunteers about their perspective and how attendance and donation levels have changed since the Cost-of-Living crisis.

With the amount of grant received being spent solely on food – it shows the huge demand for their service and the needs of the people they are supporting.

Foodbank is open from 1.30-16.00 for visitors, volunteers start at 12pm.

In November 2023, owner of Tea Rooms in Glynneath contacted the administrator of the **Food Poverty Grant** within Neath Port Talbot Council, explaining their need for funds in order to help those who are struggling with isolation and financial issues.

The Food Poverty Grant has awarded the Tea Rooms with two lots of funding as their service is in extremely high demand. Previously, the Tea Rooms were unable to assist the members of the public in the way they would like as they would be out of pocket. Although, this was the case they still did not let the issue go un-noticed. Tea Rooms work closely with Neath Foodbank and Penderyn Pantry to which they recommended to their customers. As lovely as the suggestion is, it does not tackle the issue of isolation and loneliness that they feel their customers suffer from.

By receiving the grant from the council it gives the Tea Rooms an opportunity to provide vouchers for individuals to use to spend on breakfast/lunch items and a hot drink. This gives people a sense of inclusion. Parents can visit while their children are in school, meaning they have access to a warm meal plus a warm space.

Many of the Tea Rooms customers have money struggles, so with the cost of living increasing with a warm space provided for them it helps for them to spend their funds on other necessities. Unfortunately, some of the customers of the Tea Rooms have to make a decision whether to heat their home or feed their family. The grants have enabled the Tea Rooms to cover the cost of vouchers for individuals and also to purchase items such as grills, microwaves, air fryers and a small fridge as their kitchen items are being overused with the number of meals they are providing.



Supporting Our Communities with the Cost of Living



The Hardship Relief Scheme, delivered by Warm Wales on behalf of Neath Port Talbot Council, delivered 1,866 interventions during 2023/2024 including vouchers for purchasing of warm measures e.g. electric blankets, bedding, white goods, energy company payments, water payments and home maintenance.

Local Area Coordinators worked closely with community hubs and local businesses to establish food co-operatives to support families during the school holidays. The team also play an active role in ensuring families are linked in with festive activities such as those supported by NPTCVS #kindnessatchristmas campaign. The Mr X appeal ran for its 63rd year providing support to children and young people who were identified as at risk of not having a Christmas. The Safe and Well volunteer service provided a Christmas hamper and small gift for older people chronically socially isolated with no family or being supported by the service.

NPT Council were successful in applying for funding from the Welsh Government's Winter Fuel Grant for Roma and Traveller Communities 2023-2024 scheme. This funding was used to support the total number of plot tenancies across the Council's three sites.

5 food co-ops were established in partnership with the Local Area Coordinators. 150 people were supported through the food co-op based in the Afan Valley.

15 older people identified as isolated and lonely were provided with a food parcel and warm supplies, such as a scarf and blanket. These people were identified through support offered via the Safe and Well Volunteering befriending provision.

Third Sector Discretionary Cost of Living Crisis Grant Scheme, administered by NPTCVS (in partnership with NPT Council), supported 16 third sector organisations experiencing increased demand for their services due to the cost of living crisis.

NPT e-Bulletins highlighted support available from both local and national organisations, to help people struggling with the cost of living – e.g., The Digital Poverty Alliance scheme, NPT's Christmas Jobs Fair, UK Government's new website of energy saving advice, and NPT Warm Spaces.

Two Welsh Government funds, the Household Support Fund and the Direct Food Support Award were administered by Neath Port Talbot Council as "Food Poverty Funding". Funds were distributed to assist those who were vulnerable and struggling with food poverty and insecurity. Neath Port Talbot Council have received a total of £152,332 to support 30 organisations who are meeting the needs of an increased number of people and customers facing food poverty and to support activities that focus on addressing the root causes of food poverty.

Three Pension Credit campaigns were launched between January and March 2024 utilising the Low Income Family Tracker. 19.11% of those written to have made a successful Pension Credit claim.

£30,000 was secured from Sustainable Communities Fund (UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund for Warm and Welcoming Spaces).

Communities

Supporting our communities, bringing services closer to where people live and helping to sustain key local facilities remains a priority. As part of this work we have been strengthening our Prevention and Early Intervention model within Adult Services. A review of the community connecting team has commenced with a view to reshaping the offer of support to be able to meet community/service need. The council is engaged with the partnership boards to look at data linkages to better understand vulnerability across NPT. A data dashboard is available linking key data sets to better understand vulnerabilities, with a focus on domestic abuse and substance use – two prevalent risk factors and issues for the council and partnerships.

The Loneliness and Social Isolation (Adults) Strategy has been developed in partnership with the community and strategic partners. Over 15+ groups have been involved in the development of the implementation plan, which will shape the grant criteria for distribution of a Welsh Government fund aimed at tackling loneliness and social isolation within our communities. Engagement with local communities in the Afan Cluster and with specialist groups has been completed and opportunities for enhancing existing community hubs are now being scoped. Our Ageing Well officer has worked with and supported several older person's groups (55+) to talk about what is strong about their communities. Emerging key themes from the engagement work include transport, access to information and access to timely primary health services.

Baglan has been identified as the first area to take part in the Dementia Listening Campaign. Supported by Improvement Cymru, the work will shape how services and communities can better support people and families affected by dementia and ensure the implementation of phase one of Dementia National Standards. Prevention and Early Intervention Engagement Officers and the Ageing Well Officer have been working closely with local members, volunteers and community groups to shape a delivery plan.

862 people supported to access prevention & early intervention services.

267 people have contributed to the development of the Loneliness and Social Isolation (Adults) Strategy.

360 people spoken to said what they'd like to see within their area. They felt listened to and have offered suggestions to improve their local community.

150 people spoken with to understand the needs of the older population.

35 people have been engaged with to find out their views on the dementia campaign.



Communities

Supporting our communities

A review of unpaid carers is underway, with a view to strengthening an earlier offer of support and identification with a view to avoiding crisis along with transitional support throughout the caring journey. Part of the engagement element of the review was an adult carers questionnaire that asked carers their views on current carers support with outcomes being fed into the final review report.

The Community Safety Partnership Board continues to deliver on the following priorities impacting our county borough as set out in the Community Safety Strategy:

- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Substance Use
- Serious Violence
- Acquisitive Crime – including Crime Prevention and Community Engagement
- Community Cohesion

The Community Safety Partnership Board continues to monitor emerging trends, patterns, and performance data. This information is used to steer campaigns, community engagements, new projects and initiatives that the Community Safety Team will deliver on, in partnership with other relevant authorities and local partner agencies.

From the monitoring of the trends and patterns, the Community Safety Team have trialled a new approach to community engagements; delivering bespoke crime prevention events in different areas of the borough, adjusting the partners who attend to meet the needs of the local communities, considering local intelligence and anecdotal information. These have included:



‘A Safer Dulais Valley’

‘A Safer Cadoxton’

‘A Safer Glynneath’

‘A Safer Sandfields’

‘A Safer Ystalyfera’



Moving Forward 2024/2027

Further work will be taken forward as part of the Corporate Plan 2024/2027 Transformation Programmes to transform adult's services.

6 programmes will be supported:

- B’spoke redesign
- Roll out of mobile response service
- Establish a residential reablement provision
- Review and strengthen transition arrangements for young people with complex needs.
- Bring in house the Ategi Carers provision
- Review of Direct Payments



‘Improving digital connectivity across Neath Port Talbot to promote independence and well-being’.

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Communities

Digital Inclusion

Development of “Our NPT” digital platform was implemented in partnership with several community groups and went live in February 2024. The platform provides easy access to local information, learning and community groups. Housebound residents are able to access community activities reducing isolation and loneliness.

Establishment of a Digital, Assistive Technology and Digital Solutions Suite based in Cimla showcases how everyday accessible technology can be used to support people to be more independent in their own homes. The suite is open for staff and community to access. Equipment is available to loan for 2 weeks as a try before you buy. A range of systems are displayed, such as Google hub and Alexa.

UK Shared Prosperity Funding was secured to deliver a partnership bid, between Adult Learning and Adult Social care. 3 digital inclusion officers and 3 digital enablement officers have been employed to increase digital confidence across the county. Digital inclusion officers work with and within community groups, whilst digital enablement officers work on a 1-2-1 basis in a person’s home. Linked to the service is the provision of a digital solutions suite, where staff and community members can experience different types of digital equipment and the benefits they can have to support independent living.

Support given also includes downloading and saving documents from emails, to assisting with applying for a bus passes online. Assisting participants to take their first steps online using the library computer and using google maps.

Some participants struggling with transport links, are now socialising and catching up with family online, ordering online groceries, prescriptions and using online banking service.



Supporting Our Communities



A total of 26 applications, totalling £999,853 have been approved via the Sustainable Communities Growth Fund.

90 people were engaged and were able to have their say about “what’s good” about their community and to start to identify opportunities for development.

Community Groups are being supported to consider digitisation of their activities where possible. 16 community groups have been involved in the development of the system, supporting with usability, design and layout. 5 groups have already been supported with implementation.

The council’s Third Sector Grants supported 43 third sector organisations for 2023/2024, with a total grant of £722,310 being paid out across the year. The council’s application window for the grant opened between August 7th and October 13th 2023 inviting applications for 1 year funding for 2024/2025.

6 volunteers, all local residents that were referred to the Local Area Coordinator for Sandfields and are being supported by Safe and Well Volunteering.

226 people responded to the review of unpaid carers. The top three themes identified were the provision of respite and ability to take a break from their caring role, emotional support and support to access leisure facilities.

The Library of Things, a partnership led by Local Area Coordinators, Library Service, Tai Tarian and Safe and Well Volunteering, allows people to borrow household items and electrical equipment at a low cost rather than having to buy them brand new. Popular items that are useful for occasional DIY projects and family events are available including drills, wheelbarrow, jet washer, hose pipe, electric screwdrivers, carpet cleaning machine and tents/gazebos.

In partnership with Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service (NPTCVS), 3 neighbourhood forum sessions have been delivered. Facilitated by NPTCVS, the sessions provided an opportunity for community members to come together and talk about the issues/opportunities within their area. Approximately 30 people attended each event and feedback was very positive.

507 people engaged with digital technology via digital inclusion initiatives to aid their independence.

206 people engaged with digital technology via digital inclusion initiatives.

235 people engaged via Digital Enablement supporting independence.

Various Paws on Patrol events were held to promote the scheme which encourages dog walkers to be our eyes and ears in the community, reporting any issues they may see.

Increased digital inclusion sessions run in communities, including the following:

- Port Talbot Opportunity Hub
- Port Talbot Workstation
- Cwmafan Library
- Cymmer Library
- Bryn Community Village Hall
- Margam Community Centre
- Neath Town Hall
- Skewen Library
- Neath Library
- Glynneath Library
- Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen Library
- Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen Community Hall.



Housing & Homelessness



In recognition of the rising issue of homelessness and lack of affordable housing, the council has developed a three-year Housing and Homelessness Strategy. This strategy sets out a number of key actions that the Housing and Communities Department will take forward with partner organisations such as Registered Social Landlords and the third sector in order to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeatable.

Good progress is being made in the delivery of the strategy and in 2023/2024 the council was able to allocate a significant amount of Welsh Government capital funding to increase the number of affordable homes in the area, including over £22 million of Social Housing Grant and £2 million of Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme funding. In response to the rising number of families that are experiencing homelessness, the team have worked in partnership with Tai Tarian to increase the number of self-contained temporary accommodation properties so that we now have 68 temporary homes available for families whilst they are waiting for a permanent home.

In light of the changing requirements of those that are experiencing homelessness, staff have taken part in a range of training programmes including Trauma Informed Practice, substance use, mental health and neurodiversity. With support from Welsh Government, the council also worked with a number of Registered Social Landlords in purchasing a total of 28 properties between the participating organisations. The purchase of these properties prevented existing tenants in the private rental sector from losing their home and potentially becoming homeless. To help bring empty homes back into use, the council agreed to participate in the Welsh Government Empty Home Scheme in March 2023. This is a two year scheme that will provide grants to help owners of long term empty properties undertake the necessary work so that they are able to live in the property.

Moving Forward 2024/2027

Further work will be taken forward as part of the Corporate Plan 2024/2027 Transformation Programmes to operate in a way that is fit for purpose considering the significant changes in demand and the housing crisis that is currently affecting the service that can be provided.

Neighbourhood Services & Physical Regeneration

An additional £4.25m was made available as part of the ‘Clean up, Green up’ programme. Throughout 2023/2024, the majority of the programme was completed, including the renovation of 9 playgrounds, including Talbot Memorial Park, James Field, Briton Ferry and the adventure playground at Gnoll Estate Country Park.

There has been investment in new vehicles such as a pot-hole pro-machine, road sweepers and street vacuums. There are now only a handful of initiatives that are still to be delivered, including regenerating the playground at Aberavon seafront, arboriculture and bus shelter improvement works throughout the county.

The ‘Clean-up, Green-up’ initiative has already made a significant impact throughout our communities and more will be realised once the programme is fully delivered.

Additional neighbourhood services operational staff members have been focusing on cleaning up our communities through delivering services such as weed ripping, weed spraying, overgrowth cut back, pathway edging, preparation work for organised events and generally reacting to works demands from the community and local councillors.

This has resulted in some excellent feedback being received from members of the public, along with councillors.



Work has been completed on a new playground and refurbished “kick-about area” at James Field in Briton Ferry. The new installation is part of the council’s commitment to enhance our public spaces in Neath Port Talbot.








A £22,000 refreshed play area in Victoria Gardens, Neath, now features new safety surfacing throughout and time-worn benches have been replaced with more robust seating made of recycled material.







