

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## **SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT**

Assessment of our performance 2014-2015



## Introduction

The Council has a legal duty to produce an annual report that summarises performance during the last financial year. This is a short version of the Council's Annual Report for 2014-15, explaining the progress we made against our six Improvement Objectives.

If you want to read more, a full version of the report and performance measures can be found on the Council's website: [www.npt.gov.uk/improvement](http://www.npt.gov.uk/improvement)

**(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))**

**In order to be sustainable and to reduce printing costs, a paper copy of the full Annual Report and the full suite of performance indicators is available at these locations:**

**Neath One Stop Shop**, Civic Centre, Neath SA11 3QZ

**Port Talbot Civic Centre**, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ

**Pontardawe Library**, Holly Street Pontardawe SA8 4ET

## **Overall Assessment of Performance**

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.

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 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 the following pages.



## **Safer, Brighter Futures**

*better outcomes for children and young people*

### **Improvement Objective 1**

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

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 Local Authority, 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.



## **Improvement Objective 2**

### **Raise educational standards and attainment for 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 & 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).



### **Improvement Objective 3**

**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.



### **Improvement Objective 4**

**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 we are working within. This has allowed us to support a number of important physical regeneration projects, such as implementing phase one of the Neath Town Centre redevelopment (a new multi-storey car park and retail space).

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.

We also helped create 187 jobs as a result of financial support from the Authority; assisted 361 new business start-up enquiries; and 38 new business start-ups were assisted through the Innov8 programme.



### **Improvement Objective 5**

#### **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) and 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.





## **Better, Simpler, Cheaper**

*improving customer experience, making  
better use of public money*

### **Improvement Objective 6**

**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 very good improvements in the second half of the year.

## Have your say on what matters to you

We would like to hear what you thought of our Annual Report or on future priorities for improvement the Council should consider when planning and delivering services and 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)

During the year, 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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