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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

Assessment of our performance 2015-2016



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

Message from the Leader and Chief Executive

This is our self-assessment of the Council's performance during the 2015-2016 financial year. We have focussed on the progress made on the delivery of our six key improvement objectives as outlined in the 2015-2018 Corporate Improvement Plan ['Rising to the Challenge'](#).

Enduring austerity made the budget setting process in 2015-2016 the hardest yet. The sustainability and affordability of different areas of our work were scrutinised to ensure we were able to honour our commitment to continue to deliver key services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities. As a result, difficult decisions had to be made but we are pleased to report that we achieved most of what we set out to do.

The announcement of significant job losses and proposed closure of the steelworks in March 2016 placed additional pressure on families, communities, businesses and public services already struggling through times of financial uncertainty. We worked alongside partners to help those facing redundancy and support businesses in the extensive supply chain and the wider community.

In our Children and Young People Services we remained committed to building on improvements that have been made to the service over the last few years. We continued to safely reduce the number of children looked after by the Council. We improved the stability of the workforce by improving staff satisfaction and reducing staff turnover. However, we realise that there is still work to do to ensure we fulfil our commitment to improve the outcomes for all children and young people receiving support from the service.

In our Education Services, school attendance continued to increase whilst the percentage of young people not in education, employment or training reduced. The construction of our new, state of the art, all through 3 – 16 school, Ysgol Bae Baglan is on schedule and will open its doors to pupils in September 2016. There were significant changes in our Adult Social Care Services during the year, with some service areas reconfigured and the senior management structure reorganised. The appointment of an interim Head of Service brought stability and enabled us to deliver most of our service priorities.

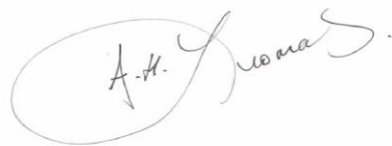
By securing capital funding we were able to progress a number of important physical regeneration projects, such as the construction of the Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre. We also continued to work with partners to support people from low income households to improve their financial circumstances.

The implementation of our Waste Strategy continued and we achieved the statutory recycling and composting target of 58% for 2015-2016. We were also able to identify funding to roll-out the final phase of the Recycle+ scheme across the County Borough. Our Digital by Choice Strategy was approved by Council in November 2015; which aims to reduce digital exclusion, improve access to services and ensure we make more service available on-line.

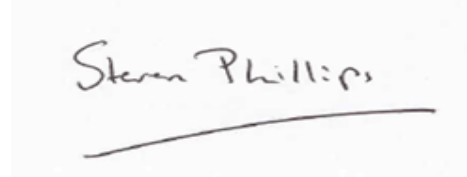
Since 2010, this Council has been proactive in forecasting funding gaps and delivered spending reductions of £60m and reduced its workforce by some 20% through a combination of voluntary redundancies and the transfer of functions. For 2015-2016, we made the required budget savings of £14.8m and an additional £2.8m was transferred into the Council's general reserves at year end.

It has become apparent that the proposed series of mergers to reduce the existing 22 local authorities down to eight are not going to be implemented. Until a decision is made at Welsh Government level, uncertainty around the future shape of local government in Wales will continue. In addition, we expect more tough challenges over the coming months and years as budget cuts continue to take their toll. We are very grateful to our workforce and the Trade Unions for their continued loyalty and want to thank our partners for their hard work to sustain good quality services and make a difference to people across Neath Port Talbot.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Ali Thomas

Handwritten signature of Ali Thomas in black ink, enclosed in a light blue oval.

Chief Executive, Steven Philips

Handwritten signature of Steven Philips in black ink, with a horizontal line underneath.

Introduction

Under the 2009 Local Government (Wales) Measure, we have a duty to produce two reports each year. The first is the Corporate Improvement Plan which sets out our key priorities for improvement for the financial year ahead. The second report we publish is the Annual Report which shows how successful we have been in delivering the improvement objectives set out in our 2015-2018 Corporate Improvement Plan [‘Rising to the Challenge’](#).

