

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2016-2019



CONTENTS

Page

Message from the Leader and Chief Executive 4

Section 1 Introduction 6

Section 2 Making the most of our resources 14

Section 3 Our improvement objectives 22

Section 4 How we will secure continuous improvement 50

Section 5 Underpinning principles 61

Section 6 What our auditors and regulators have said 66

Have your say on what matters to you 69

This Corporate Improvement Plan is Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's improvement plan, prepared under Section 15(6) of the [Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#) (referred to as the 2009 Measure), and which discharges the Council's duties under sections 2(1), 3(2) and 8(7).

This Plan is available on the Council's website www.npt.gov.uk/improvement

In order to promote sustainability and to reduce printing costs, a single hard copy of this Plan is available at each of 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

This Plan is also available in Welsh.

Message from the Leader and Chief Executive

Our Corporate Improvement Plan for 2016-2019 is the Council's business plan. It sets out what we are going to prioritise, how we will meet those priorities and how we will measure the difference we make.

Reducing budgets mean that we have to be absolutely clear about the areas that are most important and will make the biggest difference for people in Neath Port Talbot. The priorities included in this Plan were set by the Council's administration following the local government elections in May 2012 and as we move into the last year of the term of the administration, despite the difficult and financially challenging times we have faced, improvements have been delivered across all six of those priorities and particularly those that support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our communities.

Setting the budget for 2016-17, as with previous years, has been a difficult journey yet again. Although we have received a considerably better settlement from Welsh Government than was previously anticipated, we are still working in a very challenging financial environment. We are getting used to dealing with difficult choices and making tough decisions but we have not done this alone. By working hard with our partners and stakeholders, we believe we have a shared understanding of the scale and complexity of the budget challenges we face ahead and a shared commitment to finding and delivering solutions.

We have also considered the need for a different contract with our citizens; people are now exercising more personal choice around which services they access and how they do it. There is a greater awareness of the need for self-help in our communities and we want to, with our partners, help build the capacity for communities to do more for themselves, which in time will help manage demand on public services.

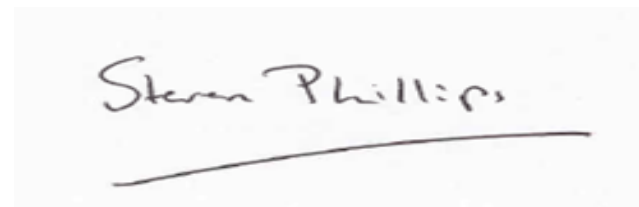
We have now reached a position where we believe we have struck the best possible balance between preserving services for children, young people and the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities, whilst at the same time making difficult choices about what we can afford to sustain in other areas of our work.

We are grateful for the continued support and input from our workforce, trade unions, partners and community organisations, all of which has assisted us to close the budget gap. The many responses we received to our consultations with service users and our wider communities have certainly helped shape our final decisions and without this level of engagement, we are in no doubt that our task would have been far more difficult. Equally, without the support of partner agencies and community organisations who have stepped forward to run services we are no longer able to run directly, many services that enrich the day to day life for people across the county borough would not have continued.

Planning forward at a time of such uncertainty is challenging. Recent events in the steel industry make such planning doubly challenging; but also doubly important going forward. However, we want to reassure the people of the county borough that we remain firmly focused on delivering the priorities we have set out in this and our Forward Financial Plan to deliver the very best services for the people of Neath Port Talbot.

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

Councillor Ali Thomas, Leader of the Council

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

Chief Executive, Steven Phillips

Section 1 - Introduction

This Plan sets out our six improvement objectives for the next three years. These reflect specific areas where the Council wishes to see improvement in the short to medium term. They are expressed clearly and simply, to explain the outcomes we want to achieve. For each improvement objective, progress will be measured by a basket of indicators. These include nationally set indicators (known as National Strategic Indicators and Population Accountability Measures), service improvement data which is collected by local authorities across Wales and other local indicators chosen by the Council.

A number of factors have helped to shape this plan, including: local priorities and the views of citizens of Neath Port Talbot; current performance of Council services; legislative changes; national priorities and policies by the Welsh Government; and recommendations of inspectorates and audit bodies in relation to the Council's performance and areas for improvement. In addition, the commitments and developments we have entered into with partners on a local and regional basis have also informed the content of this Plan (in particular, the City Region Partnership; the Western Bay Health and Social Care Collaborative; the South West Wales Regional Transport Forum; Education through Regional Working (ERW); and the developments of the Regional Waste Collaborative).

Our six Improvement Objectives are:



Our six priorities for improvement are:

Safer, Brighter Futures
better outcomes for children and young people

A purple circular graphic containing a photo of a woman and two children.

Better Schools, Brighter Prospects
strategic school improvement programme

An orange circular graphic containing a photo of a group of children in a classroom.

Improving Outcomes, Improving Lives
promoting high quality, responsive, citizen centred social care

An orange circular graphic containing a photo of a person in a wheelchair.

Prosperity for All
promoting economic growth

A blue circular graphic containing a photo of a construction worker in a high-visibility vest.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
towards zero waste

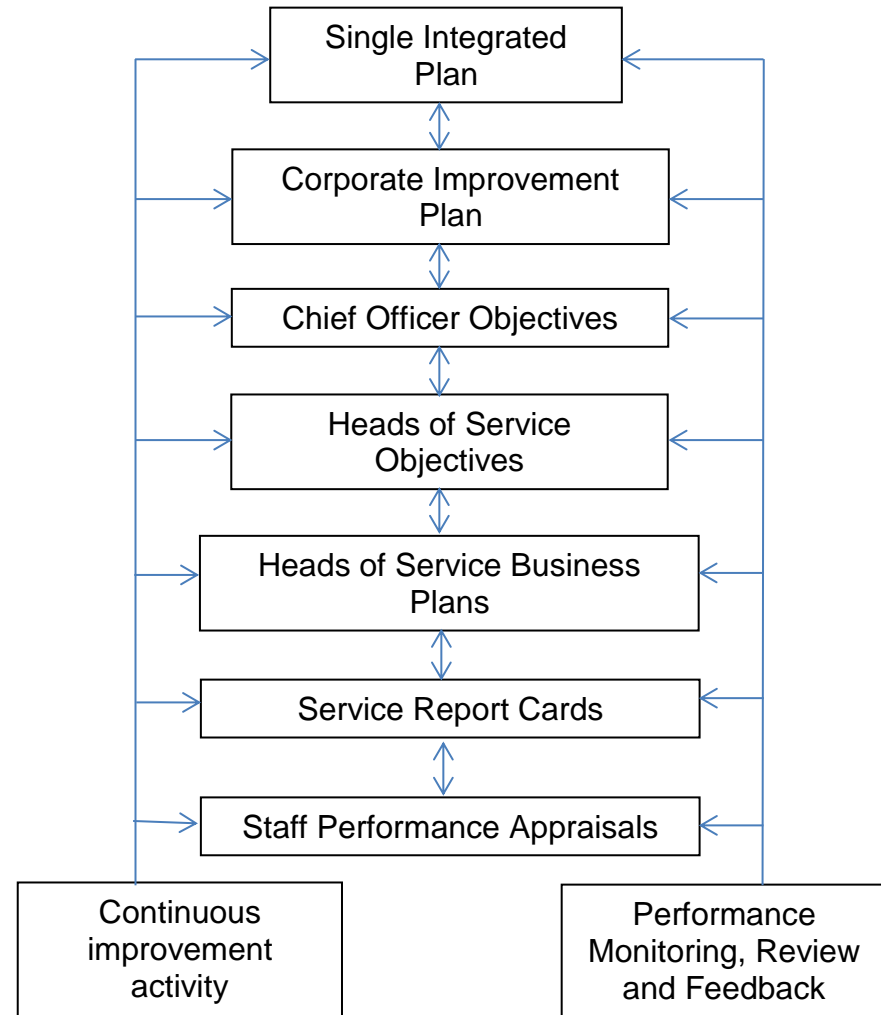
A green circular graphic containing a photo of a recycling bin with a cartoon face.