Neath Port Talbot Council’s Cabinet Member for Streetscene, Cllr Scott Jones, said: **“Equipment was chosen with inclusivity in mind, given the easy access into the amenity and its popularity as the play area at the heart of Neath Town Centre”.**



Neighbourhood Services & Physical Regeneration

- A Stage 1 Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment (SFCA) with planning authorities in the South West Wales region (Carmarthenshire Council, Neath Port Talbot Council, Swansea Council, Pembrokeshire Council, Bannau Brycheiniog (formerly Brecon Beacons National Park Authority) and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority) led by consultants JBA, following the publication of Welsh Government's revised Technical Advice Note (TAN 15) Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion we will be able to address flooding in the short, medium and long term.
- As part of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), assessment of the new Candidate Sites is currently on-going, alongside work on a number of key evidence base documents, including Economic and Housing Growth Assessment, Strategic Highways Assessment, Employment Land Review, Growth and Spatial Options and Green Infrastructure Assessment. Consultation on Growth and Spatial options will be worked on in spring 2024, with the aim to hold a formal, public consultation on the Preferred Strategy in December 2024.
- Work continues with consultants 'the Urbanists' to produce Place Plans for our three main town centres, but also several secondary towns such as Ystalyfera and Briton Ferry. In addition, Place Plans will also be produced for several tertiary settlements including Taibach, Cwmafan and Gwaun Cae Gurwen. In recent years Welsh Government funding in particular has been focused on the main 3 town centres. When the ongoing Place Plans are completed, we will have the opportunity to be more inclusive of valleys areas. This has been further supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which comes to an end in March 2025, after which we will apply for funding from any UK Government successor fund. Member and wider consultation was undertaken across Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe with local internal stakeholders, members, town councils, business district and wider businesses and we are awaiting reports from the Urbanists. We were successful with our BID for additional revenue from the Welsh Government, which will support workshops for Briton Ferry and Ystalyfera and has enabled us to commission a consultant for Glynneath town. We also continue to consult with the Design Commission for Wales as part of this process. We will dovetail together the Place Plans and capture them under one overarching Regeneration & Economic Development Strategy.
- £577,500 grant funding has been secured from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme to refurbish, reconfigure and extend the former Youth Offending Team building in Port Talbot, to provide quality office space to complement the adjacent Harbourside Court. As the council's Accommodation Strategy is delivered, then potential further surplus accommodation can also be considered with a view to bringing additional quality business space to the market.
- We are progressing design ideas with consultants and partners for the former Neath Library, the feasibility report has been completed, and has been approved by senior officers and Members, with a view to bringing forward an Arts and Crafts workspace and hub. We will be procuring an end-user who will input into the design ideas and future use of the building.
- Valley Industrial Units project aims to overcome the severe shortage of smaller, start-up style industrial units. Delivery has commenced for sites of Glyncorrwg and Nant y Cafn with planning pre-applications completed, full site and ground investigation reports commissioned. Procurement documentation for the building contractor were prepared, and biodiversity issues at Nant y Cafn have been addressed and the successful contractor has been secured. There are still issues around the Glyncorrwg site around flooding, which still need to be addressed.

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
Number of active volunteers (Safe & Well)	11	Increase	31 
Number of volunteer hours (Safe & Well)	New Measure	Increase	2279 
Number of social and micro enterprises supported	No data available	Increase	481 
Number of community owned or managed community assets	108	Increase	109 
% increase in mental well-being in adults	48%	Increase	47.9% 
Number of people supported into employment with a long-term health condition/disability	New Measure	New Measure	42 
Number of self-reported well-being following a period of intervention via Prevention and Early Intervention provision (Local Area Coordination, Community Independence Service or Community Connecting Team).	New Measure	New Measure	No data available as in pilot phase 

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	As of end 2023/2024	Outlook for 2023/2024
% of people satisfied with the local area as a place to live.	84% 2022/2023 data	Increase	No data available for 2023/2024 
% of high risk victims who engage with the Independent Domestic Violence Service (IDVA)	68%	Increase	65% 
Number of people subject to the Anti-Social Behaviour Warning process	6	Increase	6 
Number/% of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless	53.7%	Increase	57.9% 
Increase in people engaged with digital technology via digital inclusion initiatives to aid their independence	310	Increase	507 
% households with access to the internet	98%	New Measure	99% 

Well-being Objectives

The following pages provide an overview of progress and key achievements during 2023/2024.



3 Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

To work towards achieving the well-being objective of ‘Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations’ we have developed and started to implement the Culture Strategy, the Heritage Strategy and Destination Management Plan. Through close working with key stakeholders and strategic partners the action plans will deliver long term investment and management of key cultural and heritage sites.




During 2023/2024 £825,605 of funding was secured to enhance the quality of the visitor experience across Neath Port Talbot, with a further £1.7 million being provided as grants to a variety of local projects via the Heritage, Culture and Events Fund as a result of funding provided through UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund.

Across the following pages you will be able to see the vast amount of work being undertaken across the council to mitigate climate change and nature emergency. Progress is visible across council owned nature sites - we are seeing more volunteers helping out, which is making an impact not only on groundworks, but also personally to the individual volunteers.






A Decarbonisation, Energy and Climate Change team has been established to further raise awareness as well as working with local partners on decarbonisation projects and support the refresh of the DARE (Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy) strategy to set out priorities for the next six years.

The council’s efforts continue through our programme to transition suitable vehicles as part of the Zero Emission Vehicle and Infrastructure Strategy (ZEVIS) and work on the South West Wales regional travel plan and Active Travel network.

Total Number of Aims: 14















-  9 on-track
-  5 more work to do
-  0 off-track

Total Number of Performance Measures: 16

-  6 on-track
-  2 more work to do
-  0 off-track
-  4 for monitoring
-  4 data not collected

Well-being Objective **3** Our Local Environment, Culture and Heritage can be enjoyed by Future Generations

The 14 aims detailed below were approved as part of the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and have provided a direction of travel for the work undertaken during 2023/2024. The Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status provides an overview of our progress and the following pages highlight some of our key achievements between April 2023 and March 2024.

<p>1</p> <p>Worked with our community groups, partners and stakeholders to define a programme of flagship heritage and culture projects for the county borough; begin delivering the new culture strategy.</p> <p></p>	<p>2</p> <p>Worked with communities and partners to engender a greater sense of stewardship, encouraging them to take a more active role in the ongoing management and improvement of their local environment.</p> <p></p>	<p>3</p> <p>Embedded the history of the local environment, heritage and nature into the curriculum and ensure all schools have access to environmental and outdoor learning opportunities.</p> <p></p>	<p>4</p> <p>Implemented our leisure strategy to improve access to high quality leisure and recreational opportunities.</p> <p></p>	<p>5</p> <p>Developed a clear understanding of how the environment, heritage, sport and culture can contribute to a stronger, more sustainable economy.</p> <p></p>	<p>6</p> <p>Worked with partners to establish the county borough's brand as a destination of choice across the UK and internationally; implemented and delivered our destination management plan.</p> <p></p>	<p>7</p> <p>Delivered the Dramatic Heart of Wales Destination Marketing Campaign in order to raise the profile of Neath Port Talbot as a visitor destination and encourage overnight stays.</p> <p></p>
<p>8</p> <p>Extended our active travel network and improved public rights of way to encourage more people to walk and cycle.</p> <p></p>	<p>9</p> <p>Increased the proportion of the council's budget spent on greener alternatives for goods and services and which are sourced locally and within the region, strengthening our foundational and circular economy.</p> <p></p>	<p>10</p> <p>Worked with our community groups, partners and stakeholders to extend our work to help nature recover and to improve the quality of and access to our natural environment; further implement our biodiversity plan.</p> <p></p>	<p>11</p> <p>Worked with partners to facilitate the transition from traditional energy sources to more sustainable energy sources with an emphasis on the delivery of the City Deal programme, and opportunities created through the establishment of the Swansea Bay Corporate Joint Committee to decarbonise industry, housing and transport; implement our revised decarbonisation and renewable energy plan.</p> <p></p>	<p>12</p> <p>Worked with partners to further develop flood and pollution mitigation measures.</p> <p></p>	<p>13</p> <p>Increase awareness of the climate change and nature emergencies.</p> <p></p>	<p>14</p> <p>Adopted the council's new Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) and begin implementation.</p> <p></p>

Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

Biodiversity

During 2022, the council declared a climate emergency on behalf on Neath Port Talbot. We all have a huge part to play in mitigating climate change through adapting our lifestyle and behaviours. As part of our work to support biodiversity, the NPT Nature Partnership presented the State Of Nature (SON) report to Councillors at a Members Seminar in October 2023, followed by a joint launch event for the State of the Nature Report and the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) during February 2024, welcoming guest speaker Iolo Williams.

The event encouraged attendees to do something for nature and to discuss priorities for action. Through Welsh Government Local Places for Nature Funding, the NPT Partnership and NPT Council Countryside and Wildlife Team have commenced delivery of a number of projects to address needed actions of the State of Nature and Nature Report Action Plan and are supporting local community groups to make a difference in their local area. In addition to this work the 'Working with Nature' project covers management of council owned nature sites including local nature reserves, support for volunteering at such sites, awareness raising activities connecting people to nature, e.g. guided walks and biodiversity training for local people.

We have continued to work in partnership with the NPT Nature Partnership, NPT4 Nature, and the Public Services Board Group. A number of projects are being delivered in partnership with partners including NRW, Swansea University and other councils such as Rhondda Cynon Taff, as well as charities such as Coed Lleol.

The Biodiversity Duty Plan, revised for 2023-2026, identified a number of areas that required some improvement. As a result, additional actions have been added to reflect the NPT State of Nature and Nature Report Action Plan and changes in UK and Welsh policy. Internal services assessments, one action of the Biodiversity Duty Plan, have been completed, with most service areas being so far reported either Green or Amber – meaning there is some room for improvement in the duty implementation.

The amount of council owned land being managed with biodiversity in mind is currently improving with the ongoing roll out of the NPT Bee-Friendly Scheme, Working with Nature Project and other projects. Awareness of the importance of wildflowers and habitats appear to have increased with requests for sites to be managed for biodiversity coming in from residents and councillors. The audit of council owned land has also progressed with areas of biodiversity value being flagged on internal systems to ensure biodiversity is considered in any land changes etc.



Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

The number of volunteers working on our sites this year has been around 149, significantly more than in 2022/2023, benefitting nature management, health and well-being, knowledge and skills development.

Volunteers are working on a variety of sites (noted below) through the Working with Nature project, Re-greening Port Talbot Project, Coastal Connections project at Craig Gwladys Country Park, and through the Lost Peatlands Project. Whilst volunteering is continually increasing with staff, project presence and support, there is a concern that projects are short term, and if funding is not available support may cease for such volunteers. Volunteering on Lost Peatlands sites has seen an increase over the last year including corporate volunteering, the Houses of Parliament Restoration Team and Duke of Edinburgh participants. Volunteer co-ordination and nature/well-being events have been delivered and are continuing as part of the Working with Nature Project funded by Welsh Government under Local Places for Nature.

- Dyffryn Rhondda Railway Meadows
- Bryn Tip Local Nature Reserve
- Shelone Woods
- Abercregan Meadow
- Cwn Du Glen Local Nature Reserve
- Coed Cefnllan-isaf Pontardawe
- Giant's Grave, Neath
- Glanrhyd Local Nature Reserve
- Tonmawr water treatment works SINC
- Maes yr Afon C&C parallel to Parr Avenue C&C management
- Swansea Canal Local Nature Reserve
- Wood street stepping stones site
- Richard Burton Trail – patches that need vegetation/C&C management
- Tonmawr Heathland Restoration Site
- Coed Bach and Y Cwm Meadow Cut
- Llandarcy Village Green
- Maerdy Playing Fields
- Tonna Woodland
- Eaglesbush Valley Local Nature Reserve
- Stratton Way Pond



'It's their future' video Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School

We spoke to pupils at Cefn Saeson to find out what they like about nature and reinforced the message of why we should care for our natural environment.

Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

A small grants fund for nature improvements/delivery of State of Nature and Nature Report Action Plan actions for community groups and organisations has been established. The Local Nature Partnership Fund was launched in 2023, and has funded 12 projects including Fan Alliance in Neath to install green wall, planters; A contractor has been appointed to work with local community groups to design and develop projects that would fit with the fund.



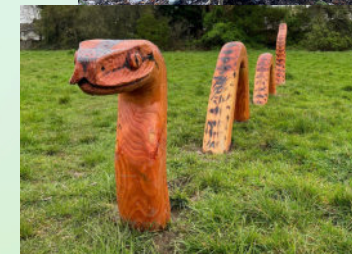
Local Nature Partnership Fund Beneficiaries

The **Friends of Gnoll Park** have recently become involved in management of a small wetland area at Gnoll Country Park. The site had been created as a wetland area approximately 15 years ago but had become largely lost to scrub through lack of land management. For the last 12 months the group have carried out bramble clearance and some scrub clearance around the pond areas. Funding was secured from the Local Nature Partnership Fund to restore the ponds, whilst also accessing contractors and machinery to mechanically cut the area providing us with a better starting point to manage the site with volunteers. Two sizeable ponds have now been recreated, are holding water well and will provide a valuable wetland resource. Ongoing management will be vital going forward and volunteer activities will be able to focus on this area. Volunteer members have benefitted from involvement in the project, through a sense of accomplishment and learning more about these valuable habitats. There has also been positive feedback from the wider public, either directly to members whilst volunteering or through our social media page.



Current Projects being delivered in partnership:

- Lost Peatlands of South Wales Project – NPT Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, Natural Resources Wales, Swansea University and Coed Lleol.
- Connecting Green Infrastructure Project – NPT Council, Swansea Council, Carmarthenshire Council, Cwmamman Town Council and Coed Lleol. (Completed)
- Local Places for Nature is delivered in conjunction with the NPT Nature Partnership.



What volunteers have said

"I really enjoyed getting to know the area. I have lived in the area for a few years but I really do feel like I know the area and reserve much better"

"Getting out and about, learning new skills has improved my mental health"

"It has reminded me of the importance of community spaces and how learning new skills together can connect you to people who you might not have much shared experience with."

