



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 11.00 am on

26 July 2024

in the

COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

Webcasting: This meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet Site. By participating you are consenting to be filmed and the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.

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

PART A

1. Mayor's Announcements
2. Leader's Announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Council (Pages 5 - 10)

5. 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

6. Budget 2025-26 -Outlook (Pages 11 - 38)
7. Corporate Plan (Pages 39 - 138)
8. Democratic Services Committee Annual Report (Pages 139 - 152)
9. Standards Committee Annual Report (Pages 153 - 180)
10. Scrutiny Committees Annual Reports (Pages 181 - 214)
11. Establishment of a Freeport Joint Scrutiny Committee (Pages 215 - 238)
12. Committee Membership (Pages 239 - 242)

PART C

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

Notice of Motion

Proposed by: Councillor Simon Knogle

Seconded by: Councillor Sarah Thomas

It is noted that:

Recent years have been characterised by considerable volatility as a result of world and domestic events.

Specifically:

- The pandemic period has left a significant legacy with high numbers of people requiring support from social services, homelessness services and more young people presenting with additional learning needs and more young people needing additional help to attend school and participate in their education;

- Energy prices, general inflation and interest rates have sharply increased. Although inflation has now returned to 2%, many goods and services remain more costly and energy prices and interest rates remain high;
- The cost of living crisis continues with many of our residents and local businesses experiencing financial hardship;
- Whilst there has been a small increase in the number of people unemployed, the labour market remains very competitive and this is reflected in higher prices for services. The council is also continuing to experience difficulty filling some roles in our organisation. A worrying large number of people of working age are economically inactive and not looking for work;
- Capital projects have become more challenging to deliver as a consequence of a number of factors identified above; and
- Whilst the Council is engaged in a range of significant economic development opportunities and is also a key partner in responding to the challenging and complex changes at Tata Steel UK Ltd, the cumulative impact of these developments is challenging to resource whilst uncertainty remains.

The revenue settlements from Welsh Government in the last two financial years – 2023/4 and 2004/5 fell substantially short of what the Council needed to deliver its services and functions. Additional pressures of some £70 million were identified for the two year period with Welsh Government providing some £26.9 million funding. Budget cuts, additional income, including council tax increases have been necessary to balance the budget – the associated change management activity has increased workloads, placing further pressure across the organisation. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Cabinet Office in her statement of 11th June 2024 recognises the challenging context and makes clear that we must prepare for difficult decisions and trade-offs in our planning. A Welsh Spending Review is to be undertaken and this will drive the Welsh Government’s future annual budgets. The statement makes clear that there will be an emphasis on key priorities for Wales – reducing NHS waiting lists; support for children in early years; educational excellence in our schools; better, greener jobs; secure homes; and improved transport links across the country.

The incoming Labour Government following the General Election held on 4th July 2024 is yet to signal whether it will adjust current spending plans. Welsh Government advise, for 2025-26, we should base our planning on NO uplift to the Revenue Support Grant.

The scale of the challenge a cash flat Settlement presents for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is serious. Work has already started to identify the measures that will need to be considered to achieve a balanced budget for the next financial year. The many years of austerity, coupled with the series of economic shocks in recent years and the prospect of further significant reductions to the Council's funding base, will have very negative overall consequences for the services and functions we operate, the number of people we will be able to employ and rates of council tax, fees and charges.

Accordingly, it is resolved that:

- Members note the serious implications that will stem from no increases to the Revenue Support Grant in 2025-2026 on services, jobs, fees and charges and council tax levels.
- The Leader of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, on behalf of all elected members, write to UK and Welsh Government highlighting the pressures which are identified in this motion and expressing serious concern over the potential for no uplift to the revenue support grant and to call on UK and Welsh Government to provide adequate funding to enable the sustainability of councils.

14. Questions from Members, with Notice, under Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules

15. 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**

Thursday, 18 July 2024

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

20 March 2024

The Mayor: Councillor Chris Williams

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor Matthew Crowley

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, H.C.Clarke, M.Crowley, A.Dacey, H.Davies, H.Davies, R.Davies, S.E.Freeguard, C.Galsworthy, N.Goldup-John, W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, M.Harvey, J.Henton, S.K.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James, N.Jenkins, R.G.Jones, S.Jones, C.Jordan, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, A.Lodwig, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, D.M.Peters, C.Phillips, R.Phillips, S.Pursesey, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, G.Rice, A.J.Richards, P.D.Richards, P.Rogers, S.Thomas, D.Whitelock, C.Williams, L.Williams and B.Woolford

Officers in Attendance: P.Chivers, S.Curran, M.Daley, N.Daniel, T.Davies, C.Griffiths, A.Hinder, A.Jarrett, H.Jones, S.McCluskie, N.Jones, N.Pearce, C.Plowman, S.Rees, T.Rees, M.Shaw, A.Thomas and A.Thomas

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader of Council referred to the recent announcement by TATA Steel of the immediate closure of the Coke Ovens at the Port Talbot plant. Council were reminded that TATA Steel are currently within a statutory consultation period with trade unions and staff over potential redundancies linked to the transition to low CO2 steel making. It had not been anticipated that such an announcement would be made, but

it was appreciated that the decision had been made on safety reasons which is of paramount importance.

The Leader confirmed the ongoing commitment of the Council to continue to work with the UK and Welsh Governments together with TATA on the transition board.

The Leader went on to inform Council that the UK Government had recently granted Associated British Ports (ABP) permission to move to the due diligence stage with the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme (FLOWMIS.) This has the potential to unlock a projected £1billion investment in Port Talbot and surrounding areas which alongside the Freeport ambitions will encourage thousands of green jobs to the area.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services made reference to Agenda Item 9, Pay Policy Statement 24/25. It was noted that Standards Committee had granted dispensation for all Elected Members, who had family members working within the Authority and Neath Port Talbot schools, to speak and vote on the matter.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services declared an interest on behalf of all Officers in relation to Agenda Item 9, Pay Policy Statement 24/25 and Agenda Item 10, Permission to advertise for the position of Chief Executive; Chief Officers would be withdrawing from the meeting for the duration of the items.

The following interests were declared:

Cllr Mike Harvey- in relation to agenda item 5 as he works for South Wales Police.

Cllr Sian Harris- in relation to agenda item 5 as her son works for South Wales Police

Cllr Chris Williams (Mayor)- in relation to agenda item 5 as his daughter works for South Wales Police.

Cllr Jo Hale- in relation to agenda item 7 declared a prejudicial interest.

3. **Public Question Time.**

No questions were received.

4. **Presentation by the outgoing Police and Crime Commissioner-
Mr Alun Michael**

It was with pleasure that the Mayor invited the outgoing Police and Crime Commissioner Mr Alun Michael to address Council.

Members thanked Mr Michael for his service, commitment and input into South Wales Policing and wished him well on his retirement, presenting him with a gift as a token of appreciation on behalf of the Council.

5. **Scrutiny Audit- Proposals to Changes to the Council's Model of Scrutiny**

Members received detail of the proposed new model of scrutiny for the Council from the scrutiny champion, as circulated in the attached report.

It was noted that Proposal 2 would be amended to include the current Cabinet portfolios.

RESOLVED: That the proposals for the new model of scrutiny be APPROVED, and to take effect from the Annual General Meeting of Council May 2024.

6. **Mayoral Arrangements**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which was to nominate a Mayor elect and Deputy Mayor elect for the civic year 2024/2025. It was explained that each year the Council elected a Mayor and Deputy Mayor to preside over Council proceedings, and discharge the duties of the First Citizen. Members were informed that during its annual meeting in May 2024, formal appointment will take place pursuant to the Council's Constitution; however, to assist in preparation, and following discussions between political group leaders, Full Council were asked to approve that Cllr Matthew Crowley be nominated as Mayor, and that Cllr Wayne Carpenter be nominated as Deputy Mayor for the 2024/2025 civic year. Cllrs Matthew Crowley and Wayne Carpenter gave thanks for

their nomination and looked forward to serving their time as Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Matthew Crowley be nominated Mayor for the civic year 2024/25 pursuant to Section 23(1) of the Local Government Act 1972;

That Councillor Wayne Carpenter be nominated Deputy Mayor for the civic year 2024/25 pursuant to Section 23(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

7. **Proposal to Introduce a Council Tax Premium on Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties**

Councillor Jo Hale reiterated her prejudicial interest and left the meeting for this item.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the proposals to introduce a council tax premium on second homes and long term empty properties as contained within the circulated report.

It was reiterated that robust scrutiny had taken place in the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee where this item had been considered, and members requested that the observations around simplifying the exemptions that are offered be taken on board by officers and the Cabinet.

It was agreed that the proposal should have a positive impact on the issues surrounding vacant properties and the pressures on the Council's housing services.

RESOLVED: That the introduction of a Council Tax Premium of 100% on long term empty dwellings and second homes from 1st April 2025 be APPROVED.

That no premium being charged in the following cases be APPROVED:

1. Where an empty property can only be accessed through a business premises and does not have a separate entrance. This category will not apply if the building is altered to remove an existing separate entrance.

2. Where a premium would be payable on a long term empty property that is sold, the new owner will not be charged a premium for up to 6 months from the date of the sale while major building works is being carried out.

3.

8. **School Improvement Team - Constitution of Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisor Council for Religion values and Ethics (SACforRVE)**

The Cabinet Member for Education presented the Constitution of Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council for Religion Values and Ethics as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: that the Constitution of Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council for Religion Values and Ethics be APPROVED.

9. **Pay Policy Statement**

Officers re-iterated their interest in this item and left the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 as detailed in the circulated report.

It was explained that the Localism Act 2011 required that Local Authorities produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year; a Pay Policy Statement was first developed and approved by Neath Port Talbot Council in March 2011. It was highlighted that the statement was reviewed on an annual basis, and brought before Council for approval and publication prior to 31 March each year. The circulated report contained the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025, which had been updated to take account of any national or local pay related developments. It was noted that the Localism Act 2011 required that the statement set out the Councils policy in regards to a range of issues relating to the pay of the workforce, particularly focusing on senior staff and how their pay related to the lowest paid within the workforce; the aim of this was to increase accountability, transparency and fairness within Local Government in Wales.

Members were pleased to see that over several years the gap has continued to close, and highlighted the importance of this in regards to promoting fairness within Local Government.

RESOLVED: that the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 be APPROVED and published on the Council's website.

10. **Permission to advertise position of Chief Executive**

The Head of People and Organisational Development introduced the proposal to seek permission to advertise for the position of Chief Executive as contained within the circulated report.

RESOLVED: that permission to advertise for the position of Chief Executive be APPROVED.

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

No Notices of Motion were received.

12. **Questions from Members, with Notice, under Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules**

No questions were received.

13. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON

Budget 2025-26 – Outlook

Council 26th July 2024

Report of the Corporate Directors' Group

Purpose

To advise Council of the financial outlook for 2025-26 and the broad approach that will be taken to support the setting of the Council's revenue and capital budgets for the financial year 2025-26.

Executive Summary

Recent years have been characterised by considerable volatility as a result of world and domestic events.

- The pandemic period has left a significant legacy with high numbers of people requiring support from social services, homelessness services and more young people presenting with additional learning needs and more young people needing additional help to attend school and participate in their education;
- The illegal war in Ukraine caused a further economic shock which saw energy prices, general inflation and interest rates sharply increase. Although inflation has now returned to 2%, many goods and services remain more costly and energy prices and interest rates remain high;
- The cost of living crisis continues with many of our residents and local businesses experiencing financial hardship;
- Whilst there has been a small increase in the number of people unemployed, the labour market remains very competitive and this is reflected in higher prices for services. The council is also continuing to experience difficulty filling some roles in our organisation. A worrying large number of people of working age are economically inactive and not looking for work;
- Capital projects have become more challenging to deliver as a consequence of a number of factors identified above; and
- Whilst the Council is engaged in a range of significant economic development opportunities and is also a key partner in responding to

the changes at Tata Steel UK Ltd, the cumulative impact of these developments is challenging to resource.

The revenue settlements from Welsh Government in the last two financial years – 2023/4 and 2024/5 fell substantially short of what the Council needed to deliver its services and functions. Additional pressures of some £70 million were identified for the two year period with Welsh Government providing some £26.9 million funding. Budget cuts, additional income, including council tax increases have been necessary to balance the budget – the associated change management activity has increased workloads, placing further pressure across the organisation.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Cabinet Office in her statement of 11th June 2024 (Appendix 1), recognises the challenging context and makes clear that we must prepare for difficult decisions and trade-offs in our planning. A Welsh Spending Review is to be undertaken and this will drive the Welsh Government's future annual budgets. The statement makes clear that there will be an emphasis on key priorities for Wales – reducing NHS waiting lists; support for children in early years; educational excellence in our schools; better, greener jobs; secure homes; and improved transport links across the country. The incoming Labour Government following the General Election held on 4th July 2024 is yet to signal whether it will adjust current spending plans. Welsh Government advise, for 2025-26, we should base our planning on **NO** uplift to the Revenue Support Grant.

The scale of the challenge a cash flat Settlement presents for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is set out in the body of this report. Work has already started to identify the measures that will need to be considered to achieve a balanced budget for the next financial year. The many years of austerity, coupled with the series of economic shocks in recent years and the prospect of further significant reductions to the Council's funding base, will have very negative overall consequences for the services and functions we operate, the number of people we will be able to employ and rates of council tax, fees and charges.

Financial Modelling

Pay and Inflation

The economic environment has seen significant fluctuations in recent years, notably in inflation rates. These fluctuations have direct consequences on budgeting for pay awards and external contracts. Local authorities must account for these changes to ensure financial stability and effective service delivery.

General Inflation

Inflation has stabilised at 2% after peaking at 11.1% in October 2022. Despite the reduction, many goods and services remain costlier than before.

Pay Awards

The pay negotiations for April 2024 are still ongoing. Any pay award exceeding the budget provision must be incorporated into the 2025-26 budget strategy. The medium-term financial plan (MTFP) assumes a 3% annual increase in pay for the next five years.

National Minimum Wage (NMW)

The latest estimated increase in NMW ranges from 1.49% to 6.47%, with a likely increase of 3.93%. Many external contracts require an uplift in line with NMW, adding pressure to the budget.

Revenue Settlement

The Welsh Government has advised local authorities to plan for no uplift in the Revenue Support Grant. A 1% increase in the Revenue Support Grant equates to £2.856 million.

A detailed schedule of the assumptions currently built into the MTFP can be found in appendix 2 of the report. Based on the current modelling the total inflationary pressure for 2025/26 amounts to c£13m.

A range of modelling has also taken place which shows a range from a 'better case' inflation pressure of £7m to a 'worse case' pressure of £20m.

Unavoidable Service Pressures 2025/26

Whilst inflation, BREXIT impacts and pay awards continue to be reflected in higher prices, we are seeing significant increases in demand in key areas of service, further exacerbating the position. We are also now experiencing the consequences of constrained capital investment in infrastructure with significantly increased risk across all categories of assets.

These pressures are not unique to NPT but are structural problems being experienced by all councils.

The medium term financial plan includes service pressures totalling £9.7m in 2025/26. This figure includes areas previously balanced by using reserves in 2024/25, which is not a sustainable long-term strategy. These pressures are detailed in the table below:

Directorate	Detail	£'000 2025/26
Schools	-	
Schools	Welsh Medium Starter School Neath Abbey	350
Schools	Address historical shortfall in teaching assistant funding	750
Total Schools		1,100
<u>Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning (ELLL)</u>		£'000 2025/26
Leisure	Additional cost of running indoor leisure if insourced	1,300
Total ELLL		1,300
<u>Environment (ENV)</u>		£'000 2025/26
Environment	Core fund posts funded from service resilience reserve	500
Total ENV		500
<u>Social Services, Health and Housing (SSH0)</u>		£'000 2025/26
Adult Services	Increase in base budget to meet current cost	5,700

Housing and Homelessness	Increased cost of provision	1,100
Total SSHH		6,800
Grand total funded unavoidable service pressures		9,700

Overview of the Budget Gap

Based on the latest assumptions in the medium term financial plan, the budget gap for 2025/26 is £18.061m before any increase in council tax. Over the next five years the total gap is £60m.

In addition to the pressures already included within the MTFP Corporate Directors have identified other emerging pressures which will need to be considered. Any further accepted pressures will further increase the unfunded budget gap.

Some examples of areas that we will be examining in detail as we begin the budget process include:

Education and schools

All councils across Wales are seeing an increase in the number of schools reporting deficit balances. Despite providing £2 million additional funding to secondary schools in the last two academic years, the NPT position has deteriorated sharply at the end of the last academic year and detailed examination of the reasons for these balances will be undertaken as part of the budget planning exercise. The main areas contributing to the overall picture include:

- Teachers pay

Over the past two years teacher trade unions associations have secured pay awards for their members in excess of what has been included in settlements from Welsh government to local authorities as part of the revenue support grant. This has meant that schools have had to fund the difference from their reserves in the amount of £4.5m.

Over the past 3 financial years added to this the additional 1.5% uplift in teachers pay has not been included in delegated schools budgets for financial year 2024/25 and will mean a further £2m pressure in year.

- Energy

It is widely known the cost of energy has increased significantly in recent times. Schools are one of the biggest consumers of energy across the county borough. The difference in what the local authority have funded schools for energy and the actual cost of what schools have had to pay is £0.6M.

During 2023/34 an additional c£1.3m of funding was provided to schools in order to meet the rise in energy costs. The Council have invested in an energy management team to design out energy costs and schools will be a priority area within that programme. Schools will also need to participate in this work, examining additional ways to reduce energy consumption.

- Teacher Assistant costs linked to ALN

Over many years the number of teaching assistant hours linked to statements of special education needs (more recently referred to as Individual Development Plans) has been increasing with a consequential cost increase. These increased costs have not been funded by the Welsh Government. The significant number of pupils identified as having an entitlement to additional support in our schools is placing significant and growing pressure across schools.

Currently there is a funding deficit of £7.6M between what schools are funded for in the delegated school budget and the actual cost of what schools have to pay.

The impact of the funding shortfall detailed above means schools are increasingly finding it difficult to meet pupils needs resulting in increased exclusions, lower attendance and increased numbers of pupils being electively home educated.

Furthermore we are already seeing both voluntary and compulsory redundancies across our schools as Head teachers and governing bodies seek to balance their budgets. The reduction in the workforce is leading to lower staff morale and more young teachers leaving the profession and making it harder to recruit into some specialist roles. Despite these challenges NPT continues to secure very positive inspection reports in nearly all schools.

Social Services, Housing and Community Safety

Homelessness- the number of people in temporary accommodation has increased from 313 people in 2019-20 to 832 in 2023-24. It is estimated that without intervention this will continue to increase to around 2,233 people in 2027-28. In cost terms this would see an increase from £2.6 million in 2023-24 to £4.4 million in 2027-28.

Children's Social Services – As at the 17th June 2024 there were 228 children who were in the care of the Local Authority. This does not include respite provision nor the 22 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers we look after. Of the 228 care experienced children 20 are placed in a residential care setting due to complexity or a lack of available and skilled foster carers. The cost of this residential care provision in 2023/24 was £5,119,524, which was £990,774 over the budget allocated.

Environment and Regeneration

As noted elsewhere in this report energy costs remain high and despite measures to reduce energy consumption and to generate our own energy, the costs continue to exceed the budget available. Construction Inflation which remains stubbornly high, is continuing to impact upon the cost of supplies and services which are essential to repair and maintain our buildings, highways and structures. Budgets for these areas have been cut over a number of years which, together with the deterioration of our assets over time, is placing a significant financial and safety risk on the council to maintain those assets and comply with our health and safety obligations. Welsh Government targets associated with decarbonising our assets is also proving to be expensive.

Focusing on fleet transition it is likely that the funds set aside to cover the costs of renewing our fleet are insufficient to cover the costs we are about to incur (as much of our large fleet is 9 years old and failing) but the annual payments into reserve for future renewals is also insufficient. Finally, whilst we rely on our ability to increase fees and charges to cover the costs of delivering services, some of those fees are at the point where the public will stop using them which will in turn result in a decrease in income. Examples include car parking and pest control charges. The most recent increase in car parking charges has failed to cover the cost of running this service and we remain in deficit.

Corporate Services

Main Drivers for Pressures

- Social worker pay and terms and conditions are under review at all Wales level – a number of options are being considered to help improve recruitment and retention in this sector, and whilst it is too early to determine what the impact of this could be, it is possible that there will be increased costs associated.
- Similarly, work is underway at an all Wales level to review the role of Teaching Assistants (TA), including a review of the model job descriptions that link to the various levels of TA within schools. Again, whilst it is too early to determine the exact impacts of this piece of work, it is highly likely that there will be increased costs for schools.
- Software inflation costs which are currently running at around 10% year on year, creating further unfunded pressures on the Digital Services budget.
- Increases in regulatory responsibilities from Welsh Government (i.e. Special Procedure Licences) without the associative funding creates additional pressures on existing small teams.

Service Impacts

Social Services, Health and Housing

Homelessness-

Demand is being driven by a number of factors:

- Policy change from Welsh Government which has not been fully funded but has lowered the threshold for qualifying for support from councils;
- Family pressures arising from the cost of living crisis;
- A reduction in affordable accommodation in the private rented sector;
- Insufficient accommodation due to market factors, particularly one-bedded accommodation; and

- An increase in care leavers and youth homelessness.
- Insufficient accommodation due to market factors, particularly one-bedded accommodation; and
- An increase in care leavers and youth homelessness.

The Council has endorsed an ‘invest to save’ transformation proposal to create a strategic Housing function as well a preventative service. By preventing people becoming homeless, rapidly re housing those that do and supporting people to maintain tenancies it is expected that demands in this area will be better controlled. The transformation Programme was to be implemented over the next 3 years but given the huge budgetary pressures the Council is facing the Director and the Head of Housing are looking at the possibility of quicker implementation to realise some of the financial savings earlier. This will require the support of all Councillors when the service is looking to create new temporary and permanent housing solutions across the County Borough.

Children’s Social Services

The situation has been compounded by the lack of suitable placements which are being further impacted by the Welsh Government’s policy to eliminate profit from the care market. Outside of the Looked After system, there remain significant pressures in relation to the complexity of need presented across the service. Ensuring a stable workforce will need to remain a priority focus throughout the period with the need to ensure remuneration and our wider employer offer remains attractive in a highly competitive labour market.

As set out in the Corporate plan the transformational programme in this Service aims to create a small number of ‘professional’ foster carers who will step down suitable children who are currently in residential care into family life. This will be a much better option for the children and will save the Council money.

Adult Social Services – new contacts to the service were 9,265 in 2022-23 compared with 6,259 in 2018-19. Demand is projected to continue to rise given that the population is ageing and in particular, the number of people living with dementia is expected to double within 20 years. Covid-19 has had a major impact on the care market with a large number of providers withdrawing from the market entirely. The cost of providing care has also increased significantly, linked to the Welsh Government’s policy to provide at least the Real Living Wage and the impact of infection control regimes. The number of people with

disabilities requiring a specialist residential placement has seen a sharp increase linked to Covid-19. The number of people accessing health service continues at a very high level, placing additional pressure on social services to ensure care packages are available for those who need them, to expedite hospital discharge.

The transformational programmes in Adult Services is both large and complex with significant risks attached. They include, insourcing an older person's residential unit and providing a re-ablement facility; building and running supported living for those with mental health and learning disabilities (to include significant building works to create the necessary provision); insourcing and expanding respite/foster care for adults and providing an alternative night time support offer. Alongside other risks the need to prioritise this work on a Corporate basis will be crucial if there is any chance of accelerating the programmes to realise earlier savings. There will be some difficult choices for the Council to make when prioritising which Capital programmes should be supported given the limited number of specialist staff across the workforce.

Strategic Assessment by Director of Social Services, Housing and Community Safety

The significant increase in demand seen across Wales in relation to Social Care and Housing is causing huge concern for Directors of those portfolios and their ability to fulfil their statutory duties. Welsh Government policies and funding decisions, the ongoing impact of Covid on people's wellbeing and the Home Office response to immigration dispersal has created an unsustainable position for Local Government if services continue to be delivered in their current form. Whilst some Local Authorities are shedding jobs others, like Neath Port Talbot Council, are looking to transform the services we provide.

It will be imperative that we take a whole Council approach to committing the resources needed to implement the transformational programmes that we have agreed. The aim is to drive down costs whilst maintaining support for those most vulnerable. There are currently significant risks to the success of any change programmes that involve a large scale approach to building new provision, insourcing services and managing future demand but the current and predicted cost of services, as described above, are unsustainable in their current form.

Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning

Post Covid impact

It is widely accepted that the impact Covid had on our children and young people has resulted in lower levels of attendance at school and an increase in poor behaviour for a minority of pupils. This is having an impact on the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions. Schools are having to re-direct funding to support pastoral programmes for these pupils which is becoming increasingly difficult, impossible in some schools, as reserves diminish. These additional costs have been mitigated to a point following additional funding being made available from corporate reserves agreed by Cabinet last financial year.

More pupils out of main stream school puts a pressure on local authority services, education and children services budgets in particular as we have to meet our statutory obligations to all children.

Culture and leisure services

Nearly all services in this area are non-statutory which means we do not have to deliver them. That said our public engagement efforts make it very clear that these services are very important to the wider public and deliver many benefits. To continue to deliver these services will mean securing additional earned income and external grant funding. If we are unsuccessful in these endeavours it will make services vulnerable to service cuts as they compete for resource against statutory services such as education.

Directorate's strategy

The Directorate is undertaking a number of initiatives to reduce the net running cost of services. We have commissioned EDGE on Home to School transport; we have work ongoing in relation to attendance and exclusions; we have work to reduce energy costs across the school estate identified; however, if more funding is not provided by WG we risk increased class sizes; delays in assessing pupils who present with additional learning needs; workforce impacts; all of this with consequential impacts on outcomes for learners.

We are also underpinning the delivery of a range of support services that particularly benefit more disadvantaged young people through a range of grant

funded programmes. If these are reduced or in the case of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) are not at least matched at the end of the current programme, outcomes for those facing the greatest barriers to learning will be severely impacted.

Strategic Assessment of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning

The local authority will definitely undergo an inspection of its education services in academic year 2024/25, known as LGES – Local Government Education Services. This is an inspection of how well the local authority meets its statutory obligations in respect of education delivery and not merely the education directorate. The risks currently are around attendance, exclusions, the impact poverty has on our pupils and the number of schools with a deficit reserve balance. In addition are we meeting our statutory obligations for every pupil in the County Borough and the extent to which education is seen to be a priority for the Council will also be considered.

The Council has made it a corporate commitment to give every child ‘The Best Start in Life’ Higher numbers of pupils with specialist needs and financial constraints is making it very difficult to fulfil that ambition currently.

Environment

The capital grant available from WG has changed little in over 20 years. It currently stands at c£9 million, of which, £3 million is invested in Disabled Facilities Grants. Improvements to and maintenance of infrastructure is largely supported by specific grants or through borrowing (the latter placing additional burden on an over-stretched revenue budget). Members are apprised of the condition, suitability and risk attached to all assets through asset management plans. Given the limited amount of funding available to support legacy infrastructure (much capital grant being to support new infrastructure or areas which WG consider to be priority) it is no surprise that the level of risk held by the Council has increased over time.

Consequently, there is an elevated risk of infrastructure failure which needs to be considered as part of the budget process. Areas that now need attention include: the increased number of pot holes; defects in bridges and other structures; large areas of carriageway resurfacing; and drainage infrastructure. This will mean that ‘improvement’ work will be severely constrained in the

foreseeable future unless specific new funding is made available by Government. Funding originally intended for Clean Up, Green Up programme has already been refocused to mitigate the growing risk of failure on the highway infrastructure. We will need to review existing priorities within the overall capital programme to ensure we are focusing scarce resources on the greatest areas of risk or where there is a clear business case to invest to reduce pressure on the revenue budget.

The Council has approved phase one and phase two of the accommodation strategy which seeks to reduce the number of buildings required and to improve the efficiency and economy of the operation of those premises. Complete withdrawal from Tregelles Court is contingent upon replacing the vehicle repair and maintenance garage. A business case to achieve this is well advanced but at present there are no funds identified against the project in the capital programme. A review of civic and other office accommodation is to report this financial year to identify work to progress under phase three of our accommodation strategy. A clear programme of work to design out energy costs, including a reduction in our carbon footprint is planned, with a new team funded to take this work forward. Meanwhile, Building Services are seeing an increase in emergency works needed across the existing estate and this is proving difficult to resource in the context of increased materials costs and reduced budget.

Conversely, the Council has been very successful in drawing down capital grant for priority areas set by Welsh and UK governments. The Council is also central to the new Celtic Freeport initiative and is helping to mitigate the impacts of the decarbonisation of Tata Steel UK's plant at Port Talbot. We are seeing community and economic regeneration on a scale not seen previously and this is stretching the small team of expert staff whilst also consuming significant time across a number of chief officer portfolios. Members have given their support to providing capacity funding for the Celtic Freeport and we are in dialogue with Welsh and UK governments to secure the capacity we need to deliver our contribution to the Tata Transition Board. Given the level of competition in the current labour market, there is an increased risk that we will not find it easy to recruit the expertise we need at the level needed with the burden falling on existing staff, or resulting opportunities to regenerate the communities and the economy not being fully realised.

Strategic Assessment of Director of Environment and Regeneration

If further cuts are required across the services and functions delivered by this directorate there will be significant impacts on services provided under discretionary powers in order to redirect resources to those functions and services that are statutory duties. Many of the services at risk are those highly valued by the public e.g. grass cutting, litter picking, road and drainage cleansing, and other neighbourhood services will reduce which will impact upon the quality of our public realm. Potentially all of the recommendations in the waste strategy which lead to cost savings may need to be implemented regardless of public opinion.

The number of parks may need to reduce and we may need to start closing facilities on certain days of the week or during certain seasons, for example facilities such as our Household Waste and Recycling Centres, our public toilet provision etc. Carparks which are currently running at a loss or need significant capital investment may need to close and sold for alternative purposes. Resources within Economic development and regeneration may need to be scaled back with consequent impacts upon project delivery including Shared Prosperity project work.

It should be noted that SPF is currently used to financially support a number of services across the Council. Resources to deliver active travel and the delivery of subsidised bus routes may need to stop or be scaled back impacting upon the scale and quality of both networks

Corporate Services

Demand for support is increasing in all areas of the Directorate as a result of the ambitious programmes of work being embarked across the Council and articulated within the revised Corporate Plan 2024-27. To deliver the nine programmes of change will require significant support from the Corporate Services Directorate.

Legislative burdens, specifically the new Procurement Act 2023 and the emphasis on social value procurement places additional burdens and obligations on procurement and commissioning processes, all of which could result in increased cost to the local authority. Challenges being faced across all public sector organisations mean an increased risk of costs from Council contributions having to increase i.e. the Swansea/Neath Port Talbot Coronial Service.

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee has placed additional demands on officer time. The costs of meeting statutory duties placed on the CJs - which are substantial – are shared across the authorities that make up the South West region through a levy.

Recruitment activity has increased by 50% since 2020/21 with training activity increasing by 35%. The continued pace of change within the organisation and the general labour market conditions continues to be a significant demand on the People and Organisation Development function.

A refreshed digital strategy has been approved by Members to ensure the infrastructure enables the changes we need to progress across the Council whilst also managing increased cyber and other risks.

Strategic Assessment of the Director of Strategy and Corporate Services

Delivering a 5% reduction in net revenue for the Directorate in 2025-26 will mean a reduction in the workforce capacity that will significantly impact our ability to support other Directorates to deliver their programmes for change and even support business as usual activity.

The scale of the challenge now being faced by services within the Directorates is how we can continue to provide the support necessary to the Council and ensure statutory and governance obligations are met, when faced with increased demand, increased complexity of work along with increased policy and statutory requirements from Welsh and UK Government and a 5% reduction in the net revenue budget.

Strategic Approach

The scale of challenge facing the Council is unprecedented and reflected across all councils in Wales.

As can be seen in the earlier sections of this report, there are elevated risks across all service areas and increasing risks to the Council's financial sustainability.

Work done in 2023-24 and the current financial year provides a good foundation for 2025-26 but if the Revenue Support Grant is not uplifted sufficiently, the current plans will be insufficient.

The revised Corporate Plan confirms the four wellbeing objectives:

- All children get the best start in life;
- All communities are thriving and sustainable;
- Our local environment, heritage and culture can be enjoyed by future generations; and
- We create the conditions for more secure, well paid and green working the area and support local people into those jobs.

The nine programme of change that either seek to change models of service and reduce cost/raise new income, or which initiate enabling work needed to tackle future challenges are a corporate priority. Delivering all of these change programmes is essential to the sustainability of the Council. However, no increase in the Settlement in 2025-26 will require **additional** action across the entire organisation. This will mean accelerating existing plans **AND** bringing forward further measures to cut expenditure and additional measures to increase income.

Over the spring/summer, the Chief Executive and Director of Finance have met with all management teams through a series of sustainability conversations. Fifteen such conversations have taken place and have involved directors, heads of service and all accountable managers. The financial outlook for 2025-26 and beyond has been a focus of these conversations with each manager asked to outline how they intend to sustain their services in this context. The approaches and impacts on service delivery vary from service to service, reflecting the diversity of Council operations. It is very clear from this exercise that a freezing of RSG will have significant impacts. In addition to service change within directorates, we have also been able to identify areas that require further corporate attention as well as areas where support/action by the Welsh Government or others is a necessary part of the overall picture.

Further work will take place over the summer and into the autumn before details are brought forward in the budget setting process. Every service has been asked to exemplify a 5% reduction in the net revenue budget in for 2025-26 and again in 2026-27. Each of these measures will be assessed in terms of

impact to inform the advice that members will receive as the budget process gets underway.