Digital By Choice
improving customer experience, making better use of public money

A red circular graphic containing a photo of a computer keyboard and a monitor.

Delivery, Monitoring and Evaluating Improvement:

To ensure we are on track to deliver our objectives, the delivery of this plan will be monitored through the Council's Corporate Performance Management Framework which is summarised in the diagram opposite. This Plan is not an expression of everything the Council does, but is a statement which clearly sets out the strategic priorities we will be focusing on. The delivery of this plan will be supported by detailed Directorate Business Plans (produced by each Head of Service) which will set out in more detail how the objectives will be delivered as well as more information on other activities not included. At the service level, Service Report Cards will set out the operational contribution to the objectives and other operational activities undertaken by those services. Each individual employee's contribution will be captured through Staff Performance Appraisals.



Monitoring the delivery of the objectives will be undertaken by senior officers and Members on a regular basis. Mechanisms will include:

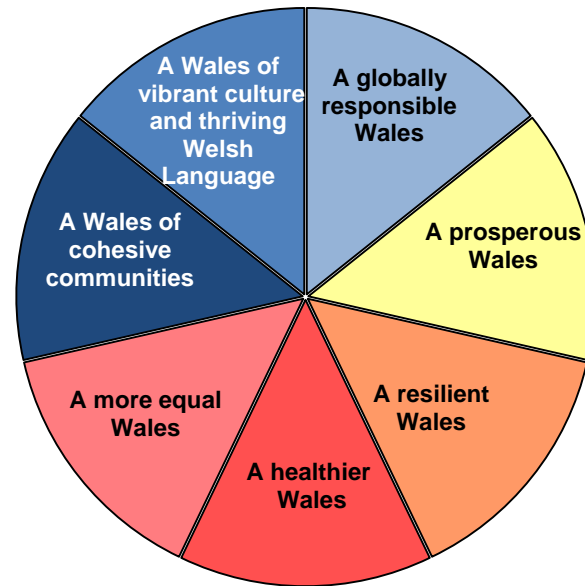
- Quarterly highlight reports prepared for each objective, which describe progress. These highlight reports will be reviewed by the Corporate Directors Group who will act as the over-arching programme board and the reports will also be submitted to the relevant Council scrutiny committees;
- Quarterly budget and Forward Financial Plan monitoring reports; and
- Quarterly performance reports which include the measures identified to demonstrate progress made in delivering the objectives will be submitted to the Council's scrutiny committees on a quarterly basis

New Legislative Requirements

Over the last year, the Welsh Government has introduced a number of new legislative requirements for public bodies and local authorities to comply with which will change the way we plan and deliver services. An immense amount of preparatory work needs to be undertaken during 2016-2017 to ensure the Council discharges the statutory duties contained within them. The key pieces of legislation are outlined below:

- **The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, now and in the future. The Act requires the Welsh Government along with the 43 other specified public bodies (including all local authorities) to ensure that, when making their decisions, they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. To do this, the Act puts in place a “sustainable development principle” which requires those bodies to think about the long term, to work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach in planning and delivering services.

To ensure the 44 public bodies are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place the following seven well-being goals for Wales.



The Act also places a “well-being” duty on the 44 specified public bodies. A duty is something we have to do by law. The well-being duty requires all the public bodies to set and publish objectives (“well-being objectives”) that are designed to maximise that body’s contribution to achieving each of the above well-being goals. These objectives will show how each public body is working to achieve the vision for Wales set out in the well-being goals. Public bodies must then take action to make sure they meet the objectives they set. The Act similarly places duties on each public body (including local authorities) to publish annual reports of progress made in meeting its well-being objectives.

In addition to the above requirements on the Council, the Act also brings a number of changes which will see the demise of the Neath Port Talbot Local Service Board (LSB). The Act establishes statutory Public Services Boards (PSB's) for each local authority area in Wales, replacing the existing Local Service Boards. Under the Act, during 2016-2017, the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board will be required to prepare and publish a well-being assessment of the state of economic, social and environmental well-being in the area. This assessment will then inform the development of a local well-being plan (to be published by March 2018) which will include objectives designed to maximise the Public Services Board's contribution to the well-being goals included on the diagram above.

In the short term, until the local well-being plan is published, the six improvement objectives contained within this Plan will continue to support the priorities set out in the Local Service Board's current [Single Integrated Plan 2013-2023](#) which contribute to achieving the Local Service Board's vision of **Creating a Neath Port Talbot where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and prosperous'**. The Plan contains five cross cutting priorities; Children and Young People, Anti-Poverty, Health Inequities,; Community Safety and Transport. Further details which show the wider contribution of our partners in delivering on these priorities and the outcomes achieved will be captured in the Single Integrated Plan Annual Report 2015-2016 which will be published in June 2016.

- **The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014** is about improving the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. During 2016-2017, we will be working with our neighbouring authorities Swansea and Bridgend and the local health board to prepare a population assessment which will include:
 - an assessment of the level of need for health and social care services
 - a description of the current pattern and supply of those services
 - the identification of the extent of the gap between the need and the supply

The understanding gained from the above will then be used to help make decisions about how to prioritise

the allocation of resources to meet the needs that have been identified, alongside other ways in which people's health and care needs are met, such as self-care or community support.

- **The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015** aims to improve the arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence and the protection of victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence. During 2016-2017, we will complete a comprehensive review of all domestic abuse services currently provided across Neath Port Talbot which will inform the development of a local domestic abuse strategy which we are required to produce under the Act, in partnership with the local health board.
- **Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015** places a duty on certain bodies (including local authorities) in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. During 2016-2017, we will:
 - Consolidate the work completed in 2015-2016 to establish a Channel Panel – the multi-agency group we are required to have in place to support people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism or other forms of extremism
 - Raise awareness of the duty within our organisation and amongst partners
 - Work with the regional CONTEST Board to keep threat under review and contribute to any actions deemed necessary

There is a degree of overlap across the work required to ensure we comply with the requirements of the above pieces of legislation and we will ensure the work is undertaken in the most efficient and practical way to avoid duplication of effort.

- **The Planning (Wales) Act 2015** aims to deliver a planning system which is fair, resilient and enables development, helping to create sustainable places where citizens have improved access to quality houses, jobs and infrastructure, whilst protecting our most important built and natural environments. During 2016-2017, we will be reviewing our processes and procedures to ensure we comply with requirements of the Act.
- **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** puts into place legislation to plan and manage Wales' natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way. This will have an impact on how we plan and deliver many of our functions including flood risk management, land drainage and waste management.

Section 2 - Making the Most of Our Resources

Since 2010, we have had to cut, in real terms, some £59 million from our revenue budget and reduced our workforce by 20% through a combination of voluntary redundancies and a transfer of functions. Setting the budget for 2016-2017, as with previous years, has been a difficult journey.

Consultation

To inform the 2016-2017 budget and the detailed activities needed to achieve our improvement objectives set out in this plan, an extensive consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken during the autumn on the Council's proposed budget savings and our set of draft improvement objectives. Mechanisms used included:

- An overarching public consultation exercise
- An internal consultation exercise
- A Partnership event
- Stakeholders' consultation
- Formal written responses

The responses to the budget consultation were analysed and the top ten issues are outlined below (highest number of comments first):

- 1) Disagree with cuts to library services in general/transferring library services to volunteers
- 2) Comments that the number of councillors/councillors expenses could be reduced
- 3) Comments that saving could be made from further reductions in workforce, staffing structures, pay etc
- 4) Disagree with closing Skewen Library
- 5) Disagree with closing Cefn Coed Colliery Museum

- 6) Disagree with closing Baglan Library
- 7) Disagree with cuts to community centres
- 8) Disagree with stopping mobile library service
- 9) Suggested collaboration with other organisations
- 10) Outsource more services if necessary

The focus of the consultation on the draft set of improvement objectives was whether they were clear and easy to understand and whether the proposed activities would help us to achieve those objectives. We received 125 responses to the draft set of improvement objectives and in summary:

- 52% of respondents agreed that the proposed activities for all six draft improvement objectives were clear and easy to understand. 25% did not agree and 23% did not answer the question.
- 34% of respondents agreed that the proposed activities will help us achieve the improvement objectives, 36% disagreed and 30% did not answer

To address the comments received during the consultation period, additional work was undertaken with Heads of Service to further refine the draft set of objectives and the detailed activities to ensure they were more action and outcome focussed. We also removed the technical language and identified a basket of measures for each improvement objective to measure progress.

