

**DRAFT**

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**Assessment of our performance 2014-2015**



Introduction.....	5
Section 1 - Overall Assessment of Performance.....	6
Section 2 - Progress made against each of our Six Improvement Objectives .....	10
Improvement Objective One.....	11
Improvement Objective Two.....	16
Improvement Objective Three .....	22
Improvement Objective Four .....	28
Improvement Objective Five.....	39
Improvement Objective Six .....	43
Section 3 - Progress made on securing continuous improvement.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Section 4 - Underpinning principles .....	50
Section 5 - What our Regulators said .....	52
Section 6 - Have your say on what matters to you .....	54

This Annual Report is prepared under Section 15(3) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (referred to as the 2009 Measure), and discharges the Council’s duties under sections 2(1), 3(2), 8(7) and 13(1).

## Message from the Leader and Chief Executive

### Welcome to the Annual Report 2014-15.

This report provides our assessment of our performance in the last financial year, in particular, the progress we made on delivering on our priorities outlined in our [2014-17 Corporate Improvement Plan](#) (referred to as the Plan) 'Rising to the Challenge'. We made a commitment to safeguarding employment to the maximum extent possible, whilst seeking out and exploiting all opportunities to improve the prosperity and wellbeing of local people in our communities in times of severe and enduring austerity. Overall, we are pleased to report that we achieved most of what we set out to do.

Following more than two years of hard work which saw significant improvements to our Children and Young People Services, the Chief Inspector of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, announced that she had decided to remove the Council from the Serious Concerns Protocol. This could not have been achieved without the strong commitment of our staff and partners; supported by political and corporate leadership. However, we recognise that there is more to do and therefore our improvement programme will continue to deliver our aspiration that outcomes for children, young people and families that we support are optimised.

In our Education Services, we made steady improvements in pupil performance at key stage 2 and maintained performance at key stage 3 and 4. Schools also saw an improvement in pupil attendance. Our transforming adult social care programme saw fundamental changes to services for disabled people, helping people become more independent, and we opened the first of our new residential care homes, Llys y Seren, with our partner Grŵp Gwalia.

Despite the very challenging financial circumstances, we performed strongly in drawing down capital investment, allowing us to support a number of important physical regeneration projects, such as implementing phase one of the Neath Town Centre redevelopment (new multi-storey car park). We also worked with partners and helped people from low income households (with particular focus on those who were affected by the welfare benefit changes) to improve their financial circumstances.

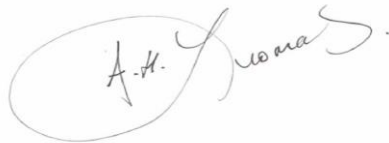
We made good progress in implementing our Waste Strategy and achieved the 2015-16 statutory recycling and composting target of 58% during 2014-15. We also saw our plans to embrace digital technology develop with an increase in number of services available on-line.

We would like to express our thanks to all of our staff for continuing to deliver good quality services and acknowledge that they are working extremely hard with fewer resources to achieve this performance. We are also very grateful for the continued support trade unions, partners and community organisations have given us to help us deliver services that make a difference to people across the County Borough.

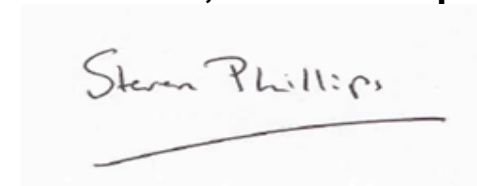
Since 2010, this Council has been proactive in forecasting funding gaps and delivered spending reductions of £59 million and reduced its workforce by some 20% through a combination of voluntary redundancies and the transfer of functions. For 2014-15, we saved the required budget savings of £17.3 million and an additional £101 k was transferred into the Council's general reserves at year end.

As austerity measures continue, the next three years will bring more tough challenges for the Council and the depth of the budget cuts will be even more keenly felt. With the continued support of local people, our workforce, trade union colleagues and partners, we are determined to keep rising to the challenges in front of us.

**Leader of the Council, Councillor Ali Thomas**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Thomas', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

**Chief Executive, Steven Phillips**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Steven Phillips', with a horizontal line drawn underneath.

## Introduction

Under the 2009 Local Government (Wales) Measure, we are required to publish two documents each year: the first is a forward looking improvement plan setting out our improvement priorities (known as improvement objectives) for the financial year ahead; and the second is an annual report to reflect back on the performance of that Plan.

This Annual Report (referred to as the Report) assesses the extent to which we delivered the improvements set out in our [2014-17 Corporate Improvement Plan](#) 'Rising to the Challenge'. Whilst it is intended to comply with the legal requirement in the measure, more importantly it provides an assessment of our performance for our citizens.

We aim to ensure that our Report presents a fair and balanced picture of performance in the year. We have taken on board feedback from our external auditors to improve the way we communicate performance to our citizens. This Report covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. We have also produced a summary ([insert hyperlink to summary](#)) version of this Report.

This full Report is available on our website [Performance and Improvement](#)

In order to promote sustainability and to reduce printing costs, a hard copy of this Report is only available at these locations:

- Neath One Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Neath SA11 3QZ;
- Port Talbot Civic Centre, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ; and
- Pontardawe Library, Holly Street Pontardawe SA8 4ET.

If you require this information in larger print or in an alternative format, please contact the Corporate Strategy Team on 01639 763677 or email: [improvement@npt.gov.uk](mailto:improvement@npt.gov.uk)

## Section 1 Overall Assessment of Performance

We assess our overall performance by a variety of means, which includes performance measures that cover a range of Council service areas; comparing change activity against the milestones we set in the programmes and projects that underpin each of our corporate improvement objectives; and progress made in strengthening on capacity for continuous improvement.

We made a conscious decision to prioritise certain areas of work, expressed as the Council's six improvement objectives. On the whole, performance demonstrates improvement in line with what we planned to deliver. We have reported in more detail how we have performed on each improvement objective in Section 2.

In terms of performance, for 2014-15, there are 163 measures in our full data set. These are reported to scrutiny committees on a quarterly basis and are accessible through our website. The data set comprises of National Statutory Indicators, Public Accountability Measures, Service Improvement Data and measures we have developed locally.

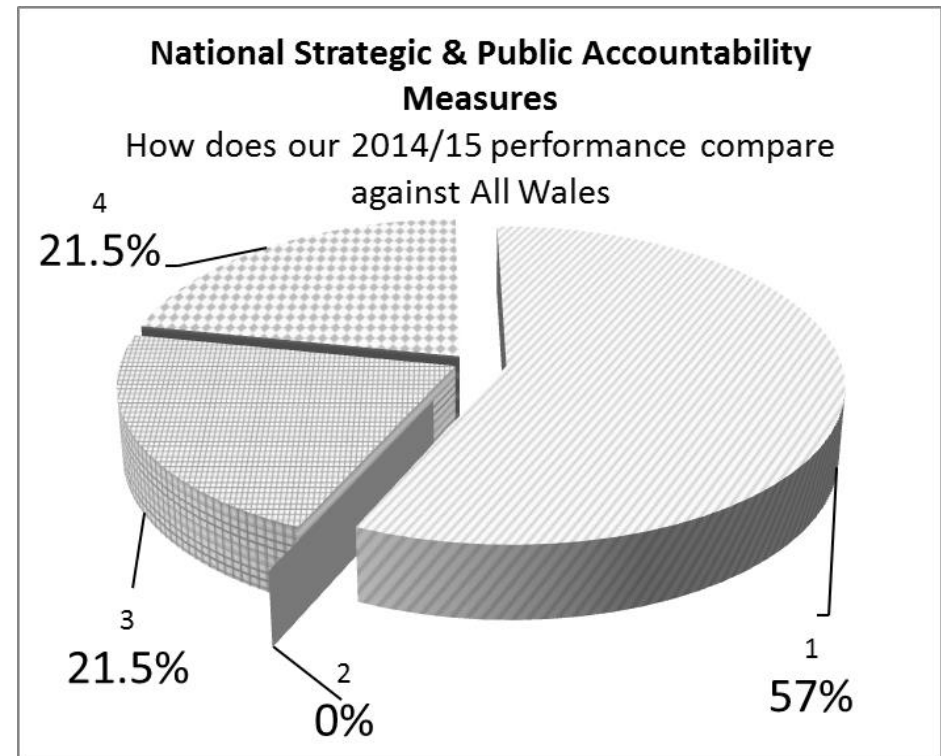
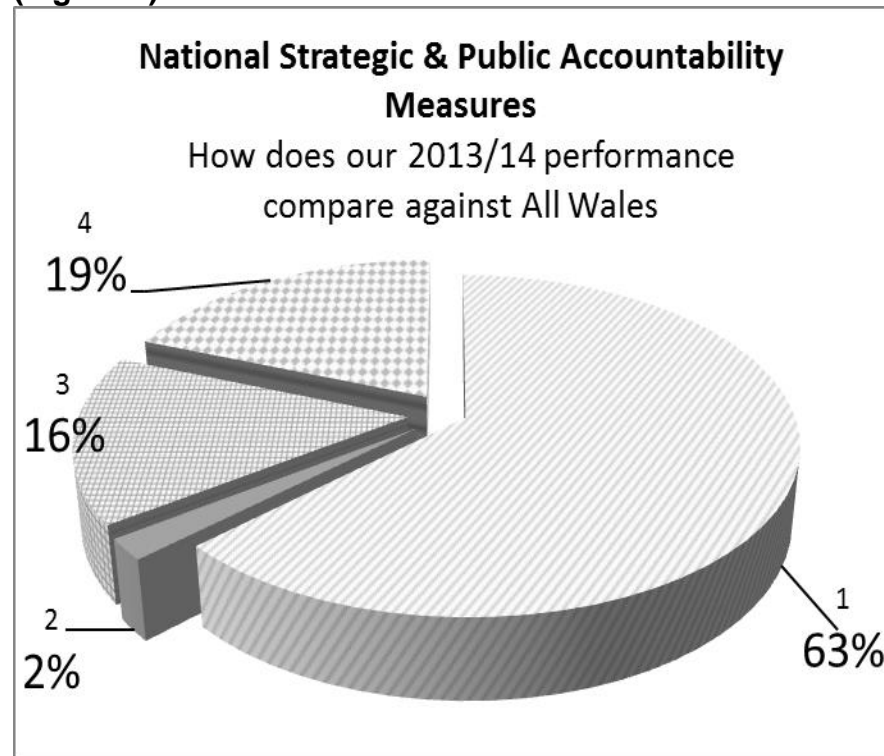
Our full set of performance measures **INSERT LINK WHEN AVAILABLE**, provides summary comments on performance from service areas and includes explanations for those performance indicators where performance has fallen by 5% or more on the previous year.