Next Steps

We are already maintaining a tight grip on spending and income across the organisation. We are currently on track to deliver all but one of the savings and income measures Council approved as part of the 2024-25 budget. We will identify what further in-year action might be taken to avoid new expenditure that impacts on the revenue budget, maximise income and reduce costs.

By end October, we will identify all available actions to deliver a balanced budget in 2025-26 and 2026-27 based on the assumptions highlighted earlier in this report. An impact assessment will be undertaken so that the consequences of the actions identified are clear. Where possible, we will bring forward decisions on specific proposals as early as possible to maximise savings or income proposals and to enable effective consultation with stakeholders.

Over the same period we will engage with key stakeholders to ensure the consequences of no increase in the RSG are fully understood. This will include working within WLGA to seek an improvement to the proposed Settlement and briefing the newly elected members of the UK Parliament on the situation. We will also put forward a range of proposals to Welsh Government where policy change could assist in mitigating the overall position – for example, lifting the cap on fees in certain instances; improving the intervention rate on capital investments; as well as other practical measures.

Between the end of October and end of December, we anticipate the incoming UK Government will provide greater certainty about spending priorities for 2025-26. This will indicate if there is likely to be an improvement in the Welsh Government's financial position and any consequential improvement in local government budgets. Assumptions in the financial model can then be updated, enabling final advice to be prepared for Members and any proposal not yet consulted upon will be made available to stakeholders.

The last two financial years have been very challenging but the outlook for 2025-26 and beyond is currently projected to be on an even greater scale. All members of Council will need to actively engage in the budget process,

offering constructive comment and challenge and also helping to explain resultant changes to services to our many stakeholders.

Financial Impacts:

No implications. This report is designed to provide general context to support the budget process.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes. Individual budget proposals will be subject to the IIA process in due course with an overarching statement of impact included within the final budget report.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

This report sets out the context for the budget process 2025-26 – whilst no direct impacts have been identified to date on valleys communities, the scale of the budget challenges are likely to impact every community across NPT.

Workforce Impacts:

No implications as this is an information report providing contextual information. The budget scenarios referenced are likely to see a reduction in the overall size of the workforce, together with changes to the way services are to be delivered. As proposals are worked up, they will be subject to the usual social partnership arrangements and the impacts of changes on the workforce will be reported as part of the budget process.

Legal Impacts:

The Council has a legal duty to set a lawful budget by the 11 March (Local Government Finance Act 1992). Members jointly and severally (individually and collectively) have a fiduciary duty to council tax payers so they have a duty to facilitate the setting of a lawful budget, a process that requires flexibility

and compromise. Failure to set a lawful budget in time will lead to loss of revenue – through not collecting council tax – both for the council and the precepting authorities such as the police and Town/Parish councils, significant additional administrative costs as well as reputational damage.

In addition, individual officers within the Council have a statutory duty to advise members and facilitate specific courses of action:

- Pursuant to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council must provide its chief executive with such staff, accommodation and other resources, which in the chief executive's opinion is sufficient to allow the duties of the chief executive to be carried out. This will include the way the Council exercises its different functions and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place in respect of financial planning, asset management and risk management.
- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to make proper arrangements for its financial affairs and appoint an officer to have responsibility for those arrangements (the Chief Finance Officer) and who must ensure that a local authority's financial functions are fit for purpose. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 also requires the Chief Financial Officer to report to Council on the "robustness of the estimates" used in calculating the budget requirement. In the event that a Council incurs expenditure which is not approved or unlawful, the S151 Officer has the power to issue a notice providing that no new expenditure is permitted except to fund statutory services although existing commitments and contracts are honoured, and staff wages are paid. Councillors must then meet within 21 days to discuss the situation and consider what action to take.
- The Council's Monitoring Officer is an officer appointed pursuant to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Amongst other duties such as monitoring conduct and overseeing the constitution, it shall be the duty of the Monitoring Officer to prepare a report to the authority (or to the Executive with a copy to all councillors) if, at any time, it appears to him/her that any proposal, decision or omission of the authority, a

Committee or sub-committee, an officer or a joint committee or by or on behalf of the authority's executive has given rise to, or is likely to or would give rise to, a contravention of any enactment or rule of law.

- The Council must appoint a person to be its Director of Social Services who has numerous duties set out in the Code of Practice on the Role of the Director of Social Services (Social Services Functions). The fundamental responsibilities of this role are to (1) ensure the Chief Executive, executive and councillors have access to the best, up-to-date professional advice and information on all aspects of care and support services and prepare an annual report; (2) assure the Chief Executive and councillors that statutory functions laid on the Council have been carried out, and that proper management information and accurate records are being kept (3) ensure effective performance management processes are in place; (4) identify and advise councillors on priorities, challenges and risks across all aspects of social services, including areas of co-dependency between agencies and circumstances where staffing issues affect the Council's ability to discharge its statutory responsibilities; (5) brief the Chief Executive and councillors on high-profile cases and other matters likely to cause public concern; (6) advise councillors on strategies for improving methods of intervention, service provision, practice and use of resources; and (7) lead and support continuous engagement with inspectorates and regulators
- The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 provides that the Council must designate one of its officers as Head of Democratic Services to discharge a number of functions, specifically, the number and grades of staff required to discharge democratic services functions; the appointment of staff to discharge democratic services functions and the organisation and proper management of staff discharging democratic services functions. The Council must provide that officer with such staff, accommodation and other resources as are, in its opinion, sufficient to allow his or her functions to be discharged.

- Section 27 of the Children Act 2004 requires the Council to appoint a lead director for children and young people's services to co-ordinate and oversee arrangements to improve the well-being of children in the local authority area.
- The Council must appoint a fit person to be the Chief Education Officer of the Council pursuant to the Education Act 1996. It will be the duty of that officer to ensure that the Council is complying with our duties pursuant to the Education Act 1996 and other related education.

It should be noted that in respect of these officers, if they feel that they are not able to exercise their statutory duties because they do not have sufficient resources, then they are provided with a power to bring a report to Full Council and Council must give consideration to the issues raised and provide such resources that may be necessary for such services to be provided.

Risk Management Impacts:

The report sets out a strategic assessment of service, organisational and financial risks that will be assessed in more detail as the response to the budget gap is developed over the coming months.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item, however, the report will be used to inform a range of stakeholders over the coming months about the impact of no increase to the Revenue Support Grant in 2025-26.

Recommendations:

That members of Council note the potential for there to be no increase to the Revenue Support Grant in 2025-26 and note the serious implications this will have for services, jobs, fees and charges and council tax levels.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

This report has been developed to provide early advice to all members of Council on the budget likely to be required in 2025-26 and the serious consequences that will follow if there is no uplift to the Revenue Support Grant as currently advised by Welsh Government.

Officers holding statutory office have duties to make sure that advice is provided to elected members on various matters including the need for early action to be taken to ensure the sustainability of the Council.

Further reports will issue over the coming months setting out detailed options for Members to consider so that the Council can meet its statutory duties, including the requirement to set a balanced budget. Without additional Government funding, it is inevitable that the Council will need to cut services, jobs, raise fees and charges and consider further increases to Council Tax.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Statement by Rebecca Evans MS

Appendix 2- Inflation Assumptions

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STATEMENT

BY

THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Context for, and Approach to, the Next Spending Review Period**

DATE **11 June 2024**

BY **Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Cabinet Office**

I am pleased today to outline the Welsh Government's preparations for the next Spending Review period and to reflect on the challenging economic and fiscal context as we try to set plans for the next few years.

We cannot underestimate these challenges. 14 years of economic mismanagement by successive Tory UK Governments have led to austerity budget after austerity budget. We've had to deal with the fallout of Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's disastrous mini-budget, which almost crashed the economy and sustained, double-digit inflation in recent years has taken its toll on our already stretched settlement.

Overall, our budget is worth £700 million less in real terms than expected at the time of the last UK Spending Review in 2021.

Additional factors such as the continuing impact of Covid, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have had a huge impact, making it very difficult for us to focus on anything other than the short term.

The past few years have been characterised by crisis after crisis, and this has limited the opportunity to consider longer-term opportunities which maximise the impact of our available funds.

We won't know detail of the next UK Government's spending plans until after the General Election. However, given that our current multi-year funding settlement will end after this financial year, work has begun to develop our plans beyond April 2025.

It is in this challenging context and taking stock of the lessons learned I want to implement a new approach which will support a medium to long term fiscal strategy and inform how we decide to spend and raise money in Wales. An approach which includes our statutory responsibilities, drives future budgets, and aligns with our priorities as a Government.

We want to take a collegiate approach to this work, and as ever, I welcome new ideas and proposals, from wherever they come, in this Siambur and beyond, where there is a clear benefit to Wales. As part of this work, I want to hear from diverse voices and from right across our communities.

It is in that spirit that I make today's statement.

It is important we recognise the wider context within which we are undertaking these preparations. The challenges we face are significant.

Public sector net debt in the UK is currently nearly 100% of GDP, its highest level since the early 1960s.

At the same time the overall UK tax burden is higher than at any time since 1950 and is forecast to continue rising over the next few years because of the UK Government's changes to the personal allowance, for example.

Options for whichever party forms the next UK Government will be constrained by this legacy of 14 years of chaos and mismanagement by the Conservatives at Westminster

It is clear there is a very challenging fiscal backdrop as we look ahead.

Whilst the economy is forecast to grow over the next few years, the average growth rate of 1.7% is historically low.

The current Shadow Chancellor, Rachel Reeves has bold and ambitious plans to deliver growth and jobs across the UK after more than a decade of low growth. I very much hope that the General Election affords us the opportunity to work with her to implement these plans in Wales.

Faster economic growth would help to alleviate these pressures and the Welsh Government will, of course, be doing whatever it can to improve the prospects for growth and more and better jobs here in Wales.

However, we cannot plan on the basis of optimistic scenarios for the UK economy in the short term. It is more important than ever that the Welsh Government ensures it is making the most of the resources available to it and deploying those resources in the most effective way possible.

We will learn of the next UK Government's plans over the coming months, but we must be prepared for difficult decisions and trade-offs in our planning.

In 2021, we set three-year spending plans and undertook a zero-based capital review. This enabled us to provide a multi-year settlement covering the period 2022-23 to 2024-25.

We continue to be dependent on the overall settlement from UK Government but this new approach enables us to construct longer-term solutions to the challenges we face.

The Welsh Spending Review will drive our annual Budgets, extending beyond short-term priorities to focus on the key medium to longer-term challenges and opportunities we face, setting the foundations for longer term settlements and embedding a whole Government approach to identifying priorities and supporting delivery outcomes for Wales.

This significant and wide-ranging work will enable robust and fully informed decision-making regarding future fiscal policy for the Welsh Government and ensure that our spending continues to align with our priorities, over the medium to long term.

At the forefront of this work will be an emphasis on this Government's five key priorities for Wales - Reducing NHS waiting lists and support for children in early years educational excellence in our schools, better, greener jobs, secure homes and improved transport links across the country. To echo the words of the First Minister, when he made his statement on these priorities to this Senedd in April, we will find Welsh solutions to Welsh problems which goes to the heart of what devolution is all about, setting out an ambitious future for a fairer Wales.

I want all of us to have a greater understanding of both the current and potential future profile of Wales enabling us to adapt and react to changing circumstances, whilst creating the conditions for more informed and continuous fiscal planning.

We are in the very early stages of this work, and I anticipate that it will continue throughout 2024 and into 2025.

But I wanted to start the debate in the Siambr early, so I can listen to – and work with – all colleagues and ensure there is an opportunity for early engagement.

I look forward to your thoughts.

Appendix 2 – Inflation assumptions

2025/26 Budget Assumptions

Expenditure head	Base Budget £'000	Modelled Assumptions		FYE 1% variation £'000	Comment
		%	£'000		
Teachers Pay	70,145	3%	2,104	701	
Non Teaching Pay	188,421	3%	5,653	1,884	IMF CPI assumption (as at April24) - 2% by 2025
Premises costs excluding utilities	7,721	2%	154	77	
Electricity	5,208	-19%	-984	52	
Gas	1,557	-16%	-252	16	
Home to school transport	10,599	3.5%	371	62	
Materials	1,959	2%	39	20	
Waste disposal	7,096	2%	142	71	
'Other Services' (External Domiciliary Care)	12,444	3.93%	489	124	UK Gov Low - High NMW projections (as at Mar24)
Subcontractors	3,168	2%	63	32	
Levies including Fire Authority	10,846	3%	325	108	Linked to pay but who knows based on last 2 yrs
Out of county placements	2,767	3%	83	28	
'Contribution to third parties'	14,947	0%	0	149	Grant funded no inflation allowed
Residential Care	77,468	3.93%	3,047	775	UK Gov Low - High NMW projections (as at Mar24)
Foster care allowances	6,264	3%	188	63	Linked to pay
Grants and contributions	13,122	0%	0	131	
Bed and breakfast payments	2,633	3%	79	26	
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	20,784	7%	1,455	208	
All other expenditure heads	63,656	0%	0	637	

Appendix 2 – Inflation assumptions

Income	-111,505	0%	0	-1,115	Not including services which have income efficiency savings
Total	409,301		12,957		

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

26TH JULY 2024

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTORS GROUP

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Corporate Plan 2024/2027: Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT

Purpose of Report

1. To present a reset Corporate Plan for 2024/2027. The Plan was presented to Cabinet on 24th July where it was approved and referred to Council for formal adoption.

Background

2. Section 3(2) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to:
 - Set and publish well-being objectives that are designed to maximise the Council's contribution to achieving the well-being goals; and
 - Take all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.
3. The above statutory requirement is discharged via the publication of the council's Corporate Plan.
4. The council's current Corporate Plan for 2022/2027 was published in May 2022 and provided a clear framework for the council to recover from the disruption that had occurred during the pandemic period.

5. Since the publication of the Plan in 2022, a lot has changed over the last two years. World events have driven very high levels of inflation and energy prices and compounded the cost of living crisis that has pushed many more of our residents and businesses into financial hardship. Supply chain disruptions arising from Brexit have affected contract prices and delivery timescales. We have seen structural changes in the labour market making it more difficult to attract and retain a sufficient workforce.
6. Across our services we are seeing an increase in demand. More people seeking help from social services; more people presenting as homeless; and more children needing extra help in school and in travelling to school.
7. However, the funding made available by the UK and Welsh governments for these functions in the last two years has fallen significantly short of what is needed to respond to our communities.
8. We have secured a large amount of investment funding under the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda to help regenerate our communities.
9. In addition, there are 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.
10. The announcement by Tata Steel UK Ltd of a decarbonisation programme that will see the end of traditional steel making at Port Talbot, and a move to new technologies, adds a further strategic dimension to this landscape.

Looking Forward – Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT

11. In light of this new context we are working within, the priorities contained within the Corporate Plan have been reset.
12. The council's four well-being objectives, set in 2022, are unchanged and remain our focus for 2024/2027.
13. As part of the reset, a set of strategic priorities have been identified which form corporate transformation programmes. There are 9

programmes which will support the delivery of the four well-being objectives and many of the actions contained in those programmes are essential to service and financial sustainability going forward.

14. In addition to the transformation programmes, all services and functions will contribute to the four well-being objectives through service planning and performance management arrangements at the operational level.
15. Members will see elsewhere on this agenda that the financial context for future years is extremely challenging. Welsh Government have indicated that there will be no uplift to the Revenue Support Grant for 2025/2026 and there is the prospect also of a reduction in the capital grant. At a time when there are significant inflationary pressures still in the system and very high and increasing levels of demand and risk across the organisation, the 2025/2026 budget gap is forecast to be circa £20 million. It is unclear whether the incoming Labour Government will provide any additional funding to Welsh Government to mitigate against this. Should no additional funding be available, it will be essential that all nine transformation programmes are accelerated and that the council urgently identifies other measures that can be taken to reduce the net revenue budget requirement and to mitigate risks.
16. The focus on financial sustainability and ensuring statutory duties are discharged may cause a delay in delivering some of the other outcomes identified in the corporate plan or require a further revision of Plan priorities in due course. Update reports will be provided to members as and when necessary.

Engagement

17. During the summer of 2023, the Let's Talk engagement exercise that was undertaken in 2021/2022 was repeated to ensure we had a good understanding of what matters to people now and to have an insight about what had changed in people's lives since the original exercise was undertaken back in 2021/2022.
18. During the initial Let's Talk campaign, it was clear that the main focus for our residents, community organisations and businesses was to

keep friends, family and customers safe whilst restrictions continued to ease. Whilst these are still important to people, when asked “what matters to you for the future” in the 2023 Let’s Keep Talking campaign the responses included protecting our local economy, our environment and health and well-being. This feedback has been used in developing the priorities set out in the reset Corporate Plan.

Feedback from Members

19. It is to be noted that the Corporate Plan draft presented to Council, is the version circulated to Members as at 18th July 2024. Due to timings of democratic arrangements, a member’s seminar, the Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet have taken place following this circulation. As a result of the member’s seminar a minor change has been made in order to reflect comments prior to publishing the final version. This amendment does not change the content of the Plan.

Performance Measures

20. As part of the reset a number of performance measures contained within the Corporate Plan reflect the progress of the strategic priorities within the transformation programmes.

Financial Appraisal

21. In resetting the Corporate Plan, account has been taken of any budget savings/financial impacts, as part of the council’s budget setting and planning process for 2024/2025 and invest to save proposals approved by Members for a number of the transformation programmes. These have been incorporated into revenue and capital budgets for the financial year. As indicated above, the Plan must be considered within an uncertain and volatile external environment and consequently Plan priorities will need to be adjusted as the revenue and capital budgets become more certain.

Integrated Impact Assessment

21. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, 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 impact assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment was required. It is essential that Members read the full Integrated Impact Assessment, which is attached at Appendix 2 for the purposes of the meeting.

Valleys Communities Impact

22. The reset Corporate Plan 2024/2027 contains initiatives to support valley communities across the county borough.

Workforce Impact

21. The council's Strategic Workforce Plan links to and supports the strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, by identifying what the workforce needs to look like and how it needs to operate to deliver outcomes for the residents of Neath Port Talbot. The Plan helps provide the direction and to ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills and attitudes, in the right place and at the right level.

Legal Impact

22. The publication of the Corporate Plan will meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by detailing the steps that we will take to achieve our four well-being objectives. Our well-being objectives show how the council contributes to the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Neath Port Talbot and to the seven national well-being goals contained within the Act.

Risk Management

23. The council's Strategic Risk Register will be updated with any risks associated with the delivery of the work outlined in the Corporate Plan.

Consultation

24. There is no requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to consult on this reset plan as there has been no change to the well-being objectives. Many of the proposals within the Plan have already been subject to individual public consultation processes and those elements of the Plan that are at early stages of development will be subject to consultation as required.

Recommendations

22. It is recommendation that:
 - i. Council adopt the Corporate Plan for the period 2024/2027, but note the priorities will need to be subject to ongoing review given the level of uncertainty in terms of available revenue and capital resources provided by Government. The Director of Strategy & Corporate Services is given delegated authority in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive to make any further changes that are necessary prior to final publication and which do not materially change the content of the Plan.

Reason for Proposed Decision

25. To meet legal duties set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 as they relate to council corporate planning activities.

Implementation of Decision

23. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices

24. Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan 2024/2027: Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT
25. Appendix 2 – Integrated Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers

26. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

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Neath Port Talbot Council **Corporate Plan** 2024/2027

“Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT”



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

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Foreword

In March 2022, the council published a new corporate plan 'Recover, Reset, Renew'.

The Plan drew on extensive engagement with residents, businesses, our workforce and partners, as well as other insights and intelligence. It provided a clear framework for the council to recover from the disruption that had occurred during the pandemic period. It also acknowledged the ongoing work that the council was doing to support the wider recovery effort – for example, administering support to businesses and community organisations on behalf of the governments; whilst also continuing to support the NHS in delivering population-wide vaccine and other public health programmes.

A lot has changed in two years.

Soon after Recover, Reset, Renew was published we experienced the impacts of the severe, additional economic shocks that arose from the Russian Government's illegal war in Ukraine and the more recent conflict in the Middle East. These world events drove very high levels of inflation and energy prices and compounded the cost of living crisis that has pushed many more of our residents and businesses into financial hardship. We have also seen supply chain disruptions arising from BREXIT which have affected contract prices and delivery timescales; structural changes in the labour market making it more difficult to attract and retain a sufficient workforce; welcomed unprecedented levels of investor interest which has the potential to transform the local economy over the medium to long term; and we have also implemented a wide range of new policy initiatives introduced by the council elected in 2022 and the Welsh Government.

These changes have had, and continue to have, a profound impact on our organisation.

Foreword (continued)

At the time of writing this Plan, there are more people seeking help from social services; more people presenting as homeless; and more children needing extra help in school and in travelling to school. However, the funding made available by the UK and Welsh governments for these functions in the last two years has fallen significantly short of what we need to respond to our communities. Conversely, we have secured a large amount of investment funding under the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda to help regenerate our communities and we have dealt with 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. The announcement by Tata Steel UK Ltd of a decarbonisation programme that will see the end of traditional steel making at Port Talbot, and a move to new technologies, adds a further strategic dimension to this landscape.

As we look forward to the remaining three years of this local government term, we have taken the opportunity to take stock and to reset the council's priorities in light of the new context we are working within. Whilst there is no doubt that there are many challenges in front of us, we remain optimistic and ambitious for our county borough. This refreshed Corporate Plan describes the next set of actions we believe we need to take to balance the needs of our communities in the present, with the opportunities we will need to grasp if we are to create a more prosperous, fairer and greener future for everyone over the long term.

**Cllr S K Hunt ,
Leader of Council**



**Mrs K Jones,
Chief Executive**



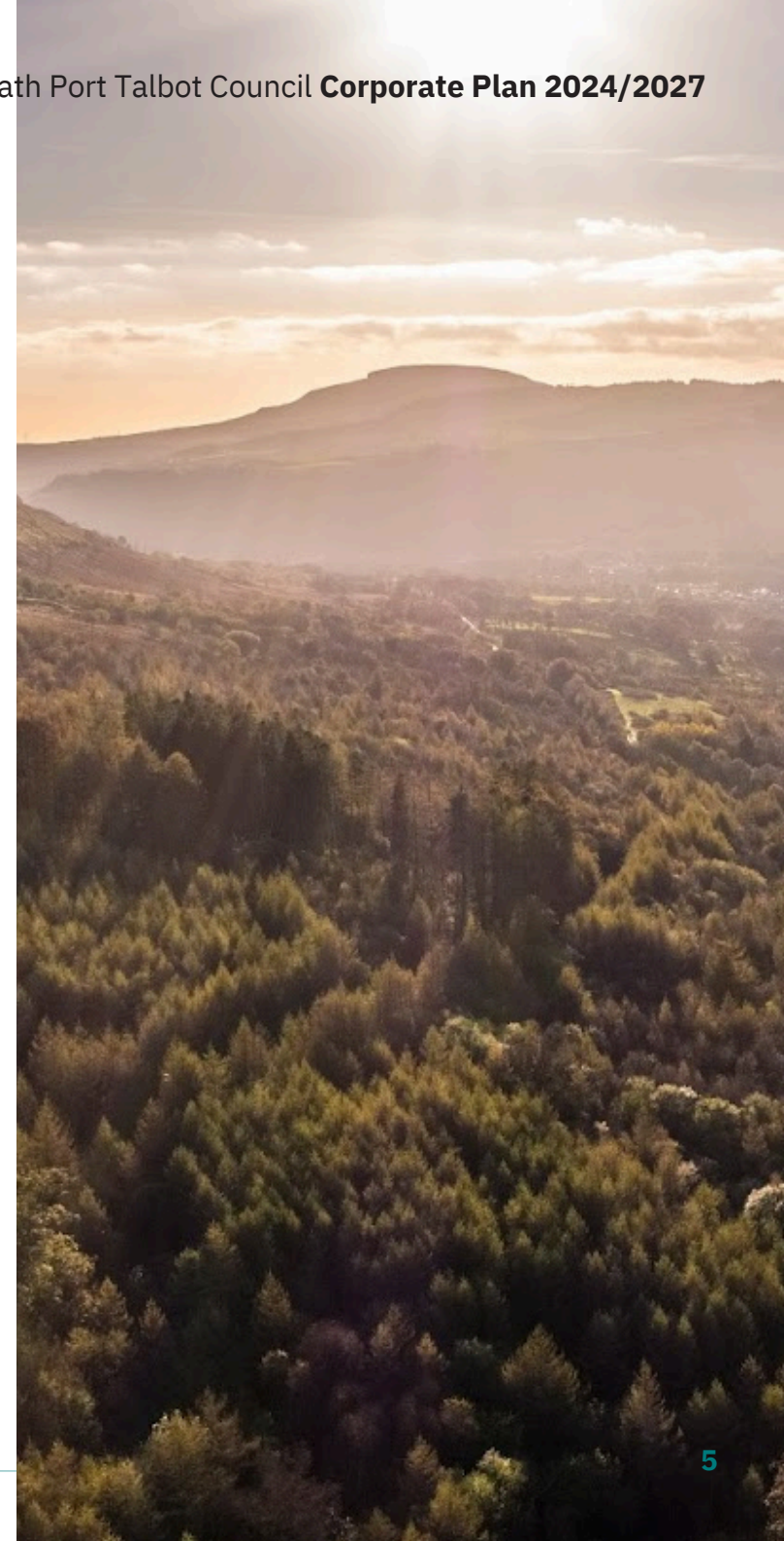
Our Current Situation

➤ Our Financial Resources

The public sector has faced a sustained period of real term reductions in funding levels for over ten years with Neath Port Talbot Council securing reductions in the revenue budget in excess of £100m in real terms since 2008. As well as finding genuine efficiencies and economies in the cost of services and functions (as has been the case in other councils) the scale of austerity measures imposed by the UK Government has also seen deep cuts in services and jobs, particularly in those services delivered under discretionary powers.

Over the last two financial years – 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 – we have faced additional costs of circa £70 million but have received just £26.9 million from the Welsh Government to meet these additional revenue budget pressures. To set a balanced budget, something we are legally obliged to do, we have delivered over £23 million of efficiency, income and other budget measures, with the balance of funding met through council tax. We have achieved this whilst protecting the services people rely upon and safeguarding jobs.

We do not have certainty of funding for future years and indications are that Welsh Government will be freezing or potentially reducing funding for local government in the financial year 2025/2026. At a time when there are more people needing help and support and the cost of goods and services is still increasing, this will impact jobs and services and the council will need to prioritise further. Early soundings from residents will be crucial to inform decisions in the next budget round.



Our Current Situation

➤ Our Financial Resources (continued)

In terms of investment, the council has secured additional, large sums of money through the Levelling Up programme and the Shared Prosperity Fund and will focus on delivering these programmes. A bid submitted to both the Welsh and UK governments for Freeport status (with partners from Associated British Ports, Port of Milford Haven and Pembrokeshire County Council) was successful and we are now working through the detailed business case stages to secure seed capital of £25 million for the Freeport area and an estimated £0.5 billion of retained business rates that can be used to improve infrastructure to facilitate and enable economic growth over the next 25 years.

The council has also led the development of a Local Economic Action Plan (LEAP) on behalf of the Tata Transition Board that will inform decisions as to how the £100 million available to the Board will be spent. The LEAP identifies a significant impact on the local and regional economy which will require concerted action on the part of government, the company and wider stakeholders over the next 10 or more years. In the short term there will need to be a significant effort to support people affected by job losses at the plant and in the wider supply chain.

The council will continue to seek out funding to improve local infrastructure, for example to extend the 21st Century Schools programme. However, at the time of writing funds are generally geared towards new facilities and there is a growing concern about the condition of legacy infrastructure including roads; other highways structures; and buildings, with inadequate funds available to maintain and repair infrastructure.

The overall financial context is set to be very challenging indeed. On the current trajectory the council will need to plan to be a smaller organisation, focused on fewer things and working in a very different way.

Our Current Situation

➤ Our People

In common with other parts of the UK, the pandemic period has disrupted the world of work across Neath Port Talbot and the council has experienced this too.

The labour market has become more competitive with employers needing to adopt increasingly creative approaches to recruitment and retention practices. An early action in our recovery plan was to create a Future of Work Strategy. A priority within that Strategy was to focus on our employment offer and the way in which we promote this offer to the labour market and our existing workforce. The Strategy has had a good measure of success although more remains to be done to recruit to some jobs in our organisation that remain hard to fill.

We are continuing to build on the work we have started, with the aim of becoming an employer of choice. We have a really good employment offer and are proud of the number of local people who choose to come and work with us. We are particularly proud to have been externally recognised by former equality body Chwarae Teg for the work we have done in advancing equality of opportunity; by Welsh Government for our social partnership arrangements with trade union partners; and by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) for the way we are approaching our people and organisational development work.

Developing and supporting our people will continue to be a central part of the work we will be doing over the remainder of this local government term. We firmly believe that ultimately people make the difference. Our ability to achieve our purpose, vision and values rests on our ability to support people to achieve their potential.



Our Current Situation

➤ **Basing actions on what matters to residents, businesses and wider stakeholders**

We launched a public engagement exercise ‘Let’s Talk’ to inform our priorities as we emerged from the pandemic period.

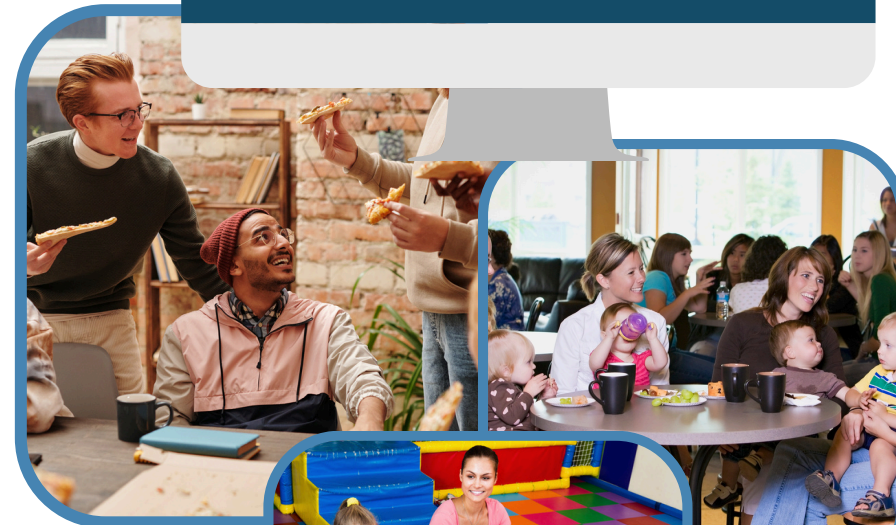
We heard from thousands of people as part of that work, including people from different parts of the county borough and people from all sorts of backgrounds.

We repeated that exercise during the summer of 2023 to ensure we had a good understanding of what matters to people now and to have clear insight about what has changed in people’s lives since we did the original exercise back in 2021/2022.

During the initial Let’s Talk campaign it was clear that the main focus for our residents, community organisations and businesses was to keep friends, family and customers safe whilst continuing to ease restrictions and return to day to day living. Whilst these are still important to people, when asked ‘what matters to you for the future’ in the 2023 Let’s Keep Talking campaign the responses included protecting our local economy, our environment and health and well-being.

We have used the feedback we gathered through this new exercise in developing the priorities set out in this Corporate Plan.

The main themes are summarised across the following pages.



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As part of the **Let's Keep Talking** campaign we asked:

The ten responses most frequently mentioned were as follows:

“ What matters to you now ”

1 “ Friends and family (including pets) ”

2 “ Leisure activities / recreational facilities ”

3 “ Education / Libraries / schools ”

4 “ Health & well-being ”

5 “ Keeping local area clean ”

6 “ Cost of living /inflation ”

7 “ Environmental issues ”

8 “ A good local economy / local area/town centre ”

9 “ Public Transport ”

10 “ Standard of living/quality of life ”

As part of the **Let's Keep Talking** campaign we asked:

The ten responses most frequently mentioned were as follows:

“ What matters to you in future ”

1 “ Job / Job opportunities ”

2 “ Friends, family and pets ”

7 “ Environmental issues ”

8 “ Cost of living / inflation ”

3 “ Education / libraries / schools ”

4 “ Leisure activities /recreational facilities ”

9 “ A good local economy / local area / town centre ”

5 “ Standard of living / quality of life ”

6 “ Health & well-being ”

10 “ Keeping local area clean / public transport ”

A Changing World - Megatrends

Increasingly, world events are also shaping our priorities and responses. There are a number of other factors that we have taken into account in our forward planning. These include:

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Pandemic Legacy

- Whilst for many people the pandemic has passed, the council continues to see very high levels of demand and increased complexity of demand coming through our front doors.
- Covid-19 funding is no longer available to support ongoing impacts which is putting significant pressure on base budgets.
- There are more people accessing social services; more people presenting as homeless; and more children needing additional help across our schools.
- There has been a significant shift in the pattern of working for office based workers with hybrid working (a mix of working at the office and at home) now the norm.
- There is a heightened awareness of the importance of public health and a greater confidence in dealing with emergency situations as a result.
- It is evident that some people are experiencing 'long covid' and other long term health impacts from Covid-19 – we are undoubtedly still learning about the long term impacts that the pandemic has left us with.



Cost of living and inequalities

- An increasing number of people and businesses are facing financial hardship as a result of the huge increase in the cost of goods and services.
- This, in turn, has also contributed to the high levels of demand experienced across council services but also in services provided by partner agencies, including in the voluntary and community sector.
- The impact of the pandemic, inflation and energy prices has not been uniformly distributed across the population. Inequalities between population groups have widened and continue to grow.



Public Expectations

- There is a long term trend towards reduced tolerance of service failure. Staff and councillors are facing an increase in abuse, particularly on social media platforms.
- There are increased expectations of improved service access with society operating on an expectation of 24/7 a day and 365 day a year access.