Budget 2016 - 2017

During the consultation and engagement exercise, the Welsh Government announcement of the provisional settlement was delayed until 9th December (usually issued in October). However, when it was received the settlement for this Council was considerably better than had previously been estimated by some £9.2m. As a result, the budget savings we needed to deliver during 2016-2017 reduced from £18 m to £11.5m and this enabled us to increase investment in our schools, social services and street scene services and to also revisit planned cuts to cultural services (libraries and museums).

The following paragraphs provide a brief outline of the service investments, changes and implications arising from the 2016-2017 budget and savings proposals:

- **Children and Young People Services** - we continue to remain committed to improving outcomes for children in need and children who are looked after. In 2016-2017 we will continue to prioritise and make significant investment of £23m in these services. The service has continued to improve and has managed a reduction in the number of looked after children from 493 (as at 30th September 2012) to 385 (as at 31st December 2015).
- **Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning** – we remain committed to prioritising investment in our schools and educating our children. The budget for 2016-2017 provides for a £1.8m increase in the services budget to £79.6m. In addition, we will be investing £23.5m in other Education, Leisure and Lifelong Services. This is inclusive of an additional £1.2m provided to cover additional pressures including out of county placements, education outside of the school and to offset a reduction in the Families First Grant – helping protect services to vulnerable families and children. During the autumn (2015), we carried out a number of specific consultations on various Community Transfer proposals. At the time of writing this Plan discussions are

underway to transfer both Cwmafan and Taibach Community Centres. The two proposed library closures (Skewen and Baglan) have been postponed as discussions are underway with stakeholders regarding the transfer of these facilities during 2016-2017 and during 2017-2018 respectively. Savings from the redundant mobile library vehicle and general efficiencies are supporting the continued operation of these two libraries. Cefn Coed Museum will now remain open following positive discussions with the Friends of the Museum to reduce the subsidy paid by the Council and discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Government regarding funding opportunities.

In addition, the proposal to reduce the Youth Service budget by £145k during 2016-2017 is now no longer required as alternative savings from staff rationalisation and better use of grant funding and proposals for increasing income generating opportunities and cost efficiencies are in place for our theatres, the arts centre at Pontardawe and Margam Park.

- **Adult Services** – during 2016-2017 we will be investing £47.6m in Adult Services. An additional £1.9m has been provided to fund identified pressures, including the growth in demand for services and additional costs associated with an increase in the living wage. As highlighted earlier, the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 encourages all Councils to maximise people's independence by providing support to people to live at home, encourage the provision of respite opportunities and right sizing of care packages. The Council has over a number of years been progressing such work and various changes are being incrementally built into the budget and service arrangements/provision. Consultation is ongoing in relation to various Community and Day Services, the outcome of which will be forwarded for Member approval in early 2016-2017.
- **Environment** – during 2016-2017 we will be investing £31.5m in Environment Services. This includes an additional £1.1m to fund identified pressures which include a reduction in grant monies available and a further £1.2m one off funding is being made available to be invested in Streetscene improvements. These

will include maintenance monies for footpaths, cycle ways, rights of way (in particular rural areas), fly tipping, grass cutting and other Streetscene services. The Directorate is also required to deliver significant savings of £1.66m which will be achieved via a number of strategies including:

- Increasing income through sponsorship and increased charging;
 - Utilise more energy efficient LED lights and dimming of some lights in the early hours of the day, there is now no proposal to turn off lights as mentioned in the budget consultation;
 - Reduce staff costs via the restructuring of services and deletion of posts through the Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy (ER/VR) programme;
 - Waste – savings on procurement and a restriction to be placed on the amount of side waste that will be collected;
 - Amalgamation of services with Environmental Health and Trading Standards; and
 - Stopping services such as tennis provision, free dog mess bags and some woodland management activities
- **Corporate Services** – the budget for 2016-2017 will be £16.635m and the Directorate is required to deliver savings of £1.6m which will be achieved via the following strategies:
 - Reduce staff costs through the Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy scheme. This is possible by improved efficiencies and the move to increased digital services
 - Significant reduction in non-staffing costs
 - Increase income through partnership agreements with other local authorities

- A reduction in the number of CCTV cameras that do not comply with best practice regulations
- **Capital Financing Costs/Prudential Borrowing** – £16.408m is included in the budget to meet the cost of capital financing (money we plan to spend on major projects such as building new schools or maintaining bridges) and we will continue to underpin a Capital Programme of some £72m over the next three years.

The savings we are required to deliver during the year will be delivered through the following strategies:

- Ensuring that all the individual savings making up the £11.5m are delivered in full;
- Improved efficiency and the elimination of waste - partly achieved from the range of service reviews that are taking place;
- Reduction in some service levels will occur together with some negative consequential quality impacts;
- A council tax increase of 2.9%, and;
- Increased use of income generating opportunities and selective increases in fees and charges.

Budget and performance monitoring will continue to be strengthened during 2016-2017 in order to ensure that service savings and cash limits are delivered to acceptable standards. Each individual Scrutiny Committee will meet throughout the year to ensure we are delivering the savings proposals and to monitor if the savings are being met. The service report cards presented to individual Scrutiny Committees will enable any impact of budget savings on service performance to be highlighted and will also strengthen the integration of financial and service performance monitoring.

In the absence of a framework from Welsh Government within which medium term financial planning can be

undertaken with any certainty, further work will be undertaken during 2016-2017 to update the Forward Financial Plan for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 to identify the additional income/savings required in order to balance the Council's budgets for those periods.

Partnership Working and Collaboration

The Council continues to participate in a wide range of partnership and collaborative arrangements but remains focused on ensuring we are involved in partnership arrangements that make a real difference. The key regional collaborative arrangements that we are supporting include: Swansea Bay City Region; Western Bay Social Services and Health Collaborative; Regional Waste Committee; Education through Regional Working (ERW).

The Council recognises and values the contribution of the many volunteers and the third sector organisations that play an important role in supporting the well-being of our local communities. To support the continuation of this long and productive relationship, we have over the past year reviewed a number of our arrangements with the third sector to ensure they reflect how our relationship has evolved over the last 16 years and the different approach now required to designing and planning services.

The work has included:

- The review of the arrangements in place to grant aid voluntary organisations. From the outset the review was designed to be inclusive and the initial phase of work involved a Steering Group chaired by an independent person from the voluntary sector with membership drawn from the Council and the third sector. The output of the initial phase identified where grants could be stopped or reduced to assist the Council's budget strategy and to also identified improvements to the governance of grant arrangements.
- To address the improvements identified above a new Grant Scheme was co-produced between voluntary sector representatives and Council officers which makes the grant funding process clear, transparent and equitable and ensures the administrative arrangements that support grant funding are efficient and effective.

The Scheme clearly states the Council wishes to adopt an outcomes-based approach to the way in which grant funding applications are determined. The implementation of the Scheme has enabled the Council to provide funding for up to 3 years to those third sector organisations who have been identified as strategic partners which provides them with the security to apply for funding from other sources and enables them to take a longer term approach to planning and securing sustainability. Moving forward it has been jointly agreed that the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee will formally review the new Scheme each year to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

The work undertaken in respect of grant arrangements is viewed by those who have participated as a positive model of joint working which could be extended to other areas of activity of mutual interest to the voluntary sector and the Council. Both partners value the long standing positive relationships between the Council and the voluntary sector and the relationship is seen as a key strength by others from outside the area. Both partners have recognised that the context for public service delivery has and is changing rapidly and there is a desire to ensure that the existing relationship evolves to both meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities that face us. To support this change, a task and finish group comprising of council officers and voluntary sector representatives is currently reviewing the existing Compact between the Council and the Voluntary Sector. This review will provide an opportunity for both partners to articulate how the relationship should evolve and to identify a small number of topics, of mutual interest, that could be taken forward on a joint basis with a view to improving outcomes for people across the communities of Neath Port Talbot.