We also use performance information in a range of ways to see how we compare to other councils and how we can learn and improve within our service areas. These include: sharing and comparing performance of our 43 nationally reported performance indicators with the rest of Wales (pages 7-9 below); comparing our information with other Councils through benchmarking groups and benchmarking data for our service areas; visiting other councils to learn from their best practice; and hosting visits for other Councils to share our best practice.

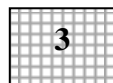
**Performance of the 43 National Strategic Indicators and Public Accountability Measures that are compared nationally across Wales are captured in the following charts.**

The charts below provide a comparison with All Wales performance data for 2014-15 (Figure 1) and also a comparison against our own performance in the previous year (Figure 2) for these performance indicators (the All Wales figure is calculated using the base data supplied by all Councils i.e. overall performance for Wales).

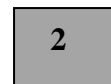
**(Figure 1)**



1 Performance better than All Wales data



3 Performance is within 5% All Wales data

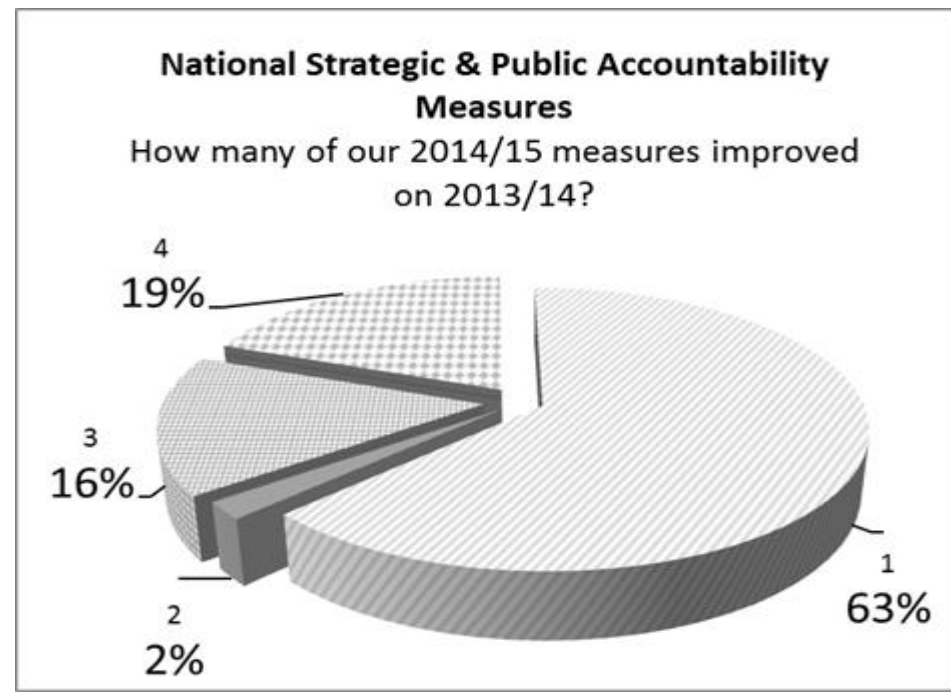
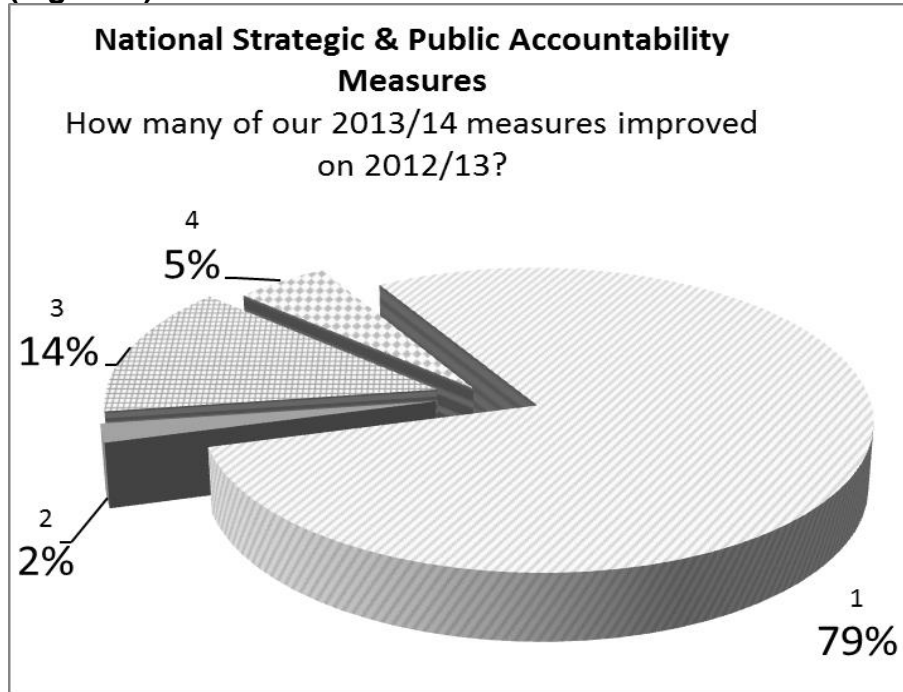


2 Performance maintained



4 More than 5% below All Wales data

(Figure 2)



1 Improved or Maximum Performance

2 Performance maintained

3 Marginally Declined within 5%

4 Declined by 5% or more



**Some of the key points of our performance for these national performance indicators are highlighted below:**

- 57% of our measures were better than the All Wales figure and below last year's performance of 63%.
- 63% of our national measures either achieved maximum performance or improved. Whilst this is below last year's strong performance of 79%, we are on a par with the All Wales level, which also had 63% of performance indicators showing improvement for 2014-15.
- We saw an overall shift in the quartile position of our performance indicators where a number of indicators moved from the upper quartile into the mid quartile:
  - 2014-15: 9 indicators upper quartile, 23 indicators mid quartile, 10 indicators lower quartile.
  - 2013-14: 18 indicators upper quartile, 15 indicators mid quartile, 10 indicators, lower quartile.

A full breakdown of the 43 performance indicators and rankings for 2014-15 is attached as appendix 2. **(INSERT LINK)**

## **Section 2 - Progress made against each of our Six Improvement Objectives**

## **Improvement Objective One**

### **Improve outcomes for children in need and children looked after by improving the performance of the Council's Children and Young People Services department**

#### **Overall summary of our progress:**

In February 2015, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales completed a full inspection on the Council's Children and Young People Services department and the outcome was reported on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015. As a result of the significant improvements made during the past two years, the Chief Inspector of Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales announced that the Serious Concerns Protocol had been lifted from department.

The service now has a stable and more experienced workforce; social work practice that is procedurally sound and performance that is amongst the best across Wales. The "back to basics" work has now been completed and with continued support and a comprehensive understanding from Councillors and Senior Managers across the Council, it is time for the service to fulfil its aspirations to move from the good service it is now to an excellent service.

The focus for 2015-16 is now on making further improvements in the quality and consistency of social work practice, particularly focusing on outcomes for children, young people and their families and preparing for the introduction of the new Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. From April 2016, a whole new set of qualitative and quantitative performance related measures will be introduced and will support our plans for developing the service further.

#### **During 2014-15 we said we would:**

**1. Improve the quality and effectiveness of social work practice; continue to improve performance of our eight priority measures and also want the number of children looked after in the County Borough to show a 2.5% year on year decrease over the next two years.**

## What did we do?

- 139 case file audits were completed during 2014-15 and findings reported as part of the Quality Assurance Framework. The results demonstrated increased compliance with procedures and enhanced quality. Areas where continued improvements could be made are regularly discussed and monitored and appropriate support/training provided where necessary.
- During 2014-15, the service achieved the revised targets for all eight of the key priority measures that had been agreed with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and are clearly being sustained as the Service moves forward. All eight measures improved or achieved maximum performance.
- The number of looked after children (excluding respite) as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 was 434, compared to 467 in 2014. The aim was to reduce the number by 2.5% over the year; however we actually achieved a 7.3% reduction, equating to 33 fewer children. The reduction reflects positive changes in the following areas: a) supporting children to remain with or return to their birth families wherever possible; b) improving permanency planning for children by increasing the opportunities for Adoption or Special Guardianship Orders; and c) the combination of a) and b) has improved the financial stability of the Council by reducing the expenditure on looked after children.