"Learning ancient traditional skills and crafts connects us to the land, to our heritage... It's practical, it's cognitively engaging, it's communal. It's been an absolute joy, and I'm excited to spend more time in these held spaces"

Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

Grant funded projects delivered this year:

- Lost Peatlands Project – National Lottery Heritage Fund,
- Connecting Green Infrastructure Project – Enabling Natural Resources and well-being Fund (WG/EU) (completed)
- Welsh Government Local Places for Nature - various nature projects including management of nature reserves, community meadows, working with nature awareness raising and volunteering. We have progressed the creation of new meadow sites at Dwr y Felin and Caewathan for people to enjoy as natural green spaces with new sculptures and interpretation being installed. There have been biodiversity improvements and additional biodiversity features at Talbot Park Stepping Stone nature reserve and Glyncorrwg Primary School.
- Craig Gwladys Coal and Community – National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). Further funding has also been secured to continue to develop this park.
- Greening the Grey in Port Talbot – Welsh Government/NLHF Local Places 4 Nature (capital fund).
- Coastal Connections – WG Coastal Capacity and Challenge Fund, funding recently secured for a coastal project running into 2025.
- Improvements have been made with Glyncorrwg Primary School seeing the most benefit – moving from almost entirely concrete play areas to including wildflower beds planted by the children. Further improvements are planned as part of the Local Places for Nature Project for subsequent quarters. Schools lessons and trips have been very well received at all the schools in the Lost Peatlands area. School based learning objectives were:
 - How peatbogs are formed – deeper understanding of the role of sphagnum moss (links to peatbog gardens installed previously)
 - Properties and uses of peat – importance of peat free compost
 - Reasons and techniques for restoring peatlands – bog in a bottle, bog gardens, sphagnum moss water retention, dam experiments
 - Deeper understanding of peatbog fauna and flora – top 10 species
 - Understanding of climate as opposed to weather
 - Children have been learning about peat bogs and their restoration and have even been up to our peat bogs to see them first hand.

Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

Decarbonisation



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The Local Area Energy Plan will ensure that as a council we are ready for the future energy needs/demands and also the opportunities arising around renewables and their technologies.



Building on the success of the council’s DARE (Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy) strategy, the council continues to address and deliver results around Decarbonisation, Energy and Climate Change (DECC) issues.

In 2024, the council reorganised internal activities under a new DECC team which operates across the whole council to raise awareness of these issues as well as working with local partners on decarbonisation projects.

In support of the DECC team’s activities and as a refresh to the DARE strategy from 2020 the council have appointed the Carbon Trust to support the DECC team to formulate the council’s Net Zero 2030 Strategy & Action Plan (which will be a costed plan) and will set out the priorities for the council over the next 6 years.

The Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) has been finalised after a significant effort by the team and adopted by Council. This has been produced in parallel to the other local authorities in the region including Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. These individual plans have been brought together to create a regional master plan which has identified 12 key priorities to be addressed over the next few years dependant on Welsh Government funding.

Welsh Government will collate these regional plans from across Wales into a national plan later this year. There are also some actions in the LAEP which are specific to NPT alone.

In 2023 NPT and other partners were instrumental in securing funding from InnovateUK in support of a Launchpad: Net Zero Industry, SW Wales. This is a 3 year £7.5M fund aimed at growing the green economy in SW Wales (covering NPT, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire).

The aim of this launchpad is to support outstanding innovation projects led by businesses. At the time of securing the funds there were only 10 launchpads across the UK. There will be a series of themed funding calls to support local businesses announced between 2023 and 2025 by InnovateUK offering different levels of financial support for project related activities.

The Swansea Bay City Deal projects and programmes continue to progress well and compliment the decarbonisation agenda. These help to further advance the agenda around low emission vehicles, including electric and hydrogen powered vehicles.

Further details on Homes as Power Stations and Supporting Innovation & Low Carbon Growth can be found on pages 68-70.

Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

Council Vehicles

Our Zero Emission Vehicle and Infrastructure Strategy (ZEVIS) was approved in November 2023 and we are engaging with regional stakeholders across South West Wales Region to formulate a synchronised Regional Strategy and Improvement Programme. The Strategy’s implementation plan has been progressed in the following key areas:

- An NPT Council fast track charging (key point node) installation programme, this fast track programme will identify key core charging hubs within key travelling routes, towns, villages and valley areas, focused on enabling locations;
- Mapping exercise to identify all potential funding sources aligned to charging provision;
- To ensure internal co-ordination across the council regarding zero emission vehicle infrastructure, the Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Officer has set up a working group of key internal stakeholders to identify all relevant existing and proposed initiatives and projects.
- Develop and formulate a Zero Emission Vehicle and Infrastructure Strategy communication strategy.

Welsh Government targets set for the transition of car and light vans by 2025 and all other vehicles by 2030 are extremely challenging. The council however has made very good progress in transitioning suitable vehicles thus far and continue to explore all options and trials when vehicles are due for replacement as part of the councils annually approved vehicle renewals programme. Early independent evaluations of progress are that we are well ahead of the average for ‘mixed’ (not urban, not rural or valley authorities in Wales). NPT have 11.59% of fleet as Zero Emissions and 90% of vans purchased in the last year are Zero Emission Vehicles.

Back-office management of the charge points has also been rationalised from multiple charge point providers to one provider. This has made the management of the charging infrastructure more efficient, allows the fleet office to better facilitate charger breakdowns and simplifies recovering costs per vehicle for electricity, producing reports and data sets which are easier to access resulting in improved service delivery.



50 of the council’s vehicles have already transitioned to full electric. Further vehicles are scheduled to be transitioned to ultra-low emissions.



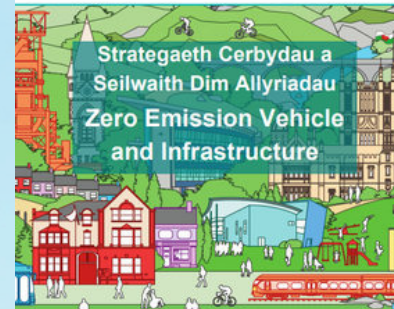
Workshop technicians (94%) have successfully been upskilled completing a Level 3 training qualification on the maintenance of electric and hybrid vehicles.



There are a total of 62 electric vehicle charging points installed and operational in the depots and civic buildings.

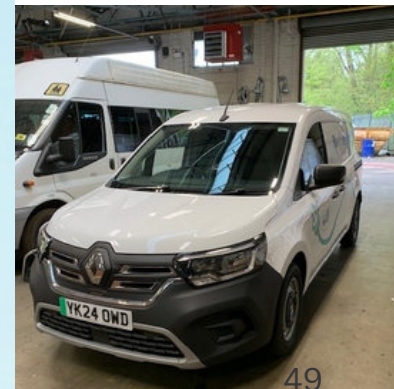


Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



Strategaeth Cerbydau a Seilwaith Dim Allyriadau
Zero Emission Vehicle and Infrastructure Strategy

www.npt.gov.uk



Climate, Nature & Decarbonisation

Operational Building Portfolio & Electric Vehicle (Public Facing) Charging Infrastructure

The following activity and measures have been developed and implemented to progress the decarbonisation of the operational building portfolio:

- Progression of the operational building rationalisation programme.
- Celtic Trust - Instigated regular meetings to setup energy, carbon and water improvement, engagement activity and programme.
- Sports Wales Grant – Successful £200k funding bid for LED lighting upgrade projects within three leisure centres.
- Building Management System Optimisation reviews – Undertaken site survey reviews at the Quays/SRC and Neath Civic within the pilot programme.
- Site energy best practice guidance - About to issue site energy/carbon good practice guidance across the operational building portfolio.
- 21st Century school programme – Completed energy/carbon performance appraisal reports.
- Energy Sparks – About to implement the Energy Sparks initiative throughout the school portfolio for applicable schools.
- Solar PV programme – Progressing PV schemes at 14 schools, also undertaking solar PV feasibility investigation on the Quays/SRC. Installing PV system on the new catering blocks at Coedffranc and Sandfields Primary schools.
- Completed net zero route map programme plans for the main civic accommodation sites.
- Completed NPT (Public Facing) Low/Zero Emission Vehicle Charging Strategy for the council to ensure a coordinated approach to decarbonise journeys within NPT synchronised to the wider Swansea Bay City Region.
- LED Lighting & Control Upgrade schemes - Completed a number of LED schemes predominately within civic accommodation and schools also looking to formulate a wider LED lighting programme.
- Developed LED lighting upgrade scheme at Neath Civic and Quays/SRC led by Facilities Management supported by Energy.
- Formulating a Carbon Literacy engagement strategy programme.
- Satisfied the minimum energy efficiency scheme (MEES), implemented EPC programme across leased building portfolio. (Key purpose of the programme to ensure NPT owned leased out properties have an EPC rating of E and above).

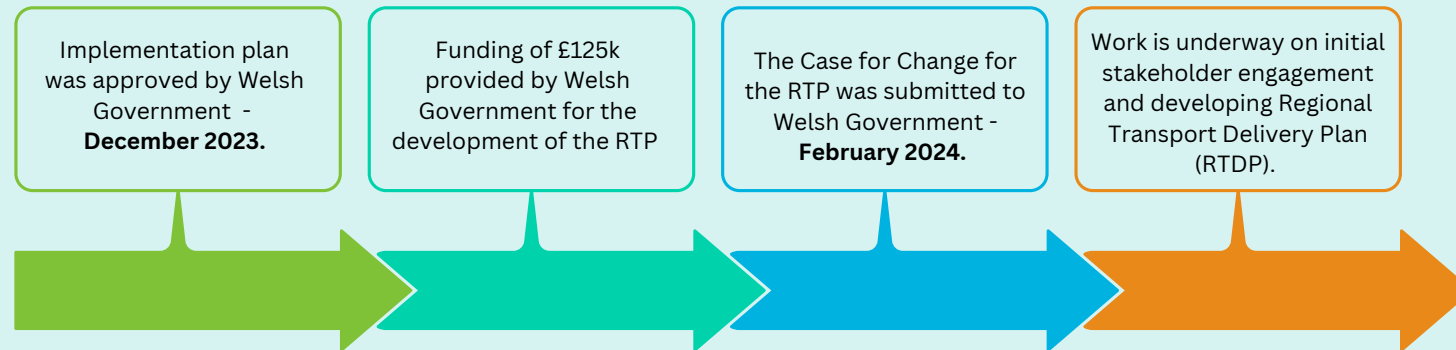
Transport

Regional Transport Plan (RTP)

The Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for South West Wales has been mandated to produce a Regional Transport Plan (RTP) by Welsh Government). The region was tasked with producing an Implementation Plan setting out how the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) will be developed and adopted. Both funding and the timeline for developing the RTP are very restricted, especially considering the number of studies that have to be completed to feed into the RTP, the amount of public consultation that has to be completed and the timeframes for political/CJC approval.

Prior to submitting the Implementation Plan to Welsh Government, the Plan was considered and endorsed by the CJC Regional Transport Sub Committee at its meeting in October 2023. The overarching aims of the Regional Transport Sub Committee is to drive an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system across the region; and they have the function to make recommendations to the Corporate Joint Committee on the development and delivery of the Regional Transport Plan.

Regional Transport Plan Timeline



Neath Transport Hub

Welsh Government funding to continue the design of the Neath Transport Hub was awarded. Design on the Transport Hub went to Scrutiny Committee in July 2023. Funding has been secured to progress to detailed design stage and to commence land assembly.

A communication strategy is being developed to ensure that businesses affected by the development are briefed and involved in the development of the scheme. Public transport and active travel routes will be improved to ensure that they support the vitality and viability of the town centre, in addition to reducing the reliance upon private vehicles.

Bus Network

The council has worked with Transport for Wales (TfW) and the bus operators to introduce an affordable network within the Bus Transition funding budget. However future networks need to be secured. A local bus tendering exercise has been undertaken for 2024/2025 network. Contacts have been tendered, evaluated and secured. This network will be operational until franchising arrangements are introduced.



Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Leisure

New Suite of Strategies

The new Culture Strategy, Destination Management Plan and Heritage Strategy have been adopted by Cabinet and a celebratory launch event was held on 16th July 2024. The event was attended by culture, tourism and heritage stakeholders, funding bodies and public sector partners.

The **Culture Strategy** is based upon extensive community consultation and identifies the priorities for the long-term investment in culture in Neath Port Talbot. Establishing a governance structure is an early action of the Culture Strategy and meetings have been set up with Swansea University to determine scope.

The **Destination Management Plan** has been co-produced with public, private and voluntary sector visitor economy partners. The next phase of implementation will be to establish the Destination Management Leadership Group to deliver the plan over the next five years.

The **Heritage Strategy** has also been subject to extensive consultation with community, heritage and strategic partners. The strategy sets out actions to ensure the sustainable conservation and management of our historic and natural environment.

Partnership working is a key component of all three strategies and officers are working closely with stakeholders and strategic partners to deliver against action plans linked to the suite of strategies.

Destination Marketing campaign reach stands at **1,923,060** against a target of 1,000,000.