Over the past year, the Local Service Board has continued to oversee the delivery of the priorities set out Neath Port Talbot Single Integrated Plan (2013 – 2023). The Single Integrated Plan contains five cross cutting priorities; Children and Young People; Anti-Poverty; Health Inequities; Community Safety; and Transport. Further details which show the contribution of our partners in delivering on these priorities will be captured in the Single Integrated Plan Annual Report 2015-2016 which will be published in June 2016.

Section 3

Our Improvement Objectives



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

What do we want to achieve?

We want to continue to make improvements in the quality and consistency of social work practice and embed an outcomes based performance framework that clearly evidences the contribution that Children and Young People Services makes in supporting children and families to achieve their well-being.

We want to empower children, young people and their families to become, wherever possible, 'co-producers' in the care and support they receive and to encourage an ethos of independence as opposed to dependency and continue to safely reduce the number of Looked after Children. However, in those cases where children need to be accommodated, our aim is to place them in care settings which best suits their needs. In most cases, this will be with Neath Port Talbot foster carers.

We want to further embed our family support strategy through the implementation of a "Resource Panel". The key aims of the Resource Panel will be:

- To prevent, wherever possible, those children and young people on the edge of care, from being admitted into care;
- To support the return home, where appropriate, of those children and young people recently admitted into care on a short-term basis; and

- To support children and young people with complex needs, to access the appropriate support services.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>1. We will work in a way that will make a positive difference to the lives of children and the families we deal with, so that children are safer, remain in their family homes and get the best start in life.</p>	<p>Through the monitoring and reporting of Personal Well-Being Outcome Measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of outcomes that have been developed during the year (including those that have been withdrawn or achieved). • % of outcomes that have had their progress reviewed during the year. • % of outcomes that have been achieved during the year. <p>The meaning of “well-being” is a broad concept that relates to all areas of a person’s life. Everyone has a responsibility for their own well-being but some people need extra help to achieve this. In essence, this means multi-agency partners working together with people to identify outcomes that are personal to them and their individual circumstances that enable them to achieve well-being through appropriate care and support. An example of a personal well-being outcome might be; “I want to feel safe at night living at home with my family”.</p>

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
2. We will have the right family support in place to ensure children and young people remain with their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children supported to stay with their families.
3. Children, young people and families will have a say in the services they receive from us, tailored to suit their needs.	<p>Feedback provided by children, young people and families will be provided via new statutory Welsh Government questionnaires. This will involve monitoring responses to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children/young people responding “Yes” or “Sometimes” to the question - “My views about my care and support have been listened to” • % of carers responding “Yes” or “Sometimes” to the question “I have been actively involved in all decisions about how the care and support was provided for the person I care for” • % of parents responding “Yes” or “Sometimes” to the question – “I have been actively involved in all decisions about how my child’s/children’s care and support was provided”

Note: The measures above are new for 2016-17 and therefore there is no baseline data available at the time of reporting this plan.



Raise educational standards and attainment for all young people

What do we want to achieve?

We want to continue with our aim to increase standards in both school and pupil performance, so that all children and young people in Neath Port Talbot get the best start in life and so they can achieve the best possible qualifications for them at the end of their school life.

Over time, we want to ensure that all of our schools are modern and that they are capable of delivering good quality educational experiences for all pupils. In some cases it will be most cost effective to replace those school buildings that are in most need of repair due to their age. Through our Strategic School Improvement Programme we will merge or relocate some schools; increase the capacity in others; and continue to build new schools; and to close some others. This will provide a more viable school estate, improving learning experiences for pupils and delivering a more efficient and effective educational service, including reducing the number of surplus places across the County Borough's schools. Surplus places represent a cost burden to the Council's budget. There are some 6,039 surplus places within the combined primary secondary sectors, equivalent to 25% of the total places available.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>1. We will merge or relocate some schools; increase the capacity in others; and continue to build new schools; and to close some others.</p> <p>The Council's Cabinet has approved a range of school organisation proposals, including Band A schemes (please see link below) for which Welsh Government 21st Century Schools Programme capital funding has been secured. Band A is scheduled to end in 2018/19. All school reorganisation proposals developed within the Council's Strategic School Improvement Programme require Cabinet approval in the first instance.</p> <p>Cabinet Report available here</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better facilities for pupils and teachers = improve outcomes for pupils. • In some cases better community facilities = community can use the school facilities. • Reduce surplus spaces = better management of class sizes • Reduce building maintenance backlog liability.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>2. We will continue to implement our strategy for the provision of Welsh-medium education in Neath Port Talbot.</p>	<p>We will continue to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and how we plan for future growth;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More seven-year olds being taught through the medium of Welsh (2014-15 academic year performance - 19%) • More learners transferring from Welsh Medium Primary to Welsh Medium Secondary School • More learners aged 14 – 16 studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh. (GCSE Welsh [1st language] and at least five further Level 1/2 qualifications) (2014-15 academic year performance - 80% from the Welsh first language cohort) • More learners aged 16 – 19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools, colleges and work-based learning (latest data - 2013-2014 academic year: Year 12: 60%, Year 13: 55% from the Welsh first language cohort) • Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) • Workforce planning and continuing professional development - schools continue to plan strategically for staff development and produce robust spending plans based on systematic analysis of need.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
3. We will ensure that the 14 -19 Learning Pathways programme supports all young people to achieve their full learning potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of relevant courses to secure young people’s full learning potential are provided. • Reduce the percentage of young people deemed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) post 16. (Latest data 2014: 3.8%)
4. Improvements in literacy outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of pupils achieve outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills at the end of Foundation Phase (2014-15 academic year performance: 83%) • % of pupils achieve at least level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 in language (2014-15 academic year performance: 85%) • % of pupils achieve at least level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 in language (2014-15 academic year performance: 85%) • % of pupils achieve level 2 threshold at the end of Key Stage 4 in language (2014-15 academic year performance: 69%)

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
5. Improvements in numeracy outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of pupils achieve outcome 5 in mathematical development skills at the end of Foundation Phase (2014-15 academic year performance: 85%) • % of pupils achieve at least level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 in maths (2014-15 academic year performance: 86%) • % of pupils achieve at least level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 in maths (2014-15 academic year performance: 83%) • % of pupils achieve level 2 threshold at the end of Key Stage 4 in maths (2014-15 academic year performance: 65%)

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>6. We will improve the performance of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) in literacy & numeracy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) achieve at least outcome 5 in Language, Literacy and Communication skills and Mathematical Development at the end of Foundation Phase (2014-15 academic year performance: 70%) • % of pupils entitled to FSM achieve at least level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 in Language and Mathematics (2014-15 academic year performance: 73%) • % of pupils entitled to FSM achieve at least level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 in Language and in Mathematics. (2014-15 academic year performance: 69% Language, 67% Mathematics) • % of pupils entitled to FSM achieve level 2 threshold at the end of Key Stage 4 in Language and Mathematics (2014-15 academic year performance: 42% Language, 45% Mathematics)
<p>7. We will improve pupil attendance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of pupil attendance in primary schools (2014-15 academic year attendance: 94.8%) • % of pupil attendance in secondary schools (2014-15 academic year attendance: 93.7%)

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>8. We will provide better support for pupils with behavioural needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of permanent exclusions during the academic year per 1,000 pupils from both primary and secondary schools. (2014-15 academic year data: 1.2 (9 pupils)) • % of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions during the academic year, in primary schools. (2014-15 academic year data: 0.008% (203 Days)) • % of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions during the academic year, in secondary schools. (2014-15 academic year data: 0.085% (1,255 Days)) • % of pupils with behavioural needs who leave compulsory education, training or work based learning without and approved external qualification. (2014-15 academic year data: 0.5% (2 pupils of 406))
<p>9. We will continue to improve safeguarding practices and procedures. Protecting children and young people from abuse is a shared responsibility for all staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools are judged by Estyn to be at least good in safeguarding practice. • Increase the capacity of all schools to meet the individual learning and wellbeing needs of all pupils. • Positive feedback from Safeguarding Peer reviews.
<p>10. We will continue to deliver school improvement through the Education Regional Working partnership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Measure: To improve the % of schools categorised as Green and Yellow schools under the National School Categorisation System



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

What do we want to achieve?