The improvement objectives referred to above, focus on:

- Improving outcomes for children in need and looked after children
- Raising the educational standards and attainment of all children and young people
- Maximising the number of adults who are able to live independently with or without support within the home of their choice within their community
- Supporting and investing in communities to maximise job opportunities and improve access to employment
- Increasing recycling and composting
- Improving customer access to our services

This Report covers the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 and is available in English and Welsh, on our website [\(insert link\)](#) and in printed format at the following 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.

A one page version of this report is also available [\(insert link\)](#).

If you require this information in larger print or in an alternative format, please contact the Corporate Strategy Team on 01639 763242 or email: improvement@npt.gov.uk

Section 1 Overall Assessment of Performance

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

On the whole, performance across our six corporate improvement objectives demonstrates improvement in line with what we planned to deliver. We have reported in more detail how we have performed on each improvement objective in Section 2.

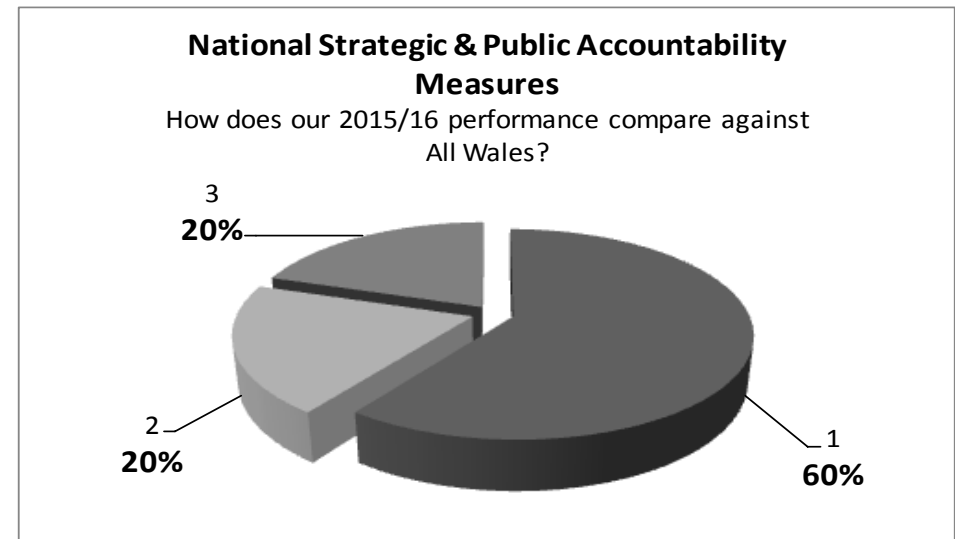
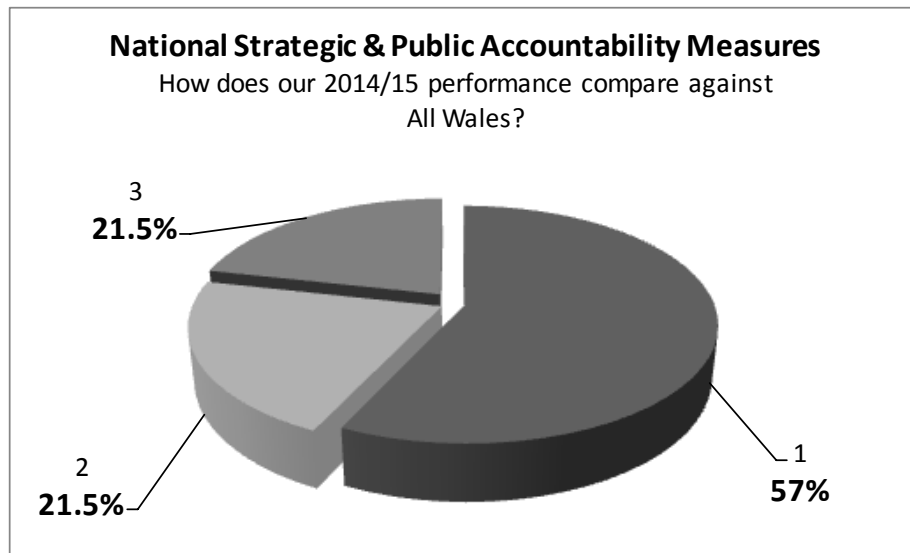
We also measure performance across a range of service areas and report performance of our full data set of 126 measures which are reported to scrutiny committees on a quarterly basis. The data set comprises of: National Statutory Indicators; Public Accountability Measures; Service Improvement Data; and measures we have developed locally. 60% of our comparable performance measures improved or achieved maximum performance in 2015-2016 compared to 65% in 2014-2015. Our full set of performance measures **INSERT LINK**, provides summary comments on performance from service areas and includes explanations for those performance indicators where performance has fallen by 5% or more on the previous year.