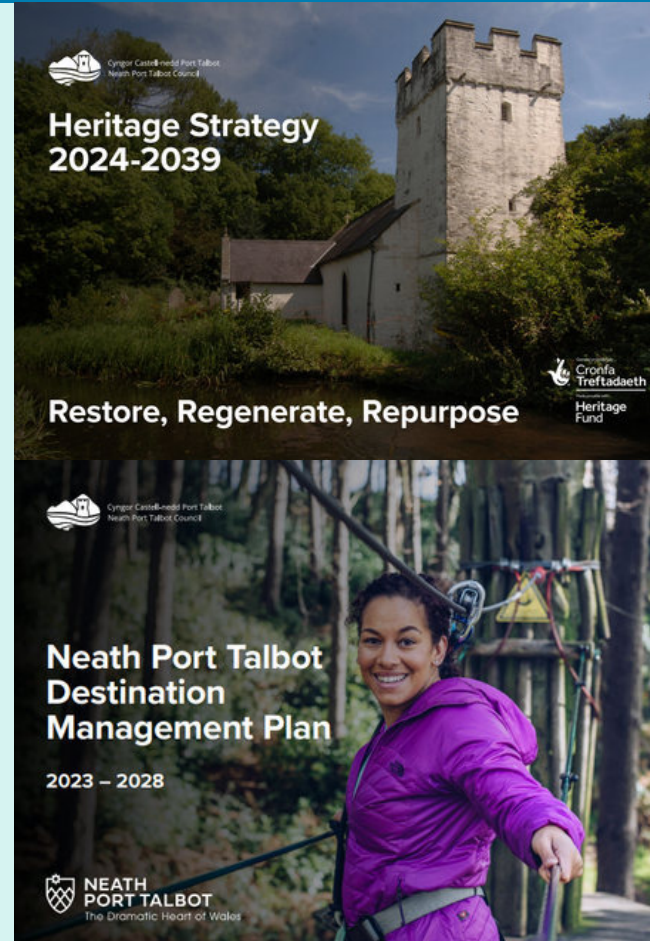


Heritage, Culture and Events Fund

The launch of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund **Heritage, Culture and Events Fund** has allowed us to support a wide range of projects across the county borough. In total 20 applications were approved, supporting private, public and voluntary sector organisations.

£1.7+ million

Total value of grant aid awarded to local projects via the Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Events Fund



Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Leisure

Heritage NPT Project

As part of the HeritageNPT Project, organisations have been able to apply for grants between £250 and £3,000 for smaller projects and up to £5,000 for larger projects. Voluntary groups, community organisations, charities, community councils and schools were invited to apply.

The fund has supported activities such as heritage skills training, archaeological excavations, oral history projects and the restoration of built heritage.

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£45k Community Heritage Grants allocated to projects in three rounds of grants.

£50k Additional funding has been secured from National Lottery Heritage Fund to continue the Community Heritage Grant Scheme

To support local volunteers a heritage event was held in Victoria Gardens to promote the work of local groups and societies. The turnout at the event was excellent, with an average of 30 people attending each stall. We have also worked with Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services on a Networking and Celebration event, which took place in October 2023, at the Plaza, Port Talbot.



We have promoted a range of local heritage group events through [@HeritageNPT](#)

Other Funded Projects

- £300,000 funding was secured from Visit Wales' Brilliant Basics Scheme to deliver car parking improvements at Neath Abbey Ruins. This forms part of a wider 'masterplan' project for Neath Abbey which is being undertaken in partnership with Cadw. The masterplan will also look at how to develop links between the Neath Abbey Ruins and Neath Abbey Ironworks - drawing the local heritage attractions together and enhancing visitor facilities overall.
- A funding application has been submitted to Event Wales to part fund a celebratory event for the Richard Burton Centenary in 2025. We are currently awaiting the outcome of application.
- A National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for £139,000 to develop the 'Canal Connections' project was successful. The project will undertake a feasibility study for the Neath and Tennant Canals to look at potential options for improvement.
- Gnoll Estate Country Park project funded by UK Government, which forms part of the wider Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor project, is at detailed design stage. Pre-application consultation has been completed and planning applications submitted. The project will deliver £12 million at Gnoll Country Park by March 2026.
- The Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan scheme, which also forms part of the wider Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor project has gone through the community consultation stage. Three drop-in consultation sessions were held between August and November 2023. An online survey was conducted alongside the face-to-face sessions.

Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Leisure

- Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre has been leased to new leaseholders Base Wales. Recent discussions with Natural Resources Wales indicate a need to revisit the previous draft of the Afan Forest Park Masterplan, further work will be completed in 2024/2025.
- Community consultation has been undertaken to devise the Aberavon Seafront Masterplan which will inform the future development of the seafront for residents and visitors. In addition to public consultation, sessions were also held for local members and council departments to feed into the masterplan. The council has now commissioned Roberts Limbrick to produce the masterplan, with a final document expected December 2024.
- A procurement exercise has been completed and an external communications agency in place to work with the Visitor Economy Team to deliver the Shared Prosperity Funded Destination Marketing and Pride of Place campaign.
- The Heart of Steel installation, which was created to promote the launch of the Dramatic Heart of Wales destination marketing campaign, was placed at Margam Park between the 7th and 13th August 2023. The Heart of Steel was also loaned to Luminate Wales during November/December 2023 and featured as one of the installations at the event.
- The Pride of Place campaign went live in October 2023 and is building momentum through a series of videos which have been filmed with local ‘campaign ambassadors’ who tell the audience about their affinity with Neath Port Talbot.
- Monthly local history talks program and events throughout libraries for adults including monthly family history help session. Outreach talks to community groups and residential homes.
- A Local Heroes WW1 exhibition took place at Aberavon Shopping Centre for the Mayor’s Armed Forces Festival, November 2023.
- ‘On Our Doorstep’ Exhibition of Archaeology in Neath Library Museum Cases - April 2023 to March 2024



Aberavon Seafront

Have your say:

What’s good about Aberavon seafront?
What is missing?
Drop by on the 16th and 17th February to have your say.

When? Where?
Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre,
Princess Margaret Way,
Aberavon Seafront.
10:00 am - 18:00 pm
Friday 16th & Saturday 17th
February 2024.

444

Online surveys submitted as part of the consultation for Aberavon Seafront Masterplan

236

People attended public drop in sessions on 16th & 17th February 2024.



The Tourism Team has supported 31 tourism operators during 2023/2024.

This includes:

- 6 new businesses
- 11 proposed business; and
- 4 existing businesses

These businesses range from holiday accommodation to events.

Enquiries relate to marketing advice, funding advice and discussions around market conditions and the potential for specific sites/proposals within Neath Port Talbot.

Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Leisure

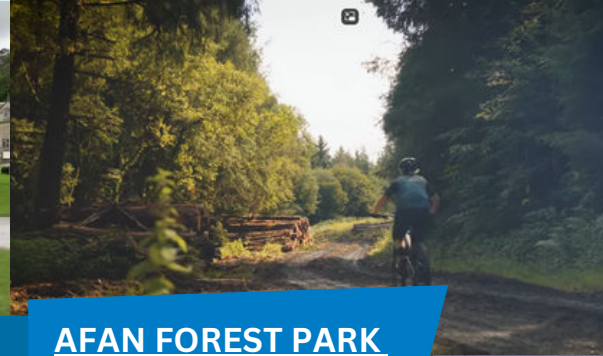
A range of videos have been launched as part of the Destination Campaign.



ADVENTURE AWAITS



HEART OF STEEL UNVEILED



AFAN FOREST PARK MOUNTAIN BIKING

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Heritage and Culture within NPT Council

The 'On Our Doorstep' course was published on 22nd January 2024, to coincide with the first Corporate Induction session of the year. Following this session the course has been made mandatory for all new starters within the council. We are now actively advertising the course through the council's corporate communication channels.

Staff have commented on the course giving them a good grounding in the locality they are working in, and they have highlighted the course providing them with opportunities on their doorstep. We are also looking to develop additional aspects of local heritage and culture by creating further resources for staff to enhance their understanding of the local area. To aid this, we are looking to create a Viva Engage channel for Culture and Heritage.



Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Leisure

NPT Active Travel - Extending and Improving our Network

The NPT Active Travel Delivery Plan has been drafted. The draft plan outlines the vision for the future of active travel in Neath Port Talbot for the next 5 years, which aims to make walking, cycling, and wheeling the preferred choices for a cleaner, safer, healthier, and more active Neath Port Talbot.

Stakeholder consultation on the Active Travel Delivery Plan took place between 20th December 2023 and 5th February 2024.

Stakeholders included:

Transport for Wales, Planning, Network Management, Highways, Playteam, Countryside, Biodiversity, Environmental Health (Air Quality), Road Safety, Tourism, Energy and Communications sections. All comments received during the stakeholder engagement were considered and, where appropriate, the plan has been amended to reflect the comments.

In order to extend our network, work is ongoing on the following schemes: Tonna Hospital link, Bryn to Goytre, Goytre to Port Talbot, Neath to Cimla, Dwr-y-felin, Newbridge Road Link, Sandfields Master Plan, Village Road crossing and Neath Masterplan.

Engagement for the Sandfields Masterplan was undertaken between 18th January and 16th February 2024, including a face-to-face drop-in event, held at Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre on Thursday 25th January 2024. A total of 80 responses were received during the consultation.

4 non-compliant barriers (that were preventing access to active travel routes for some users) have been replaced to enable access by all users. Taking the total of barriers that has been replaced since 2019 to 56.

Cycle storage has been installed at Vale of Neath Leisure Centre, Cwrt Herbert Leisure Centre, Pontardawe Leisure Centre and Aberavon Leisure Fitness Centre, allowing visitors to securely store their bikes while visiting these destinations.



Monitoring








A programme of works has been established to record the speed and volume of traffic, along with cycle and pedestrian counts. Data has been captured to record baseline data and demonstrate the advantages resulting from enhancements to active travel routes. This will allow NPT to discharge our duties under the Active Travel Act.








Promotion



NPT's website has been updated to promote Active Travel, publicise the revised Active Travel Network Map and provide information on routes that have recently been completed. Staff attended a family fun day to promote active travel. The aim of this promotion is to encourage individuals to choose walking or cycling for commuting to work, school, or shopping, as well as to drive traffic to our website.

Active Travel Network Map Development

Route audits have been completed against a set of Welsh Government specified criteria to determine if they are suitable for walking, cycling or both for all the routes shown on our Active Travel Network Map. As a consequence of the audits, certain proposed future routes have successfully met the audit criteria, thereby transitioning to existing routes.

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
% of persons (aged 3 and over) who say they can speak Welsh	23.4%	Increase	29.1% 
% of people (aged 3 or over) who say they speak Welsh daily	12%	Increase	16.6% 
Total (£) external funding achieved to protect historic environment assets	New Measure	Increase	£330,000 
% of pupils participating in sport three or more times a week	Not available	Increase	Data not available 
% of pupils participated in sport in a community club at least once a week	62.3%	Increase	Data not available 
% of adults active for at least 150 minutes in the previous week	New Measure	New Measure	Data not available 
% people participating in sporting activities 3 or more times a week	39%	Increase	Data not available 

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
Total value of funding secured to enhance the quality of the visitor experience	To follow	Increase	£825,605 
Total value of grant aid awarded to local projects via the Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Events Fund	New Measure	Increase	£1,764,725 
Total cumulative reach of destination marketing and pride of place campaigns.	New Measure	Increase	1,923,060 
% of waste reused, recycled or composted	64.73%	Increase	67.72% 
Kilograms of residual waste generated per person	195.56	Increase	197.25 
Area of council owned land (or within council control) used as green space, local nature reserves	971ha	Increase	852ha 
The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is protected through designation and/or is subject to appropriate management for biodiversity conservation as set out in an approved management plan.	287ha and 30km	Increase	1150ha and 30km 

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
Number of PM10 breaches in the Air Quality Management Area (Port Talbot/Taibach).	30	Maintain	27 
The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is designated or meets the criteria for designation as a Site of Importance for Conservation (SINCs).	782ha	Increase	780ha 



Well-being Objectives

The following pages provide an overview of progress and key achievements during 2023/2024.



4 Jobs and skills

To work towards achieving the well-being objective of ‘Local people are skilled and access high quality, green job’, we have continued to progress a number of key investment and regeneration projects locally as well progress Swansea Bay City Deal projects, further development the Celtic Freeport business case and drawing down over £50million funding from UK Government through their Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling Up Fund.




As a result of this funding we were able to launch a Business Growth and Innovation Fund and a Local Business Priority Fund, with over £6 million of grants being offered to businesses. In addition we delivered 52 ‘Let’s Talk Business’ engagement events to hear from our local businesses and work with them to drive forward the local economy.

Work continues with partner organisations to identify skills gaps and develop relevant programmes to support the Floating Offshore Wind (FLOW) sector, witnessing the emergence of new green jobs, strengthening working relationships with academic partners to develop and link projects to ensure companies are in the best position to diversify into the sector and develop the local/regional supply chains.






Neath Port Talbot Employability continues to deliver a wide range of interventions to help and support individuals from 16+ with well-being, employment, training, work experience and paid work opportunities. As part of this work during 2023/2024, 404 individuals from jobless households were supported back to work.

Following the announcement in 2023 of the Tata transition, work commenced with the Department of Work and Pensions, Careers Wales and other partners to prepare to engage with Tata staff to raise awareness of training and employment opportunities, and where they can access further support.

Total Number of Aims: 20

-  11 on-track
-  6 more work to do
-  3 off-track

Total Number of Performance Measures: 10

-  3 on-track
-  0 more work to do
-  2 off-track
-  4 for monitoring
-  1 data not available / to follow

Well-being Objective 4 Jobs and Skills

The 20 aims detailed below were approved as part of the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and have provided a direction of travel for the work undertaken during 2023/2024. The Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status provides an overview of our progress and the following pages highlight some of our key achievements between April 2023 and March 2024.