We want to continue to modernise the way in which we will meet people's care and support needs. We want to continue to encourage greater take up of direct payments, enabling and encouraging people to have greater choice and control over the way in which their care and support needs will be met, reducing reliance on traditional establishment-based services.

We want to continue to work with partners to deliver better outcomes for people. In particular, we will further integrate and strengthen arrangements that reduce the risk of people losing their independence or needing long-term health and care services. We want to enable more people to take better care of their own wellbeing promoting community support and activities that help people maintain and improve their wellbeing so that we prevent, delay or reduce the need for people to access long term health and social care services.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>1. We will develop community based early intervention and prevention services to support people to remain as independent as possible without formal care and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rate of older people (aged 65 or over) supported in the community per 1,000 population aged 65 or over (performance as at 31st December 2015: 108.99) • The percentage of clients, who are supported in the community during the year, aged 65+ (1st April 2015 – 31st December 2015 performance: 84.37%)
<p>2. We will continue to improve the Gateway Service so we can be sure that people are getting the right response when they first contact adult social services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the percentage of new referrals screened within 24 hours (1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016 performance: 72%) • Increase the % of people diverted into well-being services. (1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016 performance: 55%) • % people contacting the Gateway whose needs can only be met by social services. (45% of referrals between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 were for social services.)

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>3. We will increase the take up of direct payments to support service users and carers in exercising their right to have a choice and control over the way in which their care and support needs are met</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people accessing direct payments (as at 31st March 2016 there were 279 adult direct payments clients). • Number of care and support hours met via direct payments (relating to above clients, 4,893 hours as at 31st March 2016) • Number of people accessing care and support services from social services
<p>4. We will implement '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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of clients who are supported in the community during the year: Aged 18-64. (1st April 2015 – 31st December 2015 performance: 93.73%)
<p>5. We will deliver full integration of community health and social care for frail older people, underpinned by the formal partnership agreement for intermediate health and care services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over. (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015 performance: 3.65)

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
6. We will increase efficiency and value for money of direct services provided by the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people accessing care and support from the Council's home care • Financial cost of in-house services/hours (2016-17 Budget £8,251,900)
7. We will review the partnership arrangement with Grŵp Gwalia to ensure it remains fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total residential beds commissioned (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 196) • Total short term residential beds commissioned (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 24)
8. We will continue to implement the safeguarding action plan to further improve safeguarding practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of adult safeguarding referrals received (between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 = 230 referrals were received). • The % of adult protection referrals completed where the risk has been managed. (1st April 2015 -31st December 2015 performance: 100%)



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

Regeneration: What do we want to achieve?

As this Plan was being finalised, there have been significant developments in the UK steel industry. As the position crystallises, the Council's Plan will be reviewed and should adjustments to our priorities become necessary an addendum report will be presented to Members.

It is essential that we focus our attention on our town centres and communities, with the aim of regenerating them, as they are important aspects of the county borough. We will improve access to towns and employment centres by introducing new bus corridors. To do this we will bring forward proposals to reduce traffic congestion, including the construction of a new integrated transport hub in Port Talbot and develop a commuter cycle network. We will continue to promote projects and programmes to maximise the impact of the next round of external funding.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
1. We will encourage inward investment and bring forward a range of opportunities, including residential, retail and commercial developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of new development opportunities made available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secured funding to deliver 16 commercial, retail and leisure projects valued in excess of £66m.
2. The next phase of Neath Town Centre redevelopment will be completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on delivery of the project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This will be a parade of shops with apartments above, and will improve the pedestrian linkage between the existing first phase and the bus station, Gwyn Hall and Victoria Gardens.
3. The development of leisure and commercial opportunities at Aberavon Seafront will continue and will include a new adventure golf course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding secured and support provided to existing businesses to increase commercial activity and new developments on Aberavon sea front. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 new businesses/leisure providers – total 11 - £205,000 funding secured to build a 12 hole family adventure golf course

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
4. Caravan and camping facilities at Margam Park will be developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the delivery of the development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed start on site - Autumn 2016
5. We will access funding to refurbish, repair and maintain locally important buildings and structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of important, historic or listed buildings and ancient monuments removed from the buildings at risk register on an annual basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 buildings completed and/or progressed
6. We will drive forward regeneration projects in the valleys, to encourage tourism and improve employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of projects supported as a direct result of regeneration work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 projects progressing/completed
7. We will continue to deliver the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme to combine support for people and places whilst encouraging partnership working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the delivery of the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Vibrant and Viable Places Programme consists of 12 projects to be delivered over a 3 year period. 5 projects are underway and close to completion (as at May 2016) during 2016-2017.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>8. We will identify supply chain opportunities for local companies within major developments in the county borough by working in partnership with developers/organisations who are delivering substantial investment programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local people helped to get back into work – (latest data from 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016 - 75 • Number of completed apprenticeship training weeks, traineeships and work experience opportunities – (latest data from 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016 - over 3000 weeks completed • Number of contract opportunities secured by local businesses – (latest data from 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016 – 90) • 4 projects completed achieving more than 86% spend with contractors in Wales
<p>9. We will continue to support local businesses to help them prosper; create more jobs and business start-ups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of business enquiries resulting in advice, information or financial support given to existing companies. (1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016: 584) • The number of new business - start-up enquiries assisted. (1st April 2015 -31st March 2016: 271) • The number of new start-ups assisted through Innov8 programme. (1st April 2015 -31st March 2016: 32) • The number of jobs created as a result of financial support by the Council (1st April 2015 -31st March 2016: 184)

Anti –poverty: What do we want to achieve?

Research studies conducted by Sheffield Hallam University demonstrate that areas within the county borough are disproportionately and negatively affected by the UK Government’s welfare benefits changes. Our over-riding corporate priorities are to protect services to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Consequently, continuing to work in partnership to mitigate the impact of the welfare benefit changes will have on those with the lowest incomes remains a priority for us and our Local Service Board partners. We will support people to maximise their income ensuring people are helped into work or are receiving the benefits they are entitled to and have the skills and support to manage their income appropriately. We will also increase support for people who struggle to access on-line services.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
10. We will deliver the commitments in the partnership agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions to support the introduction of Universal Credit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of claimants receiving their benefit via Universal Credit. As at 11th April 2016, there were over 1,000 claimants in receipt of Universal Credit, 196 transferred from Housing Benefits to Universal Credit.• Number of claimants requiring digital support.• Number of claimants accessing personal budget support. As at 11th April 2016, 85 claimants have requested the specialist money management support service and 25 have actually taken up the service.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
11. We will work with partners, to identify the impact of the next set of Welfare Benefit changes announced by the UK Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact assessment produced • Updated action plan signed off by the Local Service Board.
12. We will map existing community resources that can be drawn upon to mitigate the impacts of Universal Credit and Benefit changes. Focusing particularly on: digital inclusion; financial literacy; employment support; and benefits advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publication of the mapping exercise • Information Advice and Assistance Service available, integrated with Information Advice and Assistance requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
13. We will work with partners to ensure citizens and service providers are aware of the community resources and how they can be accessed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hits to Independent Advice and Assistance website • Rating of service by customers accessing the website
14. We will develop an understanding of unmet need across the county borough and produce partnership proposals to address the unmet need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of a multi-agency action plan.
15. We will further develop our Digital inclusion plans with partners,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy developed and signed off by the Local Service Board and reviewed by the Public Services Board when it has been established to secure ongoing support.

Housing: What do we want to achieve?