A Changing World - Megatrends



Funding

- The UK government has not made available sufficient additional funding to respond to the additional demand and cost pressures being experienced across all councils.
- In Wales, the government is prioritising investment in health and aspects of transport. Whilst providing some protection to front line services delivered by councils, settlements are significantly short of what is needed to ensure sustainability.
- There are increasing numbers of councils experiencing financial distress. Without additional government funding, we expect a deterioration in the financial resilience of all councils and an increase in the number of councils that are faced within unpalatable cuts to local services and higher council tax levels.
- In terms of investment, processes for accessing funding from the UK Government have been based on a principle of competition making it costly to draw down funding and the tight timescales for delivery are impacting on the wider investment programme priorities.
- It is unclear what the government plans to do to replace the EU structural funds. The initial programme – Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund have run over extremely short timescales with no certainty about longer term arrangements.



Demographic Changes

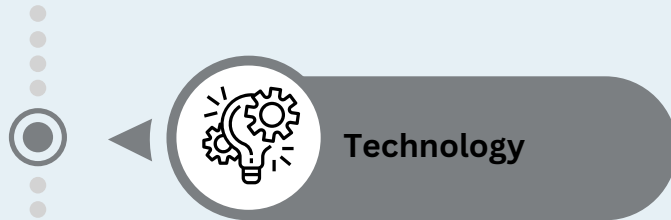
- The workforce is ageing and there are wider structural changes in the labour market affecting recruitment and retention.
- Our population is getting older and we see higher levels of sickness, disability and inequity in the post-pandemic period.
- Neath Port Talbot has a relatively older, disabled and deprived population and a high level of unpaid carers.



Geopolitics

- Global conflicts are causing disruption to economies, supply chains and accelerating the movement of people across the world.
- Some of the impacts of this are being felt locally through higher prices; labour market shortages; whilst also testing community cohesion.

A Changing World - Megatrends



- Disruption through technological advances is accelerating.
- As well as increased cyber threat, artificial intelligence, disinformation and automation pose new challenges to organisational capability as well as presenting new opportunities to design different models of service to respond to community need.
- The accelerated move to on-line shopping is contributing to a decline in retail presence in town centres.
- There are still significant numbers of people who are not on-line which creates inequality of access to a wide range of services and information.



- We need to take urgent action to respond to the climate and nature emergencies, underlined by increased incidences of flooding, extreme weather events, population movement, environmental activism and food scarcity – to name just a few very real impacts.
- As well as increasing the pace at which these critical issues are addressed, greater attention is needed to securing a just transition so that the burden of change does not fall disproportionately on those who already face the greatest disadvantage.
- More residents and businesses are engaged with their local environment, heritage and culture to understand the impact of climate change and nature emergencies..



- There has been an increase in powers to the Welsh Government over time and clear divergence on a range of policy matters from other parts of the UK.
- This seems set to continue with the proposed increase in the number of Senedd Members and associated electoral reforms.
- The partnership landscape in Wales is increasingly complex with over-lapping regional, pan-regional local governance arrangements.

Our Performance - Feedback from Regulators

Service performance and our wider organisational arrangements have recovered well in the last two years. Our annual assurance from our external auditors – Audit Wales – and the two inspectorates Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales demonstrated that we have a good understanding of what is working well and where our improvement effort should be concentrated. A summary of our overall performance follows:

Wider Council

- The council has a clear corporate plan in place covering the period 2022/2027;
- The council has positively engaged with its communities through its Let's Talk and Let's Keep Talking initiatives;
- The council responds positively to external audit findings and recommendations and continues to review much of its corporate framework. A focus on asset management, performance management will feature in the next phase of the governance improvement work;
- The council has been financially stable to date and its leadership team is fully resourced. The 2024/2025 financial year has been challenging and this is set to continue. Demand pressures in social services, education and housing will present particular risks but this is a picture seen across Wales;
- The council has developed a Future of Work Strategy and put arrangements in place to implement it. Recruitment and retention of people will however continue to present issues;
- There are a large number of economic regeneration projects which are progressing as well as new strategies for culture, heritage and destination management;
- There is a clear and well-developed approach to digital, data and technology;
- Changes at Tata Steel UK Ltd will create new risks for the council
- There is a plan to increase the percentage of waste recycled and this will require ongoing monitoring;
- The return of indoor leisure services from Celtic Leisure is proving difficult in the current economic conditions.

Social Services

- The council has a good understanding and provides strong corporate support for social services and has a strong senior leadership team that provides confidence across both children's and adults' services;
- The level of demand will present ongoing budget challenges for the whole council;
- A strengths-based and outcome-focussed social work assessment model is embedded across Children's Social Services;
- The workforce is stable and experienced with good use of consultant social worker roles in both adult and children social services;
- Partnership relationships are effective and there are good examples of co-production, supported by a strong early help offer;
- There is investment in foster carers to increase the range of placement options available to support those young people who need them;
- Ensuring a focus on workforce continues is important, particularly given the increased demand and complexity being seen through our adult and children social services front door;
- Further work will be needed to develop a sufficient range of placements so that there is the right range of services for children and families who will need support;
- In adult social services there is good creative thinking around the way services are developed and resourced.
- The workforce involved in safeguarding has increased;
- There are positive relationships with health colleagues;
- There remain challenges in the provision of care for vulnerable adults in common with other parts of Wales and this needs to align with the wishes of those needing services.

Education

- There is a stable senior officer team and local authority officers know their schools well;
- Safeguarding work is strong;
- There are sound plans in place to deliver national priorities and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is driving improvement, including the opening of a new Welsh Medium school in the Neath area;
- Inspection outcomes are mainly positive, although one secondary school and three primary schools are receiving enhanced support and monitoring; and
- Attendance and exclusion rates in common with other parts of Wales are receiving attention – there is more to do in both of these areas.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

World events since 2022 have caused inequalities to widen across Neath Port Talbot in common with a pattern seen in other parts of the United Kingdom. It is clear that those who faced the greatest disadvantage prior to the pandemic have been hardest hit. Equalities is at the heart of everything we do, this is demonstrated through all elements of the corporate plan and the supporting strategic equality plan to reduce inequality.

The council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024/2028, which includes how we will address our socio-economic duty, sets out more detail on the work we will do under each well-being objective.

Welsh Language

The Welsh language is a very important part of our work across Neath Port Talbot in supporting the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 ambition to achieve a million people able to use and enjoy speaking Welsh by 2050. Our Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023/2028 takes account of, and builds on, the progress made, the commitments of Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/2032 (WESP) as well as the work of our partners in promoting the Welsh language locally.

Our approach is to reflect the strategic themes outlined in the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Welsh Language Strategy. These themes reflect our own belief in how the Welsh language can be promoted/facilitated locally and we will work toward realising the themes of:

- Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
- Increasing the use of Welsh
- Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context

A number of actions contained within the WESP have already been delivered or are currently being developed to promote and facilitate the language locally.

The Socio-Economic Duty

(Equality Act 2010) which came into force on 31 March 2021 requires councils, when taking strategic decisions such as setting priorities, to consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

Evidence demonstrates that the poorest areas have experienced the greatest impact both in terms of health and financial impacts. Those who faced the greatest disadvantage prior to the pandemic have been hardest hit and, as a consequence, inequalities across Neath Port Talbot have widened.

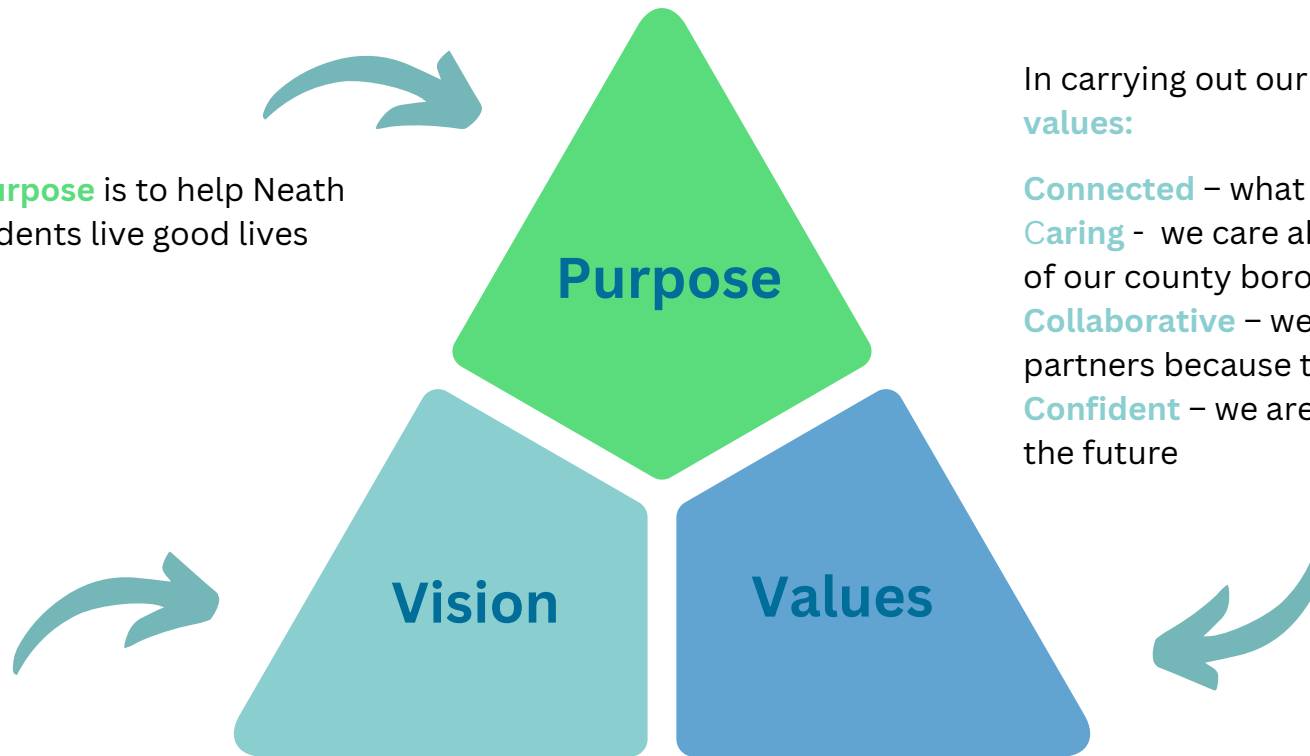
Addressing these inequalities is a cross-cutting theme across all the priorities in the short, medium and longer term.

Purpose, Vision and Values

We have tested our existing purpose, vision and values as part of our review process and have concluded that they remain relevant.

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

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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.

Our Well-being Objectives and Associated Priorities

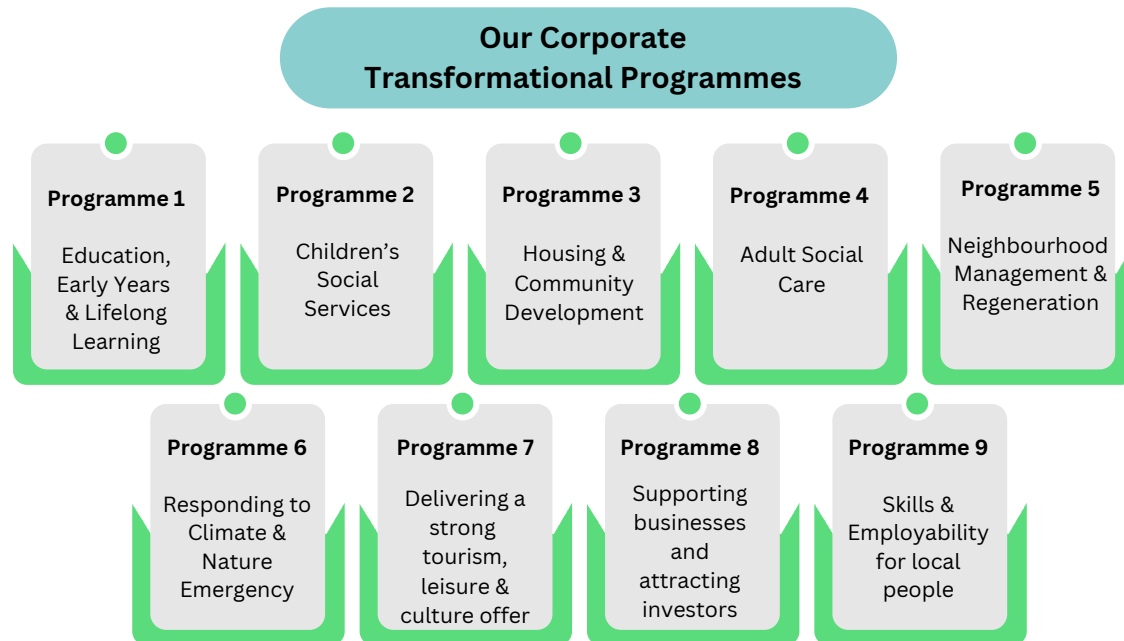
The four well-being objectives set in 2022 are drawn directly from our vision and remain our focus for 2024/2027.

For each well-being objective we have set out long term (20 year) outcomes that we want to achieve. Over the last two years we have made a good start in working towards those outcomes.

The detail of progress we have made to date can be accessed in our annual reports. We have also taken the opportunity, as part of this review, to identify a small number of strategic priorities that we will concentrate upon over the next three year period. These strategic priorities form our corporate transformation programme.

The corporate transformation programme represents the next major steps towards our long term vision, whilst also making a significant contribution to improving outcomes for citizens and wider stakeholders against a backdrop of a challenging financial context in the medium term (three years). It is key to note that future budget settlements, and grant funding, will play a significant part in how these transformation programmes progress over the medium term.

In addition to the corporate transformation programmes which are summarised in this Plan, all services and functions will contribute to the four well-being objectives through strengthened business planning and performance management arrangements at operational level.



Service & Business and Partnership Plan will also support the delivery of Well-being Objectives and driving continuous improvement

Medium Term Financial Plan, Asset Plans, Strategic Equalities Plan

1

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 1 Best start in life

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*All children get
the best start in life*



In 20 years' time...

- All children and young people will be:
 - ambitious, capable learners;
 - enterprising, creative contributors;
 - ethical, informed citizens; and
 - healthy, confident individuals.
- There will be a shared culture across the county borough that supports aspiration and ambition for all children and young people;
- Inequalities in health, education and economic outcomes will have reduced;
- Children, young people and families will have access to high quality early help and support services at the right time, this will ensure children and young people are engaged in their learning and families are being helped to move out of poverty;
- We will have completed a programme of school reorganisation and have the right schools in the right place and all children and young people are accessing the schools that are right for them, first time, every time;
- The council will be systematically removing the barriers to learning and aspiration by convening and working in partnership with other services and agencies that touch the lives of children and young people;

- We will have created an environment that secures access to learning and opportunities for all children, young people and adults in order that they reach their potential and their ambition;
- We will be championing the needs of all learners, particularly our vulnerable and disadvantaged, and building strong relationships with families, schools and communities;
- We will have created environments where learning is a safe, nurturing and fulfilling experience in all settings, where there is respect and due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion; and
- We will be working in partnership to ensure that schools and other providers meet the learning needs of all their pupils and students, building professional capital and collective responsibility throughout the system and ensuring that literacy and numeracy are at the heart of learners' development.



Our work over the next three years to deliver our Well-being Objectives has been set out within this Corporate Plan, through our transformational programmes, and will be supported by delivery plans and also through plans which have been produced in collaboration with our partners.

In the next 3 years we aim to....

- Work with our partners to ensure our youngest children are better prepared for the transition into education.
- Progress our strategic schools improvement programme to develop our learning and teaching environments.
- Continue roll out of educational reform to support all pupils, including Additional Learning Needs legislation and the Curriculum for Wales to raise standards across our schools for all learners.
- Provide opportunities for all to benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh.
- Provide high quality support for teaching that supports the evolution of pedagogy and how to plan for progression in the Curriculum for Wales.
- Provide high quality responsive support for leadership at all levels including induction, support staff, leadership training etc.
- Support schools to secure an improvement in pupil attendance rates across all NPT schools.
- Support schools to reduce the number of pupils subject to an exclusion (both fixed-term and permanent).
- Ensure that there is a culture of safeguarding within Neath Port Talbot Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning and our schools.
- Work with Sports Wales to ensure a smooth transition for the Physical Activity Sport Service (PASS) to the regional partnership model
- Enable our young people to develop independent, safe travel skills.
- Expand the foster care provision, supporting children with the most complex needs.
- Support young carers, those leaving care and minority groups to access opportunities.
- Enhanced facilities, improved play and leisure services for children and young people.
- Develop a co-ordinated approach to meet the well-being needs of our children and young people and ensure there are strong safeguarding and support procedures in place.



Why is this important?

- The impact from Covid-19 and the subsequent loss of education that happened within schools is still having a significant, adverse impact on children and young people, with the disruption they had to their learning at crucial points (e.g. transition from Primary to Secondary) and consequences for their social development and physical and mental well-being.
- From the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, 14 of Neath Port Talbot's (NPT) 91 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (15.4%) are in the most deprived 10% in Wales. Three (3.3%) are in the least deprived 10%. NPT has the ninth highest number of children in Wales receiving care and support from the local authority according to the Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2022.
- 27% of pupils of statutory school age are entitled to free school meals (Pupil Level Annual School Census 2024 (PLASC));
- In 2023/24, 2156 children received support from Flying Start funded services. This figure continues to increase as result of Flying Start Expansion. The programme now reaches around 35% of the local authority, with its targeted outreach programme accessible on a needs basis to the whole of the local authority.

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A significant percentage of pupils finish statutory education without the expected levels in language, mathematics and science, especially those who are eligible for free school meals.

- Too many children and young people are still being excluded from schools on a fixed term and permanent basis;
- At PLASC 2023, 15.7% of Neath Port Talbot's school population had special educational needs/additional learning needs compared with 13.4% nationally. There continues to be a rise in complexity of need.
- In NPT, 16.9% (3,536) of pupils received their education in Welsh medium schools at PLASC 2023, the highest percentage in Neath Port Talbot based on figures going back to 2007. This consisted of 17.4% (2,130) of primary school age and 16.0% (1,406) of secondary school age pupils with percentages in both sectors increasing annually.
- To maintain our place as the top performing physical activity service in Wales with 46% of pupils undertaking activity three or more times a week.

Key Strategies, Plans & Partnerships

The following partnerships, strategies and plans will support us in the delivery of Well-being Objective 1

Strategies & Plans	Key Partnerships
Children & Young People’s Participation and Engagement Strategy	NPT Public Services Board
Children & Young People’s Plan 2024/2029	Children and Young People’s Leadership Group
Children & Young People’s Social Care Strategic Plan 2023/2026	Western Bay Regional Partnership
Community Safety Strategic Intent Document for 2024/2027	NPT District Sports Council
Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy – 2023/2026	NPT Local Economic Partnership
Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023/2028	Western Bay Safeguarding Board
Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/2032	

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2

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 2

All communities are thriving and sustainable



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People live healthy, long and good lives in thriving and sustainable communities where people get along together and support one another

In 20 years' time...

- Every community is thriving;
- We have sustainable communities where residents have the ability to live, work, shop and enjoy their leisure time in their communities;
- Inequalities in health, economic and social outcomes have reduced;
- People are involved in decisions that affect them, more people are involved in community life;
- People are welcoming of newcomers and treat each other with respect; every individual is included and has an equal voice;
- People can access good quality, affordable, low carbon housing in their community;
- People are connected within their community; communities are connected to each other and the wider world through good quality digital services and public transport networks;
- People are resilient; they respect and take care of their environment and they can come together and act at times of crisis;
- Communities are inclusive and accessible to all;
- Communities are pleasant, clean, safe and green;
- Vulnerable people are supported in their community through a range of informal and formal care and support networks;
- Communities can access a range of quality services necessary for daily living; and
- Communities benefit from a high quality of design that reflects the unique heritage and characteristics of each place.



Our work over the next three years to deliver our Well-being Objectives has been set out within this Corporate Plan, through our transformational programmes, and will be supported by delivery plans and also through plans which have been produced in collaboration with our partners.

In the next 3 years we aim to....

- Work to ensure residents have access to high quality sustainable housing and prevent homelessness;
- Support our communities who are at risk, or living in poverty;
- Improve the range and quality of informal and formal support for elderly and vulnerable residents, including unpaid carers
- Ensure there is a wide range of community services for residents with disabilities and complex needs;
- Ensure that we support our communities to develop and give residents a voice to be involved in community life and decision making;
- Further develop our valleys, villages and towns and progress our regeneration vision linked to funding and investment opportunities;
- Support the development of community groups, community hubs and access to volunteering opportunities;
- Secure funding to further develop our access to walking and cycling routes as part of our active travel network;
- Reduce carbon outputs and meet statutory recycling and waste targets.
- Effectively manage drainage networks, surface water and ordinary watercourses. Protect property from flooding by constructing new defences and maintaining existing defences. Promote wider catchment approaches to managing flood risk, including cross border and multi-agency working.

Why is this important?

- Covid-19 has had an adverse impact on many people with more people becoming lonely and isolated. There has been a disproportionate impact on young people, women and people from BME backgrounds;
- There were 144,000 people living in Neath Port Talbot in 2021. This is expected to grow to 147,000 by the mid-2030s;
- The population is ageing – the number of people retired is growing but the number of young people is declining;
- People are living for longer and living healthier lives but life expectancy and health life expectancy is below the rest of Wales and the gap between those who are best and worst off is significant;
- GVA* (Gross Value Added) is lower than the Welsh average;
- 27% of children are eligible for free school meals; There are estimated to be over 20,000 unpaid carers in the county borough;
- There is a need for more affordable housing of a good quality; and we expect to see a 35% increase in those aged 65+ who will be living alone by 2035.

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* Gross Value Added (GVA) is an economic productivity metric that measures the contribution of a corporate subsidiary, company, or municipality to an economy, producer, sector, or region.

Key Strategies, Plans & Partnerships

The following partnerships, strategies and plans will support us in the delivery of Well-being Objective 2

Strategies & Plans	Key Partnerships
Adult Social Care Strategy 2023/2026	NPT Public Services Board
Adult Social Isolation and Loneliness Strategy	NPT Local Economic Partnership
Housing & Homelessness Strategic Plan 2024/2027	NPT Adult Learning Network
Regional Carers Strategy	NPT Strategic Housing Forum
Public Participation Strategy	South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023/2028	Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum
Community Safety Strategic Intent Document for 2024/2027	Community Safety Partnership
Local Development Plan	Area Planning Board
West Glamorgan Regional Partnership - Emotion and Mental Wellbeing Strategy	

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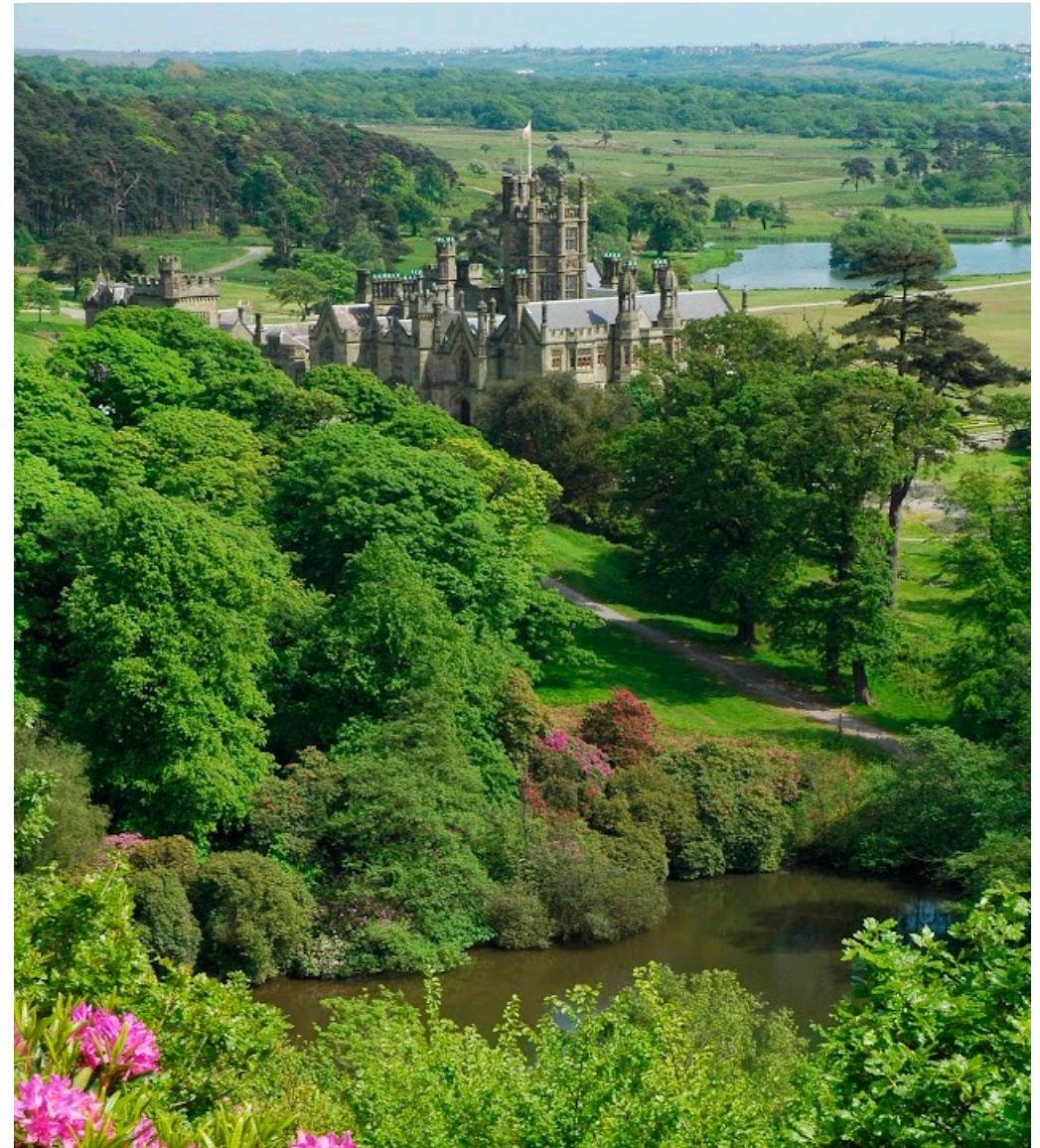


3

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 3

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

Natural processes are restored and they mitigate and develop greater resilience to climate change. People actively conserve, improve and enjoy our stunning natural environment, treasure the Welsh language and are actively engaged with the rich sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area



In 20 years' time...

- More people speak the Welsh language and Welsh is an integral part of everyday life;
- People will value and cherish our local natural environment and have reversed the decline in our wildlife; our most precious sites will be in improved condition and connected via a network of green corridors; People will have restored natural processes to mitigate and develop greater resilience to the effects of climate change;
- Our urban areas will embrace and include space for nature that can be enjoyed and provide opportunities for all;
- Residents of all ages across Neath Port Talbot will talk about the local environment, culture, sports and heritage with pride and confidence and more people will be actively involved in the conservation of our environment, culture and heritage;
- Local culture and heritage will be visible, brought to life through high quality, sustainable design that celebrates the past and connects it to the county borough's ambitions for the future;
- The area will be a destination of choice for people to live, work and spend their leisure time. The area will have built a reputation for excellence in the way it promotes a strong sense of belonging through heritage, the arts, sport and culture and supports everyone to connect to the natural environment and to enjoy a high quality of well-being; and
- We will increase the appeal of our area as a visitor destination by building upon our sense of place, having an inclusive approach and encouraging sustainable development. Visitors will be encouraged to act responsibly for the benefit of our communities and local environment.



Our work over the next three years to deliver our Well-being Objectives has been set out within this Corporate Plan, through our transformational programmes, and will be supported by delivery plans and also through plans which have been produced in collaboration with our partners.

In the next 3 years we aim to....

- Implement our culture, leisure and heritage strategies alongside our destination management plan and raise the profile of NPT as a visitor destination;
- Have a strong approach to high quality leisure and recreation activities;
- Work 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;
- Embed the history of the local environment, heritage and nature into the curriculum and ensure all schools have access to environmental and outdoor learning opportunities;
- Strengthen our approach to decarbonisation of fleet and assets, alongside a robust policy and supporting strategies to respond to climate change and nature emergency, highlighting where we have a part to play;
- Secure funding to further develop and promote our active travel network and improved public rights of way to encourage more people to walk and cycle;
- Work to help nature recover and to improve the quality of and access to our natural environment.
- Encourage people to speak, and enjoy the Welsh language.

Why is this important?

Heritage is integral to our culture, people's sense of identity and sense of belonging which in turn impacts on people's health, well-being and social inclusion. Heritage and culture also contributes to the economy, supporting paid employment, helping to attract inward investment and generating value through voluntary action – part of our wider place shaping agenda.

The Welsh language is a very important part of our heritage and culture. We support the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 ambition to achieve a million people able to enjoy speaking Welsh by 2050.

The importance of protecting our natural environment has, of course, never been so prominent. The Welsh Government officially declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and a Nature Emergency in 2021, recognising the significance of these two interrelated challenges and the urgency in tackling them. The natural environment is vital to our communities and provides us with all our basic needs. It gives us all a better quality of life and opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and Wales' natural beauty and heritage, giving people the choice to become more physically active. People come from far and wide to experience our environment and it is intrinsically linked with Welsh culture and language.

While the area has many strengths, it also experiences relatively high levels of poverty, deprivation, ill-health and disability. There is a strong focus on encouraging people of all ages and from all backgrounds to adopt active lifestyles to improve physical and emotional well-being. There is also a need to grow more quality jobs in the local leisure and tourism industry and to continue the long tradition of fostering local talent to achieve success as elite athletes and to perform on the world stage.

Key Strategies, Plans & Partnerships

The following partnerships, strategies and plans will support us in the delivery of Well-being Objective 3

Strategies & Plans	Key Partnerships
Destination Management Plan 2023/2028	Afan Forest Partnership Group
Culture Strategy 2023	NPT Destination Management Plan Leadership Group
Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023/2028	NPT Nature Partnership
Public Participation Strategy	NPT Public Services Board (PSB)
Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023/2028	Aberavon Seafront Management Group
Biodiversity Duty Plan 2023/2026	NPT Children and Young Peoples Partnership
Heritage Strategy 2024/2039	NPT Heritage Forum
Local Development Plan	NPT PSB - Climate and Nature Partnership
	Lost Peatlands Steering Group
	Neath Port Talbot Council / Swansea University Memorandum of Understanding

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4

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 4

Jobs and Skills

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Working with our partners we create the conditions for more secure, well paid and green work in the area and support local people into those jobs



In 20 years' time...

- There is a strong and diverse SME base in the county borough which benefits from well coordinated support, premises and finance;
- Transformation of major sites at Port Talbot, Baglan Energy Park, the Global Centre for Rail Excellence will be complete;
- Significant, new economic benefits have been delivered through the decarbonisation of industry, housing and transport; the area is an exemplar for renewable, clean energy;
- Town centres and communities are thriving;
- We have made the most of our natural environment, heritage and cultural assets and have a significant, sustainable visitor economy;
- There is much improved connectivity to work, learning and services;
- There is a skilled and resilient local workforce with rates of workless households or economically inactive people at or below the Welsh average; and
- There is a strong partnership between the council, the business community, local people and wider stakeholders.

Our work over the next three years to deliver our Well-being Objectives has been set out within this Corporate Plan, through our transformational programmes, and will be supported by delivery plans and also through plans which have been produced in collaboration with our partners.

In the next 3 years we aim to....

- Establish the Celtic Freeport across Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire, attracting investment and creating sustainable jobs across the green economy.
- Complete the significant programme of work via the UK Government's Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds, benefiting locals and visitors alike.
- Support those impacted by the decarbonisation of Tata Steel UK.
- Take forward major development and investment opportunities and activities linked to the council's Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy with a range of partners, and developed more green opportunities.
- Work to maximise Social Value Developed transport plans in partnership with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to support access to work, reduce emissions and serve the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
- Secure funding to establish 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, attracting new investment and delivering targeted programmes that enable local people to benefit from the employment created through new investment.
- Maximise Social Value and Community Benefits opportunities across the council's procurement activities and with key private sector partners/investors to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits for local residents, businesses and communities.
- Maintain a strong employability focus to support those needing help to find work, including those who are hardest to reach, this support will be accessible for all.
- Continue to strengthen partnership working to upskill those already in work or who wish to return to work; more local people will hold qualifications.

Why is this important?

- The world of work is changing rapidly, disrupted by the explosion in digital technology advances and now by the response to the climate emergency;
- Covid-19 which caused an economic shock across the economy affected businesses in very different ways;
- NPT has a strong, distinctive manufacturing base which includes a wide range of SME's where employment needs to be protected;
- Our industrial heritage includes the UK's largest steel producer who's plans to decarbonise and transition to net zero will have a significant impact on local people, businesses and communities.

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NPT has a number of strategic employment sites and that presents many opportunities to achieve economic growth including new green jobs as industry and society decarbonises and new industries such as Floating Offshore Wind, Hydrogen production and other renewable energy projects emerge.

- The area is well served by rail, road and the deep water harbour is a strategic asset in the delivery of key investments such as the Celtic Sea Project.
- The local economy is reliant to a large proportion on micro and SME's - 88% of local businesses employ less than ten employees;
- Start-up rates and business survival rates are on a par with the Welsh average;
- There are significant numbers of people commuting into the county borough – for the higher salary jobs; and a large number of people commuting out of the area for work.