<p>1</p> <p>Worked through the Corporate Joint Committee to deliver the Regional Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p></p>	<p>2</p> <p>Delivered the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) programme in Neath Port Talbot.</p> <p></p>	<p>3</p> <p>Take forward development and investment opportunities and activities linked to the council's Decarbonisation & Renewable Energy Strategy.</p> <p></p>	<p>4</p> <p>Delivered the Celtic Freeport across Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire.</p> <p></p>	<p>5</p> <p>Ensured partnership working is robust in order to develop more green opportunities.</p> <p></p>	<p>6</p> <p>Targeted programmes are developed to enable local people to benefit from the employment created through new business investment.</p> <p></p>	<p>7</p> <p>Developed the Transport Hub at Neath Railway Station.</p> <p></p>
<p>8</p> <p>Employability programmes are further strengthened ensuring that all those needing help to find work can access it, including those who are hardest to reach.</p> <p></p>	<p>9</p> <p>Established a strong gateway to business support to help diversify the local economy and increase its resilience to future economic shocks by helping existing businesses to grow, establishing new enterprises and attracting new investment to the area.</p> <p></p>	<p>10</p> <p>Invested and attracted investment into our principal towns, district centres and wider communities; respond to the demand for more flexible work spaces; produced a holistic Regeneration Strategy for the borough</p> <p></p>	<p>11</p> <p>Increased capacity within the Regeneration & Economic Development team to better position the council to develop and bid for funding to support the development of the local economy.</p> <p></p>	<p>12</p> <p>Ensure we have a stronger workforce with sufficient apprenticeship opportunities for our young people and adults</p> <p></p>	<p>13</p> <p>More young people have access to opportunities to achieve a recognised qualification following completion of their statutory education.</p> <p></p>	<p>14</p> <p>Strengthen partnership arrangements at the local level to develop the economy ensuring business and communities have a strong voice in shaping future plans.</p> <p></p>
<p>15</p> <p>Developed transport plans in partnership with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to support access to work, reduce emissions and serve the needs of Neath Port Talbot residents.</p> <p></p>	<p>16</p> <p>Jobs Growth Wales Plus and apprenticeship programmes expanded across the county borough; with the council offering a larger number of quality placement opportunities.</p> <p></p>	<p>17</p> <p>The council's learning and development offer is strengthened ensuring that all employees are supported to access lifelong learning opportunities and confidence to advance their careers within the council.</p> <p></p>	<p>18</p> <p>Maximised Social Value and Community Benefits opportunities across the council's procurement activities to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits for local residents, businesses and communities.</p> <p></p>	<p>19</p> <p>Assessed the impact of the changes made to the council's operating model and bring forward proposals to repurpose assets that are surplus to requirements; this could include shared workspace hubs, hybrid office and research and development workspaces, starter units etc.</p> <p></p>	<p>20</p> <p>Partnership working is strengthened to upskill those already in work or who wish to return to work will improve; more local people will hold qualifications at Level 4+ and are supported into local quality jobs.</p> <p></p>	

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Local Businesses

With an ever-changing landscape our local economy has to ensure it is continuously evolving. Working with partners such as Business Wales, Development Bank for Wales, NPT Employability, colleges and universities etc., a collaborative approach has been developed to support the delivery of UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund programme and other economic development priorities across our communities.

A strong working relationship has been established to gather and share intelligence to help shape future strategies and plans to accelerate innovation and growth of local businesses connected with industrial decarbonisation, delivery of a positive and sustainable local economy, and in turn an increase in well paid jobs and reduction in poverty levels.

We have continued our collaboration with universities and local colleges to deliver specialist business support packages to key employers and spin outs to maximise opportunities from new developments/ technologies (Floating Of-Shore Wind (FLOW); low carbon; net zero, hydrogen production), Government initiatives (Freeports), regeneration (re-development of Port Talbot Docks) and new investments (Global Centre of Rail Excellence).

Business Engagement

The allocation of UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the 'business anchor project' has allowed us to invest in resources to deliver a wide range of business events across our towns, valleys and villages. These events have been successful in engaging with businesses and directly helping local people to start, grow and progress ideas. In addition, creating opportunities for the local supply chain to be awarded contracts within the organisation and externally through providing access to training and upskilling.

52

Let's Talk Business events
have taken place in
2023/2024

In addition, we have delivered Meet the Buyer events for:

- Potential Celtic Sea developers - Ensuring local companies are linked up to various supply chain portals and groups such as the Celtic Sea Cluster and those associated with offshore developers;
- Passenger Transport Supplier Development Event – partnership event between Economic Development and Passenger Transport delivering a workshop for local taxi drivers with the aim of giving them greater access to winning schools contracts.
- Associated British Ports (ABP); RWE; Wildfox; Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) to encourage local sourcing, supply chain development and employment and training opportunities; and
- Lisarb - a global renewable energy company specialising in solar, wind, marine and hydrogen.



Local Businesses

Business Enquiries

In December 2023 an enquiry process was launched to support businesses - with finance and funding being key themes where further support was required. This was followed by start-up support, innovation, marketing and social media, skills, training and recruitment.

547
Page 89

Business enquiries received between December 2023 and March 2023



Business Growth and Innovation Fund

Following the launch of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund, the Business Growth and Innovation Fund provides investment in new business start-ups, the development of existing businesses and the attraction of inward investors as critical to supporting local communities and the economy.

425

Expressions of Interest were received

293

Application were submitted

191

Offers were made to local businesses

£2.3+ million

Grants offered

689

Full-time equivalent jobs potentially created or safeguarded

Local Business Priority Fund

In addition to the Business Growth and Innovation Fund, a Local Business Priority Fund was made available for larger projects with grants of up to £250,000 to address immediate local priorities.

32

Application were submitted

20

Offers were made to local businesses

£3.9+ million

Grants offered



Local Businesses

Green Jobs

The Economic Development Team have been working with partner organisations to identify skills gaps and develop relevant programmes to support the Floating Offshore Wind (FLOW) sector and the emergence of new green jobs.

Much of this work is being delivered through the Manufacturing Floating Offshore Wind (FLOW) Skills Group which the team has set up as part of the UK SPF funded 'Business Anchor' project. This has involved working with companies across the region to establish their capabilities and capacity to be part of the developing supply chain, identify what skills are needed for the workforce of the future, understand industry issues and/or barriers to companies being able to support FLOW, on-shore renewables sectors, and green energy technology and infrastructure.

The team have also organised 3 events for local companies with potential developers for the Celtic Sea project, so they can understand the supply chain opportunities, skills requirements and wider benefits of this investment, and what is needed to diversify into the FLOW sector.

In addition, the team have engaged in projects that are pioneering new technologies to support the next generation of wind turbine technologies, and are sharing this knowledge with local companies.

The aim of this work is to bring long-term benefits to the area by:

- Helping local companies maximise opportunities associated with FLOW, on-shore renewables; Freeports, etc.
- Increase the ability of local companies to secure contracts; encourage innovation and develop local supply chains.
- Strengthen partnership working between businesses; academia and key developers.
- Help companies understand what skills and investment is needed to diversify into FLOW and renewables; create employment and grow the local economy.

Other work has also involved strengthening working relationships with academic partners to develop and link projects to ensure companies are in the best position to diversify into the sector and develop the local/regional supply chains.

Finally, to support efforts to achieving net zero, a Hydrogen Mapping Group has been established for companies and organisations linked to hydrogen generation and demand to gain industry insight, build a strategic understanding of potential and identify industry issues and challenges.

Procurement

Further internal collaboration was undertaken following the introduction of the Social Value and Public Procurement Act (Wales). Whilst the procurement element of this Act has been deferred until February 2025, the council's Economic Development and Procurement teams have worked in partnership to:

- Develop a report highlighting ways in which the council can enhance and develop local spend.
- Produce a Community Benefits and Social Value Policy, along with guidance with an aim to maximise spend within the local supply chain, create a reduction in our environmental impact, increase staff awareness of what social value means and how it can support ultimately the local economy.
- Review processes and understand the barriers faced by local businesses when tendering/ quoting for work with the council.

Investment and Regeneration

Over the course of 2023/2024, we have continued to progress a number of key investment and regeneration projects including Swansea Bay City Deal, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Fund, Celtic Freeports and the Transforming Towns initiative. We are also working with regional partners across South West Wales to develop and deliver numerous Regeneration Programmes funded by the UK and Welsh Governments, in order to deliver Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) priorities and implement the Regional Economic Development Strategy action plan.

Following on from the announcement by Tata Steel to decarbonise the plant at Port Talbot, we have had significant involvement in the development of a new Local Economic Action Plan (LEAP) to support the TATA transition. The LEAP will also consider current and future economic priorities and will be used to support the development of a revised Regeneration & Economic Development Strategy.

The Regeneration & Economic Development Strategy and associated delivery plan will support coordinated development of our existing and emerging business community and will enable the council and partners to access additional sources of funding.

To ensure these key areas of work are progressed, a number of governance structures have been implemented to develop collaborative working around economic development, regeneration, employability and skills.



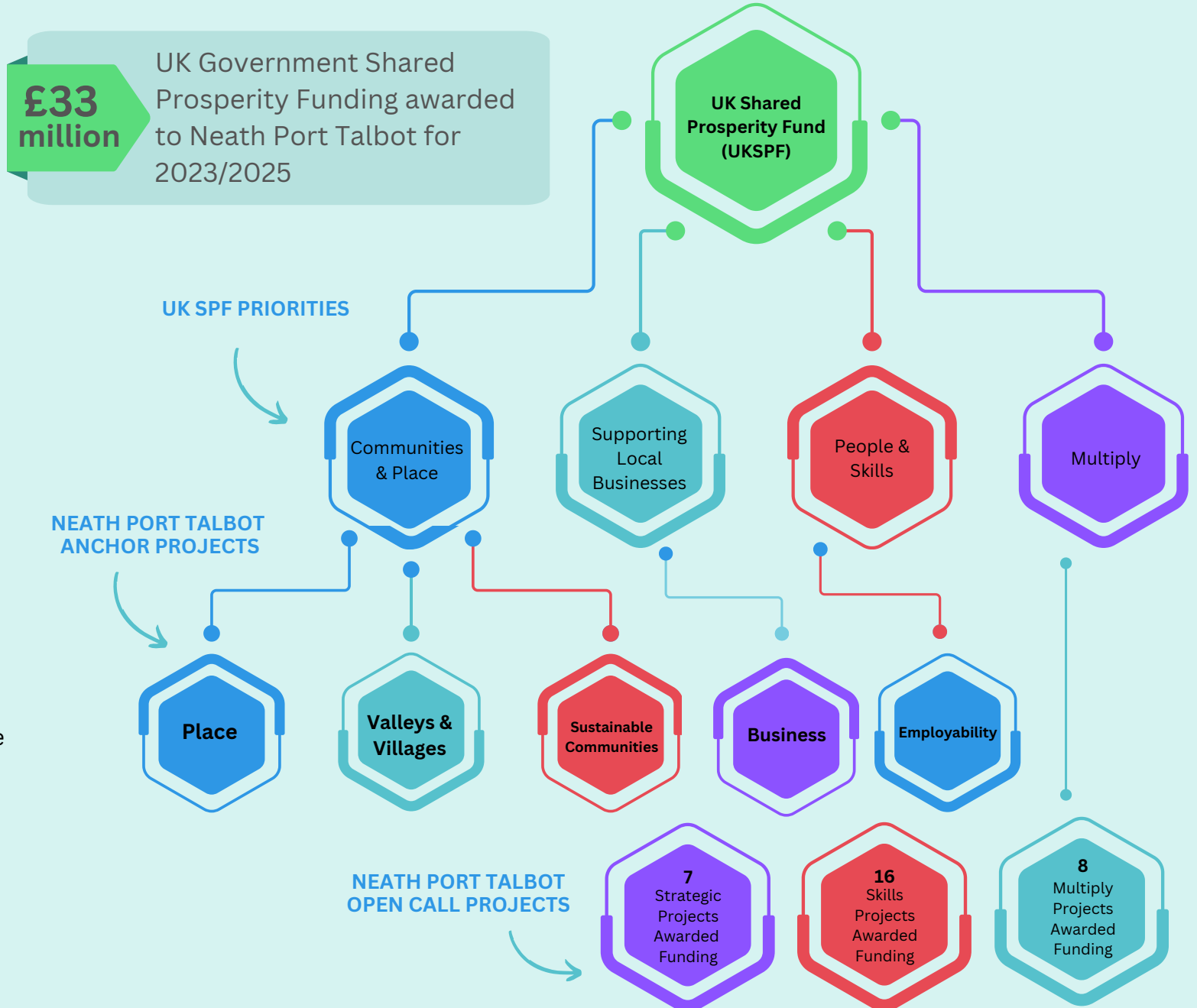
UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund provided significant investment for Neath Port Talbot for 2023/2024.