## **2. Ensure the capacity and capability of the workforce would meet the demands on the service by minimising social worker vacancies and use of agency workers, ensure all employees in the service have an agreed Personal Development Plan and by March 2015, show that 72% of staff feel valued at work from our staff survey (it was 58.8% in 2012).**

### What did we do?

- The stability in the workforce which had been sustained and built upon since the last inspection has contributed to a much more unified service. The profile of the workforce has also changed with a higher percentage of staff now having being qualified for two or more years. By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, there were 8 FTE social work vacancies across all frontline teams and 14 agency workers within the service. This compares to 18 agency workers as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. The use of agency workers continues to be minimised as and when appropriate.
- Individual learning plans have been developed for staff. During 2014-15, 95% of all qualified staff and 79% of all

non-qualified staff had an agreed Individual Learning Plan in place. A training needs analysis has been undertaken and the outcomes used to inform the training plan for 2015-16.

- The results from the annual staff survey undertaken last year showed that 69.15% of staff felt valued at work. Although this figure is slightly below our target of 72%, it represents an overall improvement since the staff survey was first undertaken in 2011 (51.3%). A full report of the survey findings can be found [here](#).

### **3. Ensure that improving Children Young People Services department remains a priority for the Council and its partners and that there is continued strong and supportive political and professional leadership for the improvement programme.**

#### **What did we do?**

- Following a Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review in 2014, it was agreed that the initial priorities set out in the Plan have all been successfully embedded and whilst not losing sight of these, it was also recognised that in order to become a good/excellent performing service, other priorities needed to be addressed.
- These priorities were approved by the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The full report is available [here](#).

### **4. Further enhance performance management and elected member scrutiny arrangements, by developing a new model which will put better checks and balances in place, so that service delivery is not compromised.**

#### **What did we do?**

- Performance management information continues to be readily available, along with a comprehensive audit programme and a new scrutiny model, which includes forward work programmes and Scrutiny Committee having sight of the Cabinet Work Programme to better plan their work.
- The Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee has benefited from support in developing their understanding and knowledge of both the strategic and operational elements of the service. Strengthening of corporate arrangements means that there is now more structured and thorough questioning, making the scrutiny processes far more effective and holding stakeholders to account.

**5. Formally adopt the new Corporate Parenting Policy and ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel hold a celebration and information day to recognise the achievements of looked after children; and support care leavers by commissioning contracts with housing providers to provide suitable long term accommodation for young people who leave the care system.**

#### **What did we do?**

- A Corporate Parenting Strategy was approved in September 2014, which describes the role of the Council as a Corporate Parent, the responsibilities of individuals and explains what looked after children can expect from the Council. The Corporate Parenting Panel, consisting of a group of councillors and key officers meet regularly to ensure the Strategy is working effectively. A link to the Strategy report can be found [here](#).
- A looked after children's consultation and fun day was held in July 2014. The event provided an excellent opportunity for looked after children and their carers to voice what was important to them. It also enabled councillors to promote their role as corporate parents, therefore providing looked after children with a better understanding of what they can expect from councillors as corporate parents. In 2015, it is planned to organise a further seminar which will focus on the role of councillors and their responsibilities as corporate parents with a view to further strengthen this area of our work.
- In 2014, a commitment was given to ensure no young person would be placed in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation. Through the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, current contracts with supported housing providers are being reviewed to provide a better range of support to meet the needs of young people. An accommodation task group has been established by the panel and this will take forward the proposals which impact on young people, and care leavers under the new Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014.

**In partnership, we said we will accomplish the work streams that are set out principally in the Team Around the Family, through the Think Family Partnership. This will mean: access to different services are clearer to service users and providers; early intervention and prevention will mean a reduction in demand for costly intervention services across the partnership and a reduction in the number of children looked after.**

#### **What did we do?**

- There is now a full team structure in place for the Think Family Partnership, as well as an [Early Intervention and](#)

[Prevention Commissioning Strategy \(2014-17\)](#). Awareness sessions for partner organisations have been delivered and the criteria has been clearly communicated to partners, so they are able to make informed decisions as to whether families are appropriate for a referral to the Team Around the Family.

- During 2014-15, 328 referrals were received by Team Around the Family, including 93 cases which had been 'stepped down' by Children and Young People Services department i.e. cases that had been worked by the service where the families no longer required the level of intervention offered by social services, but would still benefit from ongoing non-statutory support which could be provided through Team Around the Family. Partners are involved in supporting families in moving forward with their support plans and have accepted the role of Lead Family Contact as part of this. Audits continue to monitor the extent and effectiveness of joint working with partners. Several factors across the partnership during 2014-15, together with the improvements in Children and Young People Services department have cumulatively resulted in a 7.3% reduction in the number of looked after children.
- Findings from the most recent Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspection report indicate that multi-agency working has improved. Appropriate thresholds for access to statutory services were understood by partner agencies and Children and Young People Services department. There is a common understanding amongst partner agencies of the strategic approach being used by the Council, particularly in relation to reducing the numbers of looked after children in a safe manner. A comprehensive programme of appropriate training, some of which was mandatory, has been provided for staff and multi-agency partners, with good attendance.
- The [Early Intervention and Prevention Commissioning Strategy \(2014-17\)](#) was developed through the Think Family Partnership by engaging partner agencies in planning the strategic direction of the early preventative services. However, it is acknowledged that further work needs to be done in this area, to ensure this does not lead to a fragmented provision which is not fully integrated to meet the full range of need. Despite this, multi-agency partners overall are positive about the potential for the proposed model of service delivery. The full inspection report can be found [here](#).

## **Improvement Objective Two**

### **Raise educational standards and attainment of all young people**

#### **Overall summary of our progress:**

During 2014-15, we completed detailed business cases for the majority of projects under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. Schools secured an improvement in pupil attendance in both sectors, in particular in the primary sector which saw a 1.6% rise. We maintained our performance at key stage 4 (secondary school leavers) in line with 2012-13 performance and we continue to compare favourably across Wales. Key Stage 2 results (primary school leavers) are steadily improving with key stage 3 (year 9 pupils) maintaining their performance compared to 2012-13.

However, there has been a rise in fixed and permanent exclusions in the secondary sector and a rise in fixed exclusions in the primary sector which we are actively working to decrease. Performance of pupils entitled to free school meals in literacy and numeracy has been identified as an area that requires further improvement (we did not meet a number of our anticipated performance outcomes for the 2013-14 academic year).

#### **During 2014-15 we said we would:**

- 1. Continue with the delivery of the Strategic School Improvement Programme and following consultations (in some cases with Welsh Government determination), this will include federating (merging) some schools; relocating some schools; increasing the capacity in some schools; continuing with our arrangements to build some new schools; and to close some others.**

#### **What did we do?**

- Last year Cabinet approved the amalgamation of the following schools: Central Infant and Central Junior schools (to open in September 2015); and Cwmafan Infant and Cwmafan Junior schools (opened in January 2015).



- A new school, Ysgol Hendrefelin, opened in January 2015 representing the amalgamation of Velindre Community School and Ysgol Hendre Special School together with the closure of Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit and creation of a secondary assessment centre in the new school.
- Construction work of the new build Ysgol Bae Baglan (3 –16 year) is well underway, to replace Cwrt Sart, Glanafan, Sandfields and Traethmelyn Schools. The build is on schedule for September 2016 occupation.
- Welsh Government approved the Strategic Outline Case relating to the proposal for a replacement school for St Joseph’s Catholic Comprehensive and 6th Form. Welsh Government and the Dioceses are currently in discussions over evidence of affordability. This proposal is likely to be deferred to 21st Century Schools Funding Band B.
- Formal consultation on a new school (3-11 year) in Briton Ferry area to replace Brynhyfryd, Ynysmaerdy and Llansawel Primary schools to be commenced and preparation of a detailed business case to be completed. Welsh Government grant funding has been secured ‘in principle’.

**2. Continue to work with developers to ensure appropriate educational provisions are available in the new Coed Darcy village commencing with a 3-11 year primary school.**

**What did we do?**

- Officers continue to work with the developers on the design of the new build school at Coed Darcy, although the continued effect of the economic climate on the housing market could impact upon this project adversely.

**3. Continue to implement our strategy for the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot and we will measure our success against outcomes as detailed in the Welsh Education Strategic Plan.**

**What did we do?**

- The percentage of year 2 pupils taught through the medium of Welsh has increased from 17.6% to 18.5% (2013-14 academic year).
- More learners improved their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school (209 to 224).
- Schools have seen an improvement in Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language and a significant improvement in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language

(71% to 79%) at GCSE level.

- We launched the Welsh language charter to promote the use of informal Welsh amongst pupils.
- We appointed a new Welsh in Education Officer to promote effective teaching of Welsh first language and to support the strategic development of Welsh throughout the County Borough. The officer is leading a new initiative 'Y Siarter Iaith' throughout the county where Welsh medium schools have specific targets to reach the Bronze award by July 2015 (which was achieved). The officer has also evaluated work on extended writing of pupils, created a portfolio of good practice (levelled and moderated) and created a resource bank of writing 'genres'.

#### **4. Consult on a new Welsh medium school in the north of the County Borough and a new Welsh medium school in the south of the County Borough.**

##### **What did we do?**

- Welsh Government funding has been secured for the above projects and formal consultation has been completed.

#### **5. Ensure that a school led improvement model is promoted and supported through: school to school collaboration; cluster development; and improvement partnerships and increase the number mainstream Schools which are good/outstanding (as per the criteria determined with regional partners) from 58% to 68% in 2014-2015.**

##### **What did we do?**

- The number of effective and highly effective schools is currently 68.35% (changed from previously good/outstanding). Of this number, 51.89% of all schools are effective and 16.46% of all schools are highly effective.