“ The availability of interventions across all business sectors that help create a strong and resilient economy and promote inclusive growth. ”

“ Business funding to support innovation, growth, the safeguarding of existing jobs and the creation of new employment opportunities. ”

“ **What matters to local businesses** ”

Coordinated and easy to access business support services that are able to respond to the needs and opportunities of local companies. ”

“ Targeted interventions to help businesses overcome the specific challenges such as the recovery from the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the impact of the Tata Steel Transition plans. ”

“ Interventions that attract and support investment from both the UK and overseas to increase economic prosperity across NPT. ”

“ Funding to support property build and refurbishment to create an environment that supports economic growth, job creation and a “levelling up” approach across all our communities. ”

“ Support mechanisms that enable local companies to upskill and take advantage of the new business opportunities linked to Renewable Energy Technologies and emerging sectors such as Floating Offshore Wind; Hydrogen Production, Carbon Capture, etc. ”

“ The council to take an innovative approach to using Social Value policies and local procurement models to support business growth, the creation and safeguarding of employment and the delivery of training and supply chain programmes. ”

“ A joined up approach to developing an entrepreneurial culture to deliver support to new businesses start-ups. ”

Key Strategies, Plans & Partnerships

The following partnerships, strategies and plans will support us in the delivery of Well-being Objective 4

Strategies & Plans	Key Partnerships
Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023/2028	Port Talbot Waterfront – Enterprise Zone
Local Area Energy Plan 2024/2028	South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Corporate Joint Committee Corporate Plan 2023/2028	NPT Adult Learning Network
Local Economic Recovery Plan	NPT Public Services Board
Tata Transition Board - Local Economic Action Plan	Swansea University Partnership
Employability & Skills Strategy	NPT Local Economic Partnership
Local Development Plan	Swansea Bay City Deal – Joint Committee
South West Wales Regional Economic Development Plan	Celtic Sea Cluster
Key Partnerships	Swansea Bay City Deal - Digital Infrastructure Programme
Swansea Bay City Deal - Supporting Innovation & Low Carbon Growth Programme Board	Celtic Freeport
Swansea Bay City Deal - Homes as Power Stations Programme Board	Western Gateway Partnership Board
Tata Transition Board	South West Wales Regional Skills & Learning Partnership
	NPT UK Shared Prosperity Programme Board





Enabling Programme

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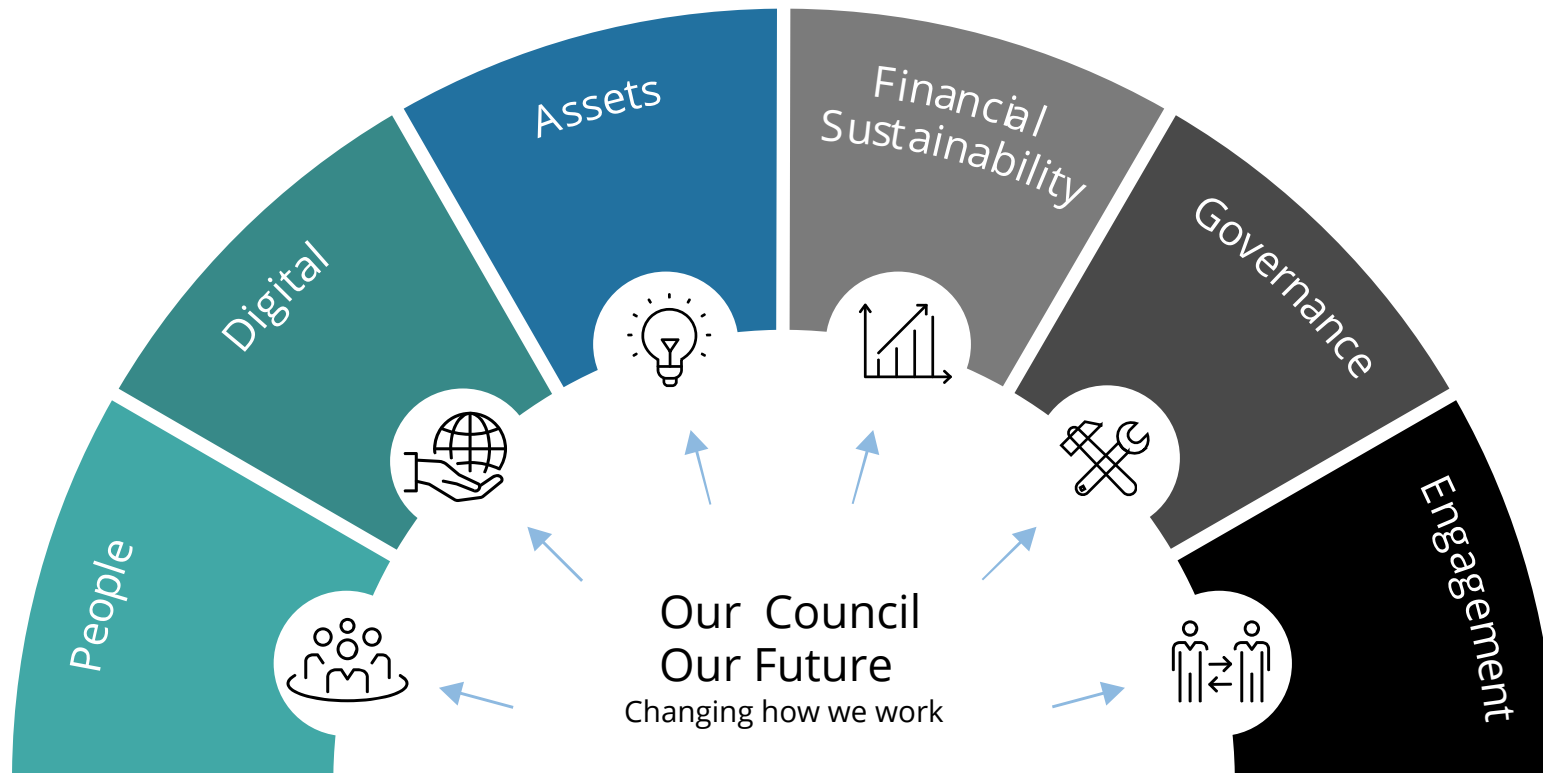
Our enabling capabilities allows the council to adapt and transform to meet the changing needs and expectations of our communities



Enabling Programme - Developing our Organisation

Our work through our 'Enabling Programme' ensures we have the capabilities to support the council to adapt and transform to meet the changing needs and expectations of our communities.

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Enabling Programme - Developing our Organisation

➤ People

As part of our Future of Work programme, we are transforming our people and organisational development capability so that we can excel at getting the best from our workforce. Through our Strategic Workforce Plan:

- We will demonstrate that people make the difference and invest in programmes that will enable us to recruit, retain and develop a workforce that will enable us to sustain a high performing, sustainable and trusted organisation.
- We will ensure that people are well led, supported, trusted and recognised for the contribution they make.
- We will ensure people are treated fairly and with respect and also encouraged to bring forward ideas about how we can improve what we do.
- We will develop a workforce that is representative of our communities and people will have equal opportunities to progress in our organisation.
- We will develop a culture where people are accountable for and recognised for what they do and how they do it; and
- We will continue to support fair work practices within our own employment arrangements but also use our procurement and community leadership arrangements to encourage others to adopt fair work practices.

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➤ Digital

We will adopt digital, data and technology to transform the services we deliver to residents, businesses, elected members, staff and visitors. Through our Digital, Data and Technology Strategy we will:

- Embrace new approaches and emerging technologies to provide our users with the best value, user centred products and services.
- Design and develop digital services based on need and ensure that the technology we use is robust, scalable, secure and efficient.
- Modernise how we manage and share our data, embedding research and data analysis into our decision-making processes, while creating the right capability, infrastructure, resilience, and collaborations.
- Ensure we have the right people with the right skills, driving a cultural shift around digital, data and technology across the whole organisation.

➤ Governance

We will adjust our risk appetite to encourage responsible innovation, and invest in building a strong corporate culture where people are responsible and accountable for what they do; where people challenge behaviours that are unacceptable and where people continuously learn and improve. We will systematically replace unnecessary red tape with more modern approaches. We will continue to foster a culture of mutual trust and respect between councillors and officers with each clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. We will provide more opportunities for citizens to take part in our democratic processes

➤ **Delivering value for money and ensuring financial sustainability**

There is no doubt that public services across the UK are under immense pressure and we see this also at NPT. In the short to medium term, we will build ownership across the whole of the council, with our community and wider partners of the challenges in front of us and seek new solutions to the financial challenges in front of us. Understanding ‘what matters’ to citizens and businesses will be a central focus as we rigorously and systematically test all areas of activity to ensure we are optimising income generation, investment and resource allocation activities. We will take a whole system view and continuously remove failure demand, reduce duplication and improve efficiency and effectiveness of service operations. We will prioritise economic growth and services that protect children and vulnerable people. We will continue to support an ‘invest to save’ culture to facilitate and incentivise innovation and service change. We will also further integrate our revenue and capital planning arrangements.

➤ **Engagement and community relations**

We have given greater priority to the way we engage and communicate with residents and other stakeholders over recent years. We aim to further develop our approaches over the next three years. Our focus will be to get greater insight and feedback on what matters to the people we serve, the organisations we work with and most crucially our employees and recognised trade unions. We will also provide clear information on how we are delivering against the priorities we have set so people can hold us to account. We will also enable more people to participate in formal decision making processes.

➤ **Assets**

The council has extensive assets that enable us to deliver our purpose. As part of our wider corporate governance arrangements, all assets are assessed as to their suitability and condition. These assessments guide our investment decisions and inform our risk management arrangements. We have a good track record of drawing down capital grants to sustain assets that support improvement in a range of service areas, however, there is insufficient funding available to maintain and repair legacy structure (most funding supports new or replacement assets) and this represents a growing organisational risk. More detail can be found in asset management plans that are in place for the major categories of assets, including buildings; highways; fleet and coal tips.

Key Partnerships, Strategies & Plans

The following partnerships and strategies plans will support us in the delivery of our Well-being

Strategies & Plans	Key Partnerships
Strategic Workforce Plan 2022/2027	NPT Public Services Board
Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) Strategy	Town & Community Council Liaison Forum
Procurement Strategy 2024/2028	Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum
Corporate Asset Management Plan	South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Annual Governance Statement	Various other professional networks
Annual Report / Self-Assessment	
Strategic Equalities Plan 2024/2028	
Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023/2028	
Medium Term Financial Plan	
Internal Audit Annual Plan	
Capital Programme	

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Our Design Principles

Our Council

The whole council will focus on doing ‘what matters’ for our residents, local businesses and investors so we can achieve our purpose and vision.

Leadership and Teamwork

Our leaders and managers have a tremendous impact on the council’s culture and through our leaders we want to provide a sense of vision, purpose and inspiration to our employees.

Creating Team NPT has enabled us to learn from one another, build organisational confidence, lead to innovation and improve outcomes for the people who live and work in Neath Port Talbot.

Trust and Empowerment

We trust and believe in our colleagues. We will make sure they are trained, supported and authorised to do the things that matter so we impact positively upon people’s lives.

Accountability

We will make it easier for people to access information and the meetings of the council. We will explain whether we have done what we said we would do.

Agile and Innovative

We will take a user centred approach to the way we design policies, services and places. We will encourage new ideas and creative thinking to challenge the status quo and improve what we do and how we do it. We will anticipate challenges before they arise and take proactive measures to face them, quickly reacting to new challenges and circumstances.

Fairness and Equality

We will recruit and develop a workforce that is representative of our communities. We will treat Welsh and English on an equal basis and we will work to reduce poverty. We will celebrate diversity, ensure our services and places are accessible to everyone and root out discrimination in all its forms.

Sustainable

We will play our part in responding to the climate and nature emergencies. We will increase the amount of council expenditure spent in the local and regional economy and encourage local people to buy local. We will balance the actions we take in the short term with the long term impact those actions may have on future generations.

Value for Money

We will use public money wisely and work hard to secure new sources of income and influence the investment decisions of our partners with the aim of achieving our purpose and vision.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 & Well-being Statement

Our purpose, vision and values show how the council contributes to the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Neath Port Talbot and to the seven national well-being goals contained in the well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We are able to clearly demonstrate through the key areas of work set out in this Corporate Plan that we are able to contribute to the well-being goals at a national level.

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Neath Port Talbot Council's Well-being Objectives / 2024-2027

WBO 1 - Best start in life

WBO 2 - All communities are thriving and sustainable

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

WBO 4 - Jobs and skills

7 National Well-being Goals	WBO 1	WBO 2	WBO 3	WBO 4
A Prosperous Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Resilient Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A more equal Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A healthier Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of cohesive communities	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language	✓	✓	✓	✓
A globally responsible Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 & Well-being Statement

The priorities for the next three years are clearly set out under each well-being objective and detail how we will focus our efforts in the short, medium and longer term.

The four well-being objectives were developed following extensive community and stakeholder engagement which drew out clear themes of what mattered to people now and in the longer term. The outcome of engagement exercises was triangulated with other key data sets, including performance data, long term trend data and the budget, policy context and megatrends. They are to be viewed as inter-connected and not seen as separate programmes of work. Given the financial outlook, we will need to keep delivery timescales under review, less funding will likely impact timescales.

The contribution to the seven well-being goals is made through the way in which we work, in accordance with the sustainable development principle contained within the Act, by considering the following 5 things that show we have applied the sustainable development principle:

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Looking ahead to the medium and longer term – the Corporate Plan sets out the focus of key work we will undertake over the next three years (medium term) and our ambition for twenty years time (longer term). We have taken into account the factors of an continually shifting landscape, from a local to global perspective, and how this could potentially impact the well-being of individuals and the well-being of Wales. When we set the 20 year ambition we challenged ourselves to think about what life would look like in generation's time – not just for those not yet born, but for all of those currently living who would be entering different phases of their lives



Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse. Maintaining people's well-being and preventing that from deteriorating is embedded across the Plan. However, the reducing level of resources available to local government in Wales will test our ability to maintain investment in essential prevention and early intervention services. We aim to protect this to the maximum extent possible.

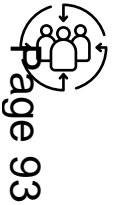


Ensuring our well-being objectives interact with each other - so it is important to consider them as a whole. Services integrate their work across the council where this enables us to maximise the impact we have on the well-being objectives, as well as integrating and collaborating with other partners where this makes sense.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 & Well-being Statement (continued)



Working in partnership with others – the Plan envisages a ‘one council’ approach to the delivery of our purpose, vision and four well-being objectives. Collaboration is also identified as a core value of the organisation. The Public Services Board adopted the well-being objectives to ensure a ‘one place’ approach for NPT and we are already seeing the benefit of aligning across the two key plans. There is tangible progress being made through the core resources of participating organisations towards the well-being objectives. This corporate plan identifies other key partnerships which support our purpose, vision and well-being objectives.



Involving local people – there has been significant emphasis on engagement as we have recovered from the pandemic and we are developing our practice in co-production, and participation, across a growing number of services and functions. This extends to our employment arrangements where we are developing a broader range of employee voice mechanisms, with a particular emphasis on inclusion, diversity and equality.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 & Well-being Statement

The **Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act (Wales) 2023** came into force on 1st April 2024.

The duty under the Act requires us to reach consensus or compromise with recognised trade unions when setting and delivering on our well-being objectives.

Social partnership is an approach that we have embedded into our organisation since the council's inception. We already have a practice of consulting and involving our recognised trade unions in our corporate planning arrangements and will now adjust those arrangements to ensure they fully respond to the new legal duties.

We will also see procurement processes being reformed in parallel with the Act with a focus on socially responsible public procurement.

As a local authority we will have a duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by carrying out public procurement in a socially responsible way. This duty will be developed through the new procurement strategy and the setting of socially responsible procurement objectives.

The **Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021** is a substantial piece of legislation covering electoral reform, public participation, governance, performance and collaborative working.

The council has completed two self-assessments in accordance with the Act. The self-assessment is a reporting framework to measure the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements (exercising our functions effectively; using our resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and our governance arrangements are effective) in order to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our communities. The self-assessment has informed the priorities set out within this Plan and working in partnership with other Welsh councils we will be externally benchmarking our progress. Our progress will also be measured when we undertake our panel performance assessment, an additional requirement set out in the Act.

We are evolving our corporate planning and performance management arrangements to both fully recover from the pandemic period and also to respond to new duties under this legislation.



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Neath Port Talbot Council 2024-2027
Corporate Transformation Programme
*“Working towards a more
prosperous, fairer and greener NPT”*



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

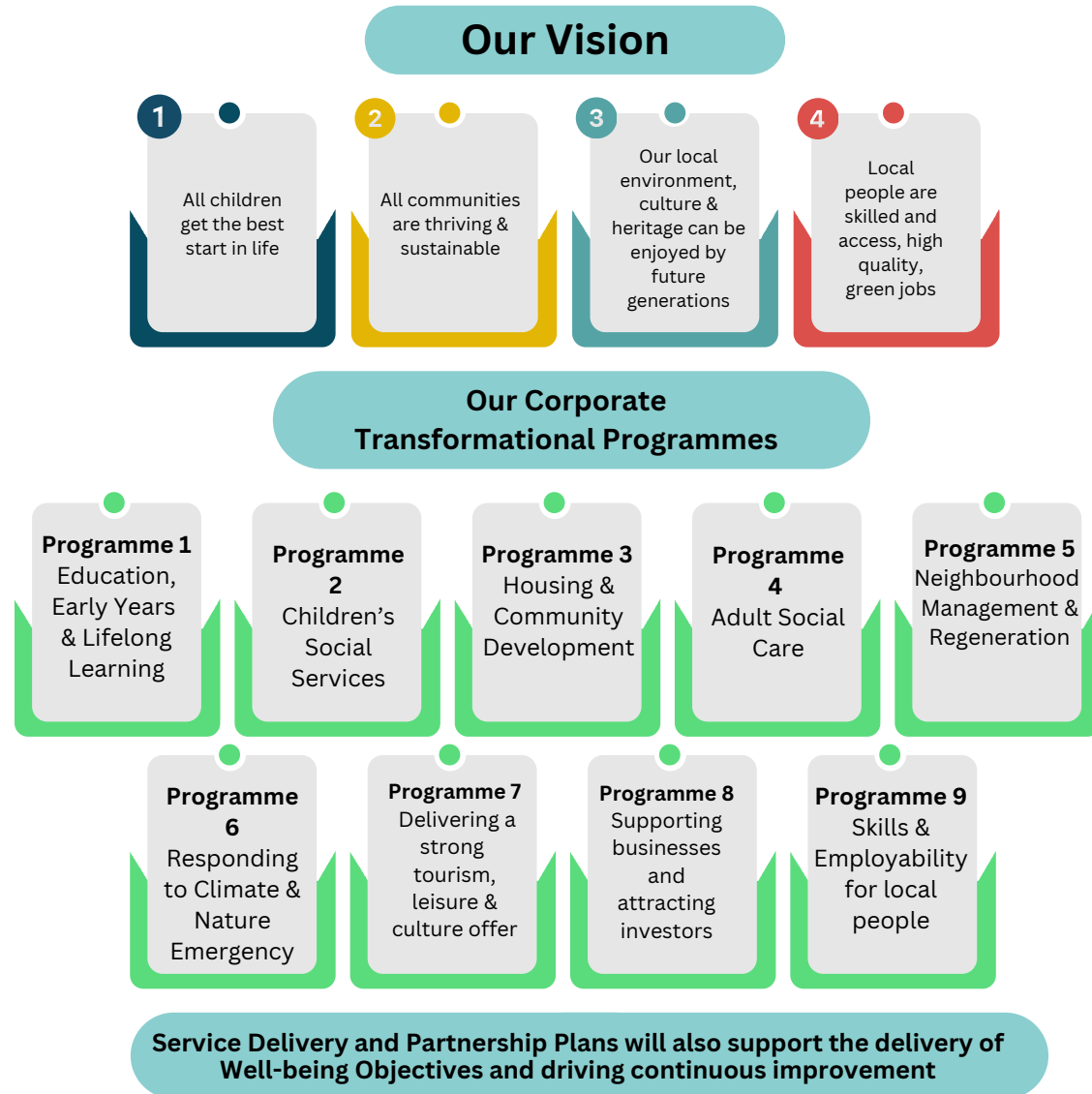
Corporate Transformational Programmes

This section of the Corporate Plan sets out the areas where we will be expecting to make a step change in our approach over the remainder of this political term, taking us up to 2027.

Many of the actions are essential to service and financial sustainability, whilst in a number of areas we will also be focusing on themes that have been derived from the extensive engagement undertaken over the last three years.

The wider continuous improvement effort will be managed through evolving business planning and performance management arrangements.

The diagram (opposite) depicts out how the transformational programmes will support the delivery of the four well-being objectives, along with our cross-cutting plans, service delivery and partnership plans.



Medium Term Financial Plan, Asset Plans, Strategic Equalities Plan

What we will do to provide children with the Best Start in Life

Programme 1 - Education, early years and lifelong learning

Political Lead:	Cabinet Member for Education & Early Years
Professional Lead:	Director for Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

Strategic Priorities	
More children are better prepared for school;	
We will have increased the number of 21st Century learning and teaching environments;	
Education reforms related to the curriculum and support for pupils with Additional Learning Needs are embedded and these changes will raise standards across our education system;	
Attendance across all school settings will have improved;	
The number of children and young people excluded from school will have reduced;	
More pupils are educated in Welsh medium schools and more learners, families and carers are able to engage and benefit from the medium of Welsh;	
Home to school transport is remodelled with an emphasis on helping young people to develop independent, safe travel skills; and	
All young people will progress to work, further education or training at the end of their statutory education.	

Programme 1 - Education, early years and lifelong learning

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Early Years & Education

Professional Lead: Director for Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

Performance Measures

£350k savings on home to school transport in 2024-25 and 2025-26 (£750k in total);

Deliver a new school for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhosafan by end 2026. We will also deliver the actions set out in our WESP;

Progress 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; progress proposals to develop a St Joseph's 7-18 Middle School;

Increase attendance level over the next 3 years;

Reduce exclusions levels;

Education Support Officers will monitor schools through regular evaluation processes and support visits, these visits are logged and reviewed; and

% year 11 leavers who are NEET.

Programme 1 - Education, early years and lifelong learning



Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

Well-being Objective 2 - Thriving & Sustainable Communities

Schools will be seen as important community hubs, enhancing the public realm and enabling the well-being of people within each community through improved community facilities and services. Access to good education ensures young people grow up to become responsible citizens, able to contribute positively to community life.

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

Improvements to the school estate will be designed to bring out the distinct characteristics of the culture and heritage of each place and will be built to environmentally sound standards. Curriculum reform will help children, young people and the wider community to develop a deeper sense of their local heritage and culture, including the Welsh language and culture.

Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy

All construction projects involve young people and other building users in the design and construction phases. The projects require community benefits to be achieved which include offering work experience and apprenticeship opportunities to local people. Local and regional companies are encouraged to bid for work so more of our public money is spent in our economy. Links between education and the economy will be strengthened with new and enhanced pathways available for young people to transition to employment at the point they exit their formal education



 **Programme 2 - Children’s Social Services**

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Children & Family Services

Professional Lead: Director of Social Services, Health & Housing

Strategic Priorities

All young people leaving care will have access to sustainable and appropriate accommodation;

There will be a wider range of foster carer placements available, which will include opportunities for paid carers to support children with the most complex needs;

Young people identified as having care and support needs when they reach adulthood will be supported to transition into Adult Services appropriately; and

All children and young people will be safeguarded effectively.

Performance Measures

Percentage of care leavers provided with appropriate accommodation;

Percentage of young adults who have transitioned appropriately;

Number of children in residential care;

Number of children who are in the care of Neath Port Talbot Council;

Number of children stepped down to professional foster carers from residential care;

Number of professional foster carers recruited;

Number of mainstream foster carers recruited;

Programme 2 - Children's Social Services

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Children & Family Services

Professional Lead: Director of Social Services, Health & Housing

Performance Measures

Number of children with a disability who have received residential respite;

Number of children deregistered from the Child Protection register; and

Number of children re-registered within 1 year.

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Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

Well-being Objective 2 - Thriving & Sustainable Communities

Housing developments and a wider range of care placements will enable more, care-experienced, young people to be integrated into their community enabling them to enjoy the same opportunities as other children and young people

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

Care plans are developed with recognition of the culture and heritage of the young people we support.

Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy

The development of services will encourage employment of local people and the procurement of goods and services within our local and regional economy to contribute to economic growth

What we will do to ensure our communities are thriving and sustainable

Programme 3 - Housing and Community Development

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety

Professional Lead: Director for Social Services, Health & Housing

Strategic Priorities

We will have strengthened our partnerships with housing developers and those arrangements are delivering more quality, affordable and low carbon housing;

More people are prevented from becoming homeless and fewer people are living in emergency and temporary accommodation; and

Empty properties have been brought back into use through the Empty Property Grant, helping to address the demand for housing.

Performance Measures

Number of new affordable housing properties funded in the year;

40% of people owed a statutory homelessness duty who are prevented from becoming homeless;

Number of people living in temporary accommodation;

Length of time people are staying in temporary accommodation;

Decrease in the number of families staying in Bed & Breakfasts;

Decrease in the number of people staying in Bed & Breakfasts; and

Percentage of empty properties brought back into use via Empty Property Grant.

Programme 3 - Housing and Community Development

Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

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

By developing more and appropriate accommodation for young people who have care and support needs, we will be able to better support those young people to live in our communities, enabling them to enjoy and contribute to community life whilst maximising their independence

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


Housing developments will be undertaken with the ambition of decarbonising our housing stock and will be sympathetic to local culture and heritage. Carried out in the right way, housing developments will also help to alleviate fuel poverty.

Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy

This programme will create a number of new jobs in the council's directly employed workforce. Goods and service procured to support this objective will also be undertaken in a manner which contributes to local and regional economic growth.

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Programme 4 - Adult Social Care

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Adult Social Service & Health

Professional Lead: Director for Social Services, Health & Housing

Strategic Priorities

There is a wider range of community services able to support the unique needs of people with disabilities and complex needs which draw on a range of community resources and which enables them to enjoy and contribute to community life;

The needs of adults of working age with accommodation, care and support needs are being met in more appropriate ways through a wider range of housing and housing support services.

More people feel that they are involved in decision making and are empowered to develop local solutions that address issues that affect them locally;

Partnership relationships between the council and the third sector are benefitting from a refreshed partnership agreement.

Performance Measures

Number of adults aged 65+ per 10,000 population supported in the community (plus separate figure for care homes);

% of people with reduced / no care package following reablement;

Number of working age adults with accommodation, care and support needs moved back into county;

Number of working age adults with accommodation, care and support needs living in their own homes with their own tenancies.

Number of unpaid carers assessments undertaken;

Number of people accessing respite and average days per year;

Number of volunteers and hours provided;

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Programme 4 - Adult Social Care

Political Lead:	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Service & Health
Professional Lead:	Director for Social Services, Health & Housing

Performance Measures

- Number of people supported by Prevention and Early Intervention services;
- Number of people who are digitally enabled to remain independent at home - (Digital Enablement);
- Number of people supported to remain at home following a non- critical emergency (Mobile Response Service);
- Number of new housing units developed to meet the needs of people with accommodation, care and support needs; and
- Completed and signed off our review of our partnership agreement with the third sector.

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Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

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

More people who need care and support when they reach adulthood will be able to access housing and support in the community which meets their unique needs

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

By enabling more people to be involved in decision making, local culture and heritage can be conserved, promoted and sustained. Carried out in the right way, housing developments will also help to alleviate fuel poverty.

Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy

This programme will create a number of new jobs in the council’s directly employed workforce. Goods and services procured to support this objective will also be undertaken in a manner which contributes to local and regional economic growth.

Programme 5 - Neighbourhood Management and Regeneration

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Streetscene / Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Economic Growth / Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Connectivity / Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance & Social Justice

Professional Lead: Director for Environment & Regeneration

Strategic Priorities

Our public realm will be cleaner and better cared for through improvements delivered through our Clean Up and Green Up programme;

A growing number of places will be seeing regeneration that has been developed with local people and stakeholders;

The regeneration ambitions for the county borough as a whole will be set out with supporting visions of how towns, valleys and villages will be regenerated. This will be clearly linked to funding and investment opportunities;

The county borough will be benefiting from better digital connectivity and fewer people will be digitally excluded; and

Additional funding will be secured to further develop, improve and maintain the active travel and rights of way network to create high quality, sustainable infrastructure which will be promoted to encourage people to walk and cycle regularly.

Performance Measures

Place Plans approved, adopted and in delivery as part of the Regeneration Programme;

Regeneration Strategy to be published by end 2024/25, with priorities reflected in 2025-2026 & 2025-2026 Corporate Plan;

Funding secured to further develop the Active Travel network;

Deliver £750,000 investment per year for Catch up, Clean up for the neighbourhood management budget;

Programme 5 - Neighbourhood Management and Regeneration

Political Lead:

Cabinet Member for Streetscene / Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Economic Growth / Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Connectivity / Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance & Social Justice

Professional Lead:

Director for Environment & Regeneration

Performance Measures

% of people satisfied with the local area as a place to live.

Regeneration Strategy to be published by end 2024/25, with priorities reflected in 2025-2026 & 2025-2026 Corporate Plan;

Increase the number of premises across Neath Port Talbot that are able to obtain high-speed fibre broadband

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Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

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

Creating the conditions where people have better access to their local community will support more young people into activities that will benefit their physical and emotional well-being

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

An improved physical environment will contribute to developing a stronger sense of civic pride which will help to sustain strong and cohesive communities

Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy

Volunteering makes a significant contribution to community life but also to the economy and the well-being of those who volunteer. The skills learned through volunteering also helps enhance the overall skills base of the area, helping to make the area attractive to investors and visitors.

What we will do to ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

Programme 6 - Responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth / Cabinet Member for Streetcare

Professional Lead: Director for Environment & Regeneration

Strategic Priorities

The council will have reduced its carbon footprint through the decarbonisation of its vehicle fleet, property assets and through behaviour change;

We will have published a strengthened policy and supporting strategies to respond to climate change;

We will have extended our work to help nature recover and the quality of and access to the natural environment will have improved, guided by our biodiversity action plan;

More people in our community and wider partners have developed a greater sense of stewardship, actively working to manage and improve their local environment; and

Greater numbers of households and businesses will be participating in our recycling and reuse programmes.

Performance Measures

New Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy (DARE) strategy published end 2024/2025;

Establish a Decarbonisation team within Neath Port Talbot Council by December 2024;

Establish our carbon baseline and set net zero 2030 implementation plan by March 2025;

Programme 6 - Responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency

Political Lead:	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth / Cabinet Member for Streetcare
Professional Lead:	Director for Environment & Regeneration

Performance Measures

Make progress towards the actions set out within the Biodiversity Duty Plan; and
 % of waste reused, recycled or composted.

Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

Well-being Objective 1 - All children and young people have the best start in life	Well-being Objective 2 - All communities are thriving and sustainable	Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy
Children and young people will grow up with a strong appreciation of their local environment and have the knowledge and skills to contribute to the climate and nature emergency response	The greater sense of stewardship will be a key feature that brings people together and helps sustain communities	Through community action, people will learn the importance of the climate and nature emergency response and develop the skills that will be sought after in the local economy

Programme 7- Delivering a strong tourism, leisure and culture offer

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism & Well-being

Professional Lead: Director for Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

Strategic Priorities

The Dramatic Heart of Wales campaign will have raised the profile of Neath Port Talbot as a destination for visitors and more people will be staying overnight to enjoy what our area has to offer;

We will have reset our strategic approach to leisure and recreation ensuring high quality leisure and recreational activities for our residents;

Our heritage, sport and culture offer will be making an increased contribution to economic growth and well-being across the county borough;

We will have formed a new strategic partnership involving community and wider stakeholders to deliver our culture and heritage objectives and this partnership will be securing additional investment to extend our work to conserve and promote the county borough's heritage and culture;

We will have established new visitor masterplans for Aberavon Seafront and the Afan Valley and will be working with partners to deliver those plans;

Pontardawe Arts Centre will be home to a new cinema complex and this will have strengthened the role of the Centre as an important community hub;

We will have developed a heritage corridor through the Vale of Neath and refurbished the Princess Royal Theatre and surrounding public realm in Port Talbot – these developments are being enjoyed by local people but also helping to grow our local economy, particularly the visitor economy; and

We will complete and publish a feasibility study to replace Pontardawe Swimming Pool.

 **Programme 7- Delivering a strong tourism, leisure and culture offer**

Political Lead:	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Tourism & Culture
Professional Lead:	Director for Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

Performance Measures

- Delivery of 70% of the culture strategy action plan targets;
- Number of overnight stays in Neath Port Talbot;
- Investment delivered in visitor infrastructure and product development;
- Indoor leisure business plan published by March 2025;
- New partnership compact to be developed by end 2024-2025;
- External grant funding attracted across the whole area (not just NPT council);
- Margam Castle NLHF bid successful;
- Aberavon Seafront masterplan to be adopted by end of 2024;
- Pontardawe Cinema to be open by April 2025;
- Budget targets met for Pontardawe Arts Centre;
- NPT Museum Feasibility complete by Dec 2024;

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Programme 7- Delivering a strong tourism, leisure and culture offer

Political Lead:	Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism & Well-being
Professional Lead:	Director for Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

Performance Measures	
	Achieve museum accreditation by 2027;
	Library strategy adopted by March 2025;
	Events strategy adopted by March 2025; and
	Pontardawe Swimming Pool feasibility study complete.

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Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

Well-being Objective 1 - All children and young people have the best start in life	Well-being Objective 2 - All communities are thriving and sustainable	Well-being Objective 4 - Local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy
Participation in sport and recreation will increase in all groups contributing to improved physical and mental well-being. The delivery of curriculum reform will enable all children and young people with a strong sense of belonging and civic pride for their local area.	The enhanced approach to leisure and recreation will enable more people across our communities to be active, contributing to the development of strong and cohesive communities.	Our culture, leisure and heritage strategies will attract greater investment which will benefit the local economy. By embedding our culture and heritage across our functions, the things that make Neath Port Talbot unique will be celebrated more widely and contribute to the growth of the local economy.