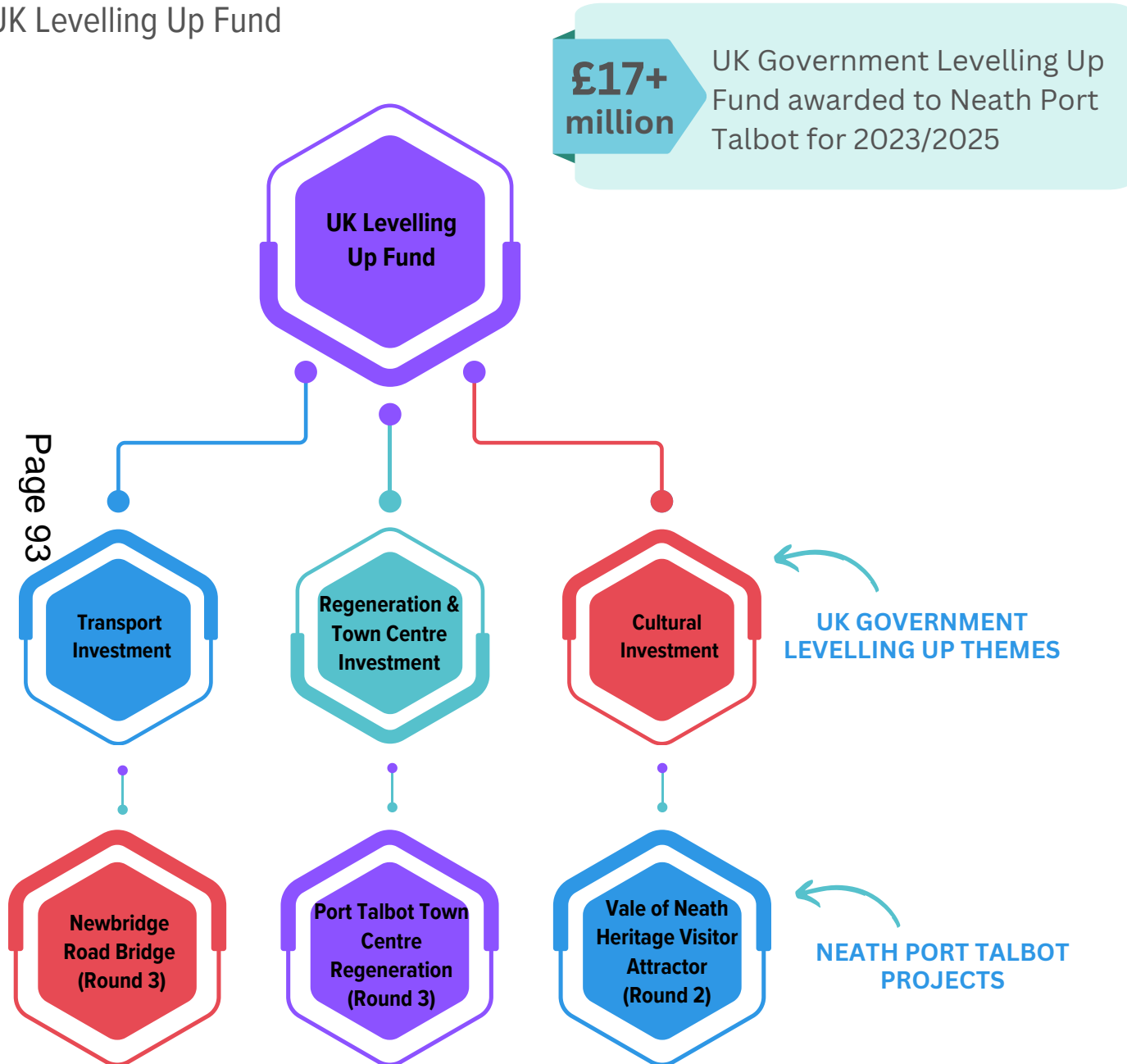
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme Management Office (PMO) within the Neath Port Talbot Council Strategic Funding Programmes Team leads the delivery of the programme for Neath Port Talbot including the establishment of five anchor projects and the management of open calls for Skills, Multiply and Strategic stand-alone projects. The PMO ensures compliant delivery, programme monitoring and related programme management functions.

The diagram sets out the overarching UK Shared Prosperity Fund priorities and the five anchor projects. In addition, a total of 31 stand-alone projects have been funded through the Skills, Multiply and Strategic Projects open calls, together with five third party grant schemes.

More information on UKSPF projects can be found throughout this report and on the council's [website](#).



UK Levelling Up Fund



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The UK Levelling Up Fund awarded over £17m to the council to deliver the Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Visitor Attractor which is a package bid in the Vale of Neath, which will deliver two transformational projects:

The Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan Visitor Infrastructure Scheme will deliver strategic visitor infrastructure including community facilities, accommodation and improved parking.

The Gnoll Estate Country Park Heritage and Visitor Infrastructure Scheme will invest in the historic estate including an improved visitor centre and park enhancements.

£14.8m of UK Levelling Up Funding was also awarded to deliver **Port Talbot Town Centre Regeneration**, this includes:

- Refurbishment of the Princess Royal Theatre;
- Redevelopment of Port Talbot Civic Square into a multi-use community space and introducing green infrastructure; and
- Redevelopment of public realm at Riverside to provide green infrastructure and children’s natural play areas.

Neath Port Talbot Council are awaiting formal approval of the **Newbridge Road Bridge** project.

Swansea Bay City Deal

The Swansea Bay City Deal is expected to give the Region a permanent uplift in its Gross Value Added (GVA) of £1.8 billion and will generate almost 10,000 new jobs by 2033. The investment is divided across a portfolio of nine projects and programmes delivering a total of 35 individual projects throughout the counties of Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, and Pembrokeshire. Neath Port Talbot Council lead the delivery of two City Deal projects/programmes.

Homes as Power Stations (HAPS)

The Homes as Power Stations (HAPS) project aims to deliver smart, low carbon, energy efficient homes through a coordinated approach across the region, ultimately leading to a reduction in fuel poverty, positive impact on health and well-being and contributing to carbon emission reduction targets.

£150 of City Deal funding supports a number of linked activities, including:

- Facilitating the adoption of energy efficient design and renewable technologies in new-build homes and existing housing stock supported by a regional targeted financial incentives fund;
- Developing a sustainable, skilled regional supply chain for renewable technologies in homes supported by a regional supply chain development fund; and
- Establishing a coordinated monitoring and evaluation of the technologies programme.

HAPS Financial Incentives Fund (£5.75m)

This fund was launched in the second quarter of 2023 to encourage and support the uptake of the HAPS concept primarily with local authorities that have housing stock and Registered Social Landlords. Private Sector developers were also eligible to access the fund.

There was a significant amount of interest where, following a rigorous application and scoring process, 16 projects across the four counties were awarded funding of up to £300k per scheme. To date, three schemes in Neath Port Talbot have been allocated funding to enable 118 HAPS homes to be created.

Monitoring and Evaluation Contract - this £1m project was awarded to Cardiff University's Welsh School of Architecture to monitor the houses that have technology installed and share the learning with stakeholders to speed up the proven up-take of concepts.

HAPS Supply Chain Fund - this funding will be soon made available to secure the manufacturing of one or more of the technologies, in addition to ensuring we have a workforce with the right skills to install and maintain the products.

HAPS



Swansea Bay City Deal

Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth

The Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth programme is made up of interlinked projects:

Bay Technology Centre is Wales' first commercial 'building as a power station' (energy positive) with a link to the Hydrogen Centre providing a proof of concept to use renewables to create hydrogen and fuel vehicles demonstrating the potential to decarbonise vehicle refuelling. The building on Baglan Energy Park provides a range of high quality, flexible, speculative office and laboratory space to support start-up businesses and indigenous business growth.

SWITCH (South Wales industrial Transition from Carbon Hub) Harbourside - SWITCH will provide a specialist facility on Harbourside, Port Talbot to carry out research to support the steels and metals industry and supply chain to improve competitiveness by increasing product capability and reduce carbon emissions to meet legislative requirements.

Advanced Manufacturing Production Facility (AMPF) - This project has been developed in response to the well evidenced need for business sites and premises, including industrial premises. The project is to develop a hybrid building based on the 'proving factory' concept, providing a range of production units incorporating a pilot line with office space to support start-up companies and indigenous business growth in the innovation and manufacturing sectors.

National Net Zero Centre of Excellence for Skills (new project approved in December 2023) - The aim is to establish the facility as a central hub for national Research Development & Innovation activity using the state of the art facilities to increase the number and quality of low carbon businesses in the region, promoting further investment and innovation.

Hydrogen stimulus programme - The project will establish a link between the Swansea Bay Technology Centre and the Hydrogen Centre on Baglan Energy Park, including necessary upgrades to the equipment including an electrolyser to create smart energy systems and to use excess electricity to convert to hydrogen to fuel vehicles for council use, which will also be purchased with City Deal funding.

Air quality monitoring programme - This project has been developed in response to air quality issues and the need to understand levels of pollution and develop mitigating measures to tackle this pollution. The project will incorporate a monitoring and analysis system to provide verified sources of air quality data.

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure route map project - This project has been developed in response to the need to decarbonise transport, and address the new challenges posed by the increasing number of electric vehicles.

Property Development Fund - This £4.5m project has been developed to support the viability of private sector schemes to develop bespoke and speculative buildings in the Port Talbot Waterfront Enterprise Zone (Harbourside, Baglan Energy Park and Baglan Industrial Estate).

Swansea Bay City Deal

In addition to the two Neath Port Talbot programmes detailed on pages 66 and 67 there are two additional regional programmes which assist Neath Port Talbot. They are:

Digital Infrastructure Programme

The Digital Infrastructure Programme, consisting of three workstreams, Connected Places, Rural and Next Generation Wireless, aims to deliver a £175m connectivity investment to the region, leading to a £318m boost to the regional economy.

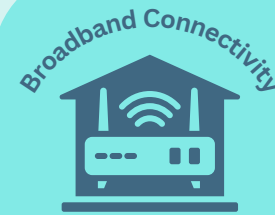
The workstreams aim to support the delivery of better mobile coverage and capacity, plus gigabit capable connectivity broadband across Neath Port Talbot Council, including the direct funding of 19 Neath Port Talbot Council sites.

The Next Generation Wireless workstream is supporting the delivery of a wireless Digital Innovation Network for Internet of Things (IOT) sensors across the county. The IOT network will enable organisations to collect sensor data remotely. The NPT Broadband Engagement officer conduct in-person sessions with residents, explaining their options for getting online.

Skills and Talent Programme

The Skills and Talent programme aims to deliver a regional solution for the identification and delivery of the skills and training requirements for all City Deal projects. Focussing on high growth industry sectors in the digital, construction, energy, smart manufacturing and health and well-being sectors, the programme will deliver 2,200 additional skills and development opportunities, 14,000 higher skilled individuals and 3,000 new apprenticeship opportunities. This will support businesses by allowing them to grow and be future proof through developing a talented regional workforce.

Skills and Talent are also working alongside the Tata Steel Transition Board to upskill and reskill workers to retain them within the region. Working alongside partners from the private sector, higher and further education, schools and the third sector, the programme team are periodically identifying gaps in current provision and establishing the changes needed to develop new courses and frameworks to meet these skill gaps. Pilot projects are being developed and deployed which align to the needs of industry and the key Swansea Bay City Deal themes.



Neath Port Talbot CBC high speed fixed broadband availability has increased drastically since 2019 and is higher than the Welsh average.

99% of residents can now access superfast speeds of 30Mb/s+, whilst 75% of residents can access ultrafast speeds of 300Mb/s+.



13 Pilot projects funded via **Skills and Talent** are taking place across Neath Port Talbot, with activity taking place across out primary and secondary schools, college and work based learning organisations.

“ Ensuring the residents of Neath Port Talbot can be well positioned for emerging careers of the future. ”

Accelerating Wales' Green Economy



Celtic Freeport

The Celtic Freeport represents a strategy to catalyse investment and development around the ports of Milford Haven and Port Talbot, spanning clean energy developments and innovation assets, fuel terminals, a power station, heavy engineering and the steel industry across South-West Wales.

The development includes capital-intensive investments that are best placed to take advantage of the specific package of tax measures afforded by a Freeport, such as:

- the floating offshore wind (FLOW) manufacturing and lifecycle cluster;
- other zero-carbon industries (e.g. hydrogen);
- advanced manufacturing, and
- new innovative technologies (e.g. sustainable aviation fuel).

The Outline Business Case submitted prior to December 2023 has been appraised by UK and Welsh Government and a positive announcement is expected shortly. Given the timeliness of delivering the Freeport vision work has progressed on the Full Business case which should be submitted to both UK and Welsh Governments in the autumn.

It is estimated that 11,500 jobs will be delivered across Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire. This figure is a reduction on that included within the Outline Business case and is a reflection of recent decisions regarding the allocation of Government funding to support port infrastructure; a delay in the delivery of improvements to the electricity transmission network which are necessary to increase its capacity and increased competition from overseas and other parts of the UK.



In March 2024 the Celtic Freeport welcomed its first permanent Chief Executive, Luciana Ciubotariu, to take this vital re-industrialisation, decarbonisation and regeneration project to fruition.

The Freeport will be working to ensure that both UK and Welsh Government implement reforms to maximise the onshore benefits linked to Floating Offshore Wind and thus support our local economy. The growth of net zero industries within underused industrial land in Neath Port Talbot will be stimulated and accelerated and promote regeneration and infrastructure improvements within the port area and outer boundaries to achieve economic growth and long-term sustainability.

Subject to the approval of the full business case, the Freeports will each receive up to £26 million of Government funding. This is on top of a range of measures, including locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. Businesses locating in these Freeports will be able to take advantage of generous tax reliefs and a simplified customs procedure, as well as a package of trade and innovation support.

Employability and Skills

Neath Port Talbot Employability has established a single front door process which captures a wide range of interventions to help and support individuals from comprehensive school age through to retirement age with well-being, employment, training, work experience and paid work opportunities. Support is offered to those who are economically inactive and unemployed, with consideration given to those who have protected characteristics.

The Hub, situated in Aberavon Shopping Centre, Port Talbot, also promotes the “single front door approach” to employment support. The Hub is open daily (Monday-Friday) with partner agencies utilising the venue for appointments. The Hub is averaging 50 drop-ins each month for people looking for employment support.

Plans are underway to look at a permanent resource in Pontardawe Library, working with our colleagues from Estates and partners from Swansea University with the aim of assisting residents from Pontardawe and the Swansea Valley. An Employment Information stall was in Neath market for 8 weeks, this was successful for referrals to the projects and was a positive step to ensure our visibility in Neath town centre. Our employability outreach for Neath Port Talbot is shown in the map (right), a full list is available on request.

Welsh Government funded Communities for Work Plus programme will have a significant cut to funding for 2024/2025, a total to £700,000 less than provided in 2023/2024. This will have a big impact on the staff and the programme delivery over the next few months.

NPT Employability Outreach



A total of 2501 referrals during 2023/2024 for people requesting employability support.

Employability and Skills

The Sea Ranger Service ran a recruitment drive in NPT, looking for young people aged 18-29 to be trained to monitor, research and protect nature in our oceans. The programme offered young people the opportunity to take part in a Sea Ranger Bootcamp where participants were tested on motivation, teamwork skills and learning abilities. Following this, selected participants were then taken to the water on sailing expeditions and if successful they would be employed as full-time Sea Rangers.