We also compare our performance of the nationally reported performance indicators with the rest of Wales. Some of the key points of our performance for these national performance indicators are highlighted below:

- Overall for 2015-2016 we were ranked 9th out of the 22 local authorities, based on the number of indicators in the upper quartile position for these national indicators.
- In 2014-2015 we saw an overall shift in the quartile position of our performance indicators where a number of indicators moved from the upper quartile into the mid quartiles, in 2015-2016 however, some indicators have moved back into the upper quartile position. A three year summary is listed below:

Year	Upper quartile	Mid quartiles	Lower quartile
2015-2016	13	17	10
2014-2015	9	23	10
2013-2014	18	15	10

- 60% of our 40 comparable measures were better than the All Wales performance figures, an increase of 3% on 2014-2015 performance whereby 57% of our measures were better than All Wales - see pie charts below:

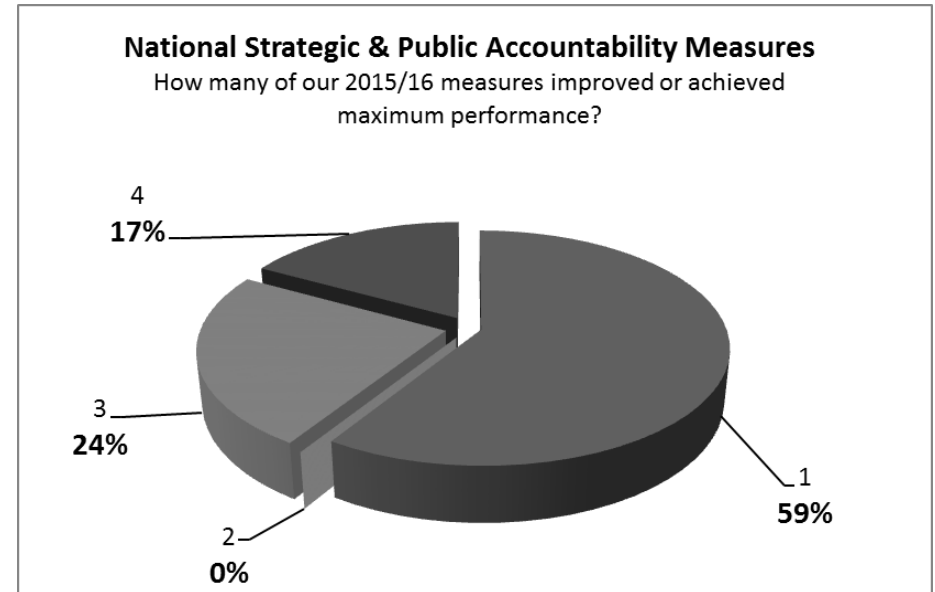
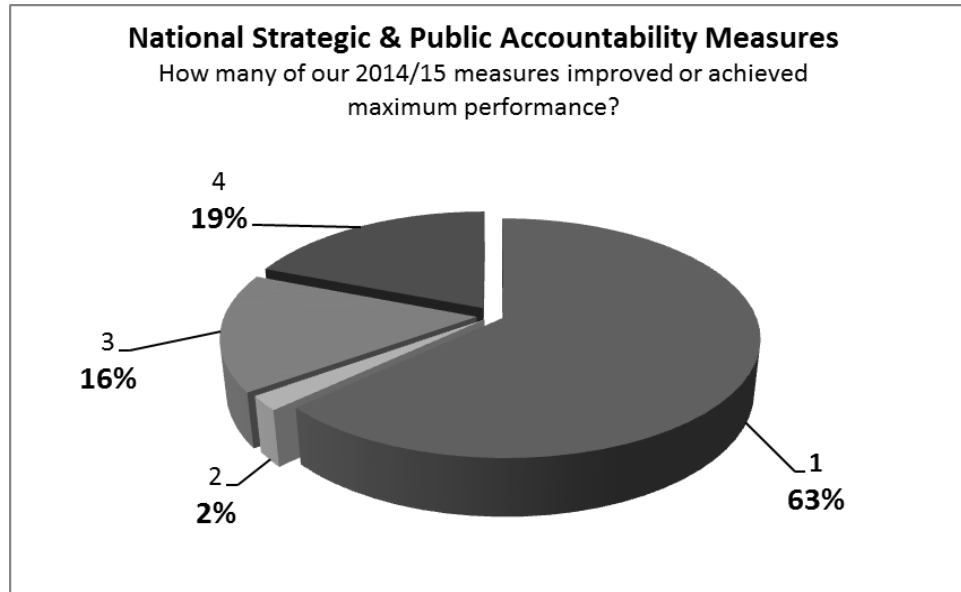