#### **6. Ensure that the 14-19 Learning Pathways programme supports all young people to achieve their full learning potential and by providing a range of relevant courses (including vocational courses) we aim to improve attainment levels for year 11 pupils and continue to work with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at post 16 and have less than 3% being NEET in 2014-2015.**

## What did we do?

- The number of young people Not in Education, Employment or training (NEET) for 2014 was 3.8%, an improvement on the previous year of 4.4%. Our schools worked with Career Wales, our youth service and Communities First to undertake work targeted at young people at risk of becoming NEET e.g. summer transition programmes. Improved links between schools, colleges and work based learning providers has also contributed to improved performance.
- We have increased the average wider point score for pupils aged 16 from 537 to 540. However this performance is below our forecast for the 2013-14 academic year of 575. In comparison our performance is better than the All-Wales level and we are ranked 10<sup>th</sup> across Wales.
- We have increased the average 'capped' points score for pupils aged 16 from 349 to 351. However this performance is below our forecast for the 2013-14 academic year of 359.

## 7. Support schools and enable schools to support each other in implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes across all key stages (years 2, 6, 9 & 11). Note: Foundation Stage = 6/7 year old pupils, key stage 2 = Year 6 pupils (final year of primary school), key stage 3 = Year 9 pupils (secondary school), key stage 4 = Year 11 pupils (final year of compulsory education in secondary school).

## What did we do?

- Three of the four key stage literacy measures improved and at least met their forecast performance for the year. One of the measures (at key stage 4) maintained performance but was below its forecast for the year. All four key stage numeracy measures have improved. Two measures met their forecast performance for the year and two measures did not achieve forecast performance for the year.

## 8. Improve the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) in literacy and numeracy. This will include improving the quality of teaching; improving engagement with parents/carers and identify and facilitate opportunities for pooling resources, for example through Communities First & Flying Start projects.

### **What did we do?**

- Four of the eight measures improved, one maintained performance and three measures saw a drop in performance. One of the measures exceeded its forecast performance but seven of the measures did not achieve forecast performance for the 2013-14 academic year. This has been identified as an area that requires further improvement.

### **9. Improve pupil attendance by continuing to provide advice and support to all schools and to those schools with lower attendance levels, scrutinise attendance and share best practice within schools.**

#### **What did we do?**

- In the 2013-14 academic year, we made improvements in pupil attendance. Primary school attendance increased by 1.6% to 94.6% and secondary school attendance increased by 0.9% to 93.5%. The ongoing core visits to schools which include looking at attendance issues and schools attendance targets with an action plan and evaluation, has positively impacted on attendance levels. In a comparison context (across Wales) our primary school attendance is ranked at 16<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> at secondary school.

### **10. Continue to improve safeguarding practices and procedures to ensure that all schools judged by Estyn meet statutory requirements.**

#### **What did we do?**

- Estyn reports for 2013-14 show that all schools meet the requirements i.e. undertaking peer reviews; safe recruitment audits; and stronger scrutiny of agencies supplying staff our schools to meet our standards.

### **11. Improve and enhance behaviour management by aiming to have fewer permanent exclusions across all our schools and to reduce the number of days lost to fixed term exclusions. This work will include improving capacity within schools to manage behaviour, so that intervention is employed at the early stages of challenging behaviour and specific support for targeted schools on behaviour management.**

#### **What did we do?**

- There has been a rise in fixed and permanent exclusions in the secondary sector and a rise in fixed exclusions in the primary sector. For the 2013-14 academic year, the actual permanent exclusions was 12, an increase of

three on last year. The number of days lost in primary sector increased to 281 days (174 the previous year) and the number of days lost in secondary sector increased to 1,626 days (1,568 the previous year). As a priority we are working to improve performance in this area.

**12. Continue to consult with pupils, parents, staff, governors on all aspects of education provision through dedicated consultation events and annual roadshow meetings across the County Borough.**

**What did we do?**

- To date the Deputy Leader and senior officers from the service have met with chairs of governors termly and attended meetings with secondary and primary school head teachers. We have held roadshows in primary and special schools and all cluster schools were invited to the roadshows.

**In partnership, we said we will continue to deliver school improvement through our partnership in ERW (Education through Regional Working). A South West and Mid Wales consortium made up of six partner authorities which are Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthen, Powys, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion who will: share best practice amongst schools in the ERW region; monitor school performance; support school leadership; co-ordinate high quality governor training, and ensure that the delivery of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework is effective across all schools.**

**What did we do?**

- We put in place the ERW Leading Learner Group, which will oversee the National Professional Qualification for Headship, head teacher and middle leader professional development programmes and the training of higher level teaching assistants. We also put in place a Regional Governor Support Officer Group. All partner regions now share training programmes on the ERW website.
- We also increased our performance for pupils achieving Level 2 inclusive of English/Welsh and maths from 55.7% to 55.8%; however we did not achieve the challenging forecast of 59%.

### **Improvement Objective Three**

## **Maximise the number of adults who are able to live independently, with or without support, within the home of their choice within their community**

### **Overall summary of our progress:**

We opened the first of our four new residential care homes for older and disabled people, Llys y Seren, with our partner Grŵp Gwalia. From October, we fully implemented our modernised disability service, which is helping people become more independent, assisting people into employment or delivering modern care and support where this is needed. The number of individuals with a learning disability who are reliant on residential care reduced, improving the quality of life for the people concerned as well as reducing care costs by £1.4 million. We have also made a number of improvements to modernise social work practice to ensure we are fully focused on helping people maximise their independence and quality of life.

### **During 2014-15 we said we would:**

**1. Deliver on proposals for a new range of services for people with disabilities, which will cater for individuals with assessed needs in relation to physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health. This will focus on three discrete elements – a community independence service, an employment service and a care and support service.**

### **What did we do?**

- From October 2015, we will have fully implemented a modernised service. In order we can see the difference this is making for people; we developed a new monitoring framework to show how the people we have been supporting are benefitting.
- During the year we supported 810 more individuals (65yrs+) in their own communities to become more independent in their day-to-day lives than last year (total was 3070).

- The COASTAL project (funded by the European Social Fund) to support disabled people into work came to an end and all project outcomes were achieved. For the nine months ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014, 30 people gained paid employment, 151 achieved accredited training and 80 gained work experience.
- We established care and support services at Trem y Mor and extended our service at 'Old' Rhodes House.

## **2. Modernise social work practice to ensure we meet or exceed practice standards in terms of timeliness of response and quality, and implement the safeguarding action plan to further improve safeguarding practices.**

### **What did we do?**

- We have implemented a new social work model and established Community Network Teams and Community Resource Teams. We also developed a new supervision policy.
- We are currently developing a system for the reporting of care response measures.
- Providers attended a workshop, where there was an opportunity to discuss Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and to update them on current changes in legislation.
- We have established an 'in house' Designated Lead Manager training programme for all social workers who fulfil the following criteria: i.e. been in the role two years; their practice has been formally assessed; and they undertake more complex work. This will substantially increase our ability to manage Protection of Vulnerable Adult (POVA) referrals. The in house training focusses on lessons learned from case reviews and Ombudsman findings.

## **3. Continue to prevent homelessness by maintaining the high percentage of all potentially homeless households which were prevented from becoming homeless for at least six months.**

### **What did we do?**

- Last year this was 95.2% and this year 95.5%. Of the 988 potentially homeless households, 944 were prevented from becoming homeless for at least 6 months. Performance against this indicator remains exemplary. This is in the context of a 30% increase in statutory homeless cases presenting to the Housing

Options Service compared to the previous year and an ongoing increasing complexity of cases dealt with and continuing difficulty in securing suitable move-on accommodation. Effective early intervention and prevention work was very successful with the majority of those households who presented to the service.

**4. Improve residents' ability to remain independent in their own homes by providing support and continuing to offer disabled facilities grants for adaptations to houses to meet the needs of disabled residents and aim to reduce the average time to complete a disabled facilities grants to 225 days.**

**What did we do?**

- We achieved our revised target (285 days) and completed our disabled facilities grant on average in 252 days. This was a planned increase from last year's 204 days due to the introduction of the Rapid Adaptation Grants process (introduced to enable smaller adaptation works to be carried out quicker, such as replacement of stair lifts, ramps and steps) which took smaller jobs out of the disabled facilities grant process and also due to a number of more complex grants being completed. We were however able to complete more disabled facilities grants, 323 this year (287 last year) due to the average cost being lower than predicted allowing the budget to go further.

**In partnership, we said we would:**

- 1. Work with the ABMU Health Board, Neath Port Talbot Carers Service, carer representatives, third sector organisations and others to develop a commissioning strategy focusing on services which support carers in Neath Port Talbot. The strategy will help us plan how we use the money available in a way which achieves the best outcomes for unpaid carers.**

**What did we do?**

- The Carers' Strategy Group agreed a process for developing the strategy, an estimated time table and the development of a communication plan. Consultation was undertaken in early 2015 and work is ongoing to update the Strategy following the outcome of the consultation. Further information can be found [here](#).

- 2. Implement an approach called 'Pathways to Independence' across community care to ensure adults of working age with care and support needs are assessed and supported in a way which maximises their**



**independence and more people are living independently with minimal or no support in their own communities.**

**What did we do?**

- The number of individuals who are reliant on residential care in the learning disability population reduced from 73 to 49. The percentage of the budget spent on residential care, has reduced from 48% to 26%. The current reduction in residential care costs in learning disability has reduced by £1.4million which is 10% of overall spend. Further targets have been identified for mental health and physical disabilities and progress is being made. An outcome matrix has been developed to measure outcomes for individuals.