Andrew was a participant with NPT Employability. Supported by his Mentor, he applied for the Sea Rangers programme. He undertook an eight day bootcamp in England. Following this, Andrew was offered a place on the Sea Rangers programme travelling to the Netherlands in March 2024 to embark on training and become a Full Time Sea Ranger. As part of our support we were also able to purchase Andrew a Passport to allow him to travel along with wet weather clothing to undergo the training. These were items that he had to purchase himself to be able to start on the programme, and being unemployed at the time, this was not achievable.

“I am excited and looking forward to what the future holds with The Sea Rangers”.



Andrew said “I was excited when the opportunity was advertised and felt it was a once in a lifetime chance to provide me with a dream career hopefully for the rest of my life. I enjoyed the selection process and knew this was what I definitely wanted to do. I have met some amazing people so far on my journey and know they will be friends for life. I feel very grateful to be offered this opportunity and the additional support I have received from my mentor.

“I am enjoying my work! I am earning way more than I had through benefits. I can’t thank NPT Employability enough for helping me get my job and I would recommend anyone looking for work, no matter how long you have been unemployed to get in touch with them for help”.

Fifty-five year old SH, from Neath, had been out of work for 2 years. He enrolled in October 2023, and with support, progressed into a Paid Work Opportunity (PWO) in December 2023. During his PWO training was arranged for SH to take part in a Quallsafe Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW). SH passed the course and now has an NQF Level 3 Certificate, which has strengthened his CV. SH’s 12 week PWO ended in March 2024, and after impressing Paul Watkins, AWD’s Operations Manager, with his ‘can do’ attitude, SH was offered full time work with AWD.



Employability and Skills

Working with local employers

Our Employer Liaison Officers are working closely with local businesses to identify opportunities for full-time/part-time vacancies, work experience and volunteering. These links have supported the delivery of 'Recruitment Days'. In addition, the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator works alongside Employer Liaison Officers to look at the use of transferable skills of participants and apprenticeship opportunities.

A Co-ordinating Employer Contacts group has been established to increase communication between colleagues offering support/services to employers. The group has provided a forum for information sharing and is developing a leaflet for a 'one council' approach for businesses which includes the range of support available. This internal group links to the Business Support Group, which includes representatives of organisations providing employer support in NPT.

NHS

We purchased 30 placements with the NHS, which allowed us to put forward candidates that were interested in gaining employment in the NHS, in their chosen area of work.

We had people enter placements in Admin roles, IT support, Porter jobs and as booking clerks. The placements run for between 6 – 12 weeks and gave individuals the opportunity to gain experience for their CV. In addition they were treated as internal candidates when applying for jobs, given support on how to apply for NHS jobs and given the opportunity to undertake the mandatory training needed to work within the NHS.

During 2023/2024 we had 30 people start the placements, 26 completed and 15 gained employment within the NHS.

Recruitment Days



Port Talbot Jobs Fair
(30+ employers)

Neath Jobs Fair (30+ employers)

Amazon Recruitment Day

Drive Recruitment Promotion Day

DVLA Recruitment Day

LLMAU Recruitment Day

Acorn Recruitment Day

Teaching Assistant
Recruitment Day

Security Recruitment Day

Care Recruitment Day

NPT EMPLOYABILITY
Delivered by Neath Port Talbot Council

Teaching Assistant Recruitment Day

FREE ENTRY AND ALL WELCOME!

Tuesday 6th August (10:00 - 13:00)

The Opportunity Hub, Aberafan Shopping Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 1PB

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US ON: 01639 880160 | jobsupport@npt.gov.uk | www.npt.gov.uk/nptemployability

Cinger Caswell Road Port Talbot Neath Port Talbot Council

www.npt.gov.uk/nptemployability

Opportunity 2024

Communities for Jobs Plus Working in partnership with Communities

Healthier Cymru Health Government

Security Recruitment Event

Elite, SGD GROUP, CORPS SECURITY, G4S

The Opportunity Hub, Aberafan Shopping Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 1PB

Wednesday 29th March 10:00 - 14:00

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US ON: 01639 880160 | jobsupport@npt.gov.uk | www.npt.gov.uk/nptemployability

Cinger Caswell Road Port Talbot Neath Port Talbot Council

www.npt.gov.uk/nptemployability

Opportunity 2024

Communities for Jobs Plus Working in partnership with Communities

Healthier Cymru Health Government

NPT EMPLOYABILITY
Delivered by Neath Port Talbot Council

Care Sector Recruitment Day

FREE ENTRY AND ALL WELCOME!

Tuesday 30th July (10:00 - 13:00)
Open to public 11:30am - 1pm

Neath Job Centre, 1 Windsor Rd, Neath SA11 1LY

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US ON: 01639 880160 | jobsupport@npt.gov.uk | www.npt.gov.uk/nptemployability

Cinger Caswell Road Port Talbot Neath Port Talbot Council

www.npt.gov.uk/nptemployability

Opportunity 2024

Communities for Jobs Plus Working in partnership with Communities

Healthier Cymru Health Government



Follow us for more
@nptemployability or visit
www.npt.gov.uk/employability

Employability and Skills

In-work Support

The current offer of NPT Employability does not support those individuals who are in work wishing to upskill or retrain to gain better employment, whether it be for additional hours or an increase of salary.

The team submitted a Shared Prosperity Fund Expression of Interest to the Sustainable Communities Growth Fund to include this as part of the holistic provision of NPT Employability. This funding was awarded and the programme commenced in January 2024.

We now have an overall provision to support those who are employed but want to upskill, retrain or move into a better paid job. Within our in-work support programme we employ one mentor that works with people who are in work but are on a zero-hour contract, low hours and/or receiving top-up benefit from DWP.

To date we have engaged 43 participants, 8 gained more sustainable employment and 2 gained training to help them gain additional hours/more sustainable work.

Developing People for the Future

Shared Prosperity Fund Apprenticeship bid approved as part of the People and Skills UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund anchor fund to enhance our Business Critical posts and react to our internal aging workforce. 'Developing People for the Future' has been submitted and approved.

This application (a partnership between Corporate Training & Development and the Employability Team) has allowed us to recruit apprentices and degree apprenticeships. In departments where evidence gathered identifies skill shortages and business critical posts, as part of our succession planning process. 30 applications were received from managers. Work was undertaken to gather information to confirm all who had applied had provided their succession plans, and identified actions, and training and development opportunities for the apprentices.

The Developing People for the Future project team have completed the application shortlisting, using a RAG rating criteria to support recruitment into critical posts identified within succession plan received to date. Out of the 30 applications, 11 managers were contacted, offering funding for 12 apprenticeships.

To date, we have extended 3 existing positions, and are at interview stage for the remaining 9 posts. The apprentice positions were publicised through various social media platforms, including NPT website, Facebook and LinkedIn/Indeed.



Employability and Skills

Tata Transition Support

Following the Tata Steel UK’s announcement (September 2023) of its plans to progress with the decarbonisation of its site in Neath Port Talbot, NPT Employability has been working with TATA Support Group partners to plan for when employability services are needed.

Support sessions were prepared for roll out at Tata’s social club for employees to seek support on employment and training. In partnership with DWP and Working Wales, we have developed a leaflet which will be distributed within Tata via their own communication channels.

Further work is being undertaken with local businesses who are offering to recruit displaced employees.

We need to understand the potential impact of the Tata changes on the company; what diversification opportunities the company could consider, if they are ready to enter any market, and if they are considering the opportunities associated with FLOW, such as investment in current capabilities, capacity and skills.

All those affected by the Tata Steel Transition, including all those in the supply chain, the following organisations can help and support you:

 <p>Department for Work & Pensions</p>	 <p>Cymru'n Gweithio Working Wales</p>	 <p>CYFLOGADWYEDD CNPT NPT EMPLOYABILITY</p>	 <p>Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot Neath Port Talbot Council</p>
<p>Our Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits and financial support if you're looking for work • Help if you're looking for a new job, out of work or affected by redundancy • "Find a Job" service (online job search site) • Benefit calculators • State pension advice <p>To make an appointment with a DWP adviser please call: 08456 043719</p>	<p>Our Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access our free and impartial careers guidance and coaching • Careers guidance and support with planning next steps • Help to find and secure job opportunities • Support to apply for funding • Help to upskill and access training <p>To make an appointment with a Working Wales adviser please call: 0800 028 4844 workingwales@careerswales.gov.wales</p>	<p>Our Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability support & advice • Funded training • 1-1 Mentoring support • CV development • Interview techniques & preparation • Access to vacancies • Volunteering • Work experience • Much more <p>To make an appointment with NPT Employability please call: 01639 684250 nptemployability@npt.gov.uk</p>	<p>Our Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support if you are thinking of starting a business / becoming self-employed • Support if you already run a part-time business and would like to develop this • Access to specialist support (e.g. Marketing/ IT/ Energy Efficiency) • Access to funding to help start or grow your business <p>To make an appointment with the Business Team please call: 01639 686835 business@npt.gov.uk</p>








Funded by UK Government






Alternatively call **01639 684250**
or visit **The Workstation, Water Street, Port Talbot, SA12 6LF**



We have commissioned consultancy work to deliver an assessment of local manufacturing companies that will be affected by the Tata transition plans. This work should provide an evidence-base to support future strategies and bids for funding. We have also been gaining an understanding of supply chain opportunities associated with the Tata Electric Arc Furnace, and projects such as Lanzatech Project Dragon.

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024	
Number of 16-24 year olds being supported into education, employment, training & volunteering by NPT Employability.	108	Increase	130	
Number of internal Apprentices on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes.	110	Increase	164	
Number of completed training weeks for internal apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience.	1867	Increase	436	
Number of people assisted by NPT Employability achieving level 2 or higher qualification.	New Measure	Increase	28	
Number of people who are economically inactive supported into employment.	New Measure	Increase	7	
Number of individuals from jobless households supported back into work with support from NPT Employability.	New Measure	New Measure	404	
Number of business enquires assisted resulting in advice, information or financial support being given to existing companies through Business Services.	515	Increase	895	

Performance Measures	As of end 2022/2023	Outlook for 2023/2024	As of end 2023/2024
Business grants given as % of available funding.	New Measure	New Measure	53% 
% of reduction in floor area of occupied council buildings.	5.9% decrease on 2022/2023 area of 22,010m ²	Decrease	Not available 
High quality business space made available/or under development.	4894m ²	Increase	415m ² 

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Welsh Language

Our commitment to the Welsh Language Standards continues with our Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023/2024 highlighting our work in implementing the standards as well as identifying areas where more work is required. Performance monitored by the Welsh Language Commissioner, and reported in the latest report for 2022/2023, identified improvements in compliance across a range of services.

Confidence in meeting the standards received a further boost with no complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner during 2022/2023. In July 2023, the Welsh Language Tribunal has upheld the decision of the Commissioner in relation to a complaint received originally in 2021. The basis of the referral to the Welsh Language Tribunal was more than just a challenge to the Commissioner's decision; it was to address the concerns of the impact the interpretation of the Welsh Language Standards could have on any consultations that the council embarks on in any subject matter thus seeking further legal and practical guidance.

The second iteration of our Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023/2028 goes beyond just the use of Welsh: it aims to permeate the fabric of our society, from helping ensure language courses are available for all who wish to learn and providing an environment in which it can be used, to celebrating and raising awareness of its place in our heritage and culture, our daily lives and as part of our visitor offer.

“ Welsh is more than a language, it is part of our very being - whether born here or not. It is woven into the fabric of our lives - even if not instantly recognisable; our place names, forenames, colloquialisms, are all rooted in the Welsh language. ”



Following the exciting announcement that Neath Port Talbot is to host the Urdd Eisteddfod in May 2025, at Margam Country Park, an Eisteddfod co-ordinating group has been established to explore appropriate plan marketing, communications and education opportunities.

This will be a key area of planning to bring one of the largest youth festivals in Europe to the county borough, attracting thousands of children and young people to take part in competitions including singing, reciting and dancing.

Welsh Language in Education

Our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 5 year action plan has been approved by Welsh Government, with key targets being progressed and evaluated as part of the annual plan. In addition, we are looking to increase nursery pupil numbers to 331 (22.8%) and Year 1 to 308 (21%). The data will be analysed in the Welsh Education Strategic Plan Annual Report 2024 and reported back in the autumn term 2024.



Significant work has been undertaken already, notably 100% of NPT schools have engaged with Siarter Iaith/Cymraeg Campus - A 10 week project has successfully been delivered with 3 English medium pilot schools to embed Cymraeg within the curriculum; Further development of the Welsh language within English-medium schools is ongoing.

A mapping out exercise of Welsh-medium provision has been completed by Fforwm Iaith Abertawe a CnPT - currently, there are 186 activities and resources available. Gaps in provision have been identified and work will take place to address these in the future. Current partners include:

- Menter Iaith, Mudiad Meithrin,
- Tŷ'r Gwrhyd, Urdd
- Cymraeg i Blant
- Technocamps
- Dysgu Cymraeg Ardal Bae Abertawe; and
- Amgueddfa Cymru

With an allocation of funding from Welsh Government 'to be used to preserve and grow the language in communities that are vital to its future' (specifically in areas that have seen a 'linguistic reduction observed in the 2021 Census') - An Action Plan developed by and agreed by education colleagues. This focuses on Welsh in Education Strategic Plan activities along with specific actions from the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. Funding has been allocated and work has already begun on the individual activities.

Welsh Language Activities

- 'Hyder-ish' sessions took place in Neath Civic Centre during November/ December 2023. These sessions, aimed at Welsh speakers who have lost confidence in using their language skills, use activities as a distraction to help alleviate the pressures around speaking Welsh.
- Welsh language courses continue to be promoted to staff via our Viva Engage groups as well as via the Welsh Language Training programme developed by the Learning, Training and Development section. The wider promotion of opportunities to learn and use the languages is still to fully realise. However working in partnership with Fforwm Iaith, Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot, progress is being made. Publicising activities, events and training opportunities for all skill levels across the area has attracted attention and participation.
- The Youth Service and Menter Iaith have established an additional Welsh language youth club at Trebanos which has proved popular.