We want to provide people with an opportunity to live in a home that they can afford; that is safe, warm and secure, a home that meets their needs whether that be owned or rented and is in an area where they want to live and we support them to do so.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
16. NPT Homes will continue to meet the Council's promise (as detailed in the 'offer document') to bring all former council housing up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and to regenerate communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• % of NPT Homes social housing that meets the Welsh Housing Quality standard (as at 31st January 2016: 3,502 houses - 38% met the standard)
17. We will provide loans to effectively target empty properties to bring them back into use and make sure existing housing stock is safe, warm and secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the number of empty properties brought back into use (latest data for 2015-16 financial year: 3)• Increase the number of private sector houses that have been made safe, warm and secure (latest data for 2015-16 financial year: 5)

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>18. We will undertake a homelessness review</p> <p>We will prioritise those most in need by implementing single point of access arrangements for Supported People-funded homelessness prevention support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the % of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 92.1%) • Number of private rented tenancies made available that were suitable and likely to be available for at least six months (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 66 tenancies)
<p>19. We will develop a Homelessness Strategy that will ensure co-operation agreements are in place with our Housing Association partners to deliver the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act and monitor the contribution they make to help the Council fulfil its duty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Strategy developed • % of Housing Association partners with stock in the county borough the Council has a co-operation agreement with (New Indicator so no baseline data available)



Increase the percentage of waste recycled and composted

What do we want to achieve?

For economic and environmental reasons the Welsh Government has set us very challenging legal targets for reuse/recycling and composting as well as for landfill in their Waste Strategy 'Towards Zero Waste'. In response to this we are working towards achieving the next target of 64% (2019-2020) and if we do not meet these targets we could end up with fines of £200 per tonne.

Currently 80% of households recycle their waste and our aim is to increase this number through our Waste Strategy. This will help us meet the legal targets above and enable us to manage our resources better.

Where possible we want to exploit all funding opportunities to further improve the service and make efficiencies to re-invest back into the service. We also want to make the service as affordable as possible and capable of collecting all waste in a way that both helps us meet the targets and is convenient to the public.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>1. More people will have an extended recycling service (e.g. collect more items such as batteries) and their waste sorted at the kerbside.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of households on recycle+ • Household participation • The percentage of local authority collected municipal waste prepared for reuse, recycling and composting (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 56.17%)
<p>2. New contract arrangements will be in place for waste treatment and disposal to ensure we are getting the best deal for the Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the overall cost of household waste services • The % of municipal waste sent to landfill (1st April 2015 -31st December 2015: 13.9%) • The percentage of local authority collected municipal waste prepared for reuse, recycling and composting (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 56.17%) • The % of municipal waste used to recover heat and power and any resultant contribution to the reuse, recycling and composting rate (1st April 2015 - 31st December 2015: 25.7%)



Digital by Choice

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

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.

What do we want to achieve?

As more and more people in our communities adopt digital technologies in their day to day life, we are responding by providing more services online. We will prioritise those services that are requested most frequently. Expanding our online services will provide more choice for our customers and make it easier for people to access services and at a time convenient for them.

We will work with our partners to ensure everyone in our communities has the opportunity to use our on-line facilities, available across the county borough, by placing an emphasis on self-help. Our Digital by Choice Strategy is the framework which sets out how we will deliver this work. Work will continue to streamline and modernise our internal support services and by working smarter digitally reduce the need for costly manual processes. We will also revise the way in which we charge people for services so they are fair and consistent and where it makes sense to do so, create opportunities to generate money for the Council.

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
<p>1. Our website will be easier to access and more services will be available on-line</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the professional rating of our website page rating from a 1 star (maximum rating is 4 star): As at the 11th April 2016, we are still awaiting the official overall rating, but individually some of our services are receiving a 3 star online rating. • More of our customers find the website easier to use • More of our customers can access the information/service they want first time • Increasing the percentage of transactions completed on-line (latest data: 61% in March 2016 (with a peak of 77% in December 2015)). • Increasing the number of new services available on-line (As at 1st February 2016, 7 services are available online: bulks, refuse and recycling consumables, van permits, pest control, phase 1 of map based reporting, missed collections, council tax (change of circumstances forms) • % of customers satisfied/very satisfied with improvements made to services available on-line

What will be different? (Outcomes)	How we will measure our progress? (Measures)
2. More of our website pages will be available in Welsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the % of webpages available in Welsh (latest data: 31st March 2016 - 97%)
3. We will change our one stop shops and support people to carry out transactions on-line to make it easier for people to access digital services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the demand on Customer Services and achieve savings identified in our Forward Financial Plan
4. More people in our communities will have the digital skills to access services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people we support to develop digital skills to access services
5. All services will use our on-line ordering and payment system replacing manual processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage volume of transactions processed through i-procurement • Achieve the savings identified in our Forward Financial Plan
6. Introduce self-service options across internal support services, starting with a self-service employee portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate employee data • % employees using self-serve option • Achieve savings identified in our Forward Financial Plan
7. Increased and new income generation opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of income achieved

Section 4 - How we will secure Continuous Improvement

The Council has a general duty to ‘make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions’ (Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009). To achieve this, we have to ensure we have the right skills, capacity and governance in place.

Our approach to improving performance and outcomes is based on a cycle of: planning; implementing; monitoring; and reflection and review at all tiers of our organisation. In 2014, the Wales Audit Office undertook a comprehensive assessment (Corporate Assessment) of our arrangements and they presented their findings to Council in January 2015. There were no statutory recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office as no significant shortcomings were identified. There were, however, a range of proposals for improvement put forward for the Council’s consideration and most of those proposals for improvement were accepted by the Council and have either been completed or are in the process of being completed. The improvement work is overseen by the Council’s Corporate Governance Group, with progress reported in our Annual Governance Statement to the Audit Committee.

a) Planning for improvement

- **Key Plans** – we consulted on our improvement objectives alongside our budget proposals during the autumn of 2016. There remains broad support for the six objectives we have selected and we have set out what we intend to do next in this plan. Alongside this work, we also, with our partners, reviewed our priorities within the Single Integrated Plan and agreed the focus for action in the next 12 month period to ensure these plans remain aligned.
- **Forward Financial Plan** – extensive consultation was undertaken on the savings strategies the Council might adopt to close the budget gap in 2016-2017.

During 2015, the WAO undertook a Financial Resilience Assessment which examined the Council's financial health, how we are budgeting and delivering on savings and whether these arrangements provide assurance the Council is financially resilient.

- The WAO found the Council has:
 - adequate financial controls in place and a clear framework for managing its financial affairs
 - financial governance arrangements which support the financial planning arrangements.

The review also found the Council demonstrates a commitment to financial governance and is working with Scrutiny Members to strengthen and improve the level of financial understanding. Following the review, the WAO proposed the following proposals for improvements

- Develop more explicit links between the Forward Financial Plan, Corporate Plan, service and financial plans
- Develop savings delivery plans which cover the period in the Forward Financial Plan
- Develop a corporate income generation and charging policy to ensure directorates review charges and income as part of the budget setting process on a consistent basis

- **Asset Management Plans** – This Council has a mature approach to the management of the Council’s many assets. This includes the maintaining of up to date information on the number and condition of those assets in our asset management plans which cover:
 - Highways
 - Fleet
 - Bridges and Structures
 - Property
 - ICT

During the Corporate Assessment the Wales Audit Office made a number of proposals for improving arrangements in relation to our property and ICT asset management arrangements.

To address these proposals, we had planned to update the Property Asset Management Plan during 2015-2016 but due to limited resources this work has not been completed. This will now be completed early 2016-2017. However, in the interim, we have ensured property asset management is included in the Council’s business planning process. Heads of Service are now required to identify any property consequences of the delivery of their priorities as set out on their business plans.

We had also planned to formalise the arrangements of the Council’s Strategic Asset Management Group but due to a number of staff losses and restructuring it has taken longer than expected to complete this work. This work will now be completed early in 2016-2017.

With regards to our ICT asset management arrangements, an updated ICT Strategy will be brought forward in the spring which also be complemented by an Information Strategy which will outline the Council's approach to the better use, security and governance of information. Progress will be reported annually in conjunction with the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

- **Workforce Capacity and Skills** – a key strength of the Council is its ability to deliver its priorities through workforce-related change. Elected Members, senior managers and trade union representatives, supported by the Human Resources team, have developed a model of social partnership with trade unions which has evolved into an effective employee relations and change management process. The Council's political leadership have provided clear and consistent direction in terms of what is expected from senior officers, i.e. a workplace culture based on trust, respect, early and meaningful consultation. An agreed programme of work for the Human Resources team is in place to support the delivery of our improvement priorities and related change management activity.