How we will work with our partners we create the conditions for more secure, well paid and green work in the area and support local people into those jobs

Programme 8 - Supporting business and attracting investors

Political Lead:	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Economic Growth
Professional Lead:	Director for Environment & Regeneration

Strategic Priorities

Working with our partners we will have fully established the Celtic Freeport, and continued the delivery of Swansea Bay City Deal projects, attracting new investment to the area, including the creation of sustainable jobs in floating off-shore wind, biofuels, high value manufacturing and the wider green economy;

Where funding from Welsh Government allows we will have delivered a range of transport schemes that enable better integration across different modes of transport and we will have ensured that the transport needs of the county borough are fully reflected in the regional transport plan prepared by the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales;

We will have delivered a range of positive outcomes across the county borough from the Shared Prosperity Programme, contributing to economic growth, the improvement of the public realm and the reduction of inequalities;

We will have helped to mitigate the impact of decarbonisation at Tata Steel UK Ltd through action to help people into alternative employment and to help local businesses to diversify. We will have secured governmental support to create replacement jobs in the local economy;

We will be in the final phases of delivering our City Deal programmes and these will have created new jobs and infrastructure that are enabling the further green and sustainable growth of our local economy;

We will have further strengthened our links with academia and the wider innovation sector. We are seeking more investment in research and development flowing from these activities and this in turn is creating more investor interest;

Programme 8 - Supporting business and attracting investors

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Economic Growth

Professional Lead: Director for Environment & Regeneration

Strategic Priorities

Town centres are demonstrating resilience and a new town centre offer is emerging which is distinctive to each place;

We have secured funding to strengthen the delivery of activities that support businesses operating within the foundational economy and, in particular those within our valley communities including the embedding of circular economy principles; and

We will have started to adopt the replacement Local Development Plan and will move forward on the implementation of the Plan.

Performance Measures

Progress towards delivering the outputs and outcomes agreed in the Celtic Freeport Full Business Case;

Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 2 - Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Visitor Attractor project (Gnoll Estate Country Park Visitor Infrastructure and Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan Visitor Infrastructure) to be delivered by March 2026;

Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 3 Port Talbot Regeneration project (Princess Royal Theatre, Civic Square and Riverside Walk) to be delivered by March 2026;

To deliver the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan in Neath Port Talbot by March 2025.

Programme 8 - Supporting business and attracting investors

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Economic Growth

Professional Lead: Director for Environment & Regeneration

Performance Measures

We will have helped to deliver a range of interventions that mitigate the impact of change on local people and businesses as a result of Tata transition:

- Number of businesses supported to diversify operations;
- Number of businesses supported to achieve growth;
- Number of businesses supported to deliver redundancy measures; restructuring or closure of operations;
- Number of individuals supported to find alternative employment;
- Number of apprentices supported to find new placements; and
- Number of people reskilled.

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Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

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

Improved vocational pathways are creating wider choice for children and young people and this is enabling more young people to access well paid, sustainable work in Neath Port Talbot.

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

Local businesses are thriving and more businesses are being created in the county borough, benefiting from the new economic activity that is taking place. Local people have a wider choice of better paid, secure employment and this is starting to reflect in improved services and infrastructure

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

More industries are helped to decarbonise and there is a growth in new green industries which are having positive impacts on the local environment and nature. More young people are choosing to bring their own families up within the county borough and are helping to conserve our environment, heritage and culture. There is a strong sense of civic pride in what the county borough is achieving.

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 **Programme 9 - Skills and Employability for local people**

Political Lead: Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Climate Change

Professional Lead: Director for Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

Strategic Priorities

We will have published a skills and employability strategy that is fully aligned with our economic and regeneration aspirations and be working with schools and wider partners to develop a wider range of pathways into work for all residents;

More people and more employers are participating in apprenticeship programmes; and

The qualification and skill levels achieved by NPT residents are improved and better aligned with economic growth in the local area.

Performance Measures

Progress towards meeting year 1 and 2 actions with the approved Employability and Skills Strategy published in 2024/2025;

Number of people on various apprenticeship programmes;

Promote the full range of pathways available for skills and employment progression; and

Improvement in the qualification levels of the resident population.

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Programme 9 - Skills and Employability for local people



Contribution to additional Well-being Objectives

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

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LET'S KEEP TALKING

LetsTalk@npt.gov.uk
[#LetsTalkNPT](https://twitter.com/LetsTalkNPT)

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Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

This Integrated Impact Assessment considers the duties and requirements of the following legislation in order to inform and ensure effective decision making and compliance:

- Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Version Control

Version	Author	Job title	Date
Version 1	Louise McAndrew	Corporate Strategy Planning & Governance Officer	25.06.2024

1. Details of the initiative

	Title of the Initiative: Corporate Plan 2024/2027
1a	Service Area: Corporate Policy
1b	Directorate: Strategy & Corporate Services
1c	Summary of the initiative: The Corporate Plan provides the framework for the council's services and functions whilst discharging duties set out in various legislation, but in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council exists to serve and represent the interests of its citizens and communities. We strive to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of all of our people. We want our county borough to be a place where everyone has an equal chance to get on in life – a place where people want to live, work and bring up their family. We want our beautiful natural environment, rich cultural and industrial heritage to be appreciated and protected for many future generations to enjoy. We also want to pursue new and existing opportunities for economic growth so we can sustain our diverse communities for many years to come.

1d	<p>Is this a ‘strategic decision’? Yes, the draft Corporate Plan sets out our medium and long-term approach to service delivery.</p>																				
1e	<p>Who will be directly affected by this initiative? Everyone who lives, works and/or visits Neath Port Talbot.</p>																				
1f	<p>When and how were people consulted? The Corporate Plan for 2022/2027: Recover, Reset Renew focused heavily on recovering from the Covid pandemic and resetting priorities, alongside the introduction of a new administration. A decision was taken due to a number of factors to revisit the Plan and streamline the focus of priorities in light of a number of both internal and external factors. During 2023 we launched the 2nd of our ‘Let’s Talk’ engagement campaign Let’s Keep Talking. Whilst this consultation was not to ask for views on the Corporate Plan by engaging with residents, businesses and partners of all backgrounds and of all ages on what matters to them now and in the future, we were able to further shape our strategic priorities with the underpinning feedback. Our ‘Let’s Keep Talking’ engagement campaign ran from 29 June to 8 October 2023. During that time we asked people what matters to them using focus groups, meetings, events and questionnaires. We received 1,657 completed questionnaires, 30 people took part in focus groups and we spoke to 262 people in group discussions at events.</p>																				
1g	<p>What were the outcomes of the consultation?</p> <p>Let’s Keep Talking campaign The ten responses most frequently mentioned were:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="293 930 1980 1386"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="293 930 1137 983">What matters to you now?</th> <th data-bbox="1137 930 1980 983">What matters to you in the future?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 983 1137 1029">1. Friends and family (including pets)</td> <td data-bbox="1137 983 1980 1029">1. Jobs/job opportunities</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1029 1137 1075">2. Leisure/hobbies recreational facilities</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1029 1980 1075">2. Friends, family and pets</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1075 1137 1121">3. Education/libraries/schools</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1075 1980 1121">3. Education/libraries/schools</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1121 1137 1168">4. Health & well-being</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1121 1980 1168">4. Leisure activities/recreational facilities</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1168 1137 1214">5. Keeping local area clean</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1168 1980 1214">5. Standard of living/quality of life</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1214 1137 1260">6. Cost of living/inflation</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1214 1980 1260">6. Health & well-being</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1260 1137 1307">7. Environmental issues</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1260 1980 1307">7. Environmental issues</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1307 1137 1353">8. A good local economy/local area/town centre</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1307 1980 1353">8. Cost of living/inflation</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="293 1353 1137 1386">9. Public transport</td> <td data-bbox="1137 1353 1980 1386">9. A good local economy/local area/town centre</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	What matters to you now?	What matters to you in the future?	1. Friends and family (including pets)	1. Jobs/job opportunities	2. Leisure/hobbies recreational facilities	2. Friends, family and pets	3. Education/libraries/schools	3. Education/libraries/schools	4. Health & well-being	4. Leisure activities/recreational facilities	5. Keeping local area clean	5. Standard of living/quality of life	6. Cost of living/inflation	6. Health & well-being	7. Environmental issues	7. Environmental issues	8. A good local economy/local area/town centre	8. Cost of living/inflation	9. Public transport	9. A good local economy/local area/town centre
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10. Standard of living/quality of life

10. Keeping local area clean/public transport

Using this feedback, along with other pieces of evidence we have developed 9 transformational programmes which link to our wellbeing objectives, providing a set of strategic priorities and measures which represent the next major steps towards our long-term vision. Through the Corporate Plan, its transformation programmes, and supporting plans and strategies we will make a significant contribution to improving outcomes against a background of a challenging financial context.

2. Evidence

What evidence was used in assessing the initiative?

The Corporate plan sets out our thinking on how we will approach our priorities medium and longer term as a result of increasing costs, declining settlement figures from Welsh Government and a plethora of regeneration and investment opportunities. It has been informed by a lot of people – residents, employees, elected members, community organisations, businesses and other partners through our Let’s Keep Talking engagement activities between June and October 2023.

We have also used a considerable amount of evidence to understand how things have changed as a result of the pandemic legacy, the overwhelming demand for services and wider influences, like climate change, cost of living, global tensions and government policy. We have synthesised this information to assess what this might mean for our future priorities. Lessons learnt from the pandemic mean our plan still needs to be flexible so we can adapt as we move forward.

A key feature of this plan is the emphasis on working together to continue to build an equal county borough and make Neath Port Talbot a place we are all proud of. We have learned through the pandemic that when we come together we can achieve remarkable things. This plan is the basis on which we can further develop that spirit of collaboration to create a place where everyone can live a good life.

3. Equalities

a) How does the initiative impact on people who share a **protected characteristic**?

Protected Characteristic	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
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Age	+			The Corporate Plan specifically sets out how the council intends to improve the well-being of children and their families in the 'Best Start in Life' objective. The impacts on older age groups are reflected within our transformation programmes addressing the needs and requirements of our aging population; resulting in a more positive impact for those older members of our communities in accessing facilities and leading a full life such as personal support, support for paid and unpaid carers, and personal safety.
Disability	+			Many studies since the pandemic have identified the disproportionate impact on disabled people. Thus, the Corporate Plan has identified priorities that will potentially have a positive impact on those with a disability: for example, improved range of care and support networks, greater opportunities for participation and improvements to public rights of way.
Gender reassignment			+/-	Where it is felt that recognition and support for people sharing this characteristic and that discrimination is currently experienced we recognise that further consultation with individuals who share this protected characteristic during future engagement consultations.
Marriage & civil partnership			+/-	There was no feedback in the formal consultation that addressed the impact the plan might have on marriage or civil partnerships.
Pregnancy and maternity	+			The Corporate Plan features specific changes planned to support children and the parents/carers of children in their early years. Including, making sure it is clear how early help and support can be accessed by those children and families who need it, refocussing our partnerships so that all services for children and families are easy to identify and use, they meet people's needs and our communities are child friendly. Responses suggest the plan, particularly the Best Start in Life well-being objective, will have a positive impact on those who are pregnant and/or expecting in terms of support and future service provision.
Race	+			The Corporate Plan has identified actions that will potentially have a positive impact on people from this group and all our communities; for example, the new curriculum, cynefin, and cultural and heritage awareness. Equalities is at the heart of everything

				we do and that is demonstrated through all elements of the Corporate Plan and the supporting Strategic Equalities Plan.
Religion or belief			+/-	There was no feedback in the formal consultation that addressed the impact the plan might have on religion or belief.
Sex			+/-	Very limited responses with regard to the impact on sex other than a suggestion around more male oriented activities.
Sexual orientation			+/-	There was no feedback in the formal consultation that addressed the impact the plan might have on sexual orientation.

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Consultation is required to identify actual impact, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics of older adults, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, disability, Marriage & Civil Partnership and gender reassignment, and to explore potential mitigating actions for consideration.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, one of the underpinning corporate documents, has been reviewed to ensure the equality objectives and actions remain fit for purpose. Where possible/appropriate, areas identified in the feedback that require strengthening will be/have been addressed in the final version of the Corporate Plan.

b) How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Public Sector Equality Duty**?

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	+			Through the development of the draft Corporate Plan 2022-2027 we also took the opportunity to reset and renew the purpose, vision and values of the organisation, by considering:

To advance equality of opportunity between different groups	+			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what matters to local people, businesses and our staff • the impact that we know Covid-19 has had on our communities, our local economy and wider stakeholders; • the lessons we have learned from our pandemic response and from elsewhere; and • other anticipated changes in our external environment. <p>Recognition of these things has helped us build on this for the reset Corporate Plan 2024/2027, we will continue to work to reduce inequalities across a range of different groups, not just in relation to protected characteristics but other characteristics such as poverty.</p> <p>There are a number of proposed actions to strengthen community cohesion and in particular the way the council works with communities and with other agencies in empowering and developing community capacity.</p>
To foster good relations between different groups	+			

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Where appropriate the Plan will be amended to reflect any issues raised – either by clarifying the intent, refocusing actions or developing new ones. However, where this is not possible, issues will be considered in the reviews of corporate plans and service specific plans as appropriate.

4. Socio Economic Duty

What is the impact	Why will it have this impact?
Positive	Structural inequalities were evident across the population prior to, and have been accentuated as a result of, the pandemic and more recently by the hike in energy prices and the cost of living crisis. Evidence demonstrates that the poorest areas have experienced the greatest impact both in terms of health and financial impacts. Those who were already facing the

greatest disadvantage continue to be impacted and consequently inequalities across Neath Port Talbot have widened. Addressing these inequalities is a cross cutting theme across our strategic priorities we propose to take in the medium and longer term.

Our wellbeing objectives aim to help address these inequalities in the medium and longer term. The alleviation of immediate hardship through hardship support schemes, increasing help and support to those experiencing food poverty, protecting and safeguarding young people supporting young people and families, work in areas with the greatest economic inactivity etc.; while looking towards longer term solutions to provide opportunities, support and pathways into education, training and employment from an early age, helping build confidence and pride both as individuals and as communities as well as opportunities to greater participation in society, sport, environment, heritage and culture to help improve wellbeing and health.

The aim of the plan is to have a positive effect by improving people's opportunities and experiences, reducing and wherever possible eliminating inequalities faced by many, thereby improving people's health and wellbeing, their life chances and the communities in which they live and work.

We are mindful of the role intersectionality plays in our society and full consideration will be given to this as we progress the plan.

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Where appropriate the Plan will be amended to reflect any issues raised – either by clarifying the intent, refocusing actions or developing new ones. However, where this is not possible, issues will be considered in the reviews of corporate plans and service specific plans as appropriate to lessen inequalities.

5. Community Cohesion/Social Exclusion/Poverty

	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
Community Cohesion	+			<p>There are a number of proposed actions through the Corporate Plan and supporting delivery plans to strengthen community cohesion and in particular the way the council works with communities and with other agencies in empowering and developing community capacity. Thriving sustainable communities which are welcoming, accepting and supportive are key. A range of initiatives to help realise this such as neighbourhood forums, Local Area Coordinators, funding and support for community groups and events, improvements to the support and facilities for young people and vulnerable people have been identified, but most importantly is working with communities to realise what is important to them.</p> <p>The wellbeing objectives, individually and combined, have already had a positive impact for individuals and communities alike; increasing social and cultural interaction, participation and economic improvement /stability. These opportunities will continue to be strengthened as a result of the reset Corporate Plan.</p>
Social Exclusion	+			
Poverty	+			

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Where appropriate the Plan will be amended to reflect any issues raised – either by clarifying the intent, refocusing actions or developing new ones. However, where this is not possible these will be considered in the reviews of corporate plans and service specific plans as appropriate.

6. Welsh

	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this effect?
<p>What effect does the initiative have on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – people’s opportunities to use the Welsh language 	+			<p>There are specific actions set out in the corporate plan to promote Welsh Language and culture. In particular, the measures the council proposes to take to increase the education and learning provision to grow the number of Welsh speakers in the area.</p> <p>Although not specifically stated there were suggested approaches to improve the positive aspects of the plan: greater emphasis on community involvement/ activities; better use of digital opportunities to learn and participate in activities; greater focus on Welsh in schools (all Welsh medium schools perhaps) and education support/opportunities; more Welsh medium school places, particularly for ALN pupils; more mainstream cultural opportunities; ensure the language is more visible in everyday life - for example signage in shops, etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – treating the Welsh and English languages equally 	+			<p>Efforts are made to ensure that the five-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy continues to inform and is integrated with the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy action plan is also developed in collaboration by a cross party task and finish group with the assistance of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council staff and a representative of Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot (Menter Iaith CNPT) (Neath Port Talbot Language Initiative).</p>

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Since the adoption of the Corporate Plan 2022/2027 we have reviewed of our compliance with, and promotion of, the Welsh language which will continue over the coming year, to help ensure we can provide a more effective and responsive service going forward. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022/2032 action plan has been embedded into our education settings with the action plan being delivered and monitored annually to ensure there are increased opportunities for more of our children and young people to be educated through the medium of Welsh and for pupils to become more proficient in speaking and enjoying Welsh.

The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023/2028 also takes into the account of, and builds on, the progress made in the initial strategy, the commitments of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (WESP) as well as the work of our partners in promoting the Welsh language locally. As a requirement of the promotion standards we must set a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in our area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the 5 year strategy.

7. Biodiversity

How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Biodiversity Duty**?

Biodiversity Duty	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity	+			The Corporate Recovery Plan includes a wellbeing objective that specifically targets the conservation and improvement of our natural environment, including biodiversity. It also sets a vision that includes valuing and cherishing our environment and reversing the decline in wildlife. The importance of our natural environment and biodiversity for both its intrinsic value and its value to local people is clearly recognised. Measures to encourage and deliver positive action either through supporting others or through direct action are set out, these will connect people to nature alongside conserving and enhancing our biodiversity resource and embedding biodiversity benefits into the way the council works. The Plan will steer positive action for the medium and long term, ensuring the council will delivery our Biodiversity Duty as well as other commitments under the Edinburgh Declaration and contribute towards addressing the Climate and Nature Emergencies.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.	+			The Corporate Recovery Plan includes a wellbeing objective, transformation programme and overall vision that aims to restore natural processes to mitigate and develop greater resilience to climate change. The importance of our natural environment (which includes ecosystems), its connectivity and the services that it provides us is clearly recognised. Measures to encourage and deliver positive action either through supporting others or through direct action to improve our natural environment are set out, these will ensure that the services that people gain from

				the natural environment will be improved and natural solutions to issues will be delivered through green infrastructure approaches. The plan will steer positive action and promote ecosystem resilience, ensuring the council will delivery our Biodiversity Duty as well as other commitments under the Edinburgh Declaration and contribute towards addressing the Climate and Nature Emergencies.
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What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?
The corporate plan will steer positive action for the medium and long term, delivering the conservation and improvement of our biodiversity resources and ecosystem resilience. In turn this will deliver benefits for local communities through the provision of services, such as improvements to wellbeing, local air quality and flooding. The plan will ensure the council delivers our Biodiversity Duty as well as other commitments under the Edinburgh Declaration and contribute towards addressing the Climate and Nature Emergencies. The plan will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the measures are up to date, relevant and based on current evidence, this will ensure that priorities for action will be able to deliver the most positive outcomes for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

8. Well-being of Future Generations

How have the five ways of working been applied in the development of the initiative?

Ways of Working	Details
i. Long term – looking at least 10 years (and up to 25 years) ahead	The Corporate Plan is reviewed and published every year to outline the council’s priorities and how we are changing the way we do things to ensure we continue to improve the services we deliver to support our communities. Although this seems like short-term planning a number of the priorities in the plan embrace current challenges whilst considering the impact these efforts will have on the future. Sustainability plays a key role in the plan, particularly in terms of the natural environment. Current work to reduce the council’s carbon footprint, if successful, will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the future environment of the area and the well-being of its residents.

<p>ii. Prevention – preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>We have prioritised providing additional financial support to the third sector to develop new preventative services in communities with a particular focus on people who are lonely and isolated. As part of this we have also expanded the number of Local Area Co-ordinators and integrated their work with NPT Safe and Well.</p> <p>The priorities described for the next 12 months will be reflected in the revenue and capital budgets set for 2024/2025. To set longer term priorities and to facilitate early intervention and preventative actions to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of people living in Neath Port Talbot work will be undertaken early in 2024/2025 to review the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as a result of financial pressures and service demand.</p>
<p>iii. Collaboration – working with other services internal or external</p>	<p>The well-being objectives show the council’s contribution to the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Neath Port Talbot but the council would be unable to make these improvements without collaboration.</p> <p>The council is a statutory partner of a number of multi-agency partnerships locally, regionally and across Wales including: the Public Services Board, Corporate Joint Committee, Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum, Regional Partnership Board and West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board.</p>
<p>iv. Involvement – involving people, ensuring they reflect the diversity of the population</p>	<p>The Plan has been informed by the Let’s Keep Talking campaign and other factors in light of the next connect we are working within.</p> <p>We have built on the initial consultation which took place over summer 2021 where we aimed to find out what mattered to local people in the context of recovery from Covid-19. Views were sought via a range of methods with a number of consistent themes in the detailed feedback under each wellbeing objective and the Plan has been reset to reflect that feedback.</p> <p>Additionally, we will continue to develop our arrangements to ensure we comply with the requirements contained in Chapter 2 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 by developing our Public Participation Strategy 2023/2027.</p>

<p>v. Integration – making connections to maximise contribution to:</p>	<p>The four well-being objectives were developed to show the council's contribution to the seven national, well-being goals. The plan takes account of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government, the associated Co-operation Agreement and other developments we anticipate will shape our future priorities such as climate change, the cost of living crisis and likely financial settlements. It also complements and can be integrated into local partnership plans and other regional or wider area work, including the revision of the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board's Wellbeing Plan.</p>
<p>Council's well-being objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children get the best start in life • All communities are thriving and sustainable • Our local environment, heritage and culture can be enjoyed by future generations • Jobs and skills - local people are skilled and can access high quality, green jobs
<p>Other public bodies objectives</p>	<p>Public Services Board priorities</p> <p>The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in sections 37- 38 sets out the duty of Public Services Boards (PSB) to prepare and publish an assessment of the state of the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area.</p> <p>PSB members work together to deliver the objectives set out in the PSB Well-being Plan and monitor progress on delivery of the work. In May 2023 the PSB published its revised Well-being Plan 2023/2028 setting out the priorities the PSB will focus on to improve the well-being of Neath Port Talbot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure all children get the best start in life • To ensure all our communities are thriving and sustainable • To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations • To ensure there are more secure, green and well paid jobs and that skills across the area are improved

9. Monitoring Arrangements

Provide information on the monitoring arrangements to:

Monitor the impact of the initiative on Equalities, Community Cohesion, the Welsh Measure, Biodiversity Duty and the Wellbeing Objectives.

Monitoring at both strategic and service level will be considered in line with the council's governance arrangements and any modification of services will be considered accordingly. An Annual Report will be produced each year which will consider whether the well-being objectives remain appropriate. Where necessary, the well-being objectives and improvement priorities will be revised.

The annual report will be published on the council's web pages and will also be widely communicated throughout the county borough using a range of different media and by the Scrutiny Committee.

The detailed priorities, set out in the Plan, will be monitored through transformation programme highlight reports and delivery plan reporting arrangements and through individual appraisal arrangements. The impact of the wellbeing objectives on people who share protected characteristics will be monitored during the life of the plan.

Monitoring of the anticipated impacts as identified in the IIA will be monitored and reported as part of the agreed reporting arrangements. Actions identified in the IIA will be monitored in the same way.

10. Assessment Conclusions

Please provide details of the conclusions reached in relation to each element of the assessment:

	Conclusion
Equalities	There is an overall neutral impact with the well-being objectives contributing to our work to address inequality and tackle the causes of inequality experienced by particular groups within our society. Engagement with different groups and communities in the development of the objectives has fostered a greater understanding of and between groups and fostered a shared sense of purpose.
Socio Economic Disadvantage	The Corporate Plan's well-being objectives and transformation programme will have a positive effect on addressing inequalities in the short medium and longer term. The Plan will contribute to improving people's opportunities and experiences, reducing and wherever possible eliminating inequalities

	faced by many, thereby improving people's health and wellbeing, their life chances and the communities in which they live and work.
Community Cohesion/ Social Exclusion/Poverty	The well-being objectives will have a positive effect on the many facets that contribute to people's experiences of poverty and social exclusion and will potentially result in stronger communities, greater community involvement and participation thereby ensuring their voices are heard.
Welsh	Our continued work on improving the availability and quality of our services through Welsh there is potentially a positive impact in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language. This was reflected particularly strongly in relation to the opportunities to learn Welsh for children and young people, the greater use of technology to promote and increase participation, emphasis on culture and heritage as well as the general benefits of using the language.
Biodiversity	There will be a positive effect on biodiversity and eco-system resilience. The inclusion of a wellbeing objective that specifically targets the conservation and improvement of our natural environment, including biodiversity demonstrates the positive intentions around this.
Well-being of Future Generations	There will be a positive impact as the well-being objectives have been developed in line with the five ways of working.

Overall Conclusion

Please indicate the conclusion reached:

- **Continue** - as planned as no problems and all opportunities have been maximised x
- **Make adjustments** - as potential problems/missed opportunities/negative impacts have been identified along with mitigating actions
- **Justification** - for continuing with the initiative even though there is a potential for negative impacts or missed opportunities
- **STOP** - redraft the initiative as actual or potential unlawful discrimination has been identified

Please provide details of the overall conclusion reached in relation to the initiative

There has been extensive impact on our communities, our local economy and the way we work as a council as a result of the pandemic, global tensions, cost of living and energy price rises. This has provided us with an opportunity to again reset our Corporate Plan. The well-being objectives, developed in line with the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales Act 2021) five ways of working, are still relevant and the introduction of the 9 transformation programmes will allow us to adequately address the current situation.

As a result of our continued work on improving the availability and quality of our services through Welsh there is potentially a positive impact in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language.

There will be a positive effect on biodiversity and eco-system resilience. The inclusion of a wellbeing objective and transformation programme that specifically targets climate, conservation and improvement of our natural environment, including biodiversity demonstrates our positive intentions around this.

11. Actions

What actions are required in relation to obtaining further data/information, to reduce or remove negative impacts or improve positive impacts?

Action	Who will be responsible for seeing it is done?	When will it be done by?	How will we know we have achieved our objective?
A revised performance management framework will be developed to measure the success of the delivery of the plan. The range of actions and performance measures, taken together, will provide a picture of the difference / impact the work set out in this plan is making and how it is enabling people to live good lives.	A multi-directorate approach will be adopted.	2024/2025	A new, comprehensive performance management framework is developed and implemented across services to ensure ongoing monitoring of the impact of the plan.

12. Sign off

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Completed by	Louise McAndrew	Corporate Strategic Planning & Governance Officer		
Signed off by	Noelwyn Daniel	Director of Strategy & Corporate Services		

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

COUNCIL

26th July 2024

Report of the Democratic Services Chairperson

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Annual Report of the Democratic Services Committee 2023/24.

Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the work undertaken by the Democratic Services Committee for the civic year 2023/24.

Background

To provide an overview of the work of the Committee for 2023/24.

Financial Impact

No impact.

Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this is an administrative report.

Workforce Impacts

No impact.

Risk Management

No impact.

Legal Powers

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (S.7)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents>

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There are no specific impacts for valley communities arising.

Consultation

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

Recommendation

That Council note and endorse the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2023/24 attached at Appendix 1.

Reason for decision

To note and endorse the Annual Report 2023/24 of the Democratic Services Committee.

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Officer Contacts

Cllr S. Rahaman - Chair of the Democratic Services Committee.

e-mail: cllr.s.rahaman@npt.gov.uk

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present this Annual Report for the Democratic Services Committee covering the period from June 2023 to May 2024.

Recent by-elections have welcomed three newly elected members to the Council and the role of this Democratic Services Committee is important in ensuring that new members are fully supported to undertake their role.

The publication of the report is an attempt to provide an element of good practice for members in addition to the production of an appropriate yardstick with which to approach the generation of future reports.

The Democratic Services Committee's forward work programme is agreed by members on a rolling basis. Whilst the Democratic Services Committee takes decisions and provides direction for the Council on several key matters relating to member support and associated issues, members remain mindful that it is the cabinet and ultimately Council that has overall responsibility for all strategic and far reaching decision making on behalf of Neath Port Talbot Council.

However, members are also mindful that they are charged with the duty of carrying out all of the statutory requirements provided for this committee under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. In this respect, I am delighted to report on the success of the Democratic Services Committee during this period.

We have embraced a dynamic approach as a Democratic Services Committee, being fortunate to build upon the strong foundations of the previous Committee and its former Chairs. We will continue to champion areas previously progressed, in particular the diversity in democracy agenda that the former Democratic Services Committee passionately highlighted through its working group arrangements, but also focus on areas of addressing member intimidation and harassment to ensure all members feel safe in their roles and are supported in various forums. The public perception of the role of the elected member also needs to be built on to encourage anyone in the community to put their name forward as a candidate should they wish to contribute to their communities.

As a Democratic Services Committee, there are many areas and opportunities we have committed to take forward over the next civic year to ensure that every member is given the best opportunity to deliver for their residents. We will produce a robust forward work programme in the new civic year to achieve this aim.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor Nathan Goldup-John for his support and advice to me as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee and to each of the members for their attendance, input and positive challenge brought to each and every meeting.

I would also like to place on record my thanks for the continued hard work and dedication of the Democratic Services Team who provide members with advice and support to carry out their roles.

Cllr Saifur Rahaman (Chair of the Democratic Services Committee)

Members of the Democratic Services Committee

2023-2024

Cllr. Saifur Rahaman	Chair
Cllr. Nathan Goldup-John	Vice Chair
Cllr. Wayne Carpenter	
Cllr. Jo Hale	
Cllr. Mike Harvey	
Cllr. James Henton	
Cllr. Alan Lockyer	
Cllr. Andy Lodwig	
Cllr. Peter Rees	
Cllr. Sonia Reynolds	
Cllr. Phil Rogers	
Cllr. Chris Williams	

The Democratic Services Committee formally met three times during 2023/24 and meetings were held on a hybrid basis, in the Council Chamber and over the Microsoft Teams platform.

The Chair is a member of and attends regular meetings of the All Wales Network for Member Support and Development where best practice is discussed and useful relationships are formed.

The remit of the Democratic Services Committee

The functions of the Democratic Services Committee are:-

- To exercise the functions of the Council under Section 8(1) (a) Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (designation of Head of Democratic Services) (as more particularly described in Section 9(1) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011);
- To review the adequacy of provision by the Council of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions (including but not limited to councillor training, improvements and innovations to Council democratic practices)
- To make reports and recommendations to the Council in relation to such provision;
- To determine whether or not the Councillors period of family absence should be cancelled in accordance with Regulation 34 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
- To determine whether or not to withhold a Councillor's remuneration should they fail to return following a period of family absence on the date specified in the notice provided
- It is for the Democratic Services Committee to determine how to exercise these functions however the Democratic Services Committee may not exercise any functions other than the functions set out above unless approved by Full Council

The work of the Democratic Services Committee in 2023-2024

Member Training and Development and Seminar Programme

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires local authorities to ensure the provision of relevant training and development opportunities for its members.

The Democratic Services Committee approved the draft Members' Development and Training Programme (and Members Seminar Schedule) for 2023/24 which had been revised following feedback from the most recent Members Survey. The Members Seminar Schedule is flexible to allow for the inclusion of any topical issues throughout the year, as required.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) also offers a full programme of support and development, which the Council will utilise to complement our Member Development and Training Programme.

Local Democracy Week

Local Democracy Week is held annually in October and the Democratic Services Committee were updated on the Council's plans to mark the event and achieve the following aims:

- Strengthen links between elected representatives and their communities;
- Increase participation in the democratic process;
- Involve citizens in community affairs; and
- Increase knowledge of local democratic institutions and processes.

The council has produced a Public Participation Strategy (required under section 40 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021) which details how the Council intends to promote awareness of the functions of the Council among local people, the roles and responsibilities of an Elected Member and the process for how residents can become elected members of the Council.

In order to discharge the council's responsibilities under the Act and to promote Local Democracy Week 2023 the following activities were undertaken:

- Promotion of the requirement for Voter ID for certain elections;
- Reviewed the Citizen's Panel to ensure it remains active and representative of the population and to offer other residents the opportunity to give their views; and
- Promotion of the political processes within the county borough.

Independent Remuneration Panel Wales Draft Annual Report

The Democratic Services Committee considered the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. The committee discussed the proposed changes to be implemented in 2023/2024 and agreed to make a response to the consultation, reflecting the decision and comments made at the meeting.

Members' Annual Report Scheme

Members were reminded of the current policy to support the production of annual reports by members of the Council. Members received and noted the Members' Annual Report Scheme.

Members Personal Development Review Scheme

Members were reminded of the Members Personal Development Review Scheme and were invited to complete a Personal Development Review should they so wish. The committee approved communications taking place with the WLGA and political groups to explore a cohort of current members to undertake the training to conduct Personal Development Reviews.

Handling Harassment Abuse and Intimidation

The role of an Elected Member is integral to the running of the Council and as such, it is important that they keep in touch with their residents and

communities, which includes communication via telephone, email, social media, virtual meetings and face to face contact with constituents.

The Democratic Services Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish group to focus on handling harassment, abuse and intimidation for Councillors while promoting Councillor safety at a local level. This work is ongoing.