**3. Work with neighbouring authorities and the ABMU Health Board as part of the Western Bay Programme to ensure services are integrated. Work will focus on community services for frail older people, those with learning disabilities and adult mental health services.**

**What did we do?**

- Investment from the Intermediate Care Fund (£7.8 million), has allowed 148 new staff to be appointed across the Western Bay area (Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Bridgend), these include therapists, advanced nurse practitioners, nurses, reablement and care workers and social workers.
- We made further investment in our third sector partners to provide enhanced services, including care and repair services, the British Red Cross providing services to people leaving hospital; and a third sector broker as a common access point for signposting to these and other third sector services.
- The aim of the investment has been to advance the integration of health and social care services, to provide more responsive and coherent services to our citizens that prevent unnecessary hospital and care home admissions, and reduce the need for long term homecare packages by promoting independence and more effective use of the third sector. To this effect, we are seeing some encouraging, early indications that the model is having an impact on unscheduled hospital admissions, care home placements and new homecare packages of care. There are emerging areas of good practice from each locality, and the lessons learned are being shared between all partners.
- There has been considerable attention and effort to improve the flow from hospital to community which has

contributed to a steady decrease (6.98%) in delayed transfers of care. During the year there were 40 delayed transfers of care for social care reasons compared to 43 for the same period last year. This is against a backdrop of unprecedented pressures on hospital services which in turn impacts on social care services. This continued improvement in performance, therefore reflects a considerable achievement for partnership working. Our rate of delayed transfer of care for people over 75 years is better than All-Wales performance and we are ranked 11<sup>th</sup> across Wales.

- Also, a considerable amount of work has been done to vastly improve the information produced around service provision and outcomes in community services. During February 2015, we introduced the 'Australian Therapy Outcome Measures' (AuSTOMs), in order to measure the improvement of patients receiving the various therapeutic services. Community services are also in the process of introducing systems specifically to measure outcomes and are piloting a new approach, working with citizens to measure the impact of service delivery on individuals and their carers.
- The Learning Disabilities Commissioning Strategy and Operating Model was approved and a 'Joint Commitments for Mental Health Services' paper was presented and approved by Western Bay partner Boards/Cabinets, which demonstrates a shared vision for improving services.

#### **4. Develop and implement a Multi Agency Transition Policy and protocol to ensure all young people receive high quality advice, information and support to enable them to plan for their future as they move into adulthood.**

##### **What did we do?**

- A Transition Protocol has been agreed and signed off between Adult and Children and Young People Services which ensures a more seamless transition process. This includes an agreement to have a single plan for every young person coming through transition and a data collection process.

#### **5. Open the first (of the four) new 60 bed residential care home delivered by Grŵp Gwalia in the summer of 2014, situated in Moor Road, Port Talbot.**

##### **What did we do?**

- Llys y Seren is open and delivering long term residential care. The home also supports patients clinically discharged from acute hospital care or admitted directly from their own home, requiring additional recovery time and/or completion of assessment to establish the appropriate ongoing arrangements that will suit their individual needs (known as residential reablement). This encourages and enables older people to maintain their independence, to gain confidence and progress with their recovery, in preparation for their return home or other long term care arrangements.

**6. Increase the availability of good quality, well managed, affordable private sector accommodation via the Social Lettings Agency to address the future changes in homelessness legislation and work to have 100 tenancies in management by the end of 2014-2015.**

**What did we do?**

- The Social Lettings Agency (SLA) increased the total number of properties in its management to 102, exceeding the challenging target of 100 (an increase of 16 properties on the previous year). The properties managed by the SLA that are used to house homeless households that were unable to access social housing.

## **Improvement Objective Four**

**Support and invest in our town centres and communities to promote economic growth, regeneration and sustainability to maximise job opportunities and improve access to employment**

### **Overall summary of our progress:**

We performed strongly in drawing down capital investment, despite the very challenging financial circumstances, which allowed us to support a number of important physical regeneration projects, such as implementing phase one (new multi-storey car park and retail space) of the Neath Town Centre redevelopment. Many of the projects supporting this improvement objective are creating an improved environment for business growth and employment, such as 'Vibrant and Viable Places'. We continued to work with key partners to ensure the benefit from wider investment programmes such as the second University Campus is maximised for local people. We developed innovative ways of working together with partners, to help people on low incomes to improve their financial circumstances, (utilising European funding via the Local Services Board) with a particular focus on those people who were affected by welfare benefit changes.

### **During 2014-15 in Regeneration we wanted to:**

**1. Continue work on Harbourside by developing pedestrian links to improve accessibility to employment opportunities.**

#### **What did we do?**

- We completed the development of pedestrian links and a planning application for a proposed Business Park was approved.

**2. Begin work on the Baglan Link Bridge which will make Baglan Energy Park more accessible and enable local bus companies to provide a bus service to the site.**

**What did we do?**

- The link bridge was officially opened in March 2015. Baglan Energy Park is now more accessible and bus companies are using the route. Our long term aim would be to increase the number of journeys taken through the Energy Park, by existing and potential users, hence increasing awareness of opportunities the energy Park provides.

**3. Begin construction work to deliver the first phase of the Neath Town Centre redevelopment to improve the town centre for the community and visitors to the town.**

**What did we do?**

- The first phase to include a new 600 space multi-storey car park, and 23,000 square feet of new retail space is under construction and due for completion in September 2015.

**4. Complete improvements in public areas in Port Talbot, Neath and Croeserw to enhance the environment for the community.**

**What did we do?**

- Initial works completed in Port Talbot (including Lower Station Road) and Croeserw. Also additional public realm works were completed in The Parade area in Neath.

**5. Begin construction work, on the new Leisure Centre on Aberavon seafront.**

**What did we do?**

- Construction work is well advanced and the centre is due to open in December 2015.

**6. Continue to drive forward regeneration projects in the Valleys to make enhancements to tourism, employment and public areas.**

**What did we do?**

- Regeneration projects in Pontardawe and Glynneath have been completed and a planning application has been

submitted for the second phase at Sarn Helen.

**7. Develop a comprehensive commuter cycle network to enable residents and visitors to access towns, employment centres and visitor attractions effectively and safely.**

**What did we do?**

- In partnership with the City and County of Swansea we have introduced an integrated commuter route scheme covering the whole of Swansea Bay. This scheme has led to improved cycle signage in the County Borough, raising awareness to car/lorry drivers of cyclists and a full marketing programme is being implemented to raise awareness of the routes. This scheme so far has led to a 25% increase in cyclists on routes that have been measured.

**8. Pursue the establishment of quality tourist accommodation and facilities at sites including Rheola**

**What did we do?**

- Outline planning was approved in November 2014 for mixed use development, comprising of residential units, holiday accommodation, retail and leisure complex.

**9. Continue to renovate properties in the Council's two renewal areas- Neath East and Sandfields East & Aberavon. We aim to improve 75 properties.**

**What did we do?**

- To date 1727 properties were improved (exceeded our year on year cumulative target of 1698) through the renewal area scheme, these include 179 properties across Neath East and Sandfields East renewal areas.
- Local contractors delivered the renewal area schemes', ensuring the local economy is benefiting from the investment as well as the residents by having substantial money saving improvements carried out to their homes. The renewal area funding and scheme also helps to attract and draw down additional funding into the area resulting in more properties having work carried out, more work for local contractors and more money in the local economy.

### **During 2014-15 in Employment & Prosperity we wanted:**

- 1. Continue to work with Welsh Government to test and explore opportunities to reduce the number of individuals in South West Wales who are economically inactive or unemployed by working in a joined up, client centred way.**

#### **What did we do?**

- 71.2% of the working age population (16 to 64) were economically active, a slight fall from the 71.6% reported last year.
- Fewer people of working age were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, 2.2% compared to 2.7% last year.

- 2. Help economically inactive people and those who are long-term unemployed to improve their chances of getting a job through the Workways project and to explore self-employment through the Council's Innov8 programme.**

#### **What did we do?**

- Since April 2009, the project engaged with 5,026 people, which was above its set target and supported 2,589 people into sustainable employment. The project came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

- 3. Provide an effective and supportive service through our Business Development Team to local businesses to help them prosper creating more jobs and business start ups.**

#### **What did we do?**

- We exceeded our forecasts for all four business development measures. A growing confidence in the local business community has resulted in a marginal increase in the number of enquiries that the Business Development Team handled (686) throughout 2014-15 compared to the previous year. We also helped create 187 jobs as a result of financial support from the Council; assisted 361 new business start-up enquiries; and 38 new business start-ups were assisted through the Innov8 programme.

- 4. Identify contracts for local companies and job and training opportunities for local people within major developments in the County Borough.**

#### **What did we do?**

- **Trem y Mor Respite Centre**, Aberavon, outputs achieved: four local companies secured contracts to provide materials/supplies; 47 people secured work on site, including 15 new job opportunities; two pathway apprenticeships completed; two apprenticeship training weeks completed; 197 training weeks completed and all outputs agreed at the tender stage were achieved.
- **Neath Town Centre Redevelopment**, outputs achieved: 22 local companies introduced to a main contractor; five local companies secured contracts to provide materials/supplies; two local sub-contractors secured mechanical, electrical and cladding contracts; 116 people secured work on site, 10 who were previously unemployed, 2 trainee places and 1 work placement. The project is on track to achieve all outputs identified at the tender stage.
- **Ysgol Bae Baglan** - work has started with appointed contractors and partners to identify training and employment for local people and contract opportunities for local contractors.

#### **5. Provide opportunities for accessing training and employment, and support for businesses, in the community at the Croeserw Enterprise Centre.**

##### **What did we do?**

- Since opening in September 2013, the Centre has provided a number of further learning and training courses to improve opportunities for local people in relation to employment. Working in partnership with a number of organisations (such as Communities First, Skills and Training Unit, Adult Community Learning, NSA Afan and Bridgend College), the Centre provided 30 sector specific skills courses such as: hair and beauty, general construction, plastering, carpentry, essential skills and ICT and nearly 200 people have attended courses from throughout the Upper Afan Valley and Llynfi Valley with all of those who have completed the course receiving a recognised qualification.