To date we have implemented four major voluntary redundancy programmes and as a result face a number of ongoing challenges. These include sustaining sufficient capacity and capability to deliver services and functions, ensuring that services can continue to operate safely and effectively with a reduced workforce, providing the learning, training and development needed for the residual workforce to cope with huge changes in the organisation, ensuring there is capacity to support our improvement and budget priorities within a context of diminishing resources, as well as delivering the business as usual work programme. It will be an ongoing challenge to have the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right place, doing the right things.

Our workforce management arrangements were examined as part of the Corporate Assessment conducted by Wales Audit Office in 2014. There were three proposals for improvement relating to human resources that the Council accepted:

- Ensure the Council adopts an appraisal process by December 2015.
- Implement an induction process.
- Introduce a workforce plan.

The following good progress has been made on addressing these proposals for improvement.

A review has been undertaken of the Council's appraisal and performance development review processes which has led to the development of a single Performance Appraisal Policy. The Council's Personnel Committee approved the Policy at its meeting on 22nd February 2016 which is now being implemented across the Council.

A review has been undertaken of the Council's induction process and a revised process developed.

Workforce planning has been introduced at a service level via the 2016-2017 business planning process and service workforce plans will support the development of a Corporate Workforce Plan by the end of 2016-2017.

b) Implementing and reviewing improvement actions

Performance and Programme Management

Our improvement work is implemented through our corporate performance management framework (see page 8). We revised our performance management framework in 2014-2015 to ensure there is a “golden thread” of accountability running through our organisation linking strategic activities to operational activities.

The improvement work set out in this plan is assigned to relevant chief officers by the Chief Executive and formally included in their personal objectives for the year. The new appraisal system introduced for chief officers is the means through which the Chief Executive assesses progress.

Personal objectives for each chief officer provide the basis for service business plans (produced by Heads of Service). A new approach to service business planning was introduced in 2014-2015 to ensure there was greater consistency across the Council. We evaluated the implementation of that new approach and used the recommendations from the evaluation to improve and strengthen arrangements for 2015-2016. We have again reviewed and strengthened the arrangements for 2016-2017 with the inclusion of a requirement for both workforce planning and property asset management matters to be included in service business plans.

Service business plans then form the framework for the activities of teams. Each team is required to develop a service report card to demonstrate what is being achieved for the resources invested in that service area. During 2015-2016 we evaluated the quality of the report cards and the use of report cards within the scrutiny process. The recommendations from this review have informed improvements being implemented during 2016-2017 which includes detailed guidance and the availability of targeted support for managers to assist them in updating their service report cards.

During the summer of 2015, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a follow up review to the proposals for improvement from their Corporate Assessment undertaken in 2014 in relation to the bringing together of

information in a way that enables the Council to evaluate whether it is making effective use of resources. The review sought to answer the question; “Has the Council made progress in implementing its new performance management arrangements?”

The WAO found:

- The Council has improved the corporate performance framework and managers are committed to using the new processes:
 - The Council has introduced guidance that encourages improvements in business planning practice across the organisation
 - The Council has adopted a report card template that has the potential to strengthen the evaluation of service performance, linked to resources and corporate priorities
- Heads of Service are planning more consistently but there is scope to continue developing and refining the business plans and report cards
- The Council is beginning to improve the coordination and presentation of performance information to support decision making and scrutiny but does not yet have a complete overview of performance.

The WAO review included the following proposals for improvement which are being addressed via the above improvement work:

- Further refine the service business plans, in line with corporate guidance
- Further refine the report cards, including strengthening the narrative evaluation and the link between priorities and actions

- Further develop performance reporting by coordinating and bringing together information to support scrutiny and strategic decision making

A copy of the WAO report can be found [here](#)

Risk Management

During 2015-2016 we made significant progress on the improvement work required to provide and sustain effective corporate risk management. This included the review and revision of the Corporate Risk Management Policy which was approved by the Council's Cabinet on 15th July 2015. The aim of the Policy is to promote an open, consistent and proactive risk management attitude whilst promoting the taking of opportunities to better serve the needs of our communities. Clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are set out in the Policy to ensure the effective recognition and management of corporate risks. To implement the Policy, during the autumn of 2015, work was undertaken with Senior Management Teams to develop Directorate Risk Registers which informed the development of the Council's Corporate Risk Register. The [Corporate Risk Register](#) was presented to the Council's Cabinet on 2nd March 2016.

The Council's Audit Committee has a key role in ensuring the Policy is implemented effectively and during 2016-2017 will review and assess the corporate risk management arrangements and will make recommendations to the Council's Cabinet on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements.

At the same meeting of Cabinet, the Wales Audit Office presented the findings of their review (undertaken during the summer of 2015) of the risk management arrangements in the Council. The review concluded with the following proposals for improvement which have been addressed via the work outlined above and will be further advanced as the Council's approach to managing corporate risk continues to mature via the implementation of the Policy:

- Ensure those members and officers with responsibilities for risk as defined in the Policy discharge their roles effectively and are held to account
- Raise awareness of the Risk Management Policy and provide support for managers to develop new skills/behaviours to effectively manage risk

A copy of the WAO report can be found [here](#)

c) Monitoring and Evaluating Improvement

Performance Review

We will further strengthen existing mechanisms to bring together financial and performance information so that a clearer picture of the use made of available resources can be seen:

- **Quarterly highlight reports** are prepared for each programme of work that has been established to achieve the six improvement objectives. The highlight reports contain information on achievements, risks, budget position, benefits tracking and the work to be completed during the next phase. These highlight

- reports are scrutinised by the Corporate Directors' Group who act as the over-arching programme board;
- **Quarterly budget and performance** monitoring reports submitted to the Council, chief officers and scrutiny committees;
 - **Annual Report** published each October which contains an assessment of our overall performance in the previous financial year including progress made against our improvement objectives in the previous year; and
 - **Benchmarking (compare and share)** - we will continue to compare and share our performance information with partners, other councils and key stakeholders to improve our services. For example, we may visit other councils to learn from their best practice and host visits for other councils to share our best practice. We will also compare our performance with other councils through benchmarking groups. In addition, each year we will undertake an assessment of our nationally reported performance indicators, so that we have an understanding of our performance, and how we match up with our peers to see if we are doing well or not across these key measures. This information will be included each year in our Annual Report and reported to Members.

Scrutiny

In 2014-15 we completed a review of democratic arrangements across the Council and identified a number of things we wanted to do to modernise those arrangements. The Wales Audit Office agreed with our analysis when they conducted their Corporate Assessment and suggested to us that improvements should concentrate on the following actions:

- Establish a skills training programme for members.
- Build a better balance of scrutiny activity in forward work programmes and focus on activities that have more impact.

- Improve the quality and accessibility of council business.

Between January and May 2015, the Wales Audit Office observed scrutiny meetings to assess developments and found:

- Improved quality of information on the website and better records of meetings
- Examples of preparation by some Scrutiny Committees in advance of considering items so questions are focused and well-coordinated
- Forward work programmes are being developed
- Observed questions and discussion about agenda items during consideration of minutes

However, the Wales Audit Office also identified further opportunities for improvement to scrutiny arrangements, including:

- Too much time spent by scrutiny members on pre-decision scrutiny and unclear as to how pre-scrutiny items are resolved
- Time management at scrutiny meetings could be improved

With regards training, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all Committees have received two Chairing Skills training sessions.

During 2014-2015 a Members' survey was undertaken and the findings have been analysed. Many of the concerns or issues that were raised have been addressed and the remaining outstanding issues will be dealt with by the Democratic Services Committee during 2016-2017.