Diversity in Democracy

Members of the Democratic Services Committee are fully supportive of the drive to promote diversity in democracy and in identifying ways in which this can be achieved. The Democratic Services Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to develop the next phase of Diversity in Democracy for the Council, considering national developments and local priorities. This work is ongoing.

Future Priorities

The Democratic Services Committee regularly reviews its forward work programme and has identified the following priority areas for consideration in 2024-2025, in addition to the standing items that the committee has a duty to consider:

- Continuing to undertake work to look at harassment, intimidation and the support that can be provided to elected members in this regard
- Diversity in Democracy and how we can do more as a Committee and Council to encourage greater diversity in our candidates for future elections
- Reviewing of participation work such as our E-Petition Schemes and Public Speaking at Council meetings
- Consider the development of a protocol for member support through the work undertaken by the Welsh Local Government Association.
- Further implementation of the Welsh Local Government Association Democracy Handbook
- Draft Charter (WLGA)

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS

26th July 2024

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Standards Committee Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose of the Report:

1. To consider and receive the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2023/2024.

Background:

2. There is now a legal requirement (pursuant to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for Standards Committees to make an annual report to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council on the standards regime within Neath Port Talbot.
3. The report must
 - (a) describe how the Standards Committee has discharged its functions during the preceding financial year;
 - (b) include a summary of reports and recommendations made or referred to the Standards Committee by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales relating to the investigation of alleged breaches of the member code of conduct, and any subsequent action taken by the committee;

- (c) include a summary of notices given to the Standards Committee by the Adjudication Panel for Wales, relating to the Panel's decisions on possible breaches of the member code of conduct; and
 - (d) include the Standards Committee's assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct.
4. The requirement to make an annual report is intended to ensure there is a regular and consistent approach to the reporting and consideration of standards of conduct by elected members. This is intended to promote local ownership and collective responsibility by members for ensuring high standards of conduct within their authority.
 5. Neath Port Talbot Council must consider the report and any recommendations made by its standards committee within three months of its receipt. The consideration of a report will be a matter of public record through the published minutes of the meeting.
 6. A copy of this report (once received by Full Council) will be shared with the following:
 - (a) All elected members of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council;
 - (b) All Town and Community Councils;
 - (c) Public Service Ombudsman for Wales
 - (d) Audit Wales
 7. A copy of the 2023/2024 Annual Report is enclosed at Appendix 1.

Financial Impacts:

8. No implications.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

9. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

10. No implications

Workforce Impacts:

11. No implications

Legal Impacts:

12. There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

Consultation:

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

Recommendations:

14. That Members note the Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2023/2024.

Appendices:

15. Appendix 1- Annual Report

List of Background Papers:

16. None

Officer Contact:

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

The Ten General Principles of Public Life

<p>Selflessness – members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.</p>	<p>Personal judgement – members may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.</p>
<p>Honesty and integrity – members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly, and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.</p>	<p>Respect for others – members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority’s statutory officers and its other employees.</p>
<p>Objectivity – members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefit.</p>	<p>Duty to uphold the law – members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.</p>
<p>Accountability – members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.</p>	<p>Stewardship – members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently, and in accordance with the law.</p>
<p>Openness – members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.</p>	<p>Leadership – members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.</p>
<p><i>Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life</i></p>	

Annual Report

There is now a legal requirement (pursuant to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for Standards Committees to make an annual report to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council on the standards regime within Neath Port Talbot and with its town and community councils.

The report must:

- describe how the Standards Committee has discharged its functions during the preceding financial year;
- include a summary of reports and recommendations made or referred to the Standards Committee by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales relating to the investigation of alleged breaches of the member code of conduct, and any subsequent action taken by the committee;
- include a summary of notices given to the Standards Committee by the Adjudication Panel for Wales, relating to the Panel's decisions on possible breaches of the member code of conduct; and
- include the Standards Committee's assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct.

The requirement to make an annual report is intended to ensure there is a regular and consistent approach to the reporting and consideration of standards of conduct by elected members.

This is intended to promote local ownership and collective responsibility by members for ensuring high standards of conduct within their authority.

Neath Port Talbot Council must consider the report and any recommendations made by its standards committee within three months of its receipt. The consideration of a report will be a matter of public record through the published minutes of the meeting.

A copy of this report will be shared with the following:

- All elected members of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- All Town and Community Councils
- Public Service Ombudsman for Wales
- Audit Wales

Chair's Foreword

Standards in public life have been under the spotlight for many years. The Nolan Principles were published in 1995 in response to the conduct of some members of the Commons during John Major's tenure as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Those principles still stand and are included at the front of this annual report

In the six years that I have been a member of the Standards Committee, the concept of standards in public life and in society at large has been the subject of fierce debate from time to time and recently they are back in the news.

In a recent publication, the UK Government's Committee on Standards in Public Life said while a "robust ethical culture" should be integral to the way organisations operate, too often it takes a crisis for leaders to act. In a report highlighting best practice in the public sector, the committee said there should be "zero tolerance" for conduct that falls short of the required standards, with clear consequences when they are not met. Doing things in the right way and in the public interest is critical for public confidence in the bodies that operate on the public's behalf and supports the delivery of public services. The report commented that a robust ethical culture supports effective risk management – if people see thinking about ethical issues as part of their job and feel safe to speak up, this can pick up potential concerns before they escalate. Evidence shows that an ethical culture does not emerge by accident - it requires discussion and action. I echo those views. To this end the role of the Standards Committee is to promote, maintain and protect standards of conduct of members within the Council and propriety in all Council proceedings. Fortunately, examples of misconduct in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council itself are rare - long may that be the case.

The Standards Committee have welcomed the powers conferred on us by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 regarding group leaders taking steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members. The duty recognises those in positions of leadership and influence within a principal council should have responsibility for combating bullying and harassment amongst elected members and council staff, and must act as a positive role model. I have welcomed the opportunity for the Standards Committee to meet with the group leaders to discuss how this important function can be discharged and more information on this can be found in this annual report.

With the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Standards Committee being the nominated standards committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, I welcome the role and look forward to contributing to this important programme of work that aims to improve the overall South West Wales region.

I would like to thank all my fellow Standards Committee members, who have all contributed fully and diligently to the work of the Standards Committee; and must also thank the Monitoring Officer and his staff who have continued, to provide us with efficient and effective support and advice.

As the Council faces the many challenges presented to it in the year ahead, we would urge Members to remain mindful of the fundamental importance of high standards of conduct in order for members of the public to maintain their trust and confidence in local democracy.

Mrs Louise Fleet CStJ, JP

Members of the Standards Committee

2023-2024

Mrs Louise Fleet CStJ, JP	Chair
Mr Tom Ward	Vice Chair
Professor Duncan Lewis	Independent Member
Mrs Alison Davies JP	Independent Member
Councillor Carolyn Edwards	Community Council Representative
Councillor Wayne Carpenter	County Borough Councillor
Councillor Sarah Thomas	County Borough Councillor

The Standards Committee operates on the clear understanding that elected members that sit on the Committee are independent of political allegiance and that all discussions and decisions are taken with ethical principles at the forefront. The Standards Committee is mindful that not all political groups are represented on the Standards Committee, and welcomes attendance by all members at its meetings and is happy to receive contributions from those groups not so represented.

The remit of the Standards Committee

To discharge with delegated authority the following functions:-

1. To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members and co-opted Members of the Authority.
2. To assist members and co-opted Members of the Authority to observe the Members Code of Conduct.
3. To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members Code of Conduct (and relevant protocols relating to Member/Officer relationships).
4. To monitor the operation of the Council's adopted Members Code of Conduct throughout the Authority.
5. To advise, train, or arrange to train Members and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members Code of Conduct.
6. Where statutes so permit, to arrange dispensation to speak and/or vote where a Member or co-opted Member has an interest in any matters.
7. To receive Local Commissioner Reports following investigations, or part investigations, in relation to allegations of breach of the Members Code of Conduct and/or
 - (a) To receive and consider reports and recommendations made with regard to same, from the Monitoring Officer (when such matters are referred to that Officer) including provision with respect to the procedure to be followed by the Standards Committee; and
 - (b) Following its consideration of any such reports or recommendations, to take any action prescribed by statute or regulations made thereunder (including action against any Member or co-opted Member (or former Member or co-opted Member) of the Authority who is the subject of any such report or recommendation) and to give publicity to such report, recommendation or action.
8. To receive, consider and implement general advice from the Local Commissioner and the Council's Monitoring Officer.
9. *To receive from the Adjudication Panel, Interim Case Tribunals or Case Tribunals:-
 - (a) Notices issued by them to Council;
 - (b) Recommendations about matters relating to the exercise of the Authority's function, the Code of Conduct and the Standards Committee and make such recommendations as it thinks fit to Council relating thereto.

10. To be responsible for liaison between the Council and external agencies, in particular the National Assembly for Wales, the District Auditor and the local Ombudsman in connection with any matter within the Committee's terms of reference, under the provisions of the 2000 Act and Regulations made thereafter.
11. To make representations to the National Assembly and the Welsh Local Government Association about any matter relating to the General Principles of Conduct for Members of the Council.
12. To consider and recommend procedures for complaints to be dealt with by the Standards Committee and to propose amendments as may be appropriate from time to time in accordance with statute etc.
13. To oversee the whistle-blowing regime in particular in this respect to consider and recommend procedures in respect of the following:
 - Whistle-blowing arrangements;
 - Anti-Fraud/Corruption or malpractice strategy.
14. To examine any Code(s) of Conduct for Employees of the Authority and to make recommendations as may be considered appropriate.
15. To receive progress reports from the Monitoring Officer from time to time on such matters within the purview of the Standards Committee, and to make such recommendations to Council as may be deemed appropriate.
16. To exercise such powers or duties as may be given to or imposed on Standards Committees from time to time by legislation.
17. To exercise in relation to Community Councils and their Members within the County Borough area such of the foregoing matters as are referred to in Section 56 of the Local Government Act 2000.
18. To monitor compliance of the leaders of political groups on the Council with their duties under Section 52A(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 that they are taking steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their group and are cooperating with the Standards Committee's functions.
19. To produce an annual report to the Council as to how the Standards Committee has operated, including:
 - (a) what has been done to discharge the general and specific powers conferred on it by statute and these requirements;
 - (b) reports and recommendations made or referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
 - (c) action taken by the Standards Committee follows is consideration of reports and recommendations

(d) notices given to the Standards Committee

20. It should be noted that members of local authorities who are Members of the Standards Committee will have a term of office until the next ordinary local government election following their appointment. They may be reappointed for one further consecutive term.

The work of the Standards Committee in 2023-2024

Observation of Town and Community Council Meetings

Members of the Standards Committee have attended meetings of Town and Community Councils as observers, and discussed their observations. Such observation is helpful to inform the Standard Committee's work and understand the work of Town and Community Council

Town/Community Councillors and Clerks have indicated that the presence of Standards & Ethics Committee members was a helpful influence on Members' behaviour.

The Standards Committee were pleased to observe positive conduct at Council meetings, with meetings being business focussed and less fractious.

This work will continue throughout 2024-2025, with continued observation of both Town and Community Council meetings and County Borough Council meetings. Standards Committee members are encouraged to continue attending different Council and Committee meetings for observation and feedback to the Standards Committee.

Community Councils

The Standards Committee has the same statutory functions in relation to Community Councils and their Councillors as it has in relation to Neath Port Talbot Council and its Members.

The Standards Committee has considered the ways in which it discharges its functions, and what else it may do, within available resources, to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within Community Councils and build good working relationships with them.

The Standards Committee have highlighted the number of Town and Community Councillors who do not undergo formal code of conduct training or have a local resolution process. The Standards Committee has noted and approved a programme of actions, which includes: offering training on the Code of Conduct; quarterly meetings between the Community Council Clerks and the Monitoring Officer to discuss issues relating to Member conduct; provision of advice and support to Clerks in relation to local resolution processes and observation of Community Council meetings by Standards Committee members.

Procedure for conducting Disciplinary Hearings

Whilst the Standards Committee strive to resolve matters proactively without having to hold a formal hearing, it is recognised that sometimes hearings will be necessary following referrals from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. Part 3 Local Government Act 2000 enables the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to require Standards Committees to determine whether a councillor or co-opted member has breached the code of conduct, where the Ombudsman considers that the facts of the alleged breach do not warrant an immediate reference to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

The Standards Committee were pleased to review the procedures for such hearings and undertaken an update to modernise the same.

This update was to ensure it reflects principles such as hearings being conducted in Welsh, should the Councillor choose and to further expand on the possibility that a hearing could be conducted by written representations and to enable the possibility of a hearing being conducted virtually via Microsoft TEAMS. Similar procedures adopted by other Councils and the procedures adopted by the Adjudication Panel for Wales and aims to set out clearly to the committee, officers, and councillors and their representatives, the process that will be followed in the event that a disciplinary breach is referred to the committee for consideration.

Member Officer Protocol

The Standards Committee considered one of the key protocols that exists within the local authority, that of the Member Officer Protocol.

The purpose of this protocol is to guide Members and officers of the Council in their relations with one another. The strength of the relationship between Members and officers is vital in ensuring that the Council practices the highest ethical standards in both its private and public dealings.

This Protocol also seeks to reflect the principles underlying the respective rules of conduct which apply to Members and officers. The purpose of the rules and this protocol is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of local government by demanding very high standards of personal conduct.

Members and paid officers each have their own separate Codes of Conduct. This protocol underpins those documents and focuses particularly on the interaction between Members and officers; deals primarily with Members' and officers' own separate responsibilities; and refers to the working relationship between Members and senior officers who formally advise the Council

An effective working relationship between Members and officers is crucial to the successful operation of the Council's business. This relationship within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is characterised by mutual trust, respect and understanding between politicians and paid officers – this is one of the keys to achieving effective local government.

The Standards Committee was content that the protocol was operating satisfactorily and that there were no ethical concerns arising.

National Standards Forum

The Standards Committee received a report on the creation of a national standards forum and the Chair attended the two meetings that have taken place this year..

In March 2021 the then Minister for Housing and Local Government announced her intention to commission an independent review of the Ethical Standards Framework for

Local Government (ESF) in Wales that was established by the Local Government Act 2000. The review sought to ensure that it remained fit for purpose, was open and transparent, and that it commanded the confidence of all involved with the framework. Richard Penn, an Independent Consultant was commissioned to undertake the review with the aim to report to Welsh Government Ministers by the end of June 2021 with the intention that any agreed changes to be made ahead of the Local Government elections in May 2022. Mr. Penn is a former Chief Executive of two major local authorities in England and was the first NAW Commissioner for Standards from 2000 - 2012.

The first phase of the Independent Consultant's Review was brought before members of the Standards Committee in January 2022. In the first phase review Richard Penn suggested that an all Wales - Forum for Chairs of Standards Committees be established and that the Annual Conference for Independent Chairs and Independent Members of Standards Committees across Wales be re-established.

The Forum is a body for the sharing of good practice and the coordination of activity. The Forum is not a formal decision making body and will not have delegated powers to act on behalf of the Standards Committees in Wales. The purpose of the Forum is to share good practice and training and knowledge across the 22 principal councils, 3 fire and rescue authorities, and 3 national park authorities in relation to the work of Standards Committees. At the Forum, authorities can share good practice and discuss solutions to problems they are experiencing.

The Standards Committee look forward to playing a role in this Forum and identifying any measures of best practice that can be adopted in Neath Port Talbot.

Local Resolution Process

The Standards Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider the Local Resolution Protocol.

This protocol recognises that the freedom of expression enjoyed by Members is not absolute and the exercise of the freedom incurs responsibilities and may be subject to restrictions, notably the protection of the reputation and other rights of other Members and preventing unauthorised disclosure of information. The freedom to express their political opinions is not restricted by agreeing to this Protocol.

It is designed to consider low level complaints about Members, including:

- Minor complaints from Members about Members
- Minor complaints from Officers about Members
- Members alleged to have not shown respect and consideration for others – either verbally or in writing.

The Standards Committee were pleased to note that there had been no occasions in the last 12 months where the protocol was required to be invoked but would continue to publicise its requirements to elected members and ensure they consider the same, to negate any

complaints to bodies such as the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. The Standards Committee will continue to promote the use of this protocol to Group Leaders.

Whistleblowing

The Standards Committee's terms of reference include responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and considering any ethical issues arising from complaints made under the Policy. T

The Committee received a report on the Council's Whistleblowing Policy

The Committee was informed about work undertaken with Management teams to raise awareness of the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and the information leaflets produced for employees and managers with some amendments being suggested to how the Whistleblowing Policy could be improved and clarified in some areas to provide greater ease of understanding for officers and members of the public.

The Standards Committee was content that the Council's whistleblowing arrangements were operating satisfactorily and that there were no ethical concerns arising.

Employee Code of Conduct

The Standards Committee welcomed the opportunity to review and comment on the Council's Employee Code of Conduct

The purpose of the Employee Code of Conduct is to provide a clear framework for all Council employees, as the service the officers provide make a difference to the lives of individuals, families, and our local communities. As a public service worker, they have additional responsibilities due to public accountability and statutory obligations. The public expects and deserves a high standard of conduct from all local government employees.

It is noted that the Council has high aspirations for our communities and relies on our employees to deliver the best possible services and value for money. Our local communities expect them to be committed and dedicated; to be creative and innovative in service design and delivery; to embrace new ways of working and work collaboratively with others to achieve common goals.

The Employee Code of Conduct encourages officers to work in this way and sets out clear and helpful advice on the standards expected. To support the code, there is a framework of policies, procedures, standards, and guidance on a range of topics which provides information on rights, responsibilities and values and behaviour at work.

The Committee was informed about work undertaken with promote the Code of Conduct and identified some areas which could be improved and clarified to provide greater ease of understanding for officers and members of the public. These will now be considered by the Council's Personnel Committee as part of their review

The Standards Committee was content that the Council's Employee Code of Conduct is operating satisfactorily and that there were no ethical concerns arising and were pleased to note that their previous recommendations were taken on board by the Council's Personnel Committee.

Dispensations

The Standards Committee has statutory power to grant dispensations to Members with a personal and prejudicial interest in a matter, to allow them to participate in a decision regarding that matter, in appropriate circumstances, which are set out in statutory regulations.

During the course of the year a number of dispensations were granted to allow Members to actively participate in decision making to ensure their voice and the voice of their constituents is not lost as a result of prejudicial interests. These covered matters such as where members may have family members employed by the Council, whether they have children who attend a neighbouring school or perhaps they serve on a community organisation or school governing body.

The Standards Committee continues to approach each application with a presumption in favour of granting a dispensation wherever practicable, particularly in relation to granting a dispensation to speak. The Committee may also delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to grant similar dispensations in relation to that business. However no such delegation was utilised during the period of this report.

Details of the applications that have been dealt with can be viewed as part of the minutes of the meetings of the Committee which are accessible on Neath Port Talbot Council's website (www.npt.gov.uk)

Gifts and Hospitality

The statutory principles which are to govern Member conduct say that Members "must not put themselves in a position where their integrity is called into question by any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties. Members must on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour". Also the same principles state Members "must act solely in the public interest – they must never use their position as Members to improperly confer advantage on themselves or to improperly confer advantage on others.

As part of this requirement, the Standards Committee were pleased to review the Member Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and agreed to propose a change to the threshold of such gifts from £50 to £25 in line with all other local authorities in Wales.

Local Government and Ethical Standards Framework in Wales

In March 2021, the then Minister for Housing and Local Government commissioned an independent Review of the Ethical Standards Framework for local government in Wales

established by the Local Government Act 2000 and the Standards Committee welcome this commitment to ongoing review.

The Framework has remained largely unchanged over the last 20 years, so an independent review was felt important to maintain confidence in the system and ensure developments in the way councillors and their public lives are reflected in its operation. An effective ethical framework is essential to ensure people and councillors from all backgrounds have confidence to engage with local democracy or stand for elected office. It is part of making Wales a diverse and inclusive nation and its review is an action in our Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

The Standards Committee welcomed the opportunity to respond to the Welsh Government Consultation and a copy of our response can be found on the Council's Website from our April 2023 meeting. It was pleasing to note that all local authorities made a response similar to our own and we look forward to receiving further updates on the process of the review as it continues.

Social Media

The increase use of social media means the accountability and conduct of members is of the utmost importance. The Standards Committee proposed a piece of work to look at social media training and what more can be done to guide and support members in their use of social media platforms and to ensure conducts and behaviour are being considered in usage.

That work is reaching its conclusion and a guidance document will shortly be issued to all elected members on some issues to consider as part of social media usage.

Other Activities

In addition to the above activities the Standards Committee also:

- Received and considered the Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales;
- Received and considered case decisions of the Adjudication Panel for Wales;
- Received and considered case decisions made by other Standards Committees in Wales;
- Received and considered the Code of Conduct casebook published by the Ombudsman.
- Received guidance on the role of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and its remit in promoting and upholding the standards regime
- Received guidance on the role of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales on how they approach determinations whether to investigate complaints against elected members. Members resolved here to write to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales to express concern over the use of terminology such as "thicker skin" and whilst acknowledging it derives from case law, whether the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales could address the use of such phrases in its guidance.

- Promoted the Town and Community Councils, Civility and Respect Pledge <https://www.slcc.co.uk/news-publications/civility-respect-pledge/> as an initiative introduced by a partnership of organisations working on behalf of Town and Community Councils, the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks), NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and OVW (One Voice Wales), inviting Community Councils to sign the Pledge to publicly commit that it will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles, with a number of specific supporting commitments

Where appropriate the Standards Committee have identified points of learning and best practice and have taken them into account in their own decision making and included them in any training provided

Group Leader Duties

Background

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 addresses some new obligations for Standards Committees. The Act imposes specific duties on political leaders to promote and maintain standards of conduct within members of their group, and to cooperate with the Standards Committee in the exercise of its functions. This requires leaders of political groups to take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their groups.

The duty does not make leaders of a political group accountable for the behaviour of their members as conduct must be a matter of individual responsibility. However, they do have a role in taking reasonable steps in maintaining standards, setting an example, using their influence to promote a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in their group and addressing issues as soon as they arise.

Reasonable steps the group leader *may* undertake include:

- demonstrating personal commitment to and attending relevant development or training around equalities and standards;
- encouraging group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards;
- ensuring nominees to a committee have received the recommended training for that committee;
- promoting civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal council meetings;
- promoting informal resolution procedures in the council, and working with the standards committee and monitoring officers to achieve local resolution;
- promoting a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity;
- attend a meeting of the council's standards committee if requested to discuss Code of Conduct issues;
- work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee about improving standards;
- work together with other Group Leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the council.

The purpose of the new duties is to build on and support a culture which is proactive, acts on and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour.

A standards committee must also provide advice and training, or arrange to train Group Leaders on the new duty. At the start of each administration this should take place within six months of the election and be reviewed at least annually.

Group Leaders in Neath Port Talbot

At its meeting in April 2024, Standards Committee were pleased to receive the reports from the four Group Leaders which clearly demonstrated their commitment to fulfilling their new duties.

The Standards Committee were pleased to note the approach that Group Leaders take in promoting standards and the personal commitment they have to encourage members within their groups to embed ethical processes in their day to day activities. Of interest particularly to the Standards Committee was how Group Leaders deal with the “thick skin” ideology that the Public Service Ombudsman and other regulatory bodies adopt and the views that all Group Leaders have that often this is an inappropriate test and it is not something that any elected member should have to have if they face abuse from members of the public, particularly in a social media setting.

The Standards Committee are required to conduct an assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct and the Standards Committee are able to confirm that throughout 2023-2024, Group Leaders have discharged their duty, in the views of the Standards Committee, and that there were no ethical concerns arising.

Further work will be undertaken throughout 2024-2025 to further refine how Group Leaders can discharge their duties and how the Standards Committee can further assist Group Leaders.

Complaints

The Standards Committee has oversight of the complaints and any themes or patterns emerging (but only considers specific details of individual cases if a complaint is formally referred to the Standards Committee by the Monitoring Officer or the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales).

During the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, the Monitoring Officer was notified of a total of 7 complaints made against Members of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.

All bar one of these complaints were dismissed by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales with one being considered by the Standards Committee with a determination reached in Summer 2024.

During the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, the Monitoring Officer was notified of 5 complaints made against Town and Community Councillors alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct. All bar one were dismissed by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales as not being appropriate for investigation. It is understood that the Public Service Ombudsman Wales continues to investigate the other.

In respect of its role as the Standards Committee for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, the Standards Committee received no complaints or referrals to it in respect of the members to that regional organisation. During the municipal year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, the Standards Committee received no referrals from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

Local Resolution Process

The Standards Committee notes that the Local Resolution Protocol adopted by Neath Port Talbot Council continues to provide a helpful process for resolving relatively 'low-level' behavioural complaints made by Neath Port Talbot Members about other Members, in a timely and proportionate way.

The Standards Committee is pleased to note that no cases have been referred to the Hearings Panel during 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

The Standards Committee has encouraged Community Councils to adopt their own local resolution protocols, using the model developed by One Voice Wales in consultation with the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

Future Priorities

The Standards Committee regularly reviews its forward work programme and has identified the following priority areas for consideration in 2024-2025

- **Code of Conduct, Member Training and Development** – the Standards Committee will consider the need for any further training on the Members’ Code of Conduct focussing on Town and Community Councils and facilitate training opportunities for Councillors, as part of this a survey and review of Community Council training plans so far as they relate to standards and ethical governance will be undertaken. Further engagement work will also be undertaken, to include presentations, meetings and guidance.
- **Declarations of Interest** – a review of interests being declared in Council meetings by both Town and Community Councillors and County Borough Councillors.
- **Candidates for Council Elections** – the Standards Committee will look to develop an easy read guide for proposed candidates on the ethical obligations they will be required to meet if elected which can be placed on the Council’s website.
- **Observation of Council and Committee Meetings, including Town and Community Councils** – the Standards Committee will continue to observe proceedings at Council and Committee meetings to give feedback on observations and inform its work priorities.
- **Annual Meeting with Group Leaders** - To facilitate ongoing engagement with representatives from all political groups and discharge legal duties pursuant to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and develop ways to ensure regular reporting from Group Leaders to comply with the duty under the aforementioned legislation.
- **Case Studies** – A set of case studies and examples will be prepared by the Standards Committee to address practical scenarios for elected members to consider on ethical behaviour, declaration of interests and general conduct matters.
- **Engagement with Members** – in order to dispel myths about the work of the Standards Committee, it was felt arranging a meeting with a sample of elected members would be beneficial for members to understand more about their work programme.
- **Adjudication Panel for Wales** – the Standards Committee propose to seek out opportunities to attend adjudication panel meetings where opportunity presents itself and to observe and bring back to the Standards Committee evidence of good practice

- **Member and Officer Relationship** – the Standards Committee recognise that this is the lynchpin of local government and propose to look at ways to further develop the Member Officer protocol to ensure ethical standards remain at the forefront of the relationship.
- **Governance and Audit** – the Standards Committee will look to develop a relationship with the Governance and Audit Committee and identify ways to work collaboratively on matters to enable assurances to be provided of ethical decision making and appropriate arrangements being in place.
- **Engagement with National Standards Regime** – with proposals to changes in the Standards regime throughout Wales, the Standards Committee will continue to work and look at ways for such proposals to be implemented in Neath Port Talbot.
- **Social Media and Conduct** – the increase use of social media means the accountability and conduct of members is of the utmost importance. The Standards Committee will continue its piece of work to look at social media training and what more can be done to guide and support members in their use of social media platforms and to ensure conducts and behaviour are being considered in usage.
- **Local Resolution** – the Standards Committee will look to do more to promote the Local Resolution Process and how it can incorporate Town and Community Councils
- **Conflict Resolution** – it is important that members are able to resolve conflicts or give alternative views without feeling they at risk of breaching their code of conduct. Accordingly, the Standards Committee will look at possible learning and development opportunities to support members in this area.

Recommendations

As part of consideration of the annual report, the Standards Committee would make the following recommendations to Neath Port Talbot Council:

- (1) All members ensure they attend annual refreshers in respect of the Members Code of Conduct undertaken by the Monitoring Officer;
- (2) All Group Leader make Standards and Ethics a standing item on their political group meeting agendas;
- (3) All members ensure they are completing their declarations of gifts and hospitality, including where such gifts and hospitality are declined;
- (4) Group Leaders consider bi annual meetings with the Monitoring Officer to discuss standards and ethics and how they can work together to promote standards within their political groups;
- (5) Steps be taken to promote the Member Officer Protocol to all elected members and officers of the Council, with training provided as appropriate;
- (6) Consideration be given to inserting a guidance note on the website for those individuals wishing to stand for County Borough Council or Town/Community Councils highlighting the key ethical principles that if elected they will have to comply with;
- (7) A series of guidance documents be circulated to all members in respect of key conduct matters such as declarations of interest, predetermination, conduct case studies and key information for members to supplement the existing guidance available from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

COUNCIL

26 July 2024

Report of the Scrutiny Champion Cllr. P. Rogers

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Annual Reports of the Cabinet Scrutiny and Cabinet (Policy & Resources) Scrutiny-Sub Committee, Education Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee and the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee 2023-24.

Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees 2023-2024.

Background

To provide an overview of the work of the Scrutiny Committees for 2023/24.

Financial Impact

No impact.

Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this is an administrative report.

Workforce Impacts

No impact.

Risk Management

No impact.

Legal Powers

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There are no specific impacts for valley communities arising.

Consultation

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

Recommendation

That Council note and endorse the Scrutiny Committees Annual Reports of the Cabinet Scrutiny and Cabinet (Policy & Resources) Scrutiny-Sub Committee, Education Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny

Committee and the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee.

Reason for decision

To note and endorse the Annual Reports 2023/24 of the Scrutiny Committees.

Implementation of Decision

This report will be for immediate implementation.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Annual Report of the Cabinet Scrutiny and Cabinet (Policy & Resources) Scrutiny-Sub Committee

Appendix 2 – Annual Report of the Education Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 3 – Annual Report of the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 4 – Annual Report of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee.

Officer Contacts

Cllr P. Rogers, Scrutiny Champion.

Cllr.p.rogers@npt.gov.uk.

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2023/2024

**‘Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet
(Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub
Committee Annual Report’**

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1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub Committee for the period May 2023 to April 2024.

This report provides the opportunity to reflect on the work that has been undertaken by the committee and its attempts to ensure that any decisions taken are in the best interests of the citizens of Neath Port Talbot.

You may be aware that this Committee has within its remit the scrutiny of the Council's budget, the Corporate Plan and the risk register.

We as a Scrutiny Committee are under no illusions that the difficulties facing this Council will continue for the foreseeable future and it is important the Scrutiny continues to develop as the Council responds to the national guidelines etc.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Vice Chair Councillor Carl Jordan for his continued support along with the Cabinet Members who have been present at the meetings to listen to and consider the views of the Committee prior to making any decisions.

Finally, I would like to thank the officers for their invaluable support and guidance through the year and I look forward to working with you again during the next civic year.

Councillor, Chairman. Phil Rogers
Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny and they are:

1. provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process
4. drives improvement in public services

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. A number of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within the respective annual reports.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors that is politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least 8 times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

- 3.1** The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Cabinet Scrutiny and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-Committee 2023/2024.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2024/2025.

4. Overview of the work of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee during 2023/2024

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee met on 14 occasions during 2023/2024.

Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-Committee met on 6 occasions during 2023/2024 and held one Forward Work Programme session.

4.2 The Work Programme 2023/2024

Generally, the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Sub Committee agreed its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshop 13.06.23.

When developing the work programme, it was essential to consider the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committees are included in the following pages and has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes).

4.3 Key Issues considered during 2023/2024

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on a number of areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Members are in attendance during

discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function, and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments, and I look forward to the next year as we take forward the priorities of the Council.

5. Issues considered Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

May 2023 -May 2024.

See appendix 2 attached for full list.

Passenger Transport Review - Appointment of Consultants (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Members were presented with information relating to the Passenger Transport Review – Appointment of Consultants.

Following discussion, the following amendment to the recommendations contained within the circulated report was proposed and seconded: “To put a time-limit in place and a parallel action to look at enhancing skills of the team and growing the team.”

Following scrutiny, members were supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet, with the amendment included.

The proposed amendment was accepted by Cabinet.

Pontardawe Swimming Pool

Members were presented with information relating to Pontardawe Swimming Pool.

The report provided an overview to members on the current condition of Pontardawe Swimming Pool and set out proposals to agree the planned closure of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool facility at the end of August 2024. The report also set out proposals, in terms of a feasibility report into a future facility mix, location and external funding options for a replacement pool.

Following scrutiny, the following amendment was put forward for consideration by Cabinet in relation to recommendation 4 of the report: "Grant delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism & Wellbeing to commission a feasibility study to investigate options for a future site and potential funding for a replacement facility and to make a commitment when resources allow, that a pool which serves the whole of the upper Swansea, Amman and Llinfell Valleys will be built."

Members were supportive of the recommendations for Cabinet with the above amendment included.

The proposed amendment was not accepted by Cabinet.

5.1 Issues considered Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub Committee

May 2023- April 2024.

See appendix 3 attached for full list.

6.Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive's Legal and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
Alison Thomas	Senior Scrutiny Officer	E-mail a.thomas6@npt.gov.uk
Tom Rees	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: t.rees1@npt.gov.uk
Pamela Chivers	Scrutiny Officer	Email p.chivers@npt.gov.uk

Alternatively, if you think Scrutiny should consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail democratic.services@npt.gov.uk



2023/2024

**‘Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny
Committee Annual Report’**

1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee May 2023 – April 2024.

It has been an honour to chair the committee during this period and I would like to thank all Members and Officers for their work and contributions over the past 12 months.