Equalities

Helping meet the challenges faced by residents over recent years has been at the forefront of our work – not least in addressing the inequalities faced by many, notably as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, education, accessibility and by society itself.

Our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2020/2024 was just one contributory factor in our work to help achieve this. The Plan, developed during the pandemic, at the time of the international condemnation of the killing of George Floyd and the greater awareness of Black Lives Matter required us to re-evaluate our equality objectives and identify more immediate actions to address some of the inequalities experienced at that time.

Since this last iteration of the SEP our world has changed once again. These changes have brought with them different and/or greater challenges and inequalities for our communities and ourselves. In order to help address the position, we began a review of our equality objectives, the outcome of which will help focus our work to reduce, and where possible, eliminate inequalities and better align the Strategic Equality Plan 2024/2028 with our other statutory plans, and in particular, the Corporate Plan 2024/2027.



Through our Ethnic Employee Network Group (pictured above) we supported and shared in the celebrations for Black History Wales 365 in October 2023. Guest speakers, information displays of our Welsh Black role models, biographies of the descendants of the families that moved to Port Talbot in the 1950s/1960s, and a video *"Just ah liddle piece of Jamaica inna Port Talbot"* combined to tell the story of those who settled here and made a positive contribution to our communities.

Our Ethnic Employee Network Group connects staff members from diverse ethnic backgrounds or heritage. We want our members to have more open conversations about experiences, and establish the issues faced in terms of diversity and inclusion.

The aim of the group is to provide support and networking opportunities for group members, raise multicultural awareness within the workplace, contribute to the NPT Ant-racism strategy, and take steps to effect positive change.



Our commitment to gender equality and inclusion here at Team NPT is reflected in our **Chwarae Teg FairPlay Employer Silver Award for Gender Diversity**. This award recognises our commitment to making a difference to the recruitment, retention and progression of women in the workplace.



The council were among 17 major Welsh employers to receive the **Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver Award** in 2023/2024 from the Ministry of Defence-recognising employers who have actively demonstrated support for the Armed Forces community by implementing policies to help them.

Engagement & Communications

Let's Keep Talking

The 'Let's Keep Talking' campaign ran from June to October 2023.

Questionnaires were available online, in 41 venues across NPT, officers, and councillors attended 19 events. There were also focus groups for valleys areas.

- In total, 1,949 people engaged with the campaign. Respondents were not fully representative of the NPT resident population, but there was a good spread:
- 84% of respondents said they were residents of Neath Port Talbot.
- Over half (57%) of respondents were female, and 42% were male.
- 50% were aged under 25; just over a fifth (22%) were aged 60 years or above, and the remaining 29% were between 25-59 years.
- Notably, 44% (or 681) of the respondents were school children.

There was a degree of consistency between 2023 and 2021 in terms of themes raised, with many comments being made in response to both about the importance of friends/family, health and well-being issues, education, the economy, cleanliness and the local environment, etc.

However, the two sets of responses also differed quite markedly, in as much as they also tended to reflect topical issues that were ongoing at the time that each of the consultations took place.

While concerns and comments that related specifically to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. around the easing of restrictions, feelings of safety, school closures, impacts on communities and families, home-working etc) featured in a considerable number of responses in 2021, these comments were relatively few and far between in 2023.

On the other hand, issues such as those around the cost-of-living, inflation and the economy were far more prevalent in the 2023 questionnaire responses, reflecting current pressures being felt both locally and nationally. An overview of the feedback from the campaign has been published on the council's website www.npt.gov.uk/lkt



NPT Citizens' Panel

A recruitment drive for the NPT Citizens' Panel, started in October 2023 during Local Democracy Week. This included social media, employee communications and signposting to the Citizens' Panel sign-up web page from key consultations e.g. the Consultation on the Draft Budget Proposals 2024/2025.

NPT Community of Practice

The NPT Community of Practice was established in 2019 and membership has grown to 60+ council officers and representatives from partner organisations, such as the Local Area Coordinators, Youth Services etc.

The Community of Practice continued to meet on a six-weekly basis and were instrumental in supporting the council's consultation and engagement activity amongst their stakeholder groups, in particular, the consultation on the Draft Budget Proposals 2024/2025.

The group also contributed to the preliminary work to update the council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy and supporting toolkit.

Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board (PSB)

The second Neath Port Talbot Well-being Plan was published on 4th May 2023 following extensive consultation with stakeholders. Implementation of the Plan is now well underway, the first Annual Report was published in July 2024. The Public Service Board governance structure consists of a series of partnerships that sit underneath the Board and drive the work of the Well-being Plan. Progress made during the first year includes:-

Our children will have the best start in life

The Children and Young People's Leadership group have overseen the development of the Early Years, Children and Young People's Plan for 2024/2029. Extensive engagement with children, young people and their families was key to informing this Plan and partner action plans are now being developed to drive this work in a collaborative way.

Our communities will be thriving and sustainable

The Cost of Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership has held 3 successful multi-agency workshops during the year where partners have shared information and worked together to develop a common understanding of the impact of poverty in Neath Port Talbot.

Significant support has been delivered to those impacted by the cost of living and a partner Winter Action Plan was developed. The Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) is live and has delivered a number of successful campaigns increasing benefit take up.

Focus is now being given to developing a Poverty Action Plan for NPT and looking further into the root causes of poverty to inform long term solutions. The Community Safety Partnership continues to work with communities in NPT to reduce crime, the fear of crime and to support community cohesion.



Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board (PSB)



Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

A Climate and Nature partnership has been established for Neath Port Talbot, and this group will lead on a Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) for the area. The assessment will be supported by Natural Resources Wales Framework guidance which has been developed to assist PSBs to carry out CCRAs of their Well-being Plans. A Culture Strategy for NPT has been published alongside Heritage and Destination Strategies. Work is underway to deliver these strategies which will be supported by a strengthened culture team thanks to a successful UK Shared Prosperity Fund bid. A Culture Compact Model is being developed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority.

This year PSB partners have taken part in a capacity building programme funded through the regional PSB Support Grant and delivered by CARP Collaborations. The aim of the programme was to improve how we capture and record lived experience, and the way we use it to inform our work. We look forward to putting our learning into practice in the coming year as we continue to deliver on the Well-being Plan.

Our communities will be thriving and sustainable

The Local Economic Partnership, originally established to support economic recovery following the pandemic, has been reviewed and the revised. This group will deliver on the economic well-being objective for the PSB whilst pulling together the strands of economic development work in NPT as we support our communities through the economic transition ahead. An initial action is to map economic development strategies across partner agencies to identify gaps, avoid duplication as well as identify opportunities to collaborate. In addition the NPT PSB continues to collaborate with Swansea PSB to address substance misuse and support the reduction of drug related deaths in the area.

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

8th January 2025

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services – Mr Craig Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Establishment of a Modernisation Group

Purpose of the Report

This report proposes the establishment of a Modernisation Group within the Council to review and enhance our decision-making processes. The aim is to ensure that our procedures are efficient, transparent, and aligned with best practices.

Executive Summary

In recent years, the complexity and volume of decisions required by the Council have increased significantly. This has highlighted the need for a review of our current decision-making processes to identify areas for improvement and modernisation.

It would be proposed to establish a Modernisation Group, comprising of elected members to review the council's constitution, processes, and decision-making frameworks. The group will identify areas for improvement and develop recommendations to modernise and streamline constitutional processes, ensuring it is effective, transparent, and fit for purpose in a changing local government environment.

The overarching objectives for the group will be to deliver:

1. A review of the council's constitution, decision making structures and processes.
2. Evidence-based recommendations to modernise and improve decision making and constitutional requirements considering service user perspectives..
3. A detailed implementation plan, including timelines, resources, and success measures.
4. A framework for monitoring and evaluating the impact of changes.

Background

In recent years, the complexity and volume of decisions required by the Council have increased significantly. This has highlighted the need for a comprehensive review of our current decision-making processes to identify areas for improvement and modernisation.

It would be proposed to establish a Modernisation Group, comprising of elected members to review the council's constitution and decision-making frameworks. The group will identify areas for improvement and develop recommendations to modernise and streamline constitutional processes, ensuring it is effective, transparent, and fit for purpose in a changing local government environment.

The group will:

1. Review existing decision-making structures, including cabinet/committee arrangements, decision-making processes, and officer-member relationships.
2. Identify inefficiencies, gaps, or barriers within current structures and processes.
3. Consider opportunities to modernise processes in line with best practices, legal requirements, and emerging technologies, undertaking a review of the Constitution of the Council as and when required.
4. Propose recommendations to improve accountability, transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness considering service user perspectives as part of recommendations.
5. Foster a culture of continuous improvement within the council's constitutional processes.

It is proposed the Modernisation Group will comprise:

- Elected Members: Politically balanced with 11 Elected Members (5 Labour, 2 Plaid Cymru, 3 Independent, 1 Coedffranc Liberal and Green Group). Members to be determined by Group Leaders.
- Chair/Vice-Chair: To be appointed by the group at its inaugural meeting.
- Officer Support: Relevant senior officers will provide legal, technical advice and administrative support led by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Democratic Services Manager

The group will adopt the following approach:

1. Evidence Gathering:
 - Review documents, such as the constitution, terms of reference, and meeting minutes.
 - Benchmark practices from other councils and organisations.
2. Stakeholder Engagement:

- Consult with council members, officers, and any appropriate external stakeholders i.e. Audit Wales.
- Seek feedback from the public where relevant.

3. Workshops and Discussions:

- Conduct structured workshops to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
- Use case studies to explore practical challenges and solutions.

4. Analysis and Recommendations:

- Evaluate findings and develop evidence-based recommendations.
- Ensure recommendations are practical, achievable, and aligned with the council's strategic objectives.

The group itself will have no decision-making powers and will report its findings and recommendations to Full Council as and when a decision is required, and it would be proposed the group will meet on a as required to achieve its objectives. Progress reports will be provided at key milestones, with reports outlining findings, recommendations, and an implementation plan at various intervals.

Timetables for each area of work will be agreed by the group to ensure a manageable and appropriate workload for those involved.

Scrutiny

For the avoidance of doubt, the proposed review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny model will not be considered by this modernisation group.

At the Council meeting of the 20th March 2024, members resolved that any of the changes to the model of scrutiny suggested are reviewed on a six-monthly basis by the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny with any suggested amendments be reported back to Full Council before the Annual General Meeting each year. Therefore, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny will continue to lead on this area.

To ensure however maximum involvement of members in this review, each individual scrutiny committee will be consulted and views sought, along with Democratic Services Committee. In addition, a personal survey with elected members following recent approval by the Democratic Services Committee will be carried out.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications at this stage, but any actions considered by the group will be assessed as part of an ongoing review of financial implications

Integrated Impact Assessment

As this report relates to the proposed establishment of a working group there is no requirement for an integrated impact assessment.

Workforce Impacts

There are no impacts at this stage.

Legal Powers

A local authority is under a duty to prepare and keep up to date its constitution under s.9P Local Government Act 2000 as amended. The constitution must contain:

- the standing orders/procedure rules;
- the members' code of conduct;
- such information as the Welsh Ministers may direct;
- such other information (if any) as the authority considers appropriate.

Constitutions must be available for inspection at all reasonable hours by members of the public and supplied to anyone who asks for a copy on payment of a reasonable fee.

Risk Management

Potential risks include:

- Resistance to Change: Mitigated by engaging members and stakeholders early in the process.
- Resource Constraints: Addressed by prioritising actions and allocating adequate support.
- Delays: Managed through regular progress reviews and adherence to timelines.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation for this proposal

Recommendation

It is recommended that members approve the establishment of a modernisation group on the terms identified in this report.

Reason for Decision

Establishing a Modernisation Group is a proactive step towards ensuring that our decision-making processes are fit for purpose in a rapidly changing environment. This initiative will not only improve efficiency and transparency but also reinforce the Council's commitment to continuous improvement of our constitutional processes,

Appendices

None

List of Background Papers

None

Officer Contact

Mr Craig Griffiths

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

8th January 2025

Report of the Director of Finance and Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE – APPOINTMENT OF VOTING LAY MEMBER

Purpose of the Report

1. To obtain approval for the appointment of a voting lay Member of the Governance and Audit Committee following a selection panel that met on the 20th December 2024.

Background

2. An advisory panel to interview candidates for appointment as voting lay members to the Governance and Audit Committee met on the 20th December 2024, which comprised:
 - County Borough Council Members – Cllr Chris Williams, Cllr Tim Bowen
 - Chair of Governance and Audit Committee – Mrs J Jenkins
 - Independent External Member – Mr R Alcott
4. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (“the Council”) requires the appointment of one more voting lay member to the Governance and Audit Committee and one application was received following an

advertisement earlier this year and that applicant was selected for interview.

5. The panel concluded that the following candidates should be recommended for appointment to the Governance and Audit Committee

(a) Michael Spanner

The candidate demonstrated an understanding of good governance arrangements and the significance of the role they would be appointed to.

Integrated Impact Assessment

6. There are no impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts

7. There are no impacts associated with this report.

Legal Powers

8. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 stipulated changes to the members of the Governance and Audit Committee of the Council requiring at least one third of the members of the committee are lay members. The recruitment of an additional lay member will ensure compliance with this obligation.

Risk Management

9. The Council will be unable to have a sufficient number of lay members to ensure the smooth operation of the Governance and Audit Committee in the event these appointments are not made and will be in breach of its legal requirements pursuant to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Consultation

10. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

11. That the individual referred to at paragraph 5 of this report be appointed as voting lay member of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

12. To ensure that the Governance and Audit Committee of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is constituted appropriately in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

List of Background Papers

13. None

Officer Contact

Mr Huw Jones

h.jones@npt.gov.uk

Mr Craig Griffiths

c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk

Mrs Steph Payne

s.payne@npt.gov.uk

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