Section 5 - Underpinning Principles

a) Equalities

During 2015-2016 we revised our Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives through active engagement with equality groups, elected Members and officers. The review identified that all the following equality objectives and the specific projects were still relevant:

- Address **harassment discrimination and other threats to personal safety** experienced by people due to their protected characteristics - Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse
- Improve **access to information** by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people - Council website and information/documentation
- Improve **access to services** by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people - Social Services provision
- Monitor **information and data** effectively in order to identify disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics - robust monitoring systems
- Deliver **staff training** in line with the Equality Act requirements
- Improve **access to the environment** by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people- Council owned buildings, street furniture etc. and regeneration projects
- Reduce gaps in the **educational performance** experienced by pupils due to their protected characteristics - increase levels of attendance and reduce the gap in performance
- Ensure our **employment and recruitment processes** promote fairness and equality for all.

We are working to meet these objectives through a range of initiatives which focus our energies on those areas that matter most to people and where we are certain that measurable outcomes will be achieved. The

work on improving digital inclusion across the county borough will not only help meet our equality objectives but also the Council's wider improvement priorities.

The physical integration of both the Strategic Equality Plan and the Corporate Improvement Plan has not taken place as originally anticipated due to inflexibility in the associated regulations and statutory guidance. However, the objectives and priorities have been aligned to ensure a more holistic approach to improve outcomes over the lifetime of both plans.

Further information on how we intend to meet the objectives and how we will measure the outcomes can be found in the [Strategic Equality Plan](#). We continue to work on developing a greater understanding of the impacts of our actions and services on the population of Neath Port Talbot and have identified areas of good practice or where further training is required. By using the lessons learnt from the equality impact assessment process, and other engagement events, any gaps in knowledge and/or understanding of the various protected characteristics will be more readily identified. Additionally we are beginning to build up a better picture of our area enabling us to better plan and develop services for better outcomes.

b) Welsh Language

On 30th September 2015, the Council received a Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice containing 166 standards from the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Council had previously responded to the Welsh Language Commissioner in July 2015 on a draft Compliance Notice highlighting a number of the standards that were problematic for a number of reasons.

The Council's Policy and Resources Cabinet Board assessed the final Compliance Notice and agreed that a formal challenge to fifty five standards should be made on the ground they were considered to be unreasonable and/or disproportionate or on the grounds that due process had not been observed with a small number of standards having been included in the final Compliance Notice which were not included in the earlier processes (the Commissioner has since considered the challenge valid for fifty four of those standards).

The Council is currently awaiting the outcome of the above challenge that was submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner on the 15th January 2016. The Council is committed to the promotion of the Welsh Language and culture and accepted many of the requirements set out in the Compliance Notice.

c) Sustainability

During 2016-2017, we will be undertaking the necessary preparatory and planning work to ensure the Council is working towards discharging the duties contained within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act defines "sustainable development" as the process of improving the economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales". At a local level, when making decisions this Council has already in place a number of impact assessments that are completed to ensure the decisions we make take into account the impact those decisions could have on people living in Neath Port Talbot now and in the future. However, the Act is quite specific on five things we need to think about to show that we have applied the sustainable development principle as defined within the Act and during 2016-2017 we will undertake work to ensure those

five things (long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement) are integrated into our impact assessment framework.

d) Citizen & Stakeholder Engagement

We aim to be an open and responsive Council that encourages those who use our services to tell us what is important to them and to suggest how services might improve using an expanding range of tools such as social media, our website, email, road shows and partnership events. It's important to us that our citizens and other stakeholders have a voice at an early stage to influence the development of policies and strategies that affect their lives and inform the way services are planned and delivered. However, due to the complexity of the differing needs of citizens it is not always possible to meet all needs, but a good understanding means we are better placed to divert valuable resource into the right places, at the right times and in the right ways. There will always be more we can do and it remains an area of work that we will continue to prioritise.

The groups we engage with are very diverse, examples include: Youth Council; Older Persons' Council; Older Persons' Consultation Forum (which consists of representatives from organisations who are working to improve services for older people); Black Minority Ethnic Forum; and the Disability Network Action Group (whose members have direct experience of disability issues and offer to meet with service providers to help them address the needs of people with disabilities).

During the autumn 2015 an extensive consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken to inform the Council's required budget savings for 2016-2017 and the improvement objectives that are set out in this Plan. The methods we used included:

- An overarching public consultation was available on-line and via questionnaires in public buildings; email; and corporate social media accounts.

- Internal staff engagement sessions held with the Chief Executive. A dedicated email address was made available to staff to submit questions/comments along with an internal intranet “post a question” facility and question boxes placed in 12 locations around the Council for those members of staff without access to the Council’s intranet.
- Building on the success of the Partnership Budget seminar held in September 2014, the Council held its second seminar at the Princess Royal Theatre on Monday 7th September 2015 and invitees included stakeholders representing the business sector, voluntary sector, public sector, trade unions, the media and town and community councils, local government and regulators. Invitations were also extended to Members of Parliament for the area as well as external auditors, inspectors and the independent Commissioners established by Welsh Government. Members of the Older Persons’ Council, Youth Council, Disability Network Access Group BME Forum and Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender Forum for the county borough were also invited to take part.
- A number of stakeholder consultations were held involving a number of forums and groups, including:
 - Neath Port Talbot Local Service Board;
 - Trade Unions;
 - Neath Port Talbot Staff Council;
 - Town and Community Council Liaison Forum;
 - Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum; and
 - Specific consultation exercises with service users and wider stakeholders on proposals that required additional consultation.

The results of the consultation were included in the [budget report](#) that was reported to Cabinet on 2nd February 2016.

Section 6 - What our Auditors and Regulators have said

- a) **Wales Audit Office** – In addition to the work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office outlined earlier, under the Local Government Wales Measure, the Auditor General is required to report on his audit and assessment work in relation to whether the Council has discharged its statutory duties in respect of improvement planning based on the Council’s Corporate Improvement Plan 2015-2018 “Rising to the Challenge” (published May 2015). The Compliance Certificate issued by the Auditor General replaces the Improvement Assessment Letter (1) received in previous years. The view of the Auditor General is that after four years of examining improvement plans and performance reports, little further impact can be gained by continuing to undertake detailed audits of plans and assessments of performance. He has therefore decided to discharge his audit duties under section 17 of the Measure by checking whether authorities have published improvement plans and assessments of performance as required by them under section 15 of the legislation. There will be less emphasis on compliance testing and more emphasis on providing insight into drivers and barriers to improvement. From the [Compliance Certificate](#) issued to the Council (June 2015), the Auditor General concluded that the Council had discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the 2009 Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.
- 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 21st 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. The CSSiW report can be found [here](#)

c) **The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSiW)** has recently (October 2015) published its Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2014 – 2015 report for Neath Port Talbot. This report sets out CSSiW's evaluation of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's performance in delivering its social services functions. The evaluation found the Council remains realistic about the challenges posed by the need to deliver improving services within the context of reducing financial resources. The development of commissioning strategies and market position statements in children's and adult services has given greater definition to the strategic direction for service development. Corporate commitment to the needs of children and young people is demonstrated by this being a cross cutting theme in all Council priorities. The safety, health, independence and wellbeing of vulnerable older people are also key priorities in the Corporate Improvement Plan 2014-2017. The Council has been proactive in driving the preventative and early intervention agenda in its contracts with the third sector and with independent providers. Within children's services there is evidence of active leadership with the director, head of service and principal officers all providing a positive impact on setting clear priorities, which have included systems, processes and more importantly workforce stability. The senior managers have successfully introduced a culture of openness and challenge, with staff at all levels expressing support for the manner in which practice is now being delivered. The evaluation report identified a number of improvements, including, a revised model of day centre delivery, safe reduction in looked after children population and the use of alternative permanency arrangements and the establishment of an outcome based framework in children's services. The progress in relation to these improvements will be discussed at regular engagement meetings. The CSSiW report can be found [here](#).

- d) **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

- e) **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 can be found here: [Estyn- Adult Community Learning](#).

Have your say on what matters to you

We would like to hear what you thought of our Corporate Improvement Plan 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

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



Follow us and add your comments to the Council's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/NeathPortTalbotCBC>



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