1 Performance better than All Wales data

2 Performance is lower but within 5% of All Wales data

3 5% or more below All Wales data

- 59% of our national measures either achieved maximum performance or improved (see pie charts below), which is below last year's performance of 63%. At an All Wales level, 65% of performance indicators showed improvement for 2015-2016.



- | | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Improved or achieved Maximum Performance | 2 | Performance maintained |
| 3 | Marginally Declined within 5% | 4 | Declined by 5% or more |

A full breakdown of the 41 performance indicators and rankings for 2015-2016 is attached as appendix 2. [\(INSERT LINK\)](#)

Section 2 - Progress made against each of our Six 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

Overall summary of our progress:

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSiW) 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.

During 2015-2016, we continued to safely reduce the number of children looked after by the Council. As at 31st March 2016 there were 377 children looked after, compared to 434 as at 31st March 2015. During 2015-2016, 81% of the 21 comparable key indicators reported to the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board improved or achieved maximum performance.

The stability of the workforce has been sustained and further built upon, with lower staff turnover, fewer staff vacancies and an increase in the percentage of employees who feel valued at work. The number of complaints received across the service has also significantly decreased.

We have continued to pilot outcome focused practice and it is anticipated that during 2016-2017, social work staff will apply the outcome focused skills learnt, to make positive differences in the lives of the children and families which they deal with.

A [Family Support Strategy](#) was approved and will be reviewed annually and during 2015-2016, we approved 17 new fostering households. We also improved the monitoring of commissioned services and enhanced our approach to participation and engagement of children, young people and their families.

During 2015-2016 we said we would:

- 1. Maintain our strong political and corporate support for Children and Young People Services by:**
 - Continuing to strengthen Member scrutiny of Children and Young People Services**
 - Reviewing the Implementation Board to ensure it is fit for purpose and able to provide effective support and challenge to the Improvement Plan**
 - Building on the work started by the Corporate Parenting Panel, focusing on educational health and accommodation support for looked after children and care leavers, ensuring that there are opportunities for services users to express their views**

What did we do?