##### **In partnership, we said we would:**

- 1. Continue to monitor progress made by NPT Homes to ensure they meet the Council's promise to bring all former council housing up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and to regenerate communities.**

##### **What did we do?**



- The percentage of social housing meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard increased from 27.5% to 28.3%, which is below the forecast of 37%. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, 307 NPT homes are Welsh Housing Quality Standard compliant which is lower than their target for the year as they had a considerable movement in the volume of work anticipated. However 72% of their major works programme to bring all homes up to Welsh Housing Quality Standard by March 2017 had been completed. NPT Homes are on track to deliver so that all their stock meets Welsh Housing Quality Standard by March 2017. Some of the work NPT homes have undertaken up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 include: 5,029 kitchens (58% of target); 4,571 bathrooms (55% of target); 4,132 (70% of target) heating system installations; 1,105 roof replacements (48% of target); 1,821 window and door installations (73% of target). Full progress report is available [here](#).

**2. Continue to offer the “Housing to Homes” interest free loans to encourage landlords, developers and home owners to renovate empty houses that have fallen into disrepair and aim to support ten homes to be available for use.**

**What did we do?**

- We continued to have a good take of the Houses to Homes scheme by landlords and property developers. During the year, 16 units in total were renovated from empty properties to a habitable dwelling suitable for sale or rental. This scheme helps supply additional units of accommodation, provides work for local contractors and can improve the aesthetics of often a rundown property.

**3. Work with our housing partners to deliver affordable housing, through the Social Housing Grant (including Smaller Properties programme and revenue funded schemes), Vibrant & Viable Places programme and the Welsh Housing Partnership; whilst continuing to explore other and innovative funding solutions.**

**What did we do?**

- We delivered (i.e. ready for occupation) 52 properties (forecast was 77) utilising capital grant funding (including Social Housing Grant) and 37 properties (forecast was 10) without grant funding. One scheme (17 properties) did not complete as anticipated because of circumstances outside of our control; a further scheme was anticipated to be completed at the end of 2014-15 but was completed early in this financial year (2015-16). The delivery of affordable housing depends on a number of factors and as a programme can be subject to variations as a result of circumstances beyond our control (e.g. financial climate, market forces and site investigations). It

is worth noting that although the number of affordable homes delivered through grant funding was fewer than anticipated, the number delivered without grant funding was higher than anticipated which meant that we exceeded the overall target (forecast 87 and 89 delivered).

#### **4. Develop projects and programmes to maximise the impact of the next round of European Funding**

##### **What did we do?**

- The European and External Funding team supported the successful and compliant delivery and closure of a number of projects including: Neath Port Talbot regeneration schemes; Harbour Way; South West Workways; and Engage (supporting NEETs).
- The team has coordinated and supported proposals in preparation for the 2014 - 2020 Structural Fund programmes in line with our integrated strategies including: strategic infrastructure and regeneration; Connectivity; Workways +; and supporting young people.

#### **5. Prioritise the allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment Grants to those in greatest need to prevent hardship.**

##### **What did we do?**

- During 2015-16, 804 awards were made totalling £372,000. Much of this money went to support those affected by the spare room subsidy charge and a substantial proportion to assist disabled people affected by the spare room subsidy charge and/or suffering financial difficulties. Contributions were also made to those affected by the benefits cap in greatest need.

#### **6. Continue to fund benefits advice services, including maintaining the Council's Welfare Rights Unit, so that people are accessing the benefits to which they are entitled.**

##### **What did we do?**

- During the year we maintained the Council's Welfare Rights Unit, so that it was able to support people to successfully appeal benefit decisions that have cut or removed the benefits that they are entitled to.
- In total, the unit dealt with 267 appeal cases, of these 227 (85%) cases were successfully appealed (40 not successful). This has resulted in a total of £1,240,166.18 worth of benefits going to people to which they are

entitled to. 256 new appeal cases were opened in 2014-15.

**7. Complete the three pilot projects that we have set up with the assistance of European funding, to improve access to advice and support services for people with low incomes and recommend next steps to the Local Service Board.**

**What did we do?**

- The three pilot projects have been completed and evaluated and all have achieved their planned outcomes as follows:
  - **Project one**, the Multi Agency Hub at Pontardawe - the Policy & Resources Cabinet Board (16<sup>th</sup> October) received the evaluation [report](#) for this pilot and approved the recommendation to extend the project for a further 12 months and for a number of follow up actions to be undertaken.
  - **Project two**, the dedicated advice line set up in the Council's Corporate Contact Centre - a [report](#) was presented to Policy & Resources Cabinet Board (27<sup>th</sup> November) on the evaluation with a list of recommendations, including extended the pilot to the end of March.
  - **Project three**, one stop help for people actively seeking work through joint working between the library service and the Jobcentre - the Policy & Resources Cabinet Board (16<sup>th</sup> October) received the evaluation [report](#) of this pilot and approved the recommendation to endorse the continuation of the partnership arrangements.

**8. Deliver on the Strategic Aims of the Regional Economic Development Strategy to enhance the long-term prospects of our City Region economy, its businesses and communities and monitor the delivery via a newly developed performance management framework.**

**What did we do?**

- Last year five 'Pillar' sub groups were established to progress the work of the above strategy. The performance management framework (currently under development) will be informed by the emerging 'Pillar' sub groups priorities and work programmes.

## **9. Work towards linking strategic employment sites by establishing priority bus corridors between key towns within the City Region.**

### **What did we do?**

- Completion of the Baglan Energy Park Link Bridge has increased access to Port Talbot to Swansea bus corridor, through Harbourside and Fabian Way strategic sites. Work continues to develop on other schemes in liaison with the Regional Transport Forum.

## **10. Work with community transport operators to enhance and integrate their services to support local communities and ensure the schemes meet the transport targets as set out in the Service Level Agreements with the Council.**

### **What did we do?**

- All targets as set out in service level agreements have been met. There have been regular meetings with both community transport schemes and Shop mobility, to encourage closer working and combined bids, to improve future funding prospects. To date, a Regional Development Plan bid has been submitted and a project proposal put forward to Pen-y-Cymoedd Community Fund.

## **11. Redevelop Port Talbot Parkway Station, to improve access, parking and facilities for customers.**

### **What did we do?**

- The project was due for completion in spring 2015 but has been delayed due to a number of unforeseen site issues and has resulted in the need to undertake further design work. To date the fabrication of the new footbridge and station booking office are well underway.

## **12. Implement the Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework to combine support for people and places, and encourage partnership working by the public, private and third sector.**

### **What did we do?**

- Work onsite of the first scheme at Green Park has been delayed due to unforeseen archaeological issues. The delivery of 34 homes is now expected in summer 2016.

**13. Develop key sites and premises across the County Borough to encourage economic growth sites include: Harbourside, Coed Darcy Urban Village and Swansea University's new Bay Campus.**

**What did we do?**

- We developed a research and development village at Harbourside.
- In relation to Coed Darcy Urban Village, we have finalised the majority of compulsory purchase orders for the southern access Link Bridge and planning application for phase two of the housing development is pending.
- Construction work at Swansea University's new bay campus is due for completion and open to students in September 2015.

**14. Enable the establishment of caravan site facilities at Margam Park in partnership with the Camping and Caravanning Club to enhance visitor numbers to the County Borough.**

**What did we do?**

- A planning application has been submitted and is awaiting approval.

**15. Make the most of community investment by working in partnership with developers/organisations who are delivering substantial investment programmes, to encourage and monitor training and job opportunities for local people, and local supply chain activity.**

**What did we do?**

- **Residential Care Homes (Grŵp Gwalia):**
  - **Llys y Seren Residential Care Home:** 21 companies introduced to main contractors; seven contracts awarded to local companies; 300 people secured employment on site; four apprentices completed training weeks on site; eight trainee/temporary job opportunities/work placements.
  - **Caewern Respite Care Home:** 13 companies have been introduced to main contractors and four contracts awarded to local companies.
- **Welsh Housing Quality Standards (NPT Homes):** 31 people have secured jobs with sub-contractors; eight apprentices secured placements with sub contractors and 25 people have been provided with temporary job opportunities.

- **New Leisure Centre (Aberavon):** to date 80 companies have been introduced to main contractors; 13 contracts awarded to local companies and 32 local people have secured jobs on-site.
- **Swansea University:** 450 companies have been introduced to main contractors; 40 local companies secured contracts; 36 job opportunities created; more than 50 individuals completed 1000 trainee weeks.



## **Improvement Objective Five**

### **Increase the percentage of waste recycled and composted**

#### **Overall summary of our progress:**

We are continuing to implement our Waste Strategy and achieved the 2015-16 statutory recycling and composting target of 58% during 2014-15. In 2012-13 we were one of the worst performing local authorities in this area (19<sup>th</sup> across Wales) but are now ranked 7<sup>th</sup>.

Our engagement team has been out and about, meeting various community groups and schools, to raise awareness of the recycling services available and this has contributed to us achieving an 8% increase in public participation in recycling and composting. We also replaced a number of larger bins for smaller ones and increased the recycling facilities in our main buildings to encourage staff to recycle more (all positive contributions to recycling participation rates).

As a result of this work we will avoid any potential fines the Welsh Government may impose, £200 per tonne, if we do not meet the statutory target.

#### **During 2014/15 we wanted to:**

- 1. Progress with the implementation of the Council's Waste Strategy to increase recycling and composting to achieve statutory recycling targets. We aim to increase our rates to 55% and work towards achieving the 2015-2016 statutory target of 58% (which is currently 52%).**

#### **What did we do?**

- We achieved a combined recycling and composting performance of 58.10% at the end of 2014-15 and remain on track to exceed the Welsh Government statutory target of 58% by March 2016.