This report reflects the important topics we have been considering as a committee and the importance of scrutiny to ensure the correct decisions are made for the residents of the borough.

There are many challenges facing the authority in terms of mental health, the rising cost of living and funding constraints. At a time when every penny counts, scrutiny is essential to ensure that we are providing residents with the best services and delivering services that the community want and need.

I believe the committee has undertaken its role effectively over the past 12 months and we have made some very difficult decisions. It will be vital that we continue to thoroughly scrutinise all aspects of the committee's remit going forward to ensure our services are working for our residents.

Looking ahead, our Forward Work Programme will provide some structure in terms of our meetings, but members will also be able to add items onto the agenda when required. I also hope that members of the public will engage with the committee and inform us of issues that are important to them.

The committee will continue to work hard on behalf of all residents of the borough and I am looking forward to tackling the challenges ahead.

Councillor R. Phillips, Chairperson

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny and they are:

1. provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process
4. drives improvement in public services

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. A number of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within this document.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors that is politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least eight times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

3.1 The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 2023-2024.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2024/2025.

4. Overview of the work of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 2023/2024.

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during 2023/2024 and jointly with Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on two occasions.

4.2 The Work Programme 2023/2024.

Generally the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agree its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshop held on 22nd June 2023.

When developing the work programme it was essential to give consideration to the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committee is included in the following pages has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes)

5. Key Issues considered during 2023/2024.

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on a number of areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Board Members are in attendance during

discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments and I look forward to the next year as we take forward the priorities of the Council.

- Issues considered

May 2023 – April 2024

As detailed in the table attached at Appendix 1.

6. Joint Committees

During the year, the committee worked jointly with the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise two items:

Strategic Schools Improvement Programme Proposal to Amend the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning Capital Funding Projects, and Revise the Capital Spend Profile.

The item was scrutinised in detail at the Joint Meeting held on 20th November 2023. Following scrutiny, the recommendations outlined in the report were supported to Cabinet.

Pontardawe Swimming Pool

The item was scrutinised in detail at the Joint Meeting held on 8th May 2024. Following scrutiny an amendment was put forward in relation to recommendation 4. The recommendations were supported to Cabinet with the amended recommendation.

7. Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive's Legal and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
Alison Thomas	Senior Scrutiny Officer and Project Management Officer	E-mail a.thomas6@npt.gov.uk
Pamela Chivers	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: p.chivers@npt.gov.uk
Tom Rees	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: t.rees1@npt.gov.uk

If you would like to suggest Scrutiny consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail your suggestion to:
democratic.services@npt.gov.uk



2023/2024

**‘Social Services, Housing and Community
Safety Annual Report’**

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1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee May 2023 – April 2024

This report provides the opportunity to reflect on the work that has been undertaken by the committee and its attempts to ensure that any decisions taken are in the best interests of the citizens of Neath Port Talbot

The Scrutiny Committee worked during the year to scrutinise various decisions to be taken by the Council.

The Committee continued to monitor quarterly performance management data and scrutinise the information received. The committee scrutinised various decisions including the Policy on Rent and Service Charge Arrears Prevention and Recovery, Policy on Financial Contributions for Temporary Accommodation, Neath Port Talbot Social Services Strategic Action Plan for Neurodivergence (Autism and other conditions) 2024-2027 and the Directors Annual Report 2022-2023.

The committee also continued its own work and received information pertaining to Unpaid Carers, Hospital Admissions and Discharge Processes and Information Sharing in Respects of the Transition Process between Children and Adult Services.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor Helen Clarke for her continued support along with the Cabinet members , Councillor Alun Llewelyn, Councillor Jo Hale and Councillor Sian Harris, who have been present at the meetings to listen to and consider the views of the committee prior to making any decisions .

Finally, I would like to thank the officers for their invaluable support, continued hard work, professionalism and guidance throughout the year

Councillor. C.Galsworthy, Chairperson
Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny and they are:

1. provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process
4. drives improvement in public services

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. A number of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within the various Annual Reports of the scrutiny committees.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors, that are politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least 8 times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

3.1 The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Committee Scrutiny Committee 2023-2024.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2024-2025.

4. Overview of the work of the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Committee 2023/2024

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee met on 9 occasions during 2023/2024.

4.2 The Work Programme 2023/2024

Generally the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agree its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshop on 29th June 2023.

When developing the work programme it was essential to give consideration to the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committee is included in the following pages has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes)

5. Key Issues considered during 2023/2024

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on a number of areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Board Members are in attendance during discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function, and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments.

- Issues considered

May 2023 – April 2024

As detailed in the table attached at Appendix 1.

6. Investigative Scrutiny

Each year a Scrutiny Committee can undertake a piece of work in more depth on a specific area where they feel they could assist in delivering service improvements. During the year the committee set up a Task & Finish Group to consider Social Impact Bonds. The remit of the group is to '*explore the use of social bonds in social care and other alternative financial models to enhance budgetary provision for services.*' The work of this group is currently ongoing.

7. Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive's Legal and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
Alison Thomas	Senior Scrutiny and Project Management Officer	E-mail a.thomas6@npt.gov.uk
Tom Rees	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: t.rees1@npt.gov.uk
Pamela Chivers	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: p.chivers@npt.gov.uk

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2023/2024

**‘Environment, Regeneration, Streetscene
Services Scrutiny Committee’s Annual
Report’**

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1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee for the period June 2023 to May 2024.

Much of our scrutiny work this year has followed on from work started the year prior, including follow up scrutiny and monitoring after our task and finish groups.

We're now at the end of our second year in this committee, and members have yet again shown their commitment to seeking to find productive recommendations to aid the work of council.

Whilst these have not all been taken forward, all have provoked discussion and consideration from the officers and cabinet members when taking their decisions.

I want to thank all committee members for their work, as well as the officers and cabinet members who have engaged productively with us, even through some tough and probing questioning.

I now look forward to the new civic year ahead where we will be undertaking a new model of scrutiny.

Councillor S. Pursey, Chairman.
Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee.

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny, and they are:

1. provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policymakers and decision-makers.
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities.

3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process.
4. drives improvement in public services.

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways, it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. Several of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within this document.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills, and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors that is politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least 8 times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

3.1 The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee 2023/2024.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2024/2025.

4. Overview of the work of the Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services during 2023/2024.

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee met on 11 occasions during 2023/2024.

4.2 The Work Programme 2023/2024

Generally, the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agreed its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshop held on 15.06.23.

When developing the work programme, it was essential to consider the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committee is included in the following pages has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes)

5. Key Issues considered during 2023/2024.

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on several areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Board Members are in attendance during discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function, and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments, and I look forward to the next year as we take forward the priorities of the Council.

Issues considered June 23 – April 24

- **Detailed in full in the table attached at Appendix 1.**

Consider the recommendations of the T&F group on Parking Options 2023

02.06.23

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the following amendments.

1. That the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group included at Appendix A be endorsed and commended to the Environment, Regeneration and Street scene Cabinet Board. Subject to the addition of the following recommendation:

a. That the pedestrianised zone hours of operation in the Neath Town Centre be reviewed to consider closing the pedestrianised zone to vehicles in the evenings as well as the daytime.

2. That the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Transport and Connectivity be invited to the next meeting of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Committee to report back on their consideration of the matters that have been put forward.

Cabinet Board Noted Scrutiny's report.

Parking Review Options Report 2023 **28.07.23 (Special)**

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

- That recommendations 31-35 of the report be approved subject to the following amendments.

- Option 6 - that the charging hours be amended to 9am to 6pm
- Option 7 that the charging hours be 9am -6pm
- That additional recommendation 1 reads that Blue-badge holders be granted an extra hour's parking on top of the existing tariffs in town centres, to reflect the additional time disabled people require, this is to ensure there is no adverse impact on disabled people as a result of the increase in hourly parking charges.
- That an additional recommendation be added:

That a full consultation is undertaken on these proposals with the community, including businesses and residents before implementation of any changes.

Cabinet board deferred this decision to a future meeting.

At the next meeting of Cabinet Board on the 14.09.23 the recommendations of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee were approved as follows:

- 1. That when the legal orders are advertised, to change the off-street car parking order and on-street traffic orders, residents and businesses will have the opportunity to raise any objections which will be brought back to a future meeting for Members consideration before any changes are implemented.
- 2. That subject to available funding, a feasibility study would be considered to be undertaken to review the operational hours of the Neath pedestrianised zone, which will be considered against all other priorities within the Highways Capital Programme; or as suggested by Members, any other regeneration grants that become available which would be subject to a future report to Members.

- 3. That a review be undertaken in October 2024, six months after all recommendations have been fully implemented during April 2024, to allow time for measurable data to be obtained over the summer period.
- 4. That a Visitors Parking Permit, that would cover all car parks and attractions in the county (to include country parks), be explored further in conjunction with the country parks management.

Street Lighting Energy

14.11.23

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

- Following discussion, the following amendments were put forward by the scrutiny committee. The Consultation to include clear mapping of areas affected.

Cabinet board did not accept the additional recommendation, made by the Scrutiny Committee.

Street Lighting Energy - Consultation Response

22.03.24

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

- Recommendation 1 was noted.
- Recommendation 2 was commended to Cabinet Board.
- Recommendation 3 was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments:

Approve a pilot study of part nighttime lighting to gain a better understanding of the impacts of such saving strategies and thereby enable evidence-based decisions to be made in the future, if considered appropriate. Prior to such a pilot taking place, a further report is brought before Members giving details of the geographical location of the

proposed pilot study, the duration of the pilot study, and the times when the lights will be turned off/on, all to be agreed by Members prior to any pilot being undertaken. The results of pilot scheme then being referred to Members to inform any future decisions, if considered necessary.

Consultation shall be undertaken as part of the pilot study and shall include an assessment of the impacts upon women and young girls in terms of violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. The results of that consultation shall be reported to members following the completion of the pilot and consultation.

Cabinet Board supported the amendment to the recommendations of the Scrutiny committee.

6.0 Investigative Scrutiny

Each year a Scrutiny Committee can undertake a piece of work in more depth on a specific area where they feel they could assist in delivering service improvements. While the committee didn't have a task and finish group this civic year, their contributions in Task and finish groups last year lead to an influence in decisions made this civic year as noted in the item listed above 'Consider the recommendations of the T&F group on Parking Options 2023 and the subsequent amendments made.

7. Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive's Policy and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
Alison Thomas	Senior Scrutiny and Project Management Officer	E-mail a.thomas6@npt.gov.uk
Tom Rees	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: t.rees1@npt.gov.uk
Pam Chivers	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: p.chivers@npt.gov.uk

Alternatively, if you think Scrutiny should consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail Scrutiny@npt.gov.uk

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

26th July 2024

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE - MRS K JONES

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Establishment of a Joint Scrutiny Committee for the Celtic Freeport Joint Committee with Pembrokeshire County Council

Purpose of the Report

1. To confirm the establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Celtic Freeport Joint Committee

Background

2. At its meeting of the 29th May 2024, Cabinet approved the creation of a Joint Committee with Pembrokeshire County Council in respect of Celtic Freeport.
3. Clause 14 of the Joint Committee Agreement (enclosed at Appendix 1) for the establishment of the Celtic Freeport Joint Committee provides that the parties to this Joint Working Agreement will establish a Joint Scrutiny Committee to ensure greater public accountability over decisions made by the Joint Committee and any of its sub-committees and related entities. Schedule 2 of the Joint Committee Agreement contains the terms of reference.
4. The membership of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall consist of eight (8) members. Each Council shall each nominate four (4) members for appointment to the Joint Scrutiny Committee on the basis of a political balance in line with standard scrutiny arrangements. The members nominated by each Council shall be elected members of that Council but shall not be a member of that Council's executive.
5. The role of the Joint Scrutiny Committee is to provide advice, challenge and support to the Public Funds Committee. To the extent the Joint Scrutiny Committee can influence the Joint Committee's decision making, the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be required to (a) review and scrutinise the Joint Committee's financial affairs and (b) review and assess the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources have been used. They shall be entitled to make reports and recommendations to the Joint Committee in relation to the points in **Error! Reference source not found.** and 5.

6. If this Council is in receipt of public funding to implement a project the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall audit the finances and the discharge of functions relating to that project.
7. It has been determined that Pembrokeshire County Council will be the host authority for the Joint Scrutiny Arrangements given that the service of the Joint Committee and the Accountable Body for Celtic Freeport is Neath Port Talbot Council. This is similar to the model adopted for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Swansea Bay City Deal.
8. The quorum for meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be no less than 4 members, which must include at least 2 members from each Council.
9. It is proposed that the following members be appointed to the Joint Committee on the basis of a political balance of the total number of elected members in Neath Port Talbot:
Cllr Sean Pursey
Cllr Laura Williams
Cllr Andrew Dacey
Cllr Tim Bowen

Financial Impact

10. There are no financial impacts associated with this Report.

Integrated Impact Assessment

11. There is no requirement for an integrated impact assessment for this report.

Workforce Impacts

12. There are no workforce impacts associated with this Report

Legal Impacts

13. In exercise of powers under sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and all other enabling powers Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council may create a Joint Scrutiny Committee with any other local authorities. The Joint Scrutiny Committee shall provide a scrutiny function to ensure greater public accountability over decisions made by the Joint Committee and any of its sub-committees and related entities.

Consultation

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

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that:

- (a) Members approve the establishment of a Joint Scrutiny Committee for the Celtic Freeport Joint Committee on the terms identified in the Joint Committee Establishment Agreement enclosed at Appendix 1;
- (b) That the Members identified at paragraph 9 be appointed as the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee for the Celtic Freeport Joint Committee

Reason for Proposed Decision

16. To ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that the Council can meet the obligations set out in the Celtic Freeport Joint Committee Agreement

Appendices

17. Appendix 1 – Joint Committee Agreement

List of Background Papers

18. None

Officer Contact

Mrs Karen Jones
Chief Executive

Mr Craig Griffiths
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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DATED

2024

(1) NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

and

(2) PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**AGREEMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PUBLIC FUNDS COMMITTEE FOR THE
CELTIC FREEPORT ECONOMIC AREA**

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THIS AGREEMENT IS MADE ON

2024

BETWEEN:

- (1) **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council** of Port Talbot Civic Centre, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ (“**NPTCBC**”); and
- (2) **Pembrokeshire County Council** of County Hall, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 1TP (“**PCC**”),

(each a “**Council**” and together referred to as the “**Councils**”)

WHEREAS:

- (A) The Founding Partners have put forward an outline business case to the UK Government and the Welsh Government, supporting designation of a freeport in South West Wales to be known as the Celtic Freeport. The Founding Partners intend that the Celtic Freeport Company Limited will act as the governing body of the Celtic Freeport. It is expected that in short order a Final Business Case will be submitted which will then lead (it is anticipated) to approval and thereafter designation of the Celtic Freeport as a freeport for the purposes of relevant legislation.
- (B) Public Funding will be available to entities within the Celtic Freeport Economic Area. To obtain Public Funding, such entities will need to submit an application to the Governing Body and demonstrate how their proposal furthers the Celtic Freeport Objectives. The Celtic Freeport Board shall decide whether to recommend an award of Public Funding to an entity in accordance with the Investment Policy to the Public Funds Committee.
- (C) The Councils agree to establish a joint committee to be known as the Public Funds Committee to oversee the investment of Public Funding and to ensure the proper democratic allocation of Public Funding. The Public Funds Committee shall have ultimate responsibility for approving or rejecting (but not amending) proposals from the Celtic Freeport Board relating to the investment of Public Funding.
- (D) The Councils have agreed to work together to establish the Public Funds Committee in order to discharge their obligations to one another, the Celtic Freeport and to Government, and to ensure the effective oversight of Public Funding and further the growth of the Celtic Freeport Economic Area.
- (E) The Councils have accordingly agreed to enter into this Agreement to document and regulate their respective rights and obligations to each other and to enable the Councils to work together to establish and to participate in the Public Funds Committee.
- (F) Each Council has passed resolutions at Full Council and Cabinet. NPTCBC passed their resolutions on [DATE] 2024 and [DATE] 2024, respectively, and PCC passed their resolutions on [DATE] 2024 and [DATE] 2024, respectively.
- (G) The Councils acknowledge that they each may pay Public Funding to a project delivery partner for a relevant project in the Celtic Freeport Economic Area.

IT IS AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Interpretation

1.1 The following definitions and rules of interpretation apply in this Agreement:

“Accountable Body”	NPTCBC or any such body that becomes the accountable body to Government from time to time in respect of the use by the Celtic Freeport of public funds;
“Accountable Body Costs”	the operational and management costs incurred by the Accountable Body in carrying out its role of Accountable Body;
“this Agreement”	this agreement entered into by NPTCBC and PCC;
“Annual Costs Budget”	the approved annual costs budget of the Councils in relation to the payment of any Accountable Body Costs Committee Costs, and any Joint Scrutiny Committee Costs in accordance with this Agreement;
“Applicable Law”	all applicable laws, statutes, regulations, regulatory requirements, guidance and codes of practice in any relevant jurisdiction as amended, updated or replaced from time to time, including the Data Protection Laws;
“Billing Authorities”	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Pembrokeshire County Council;
“Business Day”	any day other than a Saturday or Sunday or a public or bank holiday in Wales;
“Capacity Funding”	capacity funding equalling £1 million (or such other sum as agreed between DLUHC, Government and the Accountable Body) provided by DLUHC and/or Government to the Accountable Body to be made

	available to the Governing Body in accordance with the terms of any relevant agreement or letter;
“Celtic Freeport”	the special economic freeport zone to be designated in South-West Wales in response to the Freeport prospectus issued in September 2022 by Government as described in the Celtic Freeport Full Business Case to be approved by the Celtic Freeport Board;
“Celtic Freeport Board”	the board of directors of the Governing Body from time to time;
“Celtic Freeport Economic Area”	the area as defined from time to time by the Investment Policy within which Public Funding may be reinvested;
“Celtic Freeport Objectives”	the objectives set out in the articles of association of the Governing Body;
“Commencement Date”	the date of this Agreement;
“Committee Costs”	the operational and management costs of the Public Funds Committee;
“Confidential Information”	all know-how and other information relating to the business, affairs or methods of both or either Council and any other participant in the Celtic Freeport and any applicant for funding from the Celtic Freeport, which is contained in or discernible in any form whatsoever (including without limitation software, data, drawings, films, documents and computer-readable media and information pertaining to Intellectual Property) whether or not marked or designated as confidential or proprietary or which is disclosed orally or by demonstration and which is described at the time of disclosure as confidential or is clearly so from its content or the context of disclosure;
“Councils’ Obligations”	the obligations set out in clause 3;
“Data”	any data, document, code, information, Personal Data in connection with this Agreement;
“Data Incident”	the reasonable suspicion of, discovery by, or notice to a party that (a) Data has been or is likely to be accessed or obtained by an unauthorised person; or (b) a party’s systems have been or are likely to be compromised or vulnerable; or a person has threatened the unauthorised access to or obtaining of any Data;
“Data Protection Laws”	all applicable data protection and privacy legislation in force from time to time in the UK including the UK GDPR; the DPA; and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2426) as amended and the guidance and codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or other relevant regulatory authority and applicable to a party;
“Data Subject”	shall have the meanings set out in the DPA;
“DLUHC”	the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (and any other successor central government department which assumes some or all of the functions formerly exercised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities upon an amalgamation or merger of or transfer of engagements or otherwise);
“DPA”	the Data Protection Act 2018 and regulations made thereunder;
“DP Regulator”	any governmental or regulatory body or authority with responsibility for monitoring or enforcing compliance with the Data Protection Laws;
“FBC”	the full business case submitted to DLUHC for the Celtic Freeport to operate a freeport within the Celtic Freeport Economic Area;

“FOI Legislation”	the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and subordinate legislation made under that Act and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004;
Founding Partners	Associated British Ports, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and Milford Haven Port Authority;
“Governing Body”	the entity responsible for the management and oversight of the Celtic Freeport being Celtic Freeport Company Limited a company incorporated in England and Wales (registered with company number 14779775) and whose register office is at Woodfield House, Castle Walk, Neath, SA11 3LN;
“Government”	Welsh Government and UK Government or either of them as the context permits or requires;
“Intellectual Property”	patents, rights to inventions, copyright and related rights, trade-marks, trade names and domain names, rights in get-up, rights in goodwill or to sue for passing off, rights in designs, rights in computer software, database rights, rights in confidential information (including know-how and trade secrets), and any other intellectual property rights, in each case whether registered or unregistered and including all applications (or rights to apply) for, and renewals or extensions of, such rights and all similar or equivalent rights or forms of protection which may now or in the future subsist in any part of the world;
“Investment Policy”	<p>the Celtic Freeport’s policy approved by the Public Funds Committee for the investment of Retained NDR which includes, amongst other things:</p> <p>(i) the objectives of the Celtic Freeport’s Retained NDR programme;</p> <p>(ii) the types of investment which will be eligible;</p> <p>(iii) the process for identifying potential investments;</p> <p>(iv) the process of evaluating, prioritising and approving specific investments;</p> <p>(v) the guidelines for geographic balance, setting out how funding pots will be sized to ensure that they adequately reflect both the origin of the funds and a fair overall allocation between geographies;</p> <p>(vi) arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the outcomes of investment of Retained NDR, including measuring those outcomes;</p>
“Joint Scrutiny Committee Costs”	the operational and management costs of the Joint Scrutiny Committee;
“Investment Committee”	a committee of the Governing Body responsible for assessing proposals for the allocation of Public Funding and making recommendations to the Public Funds Committee regarding such proposals for their consideration;
“Local Authority”	a principal council as defined in section 270 of the Local Government Act 1972 or any body established as a successor of a principal council;
“Material”	all data, text, graphics, images and other materials or documents created, used or supplied by either Council in connection with this Agreement unless before the first use or supply the relevant Council notifies the other Council that the data, text, graphics, images and other materials or documents supplied are not to be covered by this definition;
“MoU”	the Memorandum of Understanding to be entered into between the Governing Body, the Accountable Body, the Billing Authorities, DLUHC and the Welsh Government relating to the use of Public Funding provided by DLUHC and the Welsh Government to the Accountable Body for the Celtic Freeport and outlining

	other support to be made available to the Celtic Freeport by Government;
“NDR”	the non-domestic rates (otherwise known as business rates) payable by occupiers of non-domestic properties to the Billing Authorities under the Local Government and Finance Act 1988;
“Personal Data”	shall have the meanings set out in the DPA and shall also include “Personal Information” classified as “personal information” or “personally identifiable information” or similar term under the Applicable Law governing a person’s processing of personal information about an individual;
“Powers”	the powers of Welsh local authorities under: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 101, 102, 111, 112 and 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 and sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the regulations made under these Acts to make arrangements to discharge functions jointly and to employ staff and place them at the disposal of other local authorities; (ii) the powers in section 9 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to collaborate; (iii) the general power of competence under section 24 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021; (iv) the incidental powers in section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972; (v) the powers in section 1 of the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 and section 25 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 to provide services; (vi) all other powers them so enabling;
“PR Protocol”	a protocol agreed by the Councils for the release of public statements and press releases relating to the Celtic Freeport;
“Project Business Case”	a document setting out details of a project proposed for funding from the Celtic Freeport and explaining why it should be funded from Public Funding or Retained NDR;
“Project Conditions”	the project funding conditions for projects funded by Retained NDR proposed by the relevant Billing Authority and approved by the Public Funds Committee in accordance with clause 12;
“Public Funding”	the Capacity Funding, Retained NDR, Seed Capital Funding, and such other monies as Government may from time to time make available to the Celtic Freeport;
“Regional Project”	a project located in the area of both Councils;
“Request for Information”	a request for information or an apparent request under the FOI Legislation;
“Retained NDR”	the NDR retained by the Billing Authorities to be utilised in connection with the Celtic Freeport;
“Seed Capital”	the funding to be made available by Government under the MoU to be applied to the projects which shall be detailed in the FBC;
“Terms of Reference”	means the terms of reference of the Public Funds Committee as set out in Schedule 1 as may be amended from time to time in accordance with clause 4.4;
“UK GDPR”	has the meaning given to it in section 3(10) (as supplemented by section 205(4)) of the DPA;
“Withdrawing Council”	a Council that has given notice of its intention to withdraw from this Agreement in accordance with clause 16.

“Withdrawal Notice” a notice issued by one of the Councils in accordance with clause 16 to give notice of its withdrawal from this Agreement;

- 1.2 The headings are inserted for convenience only and shall not affect the construction of this Agreement.
- 1.3 Words importing one gender include all other genders and words importing the singular include the plural and vice versa.
- 1.4 A reference in this Agreement to any clause, paragraph or Schedule is, except where it is expressly stated to the contrary, a reference to a clause or paragraph of or Schedule to this Agreement.
- 1.5 Any reference to this Agreement or to any other document unless otherwise specified shall include any variation, amendment or supplements to such document expressly permitted by this Agreement or otherwise agreed in writing between the relevant parties.
- 1.6 Words preceding “include”, “includes”, “including” and “included” shall be construed without limitation by the words which follow those words unless inconsistent with the context, and the rule of interpretation known as “*eiusdem generis*” shall not apply.
- 1.7 Any reference to the title of an officer of any of the Councils shall include any person holding such office from time to time by the same or any title substituted thereafter or such other officer of the relevant Council as that Council may from time to time appoint to carry out the duties of the officer referred to.
- 1.8 The Schedules form part of this Agreement and shall have the same force and effect as if expressly set out in the body of this Agreement and references to this Agreement includes the Schedules.

2. Commencement and Duration

This Agreement shall commence on the Commencement Date and shall continue in until it is terminated earlier in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement.

3. The Councils’ Obligations

- 3.1 The Councils agree to work together to carry out the functions of the Public Funds Committee and ensure the effective oversight of Public Funding pursuant to and in accordance with this Agreement.
- 3.2 To that end the Councils shall promote the Celtic Freeport and (without prejudice to the generality of that obligation) shall comply with their duties as set out at clause 7 (Duties of the Accountable Body) and clause 8 (Duties of the Councils). This is subject to the fiduciary financial and legal duties of each Council.
- 3.3 Without prejudice to the specific terms of this Agreement, the Councils further agree that they shall conduct their relationship in accordance with the following principles:
 - (a) Openness and trust: The Councils shall be open and trusting in their dealings with each other, make information and analysis available to each other, discuss and develop ideas openly and contribute fully to all aspects of making the joint working successful. The Councils shall embrace a commitment to transparency in their dealings and shall recognise the need to comply with statutory access to information requirements including FOI Legislation and supporting codes of practice.
 - (b) Commitment and drive: The Councils shall be fully committed to working jointly, shall seek to fully motivate employees and shall address the challenges associated with the delivery of public money connected with the Celtic Freeport with enthusiasm and a determination to succeed.
 - (c) Skills and creativity: The Councils recognise that each brings complementary skills and knowledge which they shall apply creatively to achieving the Councils’ objectives, continuity, resolution of difficulties and the development of the joint working relationship and the personnel working within it. It is recognised that this shall involve the appreciation and adoption of common values.
 - (d) Effective relationships: The roles and responsibilities of each Council shall be clear with relationships developed at the appropriate levels within each organisation with direct and easy access to each other’s representatives.
 - (e) Developing and adaptive: The Councils recognise that they are engaged in a potentially long-term business relationship which needs to develop and adapt and shall use reasonable endeavours to develop and maintain an effective joint process to ensure that the relationship develops appropriately and in line with these principles and objectives.
 - (f) Reputation and Standing: The Councils shall pay the utmost regard to the standing and reputation of one another, and act with regard to each Council’s own employer and member codes of conduct and shall not do or fail to do anything which may bring the standing or reputation of any other Council into disrepute or attract adverse publicity to any other Council.
 - (g) Reasonableness of decision making: The Councils agree that all decisions made in relation to this Agreement and the Celtic Freeport shall be made by them acting reasonably and in good faith.
 - (h) Members and Officers’ Commitments: Each Council shall use its reasonable endeavours to procure that their respective members and officers who are involved in the Celtic Freeport shall at all times act in the best interests of the Celtic Freeport, and act compatibly with regard to each Council’s own employer and member codes of conduct, devote sufficient resources to deliver the Celtic Freeport and respond in a timely manner to all relevant requests from the other Council.

4. Establishment of the Public Funds Committee

- 4.1 In exercise of their Powers under sections 101(5) and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and all other enabling powers the Councils hereby create a joint committee to be known as the Public Funds Committee with effect from the Commencement Date.
- 4.2 The Councils shall use their Powers in sections 101, 102, 111, 112 and 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000, section 24 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, section 1 of the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970, section 25 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994, section 9 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and all other enabling powers available from time to time to facilitate their effective participation in the Public Funds Committee and the effective oversight of public money delivered through the Celtic Freeport.
- 4.3 The Terms of Reference as at the date of signature of this Agreement are set out in Schedule 1 to this Agreement. The Public Funds Committee shall operate and conduct its business in accordance with the terms of this Agreement including the Terms of Reference.
- 4.4 The Councils may from time to time vary the Terms of Reference and this shall be a matter reserved to the Councils however any changes must be done so in consultation with the Celtic Freeport Board. In the event that the Councils agree to vary the Terms of Reference they shall notify the Celtic Freeport Board and provide them with a copy of the revised terms within ten Business Days of any such revisions being agreed. The reservation to the Councils does not preclude the Public Funds Committee from making recommendations to vary the Terms of Reference where it considers they shall promote the Councils' Obligations.
- 4.5 This Agreement is without prejudice to each Council's other powers and responsibilities for its area.

5. Arrangements for the discharge of functions

- 5.1 The Councils agree to use their powers under section 101(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and all other enabling powers to enter into arrangements under which the Public Funds Committee shall discharge on their behalf the functions set out in the Terms of Reference.
- 5.2 Each Council hereby represents and confirms to the other Council that it has obtained all necessary consents sufficient to ensure the delegation of functions and responsibilities provided for by this Agreement.
- 5.3 Each Council warrants that entering into this Agreement and its participation in the Public Funds Committee is consistent with its own constitution.
- 5.4 The Councils agree that, where additional agreements may be required to ensure their working relationship and obligations in connection with the Celtic Freeport and under the MoU can be properly discharged, they shall work together and in good faith to agree such additional agreements.

6. Appointment of the Accountable Body and officer functions

- 6.1 NPTCBC shall act as the Accountable Body to the Celtic Freeport in accordance with the MoU and shall receive the Capacity Funding and Seed Capital for and on behalf of the Celtic Freeport and shall hold and manage such funding in accordance with the terms of the MoU although decisions about spending such funds will be subject to the provisions of this Agreement.
- 6.2 The Public Funds Committee shall determine the appropriate functions under this Agreement in respect of the section 151 officer, monitoring officer, democratic services, audit and scrutiny obligations as to whom such responsibilities shall lie. At the commencement of this Agreement responsibility for these functions are allocated as follows:
 - (a) NPTCBC - Section 151 Officer function
 - (b) NPTCBC – Monitoring Officer function and Democratic Services function (to the Public Funds Committee)
 - (c) PCC Scrutiny function (to the Public Funds Committee and Democratic Services of the Joint Scrutiny Committee)
 - (d) PCC – audit function
- 6.3 Any decision to change the responsibility for the functions set out in this clause 6 shall be agreed between the Councils and recorded in writing.
- 6.4 The Accountable Body shall act as the Accountable Body.

7. Duties of the Accountable Body

- 7.1 The Accountable Body shall:
 - (a) act as the primary interface with Government and any other funding bodies necessary to discharge the Councils' Obligations in respect of Public Funding;
 - (b) hold and release any Seed Capital and Capacity Funding (and where relevant other sources of Public Funding) and only release such funds as agreed in accordance with the terms of such funding and this Agreement;
 - (c) comply with the obligations of the Accountable Body set out in the MoU;
 - (d) undertake the accounting and auditing responsibilities set out in this Agreement; and
 - (e) cooperate with any reasonable requests of PCC relating to Scrutiny and audit functions.

8. Duties of the Councils

8.1 The Councils shall:

- (a) act diligently and in good faith in all their dealings with each other and shall assist each other to discharge the Councils' obligations in relation to the Public Funds Committee and the oversight of public money delivered through the Celtic Freeport pursuant to and in accordance with this Agreement and all applicable legislation;
- (b) act with reasonable skill and care and in accordance with best practice;
- (c) work together to ensure that Retained NDR is utilised and distributed equitably across both Councils' areas and in accordance with the Investment Policy;
- (d) work together to deliver the outcomes and objectives contained in the MoU;
- (e) in respect of their role as Billing Authorities:
 - (i) hold and release Retained NDR and only release such funds as agreed in accordance with the terms of such funding and this Agreement;
 - (ii) act in accordance with the principles and strategic aims of this Agreement and any applicable policies agreed by the Public Funds Committee; and
 - (iii) comply with any investigation by Audit Wales, Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, or any other statutory ombudsman or tribunal relating to the Celtic Freeport.

8.2 It is acknowledged and agreed that the obligations and liabilities of each Council shall bind any successor authority in the event of any local government reorganisation.

8.3 Where any additional services not covered by the roles and responsibilities set out with this Agreement may be required to support the Public Funds Committee in the discharge of its obligations under this Agreement these shall be provided by the Councils as necessary and as agreed between the Councils from time to time.

9. Retained Business Rates

9.1 The Public Funds Committee shall:

- (a) approve the Investment Policy;
- (b) ensure decisions relating to the use and management of Retained NDR are taken in accordance with the Investment Policy.

10. Virtual Pooling

10.1 The Councils shall operate a virtual pooled fund for the management and utilisation of Retained NDR. Allocation of Retained NDR and the operation of the virtual pooled fund shall be determined and undertaken in accordance with the Investment Policy.