- A forward work programme has been developed for the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee which focuses on the performance of Children and Young People Services.
- We reviewed the Implementation Board to ensure it is fit for purpose. The Board continues to oversee challenge and support for Children and Young People Services.
- An all-Member seminar focussing on Members corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities was held on 22nd October 2015. The Corporate Parenting Panel, consisting of Members and officers continues to meet regularly to ensure the Corporate Parenting Strategy is working effectively. [The Corporate Parenting Annual Report for 2014-2015](#) was published in October 2015 which includes information on the contribution made by the Panel.
- There has been a review of accommodation services for care leavers and there is currently a commissioning exercise underway to establish a revised supported accommodation service. An accommodation officer post will be established in 2016-2017 to work across Housing and Children and Young People Services, with the specific role of securing appropriate accommodation opportunities for young people. The service has implemented the 'When I Am Ready' arrangements as required within the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014. The arrangements support the opportunities for young care leavers beyond the age of 18 to remain with their foster carers up to the age of 21 (or 25 if in further education), as a means of improving the outcomes for young people as they move into adulthood.

2. Ensure consistent quality in the work that is undertaken on a day to day basis by:

- **Implementing a staff appraisal system across the department**
- **Training managers to ensure they have the skills to undertake routine auditing of casework**
- **Extending peer review audits across the teams**
- **Establishing mechanisms to receive feedback from children, young people, parent, carers and partner agencies**
- **Fully establishing our performance, quality and practice development team**
- **Maintaining a clear overview of caseloads**
- **Ensuring effective complaints handling**

What did we do?

- The Children and Young People Services' staff appraisal system was reviewed, amended and aligned with the corporate appraisal process and piloted in the service from October 2015. It was planned that all employees would receive a staff appraisal by the end of March 2016; however this will now be achieved by the end of August 2016.
- 76% of Children and Young People Services' employees either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'I feel valued at work', this compares favourably to the target of 72% set for the year and the 2014 survey results of 69%.
- The stability of the workforce has not only been sustained, but further built upon since the last inspection (February 2015), and is now a more unified service. More staff have been qualified for two or more years (95.1%) and as at 31st March 2016, there were 5.5 full time equivalent social work vacancies across all frontline teams, which is well within the anticipated forecast of less than 10 vacancies by the end of the year.
- During 2015-2016, 87.5% of our eight priority measures improved, achieved maximum performance or remained consistent compared to previous year's data. However, following publication of the Corporate Improvement Plan and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSiW) Inspection, a new set of priority measures were agreed with Members that better reflect the direction of the Service. These new priority measures are reported on a quarterly basis to the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board.

- We undertook 315 case file audits and changed the ‘scoring’ mechanism to be more positive and ‘qualitative’. The new mechanism now makes the findings of audits more meaningful. The Quality Assurance Group meetings present audit findings to the Children’s Services Management Meetings on a regular basis. In the main, social work practice was found to be satisfactory. However, the audits identified the need for care plans to be more outcome focussed. This is an area of work that will be progressed during 2016-2017.
- We established our Performance, Quality and Practice Development Team, to drive forward the Quality Assurance Framework. The team promote the participation and engagement of children and young people within the service, deal with complaints in a timely manner and use feedback from individual cases to inform service improvement.
- During 2015-2016 we saw a significant decrease in the number of complaints received by the service compared to the previous year, a reduction from 85 to 27. There are a number of factors this can be attributed to, including: continual service developments and improvements, implementation of a new Welsh Government complaints policy and procedures (introduced in August 2014), and extensive training for front-line staff and managers. Often there are a number of actions or lessons to be learned resulting from the complaints we receive, particularly where a complaint is complex. The Service will, where necessary, develop an action plan to address any on-going requirements or service developments. There was also an increase in the number of compliments received by the service, from 12 in 2014-2015 to 25 in 2015-2016.

3. Evaluate outcomes based upon a framework that will evidence we are making a significant positive difference in the lives of the children and families we deal with. This will include: establishing an outcome based framework to capture the views of children, parents, carers and professionals; and developing our ICT systems to support the new outcomes framework and to track the impact of interventions at different points in working with families.