## **2. Implement the Council's communications and engagement plan to improve public participation by undertaking surveys to identify areas of low participation and prioritise efforts to increase participation in these areas.**

### **What did we do?**

- We completed a recycling participation survey in January 2015 that revealed the 10 lowest performing areas improved by only 3%, whereas the most improved areas increased by 14 - 21%. Our focus going forward will be on participation improvement in the lower performing areas. The average participation of the lowest 10 areas increased their participation from 69% to 79%. The recycling participation across the County Borough increased from 72% in 2013-14 to 80% in 2014-15. Participation in food waste collection service will be prioritised in all areas in future surveys.
- During the year recycling officers engaged with various community groups and schools through various communication channels to provide support in the use of the councils recycling service and to provide general recycling education to school children. Public satisfaction with this service was measured at various road shows that revealed public satisfaction of 83%, with 91% of those who responded valuing face to face contact and interaction with recycling officers.

## **3. Introduce a phased roll out 'Kerbside Sort' recycling waste collection service in 2014-2015, to all accessible areas of the County Borough.**

### **What did we do?**

- We expanded our fleet for kerbside sort collections and currently operate a service with seven vehicles in accessible areas throughout the County Borough. This means we now sort recycling items at the kerbside instead of sending the items to another site for sorting and is a much more efficient way of operating. A further seven vehicles will be rolled out during 2015-16. Service evaluation is ongoing following public responses to the initial pilot collection service and further trials are planned to improve service efficiency.



#### **4. Continue the introduction of smaller wheelie bins, prioritising the areas that have low recycling participation**

##### **What did we do?**

- In April 2015-16 we completed the roll out of smaller bins to relevant householders. This has had a positive effect upon increasing recycling participation and increasing performance.

#### **5. Introduce specific enforcement of commercial waste, to ensure all businesses comply with legislation by writing to all businesses. We will ensure they have valid trade waste agreements, take action against businesses that do not and undertake ad hoc inspections to ensure that businesses are presenting appropriate waste in line with their agreements (trade waste agreements with the Council only).**

##### **What did we do?**

- A new enforcement system was put in place to enforce commercial waste legislation. This resulted in the Council's waste enforcement team contacting 429 businesses to determine waste collection arrangements. The action resulted in 119 businesses choosing to have a collection service with the Council and 122 set up contracts with private sector. Checks on compliance with collection arrangements and legislation will be ongoing. There were 87 recorded random inspections during 2014-15, to ensure compliance with our trade waste agreements. Other non-recorded ad hoc inspections also took place throughout the year that formed part of this process.

#### **6. Increase the level of waste recycled by council staff in the three main centres namely Neath Civic Centre, Port Talbot Civic Centre and The Quays by increasing the recycling provision available, offering food waste recycling provision and rationalisation of 'general' waste bins.**

##### **What did we do?**

- In Neath Civic Centre and The Quays we have introduced recycling stations in all break-out kitchen areas; each includes a 40 litre box for glass and a food waste caddy. A 1100 litre container for cardboard and two, 240 litre containers for glass have been added to the outside waste collection area at Neath Civic Centre, as well as a 240 litre container for glass has been added to the outside waste collection area at The Quays.
- Attempts to increase recycling bins in Port Talbot Civic Centre proved problematic owing to space restrictions

and office layouts. Opportunities to recycle waste in future within Port Talbot Civic Centre will be investigated by the Council's recycling officer.

- To promote recycling, general (under desk) waste bins were removed in The Quays and Neath Civic Centre. This reduced general waste capacity from 9,663 litres to 1,340litres. Recycling capacity increased by 1,226 litres overall in The Quays and Neath Civic Centre. Over the course of a year this extra capacity will help to contribute up to 400 tonnes to the Council's recycling performance.

**In partnership we said we would continue to participate in procurement of the regional treatment of food waste through Anaerobic Digestion (conversion of food waste into energy and fertilizer) which will contribute to the Council achieving statutory recycling targets.**

#### **What did we do?**

- In partnership with a private sector organisation, a new medium term contract is scheduled to commence in March 2016 at the Council's material recovery and energy centre. This will provide the council with the ability to arrange at lower cost, the treatment of food waste by anaerobic digestion.



## **Improvement Objective Six**

**To improve customer/citizen access to services and functions provided by the Council or on behalf of the Council and to improve the efficiency of those services and functions**

### **Overall summary of our progress:**

We increased the number of services available 'on-line' and the number of people using those 'on-line' services rose steadily over the course of the year. We continued to work on improving the content of our website, simplifying content, bringing it up to date where necessary increasing the Welsh content.

Work to move staff from fortnightly to monthly pay was completed successfully and we continued to implement a new i-procurement system (40% of invoice spends processed through the new system). When fully implemented, the system will streamline administration and improve management information.

The work to audit the Council's staffing data and the implementation of new systems to make it easier to keep records up to date and improve management information was mixed and we have reviewed our plans to take forward this area of work during 2015-16. Sickness across the Council increased slightly (by 2.3%) to an average of 9.4 FTE (full time equivalent) for 2014-15 compared to 9.19 FTE days last year. The Council did not meet its target to reduce sickness by 5% for the year.

Customer waiting times (face to face contact at Neath and Port Talbot One Stop Shops) continued to improve and the percentage of calls abandoned after 5 seconds decreased. However, the average time to answer telephone calls increased due to very high volumes of calls during the summer of 2014. To address this we put in place measures such as the introduction of a specific Interactive Voice Recognition system (Press 1 for Refuse and Recycling etc.) on the 686868 telephone number and the introduction of new working methods using alternative faster computer systems. This resulted in significant improvements in the second half of the year.

## **What we said we would do:**

- 1. Continue with a programme of efficiency reviews, using our Systems Thinking approach, and prioritising services where we receive most complaints.**

### **What did we do?**

- In order to improve our customers' experience, we monitor where there is highest demand and introduce new technologies to streamline these processes, for example in street care. Further improvements were made to the online transactional services from feedback received from staff and the public. These changes have resulted in a more effective service delivery for our customers for example requests for some services can be made online so can be requested at any time of day or night, internal processes have also been streamlined so that it is also a more efficient and effective system for staff. We also worked with our welfare rights team to improve the flow of work and investigated the value and preventable demands into the service which will provide a more timely service to members of the public who use this service.

- 2. Modernise and improve on-line transactions available to the public and increase the number of on-line transactions undertaken.**

### **What did we do?**

- The number of on-line transactions undertaken continued to increase and by the end of March 2015, 50% of refuse and recycling consumables were booked on-line; 25% of bulk collections; 43% of van permits and 26% of pest control appointments.
- We continued to re-develop our website and by March 2015, 675 out-of-date pages were deleted. We also translated more information into Welsh and redesigned and modernised our homepage, making it easier to use.

- 3. Improve our telephone response times in our corporate Contact Centre (main switchboard) and reduce the number of abandoned calls.**

### **What did we do?**

- Customer waiting times (face to face contact at Neath and Port Talbot One Stop Shops) continued to improve

with fewer customer walk offs. There was also a marked reduction in the number of customers that we saw on a face to face basis, 67,886 in 2014-15, compared to 75,576 in 2013-14. This may be partly attributed to the introduction of and the promotion by staff of online service requests for customers. Also, through continued collaborative working with NPT Homes we have further reduced the number of incorrect enquiries made by their tenants to the Council. All customers who visited the One Stop Shops were encouraged to make use of online service requests e.g. booking van permits, booking bulk collections, the ordering of recycling/refuse equipment. In future, this will reduce the need for customers to attend in person or contact the Council by telephone. The percentage of calls abandoned after 5 seconds also improved on last year from 12.87% during 2013-14 to 12.47% during 2014-15.

However, over the year there was a slight increase in the average time to answer telephone calls from 30 seconds during 2013-14 to 33 seconds during 2014-15. This was due to our Contact Centre experiencing very high levels of demand during the first 2 quarters of 2014-15 for a number of reasons including strike action after effects and the introduction of new recycling routines. These had a considerable effect on telephone demand and our ability to answer increased customer call volumes. Measures were put in place to address these concerns such as the introduction of a specific Interactive Voice Recognition system (Press 1 for Refuse and Recycling etc.) on the 686868 telephone number and the introduction of new working methods using alternative faster computer systems. However, the high call demand in the first two quarters meant that even though we have made significant improvements in the second half of the year, the average time remains slightly higher than last year due to this high demand period at the beginning of the year.

**4. Continue the work we started last year to transform our internal management and administrative processes. Once complete we expect to reduce the cost of administration associated with these processes and have much improved management information available to inform our future improvement plans.**

**What did we do?**

- **New procure to pay system** - by the end of March 2015, we had 129 (63%) departments live on the new procure to pay system and 40% of invoice spends are now processed through the i-procurement system.

Purchasing cards were deployed to 199 users across all departments, this further increases the ability for users to procure low value goods and help to reduce the amount of petty cash across the Council. Our 'on contract' spend (where there is a contract in place for buying goods/supplies corporately) for 2014-15 was 56%, we expect this to increase further in 2015-16 with the roll out of the system to more departments and the availability of compliant contracts being delivered through the National Procurement Service.

- **Moving staff currently on fortnightly pay to monthly pay** - we successfully transferred staff who were being paid fortnightly to monthly pay by the target date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
- **Audit the Council's staffing data and have new systems in place that make it easier to keep records up to date and report on that information for management purposes** - progress in updating our main personnel and payroll system was more mixed and we have reviewed our plans to take forward this work during 2015-16.
- **Develop a new, improved absence management module to help managers continue to maximise the attendance of staff at work and reduce sickness absence levels by at least 5% on 2013-2014 levels** - sickness across the Council increased slightly (by 2.3%) to an average of 9.4 FTE (full time equivalent) for 2014-15 compared to 9.19 FTE days last year. The Council did not meet its target to reduce sickness by 5%. The Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee recently examined measures being taken to bring about a step change in levels of long term sickness absence. The Committee endorsed the focus on long term absence and will be keeping progress under review. Our performance was 7<sup>th</sup> best in a Wales context.