11. Projects Funded

11.1 Public Funding shall support local projects and Regional Projects in accordance with the Investment Policy which align with and promote the following broad objectives:

- (a) to promote regeneration and job creation;
- (b) to support activity which promotes the transition to a Net Zero economy and the Celtic Freeport's Net Zero and decarbonisation ambitions;
- (c) to establish the Celtic Freeport as a national hub for global trade and investment; and
- (d) to create hotbeds for innovation.

12. Processes for funding Projects

12.1 In order to receive Public Funding every project must observe the following procedure:

- (a) the Investment Committee is responsible for assessing proposals for the allocation of Seed Capital and Retained NDR (and where relevant other sources of Public Funding) and will make proposals in accordance with the Investment Policy to the Celtic Freeport Board;
- (b) the Celtic Freeport Board will review all proposals made by the Investment Committee and make recommendations to the Public Funds Committee;
- (c) the Public Funds Committee can either approve or reject the recommendations put to it by the Celtic Freeport Board. It cannot amend such recommendations, nor propose that an alternative level of funding is made available to the relevant project;
- (d) funding for projects shall only be released at the request of the Public Funds Committee;
- (e) where the Celtic Freeport Board rejects any proposals made by the Investment Committee it shall forward details of the proposals to the Public Funds Committee and shall also provide its reasons for such rejection. The Public Funds Committee may provide comment and raise questions to the Celtic Freeport Board on any projects which are rejected by the Celtic Freeport Board.

- 12.2 All Project Business Cases for projects to be considered for funding from Public Funding must meet the requirements of extant guidance from the UK and Welsh Governments which at the Commencement Date is guidance on the preparation of “five case business models” and accordingly every Project Business Case must include full details of:
- (i) the strategic case (strategic fit and clear investment objectives);
 - (ii) the economic case (optimising value for money);
 - (iii) the commercial case (attractiveness to the market and procurement arrangements);
 - (iv) the financial case (affordability – including the contributions to be made by other public and private sector partners and the basis for them); and
 - (v) the management case (deliverability – including confirmation of decisions made and required by the governance arrangements of third party funders of a project - and plans for delivery).
- (b) If the Public Funds Committee is not satisfied with the quality of the Project Business Case it shall return the Project Business Case to the Celtic Freeport Board. The Project Business Case may then be amended as necessary and resubmitted.
- (c) If the Public Funds Committee approves a project for funding from [Public Funding][Seed Capital or Retained NDR] it shall consider and approve the Project Conditions proposed by the relevant Council (or Councils as the case may be) for the project. Upon approval of the Project Conditions the Public Funds Committee shall direct the relevant Council (or Councils as the case may be) to release the [Public Funding][Seed Capital or Retained NDR] for that project.
- 12.3 The Councils shall, with the support of the Governing Body, be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Project Conditions. Public Funding paid to any project must not exceed the amount allocated to the project in accordance with the Project Business Case or as otherwise agreed by the Public Funds Committee.
- 12.4 If a Council wishes to withdraw or withhold funding from a project being funded by Public Funding, it shall do so in accordance with the terms of any funding agreement into which it has entered for the project and shall notify the Public Funds Committee as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 12.5 It is intended that the process identified in this clause 12 shall take no longer than six (6) calendar months.

13. Costs

13.1 Budget

The Public Funds Committee shall agree the Annual Costs Budget.

13.2 Accounts

The Accountable Body shall prepare accounts for any Committee Costs and Joint Scrutiny Committee Costs incurred for the financial year, 1 April to 31 March.

13.3 Annual Costs Budget

- (a) Subject to 13.3(b) and 13.3(c), all Costs in the Annual Costs Budget shall be funded through Retained NDR which shall be paid by each Council in accordance with the Investment Policy.
- (b) The Councils acknowledge that during the establishment phase of the Celtic Freeport, the Founding Partners funded all necessary activities for the creation of the Celtic Freeport and establishment of the Governing Body and that such costs will be reimbursed to the Founding Partners from Retained NDR during the first year when Retained NDR receipts exceed £1,000,000.
- (c) During the period:
 - (i) where the Billing Authorities are not realising sufficient Retained NDR receipts; or
 - (ii) where any reimbursement to the Founding Partners pursuant to clause 13.3(b) results in insufficient Retained NDR, to fund the Annual Costs Budget, the Annual Costs Budget shall be funded by the Councils in such proportions as the Councils may agree from time to time. The Councils' costs in funding the Annual Costs Budget during such period shall be reimbursed to each Council following the Billing Authorities' realisation of sufficient Retained NDR receipts to cover such costs.
- (d) Should there be any shortfall in funding for the Annual Costs Budget from Retained NDR the Councils shall agree funding contributions to be paid by each Council to cover the shortfall.
- (e) The Public Funds Committee shall if necessary consider and recommend to the Councils alternative funding options for the Annual Costs Budget.

14. Audit and Scrutiny

- 14.1 In exercise of their powers under sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and all other enabling powers the Councils hereby create a Joint Scrutiny Committee with effect from the Commencement Date. The Joint Scrutiny Committee shall provide a scrutiny function to ensure greater public accountability over decisions made by the Public Funds Committee.
- 14.2 The terms of reference of the Joint Scrutiny Committee are set out at Schedule 2 to this Agreement.
- 14.3 The membership of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall consist of 8 members. The Councils shall each nominate 4 members for appointment to the Joint Scrutiny Committee. The members nominated by each Council shall be elected members of

that Council but shall not be a member of that Council's executive and shall not be a member of the Public Funds Committee.

- 14.4 The role of the Joint Scrutiny Committee is to provide advice, challenge and support to the Public Funds Committee. To the extent the Joint Scrutiny Committee can influence the Public Funds Committee's decision making, the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be required to:
- (a) Review and scrutinise the Public Funds Committee's financial affairs.
 - (b) Review and assess the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources have been used.
 - (c) Make reports and recommendations to the Public Funds Committee in relation to the points in (a) and (b).
- 14.5 If any Council is provided with Public Funding to implement a project in the Celtic Freeport Economic Area the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall audit the finances and the discharge of functions relating to that project.
- 14.6 Any Council which is provided with Public Funding to implement a project in the Celtic Freeport Economic Area shall keep records of time worked by any person working on the project and any other costs relating to the project.
- 14.7 Each Council shall keep records of time worked by any person on any matter relating to the Public Funds Committee or the Celtic Freeport.
- 14.8 Each Council shall permit all records held by it which are referred to in this Agreement or relate to this Agreement to be examined and copied from time to time by the other Council or any representatives of the other Council or any other representatives who reasonably require access to the same in order to undertake any audit of the funds received and spent pursuant to this Agreement (including but not limited to the Accountable Body and Public Funds Committee). If a representative of a Council requests from the other Council a copy in electronic form of any record held by the other Council which is referred to in this Agreement or relates to this Agreement the other Council shall provide a copy of the requested record in electronic form if the record exists in electronic form when the other Council receives the request.
- 14.9 The Auditor General for Wales shall have access to any document relating to the Public Funds Committee for the purpose of the Auditor General's examination of any auditable accounts, for the purpose of undertaking studies under section 145A of the Government of Wales Act 1998 or for the purpose of carrying out in accordance with any enactment other examinations or studies into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which a person has used resources in discharging the person's functions and any officer of the Wales Audit Office and Government shall have access to any document relating to the Public Funds Committee and shall be permitted at reasonable notice to visit the premises of the Councils and to inspect activities funded by Public Funding and to examine and take copies of books of account and other documents and records relating to activities funded by Public Funding.

15. Mitigation

- 15.1 Each Council shall at all times take all reasonable steps to minimise and mitigate any:
- (a) loss for which the relevant Council is entitled to bring a claim against the other Council;
 - (b) losses arising from the determination of this Agreement; and
 - (c) losses arising from the withdrawal of a Council from the Public Funds Committee, pursuant to the terms of this Agreement.

16. Withdrawal from the Public Funds Committee and Termination

- 16.1 This Agreement and the Public Funds Committee created in accordance with its terms shall (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Councils) terminate not less than thirty Business Days after the occurrence of any of the following events:
- (a) the Governing Body ceases to operate;
 - (b) the Governing Body is wound up;
 - (c) the Celtic Freeport ceases to be designated as a Freeport under legislation or otherwise by direction of Government;
or
 - (d) either or both Councils withdraw from their membership of the Governing Body.
- 16.2 Either Council may withdraw from the Public Funds Committee by giving not less than twenty four months' written notice to the other Council of its intention to do so ("**Withdrawal Notice**").
- 16.3 Upon receipt of a Withdrawal Notice or upon occurrence of any event set out in clause 16.1 an emergency meeting of the Public Funds Committee shall be convened. The meeting shall consider the implications of such withdrawal or termination and endeavour to agree an appropriate exit plan. Failure to agree an exit plan will be referred to the dispute resolution procedure set out in clause 19 and withdrawal or termination will be suspended until the dispute is resolved. The Councils agree that they will provide all reasonable assistance to one another to allow the exit of either Council.
- 16.4 In the absence of agreement to the contrary each Council shall bear its own costs in relation to termination or a Council's withdrawal from the Public Funds Committee and a withdrawing Council shall have no obligation to bear the costs of the other Council even where such costs are directly related to the withdrawal.
- 16.5 The exiting Council shall remain liable for its share (as calculated in accordance with the terms of this Agreement) of any costs properly incurred by the Public Funds Committee during its time as a member up to and including the date upon which its membership terminates.
- 16.6 Where either Council withdraws from the Public Funds Committee this Agreement shall terminate and the provisions of clause 17 shall apply.

17. Termination of this Agreement

- 17.1 In addition to clause 16, the Councils agree that this Agreement may be determined upon terms agreed by the Councils.
- 17.2 In the event of termination of this Agreement each Council shall:
- (a) supply to the other Council when requested any information which the other Council requires for the continuing involvement by that Council in the Celtic Freeport; and
 - (b) undertake to pay such reasonable payment or payments which fairly reflect the obligations of that Council pursuant to this Agreement or in absence of agreement on an equal basis.

18. Liabilities of the Councils

- 18.1 Each Council shall indemnify and keep indemnified the other Council against any losses, claims, expenses, actions, demands, costs and liability suffered by that Council to the extent arising from any wilful default or breach by the indemnifying Council of its obligations under this Agreement or negligent act or omission in relation to such obligations (for the purposes of this clause 18 "wilful" shall not include matters which are outside the reasonable control of the indemnifying Council).
- 18.2 No claim shall be made against the Accountable Body to recover any loss or damage which may be incurred by reason of or arising out of the carrying out by the Accountable Body of its obligations under this Agreement unless and to the extent such loss or damage arises from a wilful default or breach or negligent act or omission by the Accountable Body under clause 18.1.
- 18.3 Where either Council receives a claim for losses, expenses, actions, demands, costs and liabilities which relates to this Agreement it shall notify and provide details of such claim as soon as is reasonably practicable to the other Council.
- 18.4 Neither Council shall be indemnified in accordance with this clause 18 unless it has given notice in accordance with clause 18.3 to the other Council against whom it shall be enforcing its right to an indemnity under this Agreement.
- 18.5 Each Council shall not be obliged to indemnify the other Council to the extent that the insurances maintained by the other Council at the relevant time provide an indemnity against the loss giving rise to a claim and to the extent that the other Council recovers under a policy of insurance save that the Council responsible for liabilities suffered by the other Council shall be responsible for the deductible under any such policy of insurance and any amount over the maximum amount insured under such policy of insurance.

19. Dispute Resolution

- 19.1 The Councils undertake and agree to pursue a positive approach towards dispute resolution which seeks in the context of this joint working arrangement to identify a solution at the lowest operational level that is appropriate to the subject of the dispute and which avoids legal proceedings and maintains a strong working relationship between the Councils.
- 19.2 Any dispute arising in relation to any aspect of this Agreement shall be resolved in accordance with this clause 19. This is without prejudice to the right of each Council under section 103 of the Local Government Act 1972 to refer a dispute about the expenses of a joint committee to be determined by a single arbitrator agreed by the appointing authorities or, in the absence of agreement, to be determined by the Welsh Ministers.
- 19.3 All disputes, claims or differences between the Councils arising out of or in connection with this Agreement or its subject matter or formation, including any question regarding its existence, validity or termination, ("**Dispute**") shall, at the written request of a Council, be referred by each Council to its Chief Executive Officer.
- 19.4 If the Councils' Chief Executive Officers do not agree a resolution of the Dispute within twenty Business Days of the date of service of any such request, either Council may require the other Council by notice in writing to attempt to settle the Dispute by mediation in accordance with the Centre for Dispute Resolution ("**CEDR**") Model Mediation Procedure. Within five Business Days of the date of service of such notice the Councils shall each propose a mediator and shall seek to agree as to the selection of a mediator.
- 19.5 If the Councils are unable to agree on a mediator within ten Business Days of date of service of the notice referred to in clause 19.4 or the mediator agreed upon is unable or unwilling to act and the Councils cannot agree upon a substitute, either of the Councils may apply to CEDR to appoint a mediator as soon as practicable.
- 19.6 The Councils shall within five Business Days of the appointment of the mediator ("**Mediator**") meet with them in order to agree a programme for the exchange of any relevant information and the structure to be adopted for the negotiations. If considered appropriate, the Councils may at any stage seek assistance from CEDR to provide guidance on a suitable procedure.
- 19.7 All negotiations connected with the Dispute shall be conducted in strict confidence and without prejudice to the rights of the Councils in any future proceedings.
- 19.8 If the Councils reach agreement on the resolution of the Dispute, such agreement shall be reduced to writing and, once it is signed by the Councils or their duly authorised representatives, shall be and remain binding upon the Councils.
- 19.9 The costs and expenses of the mediation shall be borne equally by the Councils. Each Council shall bear its own costs and expenses of its participation in the mediation.
- 19.10 If mediation fails to secure a resolution within ten Business Days of the Mediator being appointed, the Dispute shall be referred to and finally resolved by the Courts of England and Wales in accordance with clause 29.
- 19.11 In the event that court proceedings are commenced pursuant to clause 19.10 the Councils shall notify Government.

20. Notices

20.1 Form of Notice

Any demand, notice or other communication given in connection with or required by this Agreement shall be made in writing and shall be delivered to or sent by:

- (a) pre-paid first class post or special delivery post; or
- (b) email,

to the recipient at the address as notified in writing by each Council to the other from time to time.

20.2 Service

Any such demand, notice or communication shall be deemed to have been duly served:

- (a) if delivered by hand, when left at the proper address for service;
- (b) if given or made by pre-paid first class or special delivery post two Business Days after being posted; or
- (c) if sent by email at the time of transmission,

provided in each case that if the time of such deemed service is either after 4.00pm on a Business Day or on a day other than a Business Day service shall be deemed to occur at 9.00am on the next following Business Day.

21. Information and Confidentiality

21.1 Each Council shall keep confidential all Confidential Information and shall use all reasonable endeavours to prevent their employees and agents from making any disclosure to any person of any Confidential Information other than as permitted under the provisions of this Agreement. Each Council shall not use or disclose other than as permitted under the provisions of this Agreement any Confidential Information about the business of or belonging to the other Council or third party which has come to its attention as a result of or in connection with this Agreement.

21.2 The obligation in clause 21.1 shall not apply to:

- (a) any disclosure of information that is reasonably required by persons engaged in the performance of their obligations under this Agreement;
- (b) any matter which a party can demonstrate is already generally available and in the public domain otherwise than as a result of a breach of this clause;
- (c) any disclosure which is required by any law (including any order or a court of competent jurisdiction) any statutory obligation or the rules of any stock exchange or governmental or regulatory authority having the force of law;
- (d) any disclosure of information which is already lawfully in the possession of the disclosing Council without restrictions as to its use prior to its disclosure by the disclosing Council;
- (e) any disclosure which is required or recommended by the rules of any governmental or regulatory authority including any guidance from time to time as to openness and disclosure of information by public bodies;
- (f) any disclosure which is necessary to be disclosed to provide relevant information to any insurance broker in connection with obtaining any insurance required by this Agreement;
- (g) any disclosure made pursuant to clause 23;
- (h) any disclosure by a party to a department, office or agency of Government; or
- (i) any disclosure for the purpose of the examination and certification of a party's accounts.

21.3 Where disclosure is permitted under clauses 21.2(a), 21.2(f), 21.2(h) or 21.2(i) the recipient of the information shall be placed under the same obligation of confidentiality as that contained in this Agreement by the disclosing Council.

21.4 Neither Council shall make any public statement or issue any press release or publish any other public document relating to, connected with, or arising out of this Agreement or any other agreement relating to the Celtic Freeport other than in accordance with any PR Protocol agreed by the Councils or similar policy as may be adopted by the Governing Body.

22. Data Protection

22.1 The Councils shall comply with the provisions and obligations imposed on them by the Data Protection Laws at all times when processing Personal Data in connection with this Agreement, such processing shall be in respect of the types of Personal Data, categories of Data Subjects, nature and purposes, and duration, set out in a document to be agreed by the Councils.

22.2 Each Council shall maintain records of all processing operations under its responsibility that contain at least the minimum information required by the Data Protection Laws, and shall make such information available to any DP Regulator on request.

22.3 To the extent either Council processes any Personal Data on behalf of the other Council the processing Council shall:

- (a) process such Personal Data only in accordance with the other Council's written instructions from time to time and only for the duration of this Agreement;

- (b) not process such Personal Data for any purpose other than those set out in this Agreement or otherwise expressly authorised by the other Council;
- (c) take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of all its personnel who have access to such Personal Data, limit such access to its personnel who require access, and remove, when no longer required, such access to the Personal Data, and ensure that any such personnel are committed to binding obligations of confidentiality when processing such Personal Data;
- (d) implement and maintain technical and organisational measures and procedures to ensure an appropriate level of security for such Personal Data, including protecting such Personal Data against the risks of accidental, unlawful or unauthorised destruction, loss, alteration, disclosure, dissemination or access;
- (e) not transfer such Personal Data outside the UK without the prior written consent of the other Council;
- (f) inform the other Council within twenty four hours if any such Personal Data is (while within the processing Council's possession or control) subject to a personal data breach (as defined in Article 4 of the UK GDPR) or within such other time period as required under other Data Protection Laws, or is lost or destroyed or becomes damaged, corrupted or unusable.
- (g) only appoint a third party to process such Personal Data with the prior written consent of the other Council;
- (h) not use or disclose any Personal Data to any Data Subject or to a third party other than at the written request of the other Council or as expressly provided for in this Agreement;
- (i) return or irretrievably delete all Personal Data on termination or expiry of this Agreement and not make any further use of such Personal Data;
- (j) provide to the other Council and any DP Regulator all information and assistance necessary or desirable to demonstrate or ensure compliance with the obligations in this clause and the Data Protection Laws;
- (k) permit the other Council or its representatives to access any relevant premises, personnel or records of the processing Council on reasonable notice to audit and otherwise verify compliance with this clause;
- (l) take such steps as are reasonably required to assist the other Council in ensuring compliance with its obligations under Articles 30 to 36 (inclusive) of the UK GDPR and other applicable Data Protection Laws;
- (m) notify the other Council within two Business Days if it receives a request from a Data Subject to exercise its rights under the Data Protection Laws in relation to that person's Personal Data; and
- (n) provide the other Council with its full co-operation and assistance in relation to any request made by a Data Subject to exercise its rights under the Data Protection Laws in relation to that person's Personal Data.

22.4 If either Council receives any complaint, notice or communication which relates directly or indirectly to the processing of Personal Data by the other Council or to the other Council's compliance with the Data Protection Laws, it shall as soon as reasonably practicable, notify the other Council and it shall provide the other Council with reasonable co-operation and assistance in relation to any such complaint, notice or communication.

22.5 If either Council requires the other Council to make any disclosures or provide any information in respect of this Agreement in order to enable that Council to meet its obligations under the Data Protection Laws the other Council shall do so.

22.6 The provisions of this clause 22 shall apply during the continuance of this Agreement and indefinitely after its expiry or termination.

23. Freedom of Information

23.1 Each Council acknowledges that it and the other Council are subject to the requirements of FOI Legislation and therefore recognise that information relating to this Agreement may be the subject of a Request for Information. The Councils shall comply with their own policy on FOI Legislation in respect of information disclosure obligations to the extent that they relate to the Celtic Freeport.

23.2 Where a Council receives a Request for Information in relation to information which it is holding on behalf of the other Council in connection with the Celtic Freeport, it shall inform the other Council of the request and its response.

23.3 The Councils shall be required to assist each other in responding to a Request for Information to the extent that it relates to the Celtic Freeport. This shall include co-ordinating the response when requested to do so by the other Council. All costs incurred by the assisting Council in assisting the other Council with a response to a Request for Information relating to the Celtic Freeport shall be accounted for as Committee Costs. The Council which requests the assistance of or co-ordination of the assisting Council to respond to a Request for Information relating to the Celtic Freeport shall:

- (a) provide the assisting Council with a copy of the Request for Information as soon as practicable after receipt and in any event within two Business Days of receiving the Request for Information;
- (b) provide the assisting Council with a copy of all information in its possession or power in the form the assisting Council reasonably requires within ten Business Days (or such longer period as the assisting Council may specify) of the assisting Council requesting that information;
- (c) provide all necessary assistance as reasonably requested by the assisting Council to enable it to provide any required assistance or co-ordination of a response to a Request for Information within the time for compliance set out in FOI Legislation;

23.4 The Council which receives a Request for Information shall be responsible for determining in their absolute discretion whether any information requested:

- (a) is exempt from disclosure under FOI Legislation; or
- (b) is to be disclosed in response to the Request for Information.

23.5 Each Council agrees that the other Council may be obliged under the FOI Legislation to disclose information:

- (a) without consulting them where it has not been practicable to achieve such consultation; or
- (b) following consultation with them and having taken their views into account.

24. Language

The Public Funds Committee and Joint Scrutiny Committee shall undertake their functions in such a way as to comply with each of the Council's compliance notices issued under the Welsh Language Standards (No 1) Regulations 2015.

25. Severability

25.1 If at any time any clause or part of a clause or Schedule or appendix or part of a Schedule or appendix to this Agreement is found by any court, tribunal or administrative body of competent jurisdiction to be wholly or partly illegal, invalid or unenforceable in any respect:

- (a) that shall not affect or impair the legality, validity or enforceability of any other provision of this Agreement; and
- (b) the Councils shall in good faith amend this Agreement to reflect as nearly as possible the spirit and intention behind that illegal, invalid or unenforceable provision to the extent that such spirit and intention is consistent with the laws of that jurisdiction and so that the amended Agreement complies with the laws of that jurisdiction.

26. Relationship of Councils

Each Council is an independent Local Authority and nothing contained in this Agreement shall be construed to imply that there is any relationship between the Councils of partnership or principal/agent or of employer/employee. Neither Council shall have any right or authority to act on behalf of the other nor to bind the other Council by contract or otherwise except to the extent expressly permitted by the terms of this Agreement.

27. Third Party Rights

The Councils as parties to this Agreement do not intend that any of its terms shall be enforceable by virtue of the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 by any person not a party to it.

28. Entire Agreement

28.1 This Agreement and all documents referred to in this Agreement set forth the entire agreement between the Councils with respect to the subject matter covered by them and supersede and replace all prior communications, representations (other than fraudulent representations), warranties, stipulations, undertakings and agreements whether oral or written between the Councils.

28.2 Each Council acknowledges that it does not enter into this Agreement in reliance on any warranty, representation or undertaking other than those contained in this Agreement and that its only remedies are for breach of this Agreement, provided that this shall not exclude any liability which either Council would otherwise have to the other in respect of any statements made fraudulently by or on behalf of it prior to the date of this Agreement.

29. Law of Agreement or Jurisdiction

This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of England and Wales as they apply in Wales and the Councils submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

30. Assignment

30.1 The rights and obligations of the Councils under this Agreement shall not be assigned, novated or otherwise transferred to any person other than to any public body acquiring the whole of the Agreement and having the legal capacity, power and authority to become a party to and to perform the obligations of the relevant Council under this Agreement being:

- (a) the Welsh Ministers;
- (b) a devolved Welsh authority as defined in the Wales Act 2017;
- (c) a Minister of the Crown pursuant to an Order under the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975; and
- (d) a UK public body exercising functions in Wales or in England and Wales.

31. Waiver

31.1 No failure or delay by either Council to exercise any right, power or remedy shall operate as a waiver of it nor shall any partial exercise preclude any further exercise of the same or some other right, power or remedy unless a waiver is given in writing by that Council.

31.2 Each Council shall pay its own costs incurred in connection with the preparation, execution, completion and implementation of this Agreement.

32. Counterparts

This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts each of which so executed shall be an original but together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

33. Discretion of the Councils

The discretion of each Council shall not be fettered or otherwise affected by the terms of this Agreement.

This Agreement has been entered into as a deed and delivered on the date stated at the beginning of it.

THE COMMON SEAL OF

the **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

was hereunto affixed in the presence of

THE COMMON SEAL OF

the **Pembrokeshire County Council**

was hereunto affixed in the presence of

Schedule 1 Terms of Reference of the Public Funds Committee

1 Membership

The Public Funds Committee shall comprise 6 members in total, 3 from each Council (and including each Council's leader).

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The Public Funds Committee's role is to ensure proper democratic accountability for the allocation of Public Funding including but not limited to ensuring compliance with the UK's subsidy control regime and value for money.
- 2.2 The Public Funds Committee has ultimate responsibility for approving or rejecting (but not amending) proposals from the Celtic Freeport Board relating to the use of Public Funding and Public Funding will only be released by the Councils for approved purposes at the request of the Public Funds Committee.
- 2.3 The Public Funds Committee is the final stage in the decision-making process relating to the use of Public Funding where proposals from the Celtic Freeport Board are presented to the Councils and the Councils are entitled to take a meaningful decision on the proposals, including refusing to approve them.
- 2.4 The Public Funds Committee's functions shall include:
 - (a) considering and reviewing Project Business Cases seeking financial support from Public Funding as recommended to the Public Funds Committee by the Celtic Freeport Board;
 - (b) approving Project Business Cases eligible to receive funding from Public Funding. The Public Funds Committee has absolute discretion on whether to approve or reject any Project Business Cases recommended by the Celtic Freeport Board for financial support from Public Funding;
 - (c) reviewing and Approving any Business Plan which includes a profiled statement of spending covering grants awarded to the Governing Body from Public Funding;
 - (d) receiving reports from the Celtic Freeport Board relating to project proposals which have not been approved by the Celtic Freeport Board and providing comments and raising questions to the Celtic Freeport Board on such rejected proposals;
 - (e) financial management of Public Funding;
 - (f) monitoring the financial impact on Public Funding and reporting on this to the Councils;
 - (g) reviewing, consulting on, approving and monitoring the implementation of the Investment Policy;
 - (h) agreeing the Annual Costs Budget;
 - (i) agreeing the terms and conditions of Project Funding;
 - (j) reviewing and consulting on NDR relief policies and any other relevant policies that each Council may be required to develop and adopt in respect of Public Funding; and
 - (k) consideration of the Governing Body's budget and forward financial plan in connection with the use of Retained NDR allocation to support the Governing Body's operating costs. Any request for Retained NDR allocation to support such costs cannot be unreasonably withheld or delayed by the Public Funds Committee.

3 Membership

- 3.1 Each of the Councils shall appoint its leader or equivalent and two other representatives as members of the Public Funds Committee and each member shall have full voting rights.
- 3.2 Each Council may appoint deputies for their members on the Public Funds Committee who may attend meetings of the Public Funds Committee as substitutes for the Council's appointed members on the Public Funds Committee but such deputies shall only be entitled to attend meetings of the Public Funds Committee in the absence of the Council's appointed members.
- 3.3 The Public Funds Committee may appoint additional persons to the Public Funds Committee as non-voting members of the Public Funds Committee subject to such members entering into an appropriate co-option agreement.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer of each of the Councils shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Public Funds Committee as advisers and shall not have a vote.
- 3.5 The Chair and Vice Chair of the Public Funds Committee shall be elected by the Public Funds Committee and the Vice Chair shall not be from the same Council as the Chair of the Public Funds Committee and for the avoidance of doubt the Chair shall not have a casting vote

4 Voting

- 4.1 Each member of the Public Funds Committee shall have one vote. Decisions of the Public Funds Committee shall be made by simple majority of those representing a quorum who are present and entitled to vote at the relevant meeting.
- 4.2 In the event that votes on any matter being considered by the Public Funds Committee are tied (**Deadlock**), the relevant matter giving rise to the Deadlock shall be rescheduled as an item agenda to be reconsidered by the Public Funds Committee at the next available meeting. Prior to such meeting, and where relevant, the Public Funds Committee shall liaise with the Investment Committee and/or the Celtic Freeport Board to acquire such further information relating to the matter giving rise to the Deadlock as may be reasonably required to try and resolve the Deadlock.

- 4.3 If at two successive meetings of the Public Funds Committee the Public Funds Committee is unable to reach a decision to resolve any Deadlock, the matter shall be resolved in accordance with clause 19 (Dispute Resolution) of the Public Funds Committee's Joint Committee Agreement.

5 Conflict of Interest

- 5.1 To allow the Public Funds Committee to undertake all of its functions, where the Public Funds Committee is considering a project developed by one of the Councils, a clear distinction shall be drawn between those involved in the project's development and those representatives appointed to the Public Funds Committee.
- 5.2 Members of the Public Funds Committee will be required to declare any conflicts of interest at the commencement of any meeting of the Public Funds Committee. Conflicts shall be managed in accordance with the Celtic Freeport's conflicts of interest policy and each Council's Members Code of Conduct.

6 Proceedings of Meetings

- 6.1 The rules of procedure of the Accountable Body shall apply to meetings of the Public Funds Committee.
- 6.2 The members of the Public Funds Committee shall be subject to the codes of conduct of their respective Councils.

7 Quorum

The quorum for a meeting of the Public Funds Committee shall be the presence of six voting members of the Public Funds Committee, including three representatives from each Council.

8 Frequency

- 8.1 The Public Funds Committee shall meet quarterly or as and when may be required to consider proposals put to it by the Celtic Freeport Board in a timely manner.
- 8.2 Meetings of the Public Funds Committee may be called by any of the Public Funds Committee's voting members on the giving of seven days' notice in writing to the other voting members.

9 Allowances

No allowances shall be paid.

10 Servicing

The Accountable Body shall organise appropriate servicing for the meetings.

Schedule 2 Terms of Reference of the Joint Scrutiny Committee

1 Membership

- 1.1 The Joint Scrutiny Committee shall comprise 8 members in total, 4 from each Council.
- 1.2 The membership shall not include members:
- (a) of each Council's executive; and
 - (b) of the Public Funds Committee.
- 1.3 Each Council shall nominate members for the Joint Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the political balance rule as it applies to their own elected membership. The composition of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall not be required to represent political balance across the membership of both Councils taken together.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be performing the overview and scrutiny function for the Public Funds Committee (as specified in the Public Funds Committee joint committee agreement) on behalf of the Councils.
- 2.2 For the avoidance of doubt scrutiny of individual Council projects that each Council wishes to put forward for funding from Public Funding shall be a matter for the relevant Council Scrutiny Committee.

3 Chair

- 3.1 The Chair and Vice Chair of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be elected by the Joint Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 The Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee shall not be from the same Council as the Chair of the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

4 Voting

- 4.1 Each member of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall have one vote. Decisions of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be made by simple majority vote.
- 4.2 In the event of equality of votes the Chair (or in their absence the Vice Chair) of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall have a casting vote.

5 Conflicts of Interest

Members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee must declare any interest either before or during the meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Committee (and withdraw from that meeting if necessary) in accordance with their Council's Code of Conduct or as required by law.

6 Proceedings of Meetings

- 6.1 The rules of procedure of the Host Authority (as defined below) for the joint scrutiny function shall apply to meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.2 Members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be subject to the Codes of Conduct for Members of their respective Councils.

7 Quorum

The quorum for meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be no less than 4 members, which must include at least 2 members from each Council.

8 Frequency

The Joint Scrutiny Committee shall meet quarterly. Additional meetings may be convened by the Chair on at least seven clear days' notice.

9 Allowances

No allowances shall be paid.

10 Servicing

The Host Authority for the joint scrutiny functions shall be PCC.

11 Sub- Groups

The Joint Scrutiny Committee by agreement may create Task and Finish Groups.

12 Review

The Terms of reference of the Joint Scrutiny Committee shall be reviewed annually.

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT**

**COUNCIL
26th July 2024**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC
SERVICES - Mr. Craig Griffiths.**

SECTION A – MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

**CHANGES TO POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY AND COMMITTEE
MEMBERSHIP**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to authorise changes to the allocation of seats on council committees to the political groups.

Amendments to Committee Membership

2. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been notified of the proposed changes to the membership of Council committees specified below:
 - That Cllr Helen Ceri Clarke be removed as a member of the Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee.
 - That Cllr Angharad Aubrey be appointed as a member of the Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee.
 - That Cllr Angharad Aubrey be removed as a member of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee.
 - That Cllr Helen Ceri Clarke be appointed as a member of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee.

- That Cllr Wayne Carpenter be removed as a member of the Governance and Audit Committee.
- That Cllr Andy Ludwig be appointed as a member of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Financial Impact

3. There are no financial impacts.

Integrated Impact Assessment

4. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as the issues within the report relate to constitutional matters only.

Workforce Impacts

5. There are no workforce Impacts.

Legal Powers/Impacts

6. Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government Act 2000

There are no legal impacts.

Risk Management

7. There are no risk management issues that require attention.

Consultation

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

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that Council approves the changes to the membership of committees as contained in paragraph 2 of this report.

Reason for Proposed Decisions:

10. To update the Council's membership arrangements.

Implementation of Decisions:

11. The decisions are for immediate implementation.

List of Background Papers:

12. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Constitution.

Officer Contact

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