What did we do?

- The Welsh Government outcome based framework pilot ended in the autumn of 2015. The service has continued to pilot an outcome focused practice whilst at the same time, ensuring all relevant staff received the necessary training. The outcome focused model is now in the process of being rolled out across all teams.

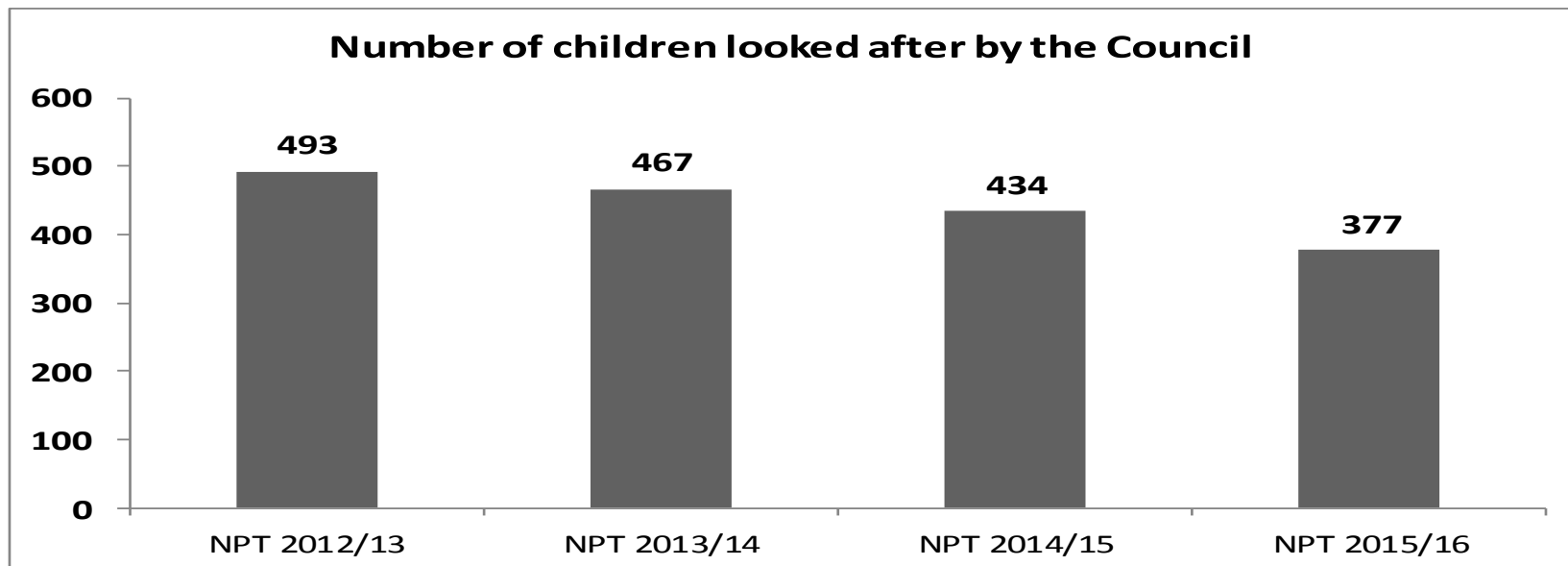
Upon full roll out, service wide performance management information will be made available to support managers in determining the impact of the outcomes based practice with families.

4. Introduce a safe and measured approach to reducing the number of children looked after by the Council by:

- **Further strengthening our admission to care procedures focusing on those children who are on the edge of care**
- **Strengthening permanency plans for those children who cannot return to their families so they can be cared for without remaining in the care system**
- **Developing our fostering services to provide a choice of high quality, stable local placements for children and young people**
- **Developing a foster carer recruitment strategy**

What did we do?