## **5. Implement a revised corporate performance management framework which will support continuous improvement and employee development across the Council's services and functions.**

### **What did we do?**

- We continued to implement the revised framework which included an evaluation of business plans produced to identify any further training and development needs in readiness for the 2015-16 planning cycle. Specific training was provided to managers responsible for preparing report cards and an evaluation will be undertaken during 2015-16 to identify any further training and development needs in readiness for the 2016-17 planning cycle.

**In partnership, we said we would implement the recommendations from the review of funding provided by the Council to Third Sector organisations, which will include the development of a new grant making policy to encourage organisations to work towards achieving financial sustainability and the building of capacity across the sector locally.**

### **What did we do?**

- We started work with partner organisations from the third sector to develop a policy and associated documentation. Initially, it was proposed the work would be completed by the end of March 2014 to inform grant allocations in 2015-16. However, due to the extensive budget consultation activities undertaken during the autumn and to avoid confusion with the savings proposals identified as part of that process a revised timetable was agreed by Policy & Resources Cabinet Board on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014 which included a completion date of July 2015.

### Section 3 Progress made on securing continuous improvement

Our approach to improving outcomes is based on a cycle of: planning; implementing, monitoring, reflection and review at all tiers of our organisation. In 2014, the Wales Audit Office undertook a comprehensive assessment of our arrangements and they presented their findings to Full Council in January 2015. The assessment findings superseded what we said we would do in last year's Corporate Improvement Plan in relation to 'securing continuous improvement'.

There were no statutory recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office and no significant shortcomings were identified. There were, however, a range of proposals for improvement put forward for Full Council's consideration and most of those proposals for improvement were accepted by Full Council.

Since the assessment, good progress has been made in most areas, although progress in others was more mixed.

**Governance** – we have introduced a new IT system to underpin our administration of the Council's business. The new system and associated improvement work has enhanced access to: forward work programmes for all Cabinet Board and Scrutiny Committee; business committee reports; contact details and information about elected Members of the Council. We have also strengthened our scrutiny practice, focusing scrutiny work where it can make most impact and reviewed the Council's involvement in a range of outside bodies to ensure that arrangements are based on sound governance and are fit for purpose. We have begun to improve the planning of Member development opportunities.

**Performance Management** – we reviewed the progress made in establishing business plans across all service areas and secured a much greater degree of consistency in business planning practice. We also made good progress in establishing "report cards" for each operational service area, although there is more to do in the coming year to achieve consistency in this aspect of work. These developments will provide a stronger basis for holding managers to account for the performance of their respective responsibilities. We continued to roll out a new appraisal system for managers, however, staff appraisal arrangements for the rest of the work continued to be mixed and a further review of these wider arrangements will take place in 2015-16.



**Financial Management** – we improved the reporting arrangements to make it easier to people to see the link between budget management and performance management. We also developed our reports to make it easier to identify where early intervention is needed to stem pressures and reduce the risk of over-spending. We continued to progress the review of accounting instructions and financial regulations and began work to review policies on income generation and charging.

**Workforce Planning** – we focused efforts on improving the quality of workforce information and intend to introduce a workforce planning element to business planning in 2015-16.

**Asset Management** – we updated a number of key asset management plans, such as our highways asset management plan, but progress in updating other asset management plans has taken longer than initially planned. This work will continue through into 2015-16.

**Information Technology and Information Management** – the Council’s ICT Strategy was updated and progress was made in addressing a number of proposals for improvement arising from an audit by the Information Commissioner. The adoption of ICT by the Council continues to grow and we will be maintaining a focus on information management in 2015-16 to ensure we secure the ongoing trust of those who use council services in our ability to safeguard data as we embark upon an ambitious programme to extend the range of on-line services.

**Community Capacity Building and Collaborative Working** – we started to explore a number of alternative ways of delivering services and focused collaborative efforts on a small number of regional arrangements – schools (Education through Regional Working); economic development (City Region); social services (Western Bay); waste (Regional Waste Collaborative).

The proposals for improvement were overseen by the Corporate Governance Group and progress on these proposals can be found [here](#). These were also reported in our Annual Governance Statement (2014-15).

## Section 4 Underpinning principles

- a. Equalities** - during 2014-15, we reviewed our equality objectives to ensure that they remain relevant in the current climate of austerity. We involved a number of people in carrying out our review, including representatives from various equality groups, trade unions, elected members and officers. Following public consultation (undertaken in the summer), a revised Strategic Equality Plan (which will include the equality objectives) will be approved by Council in October 2015 [insert link to SEP when available](#). From next year, the Strategic Equality Plan will be integrated into the Corporate Improvement Plan.

Over the last twelve months our attention has been focused on ensuring we examine the equality impact of savings proposals and organisational change. A comprehensive equality impact assessment was included in the 2015-16 Budget Report.

- b. Welsh Language** - in our [Welsh Monitoring Annual Report 2014-15](#) we provided a realistic assessment of progress in meeting the requirements of our Welsh Language Scheme. We identified areas where improvements would be possible given the current financial climate: the continued development of further opportunities for language awareness; improvements in monitoring and compliance of the Council's website; and the consideration of linguistic skills as part of the 'More Than Just Words' Strategy/Action Plan.

We undertook a detailed assessment of the impact that the proposed new Welsh Language Standards would have for the Council. We have identified areas that we could fully comply with at no additional cost, areas where we could partially comply within resources available but have also highlighted to Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner that whilst we continue to be committed to promoting the Welsh language and culture, compliance with other proposed standards would require significant financial investment or would be unachievable at a time when we are not recruiting due to financial circumstance or for other practical reasons.

- c. Sustainability** – there are many examples of local activities which are making a positive contribution to sustainable development including those of our schools with 'Green School' status, the implementation of our environmental strategy which considers biodiversity and the promotion of cycling and other greener methods of transport. Internally we have a high take up of the salary sacrifice opportunities for acquiring cycles under the

'Cycle to Work' scheme. Additionally, the Local service Board has been working over many years with Tata Steel regarding air quality issues in the area.

In preparation for the new duty contained within the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, we have produced a draft Sustainable Development Policy and Action Plan, which will be reported upon annually. Once the Policy has been agreed, more work will need to be done to embed sustainable development as a central organising principle, including reviewing our impact assessment tools we use in relation to new policies and decisions.

- d. Engagement** – over the autumn of 2014 we embarked upon an extensive programme of consultation and engagement with a very wide range of stakeholders to explain the financial forecasts we had made and to receive feedback on proposals we had developed to close our budget gap. We consulted and engaged on two levels – on the “package” of measures and on individual proposals. We have had a significant response from stakeholders and have summarised responses to the “package” in our budget 2015-16 report.

Other consultation and engagement activity has been reported in individual reports that have been considered by our scrutiny committees and executive boards. We will be reviewing the approach we took this year to identify where our approach could be further improved in future years.

## Section 5 What our Regulators said

- a. Wales Audit Office** - under the 2009 Measure, the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) is required to report annually on his audit and assessment work in relation to whether the Council has discharged its duties and has met the requirements of the 2009 Measure.

In 2014 the Wales Audit Office carried out a comprehensive assessment of the Council's arrangements to support continuous improvement and reported its findings in November 2014, [Full Corporate Assessment Report](#). The overall conclusion from the exercise was that "the Council has been delivering its key priorities but limitations in governance arrangements and performance evaluation present risks to it being able to sustain progress in the future". There were no statutory recommendations but 20 overall proposals for improvement. To date we are making good progress in implementing those recommendations.

- b. Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSiW)** - the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales completed a [full inspection in February 2015](#) and notified the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015 that it had removed Children and Young People Services from the serious concerns protocol. An improvement plan has been created to ensure we continue to strengthen services for children and families, building on the excellent progress we have made in the last two years.

- c. Estyn** - during the 2014/15 academic year, 13 of our schools were inspected by Estyn, who provided an overall assessment on each school based on current performance (1) and prospects for improvement (2):
- 1 school was assessed as Excellent (1) & Excellent (2);
  - 6 schools were assessed as Good (1) & Good (2);
  - 2 Schools were invited by Estyn to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection;
  - 2 schools required some local authority monitoring but were assessed as Good (1) & Good (2);
  - 5 schools required further monitoring by Estyn, all were assessed as Adequate (1) & Adequate (2). If an inspection team judges that a school has some important areas for improvement, then Estyn will monitor the school at a later stage (usually a year to 18 months later). Inspectors judge whether the school has improved enough to be removed from the monitoring list or whether it needs to be identified as requiring

significant improvement or special measures;

- 1 school was assessed as Unsatisfactory (1) & Unsatisfactory (2). In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Estyn is of the opinion, that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school, with the local authority will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis. Estyn school inspection reports can be found by visiting the Estyn website: [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

**d. Estyn** - Neath Port Talbot Adult Community Learning Partnership had a monitoring visit in October 2014 and is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in November 2012. The monitoring report is found here: [Estyn- Adult Community Learning](#).

## Section 6 Have your say on what matters to you

We would like to hear what you thought of our Annual Report and our future priorities for improvement that we should consider when planning and delivering services in order to help shape decisions on important matters.

Please send them to the Chief Executive, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 1PJ or email them to: [improvement@npt.gov.uk](mailto:improvement@npt.gov.uk)

We also have a number of consultation/engagement events about various services which we promote in the press and on the website which you can access via the following link: <http://www.npt.gov.uk/haveyoursay>

Visit the Council's website: [www.npt.gov.uk](http://www.npt.gov.uk)



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