- We continued to safely reduce the number of children looked after by the Council (see graph below). As at 31st March 2016 there were 377 children looked after. The reduction afforded social work practitioners greater capacity to further improve the quality of service. The reduction in numbers has also enabled the service to exceed its 2015-2016 Forward financial Plan savings of £700k. However, there is still a requirement during 2016-2017 that we maintain a safe and measured approach to facilitating the continued reduction in looked after children.



- All children and young people have a permanency plan by their second Looked After Child review. Permanency plans are reviewed at subsequent intervals and the Permanence Panel has oversight of all children. Where possible, children are supported to return to their families without statutory intervention and the success of this can be evidenced through the reduction of children who are looked after and placed with parents and the increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders (73 in May 2015 to 96 as at 31st March 2016). Special Guardianship Order is a court order which says where a child should live on a long term basis and gives the holder Parental Responsibility for that child. It is intended for those children who cannot live with their birth parents and who would benefit from a legally secure placement.
- We have reduced the number of looked after children aged 11-17 who are placed with independent carers from 68 in 2014-2015 to 47 in 2015-2016. The reduction in the number of independent placements is reflective of effective prevention strategies for children on the edge of care to enable them to remain at home (and within their local communities), and the successful rehabilitation of young people to their families where this can be safely achieved. The reduction of independent placements also has a significant financial benefit for the local authority as each placement costs on average £41k compared to a placement with an in house foster carer,

which costs just over £18k.

- A Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy received Member approval and was recently implemented in July 2016. There continues to be a shortage of foster families locally as well as nationally there.
- During 2015-2016 we said we wanted to recruit 14 new foster carers and approved 17 fostering households.
- Moving forward, the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy sets out a new banding system to support financial payments which are linked to the carer's skills and approval status. The service is currently developing a marketing strategy and reviewing carers support arrangements to help in the recruitment of carers to the key priority groups such as; teenagers, larger sibling groups and parent and child placements. The increase in the number of key priority placements will lead to improved placement choice, further reduce the use of independent foster placements and enable the Council to make greater savings.

5. Further develop our workforce strategy by:

- **Ensuring recruitment and retention strategies are robust and sustainable**
- **Ensuring managers are equipped with the skills, knowledge and capacity to undertake their roles effectively**
- **Ensuring there is a consistent approach to supervision**
- **Delivering risk assessment training to unqualified support works**
- **Ensuring the Independent Review Team reaches the required level of performance**

What did we do?

- During 2015-2016 we reduced our staff turnover rate and 20 (9.3%) employees left the authority or moved to other posts within the authority compared to 25 the previous year.
- We reduced the average number of vacancies from 6.9 full time equivalents, in 2014-2015 to 4.85, in 2015-2016.
- Management supervision and supervision audits are completed as part of an audit programme to identify

common 'themes' to identify best practice.

- We were unable to deliver risk assessment training to our unqualified support workers; however, training is being planned and will be delivered during 2016-2017.
- We completed an audit of the independent review team practice as planned and developed Independent Reviewing Officer feedback forms, which will be implemented in the coming months.

6. Develop and deliver a robust and effective family support strategy which will ensure a targeted approach to supporting children, young people and their families:

- **Complete work to agree a Family Support Strategy which assists in delivering targeted support services to children and families, linked to the Think Families Partnership.**
- **Remodel a number of support services to deliver targeted support to families most in need.**
- **Establish the contracts for services identified as necessary by the Think Families Partnership to intervene more effectively at an early point with families.**
- **Consolidate the joint working between: Children and Young People Services, the Team Around the Family, Youth Offending Team, the Integrated Family Support Service, the NSPCC Neglect Programme and the Calan DVS Project.**

What did we do?

- Cabinet Members approved a Family Support Strategy in May 2015, which will be reviewed annually for the next three years.
- Since the Commissioning Officer has come into post we have prioritised which support services need to have contract extensions and which need to be retendered. There is a 3 year work plan in place to identify the time scales and work involved. Early intervention and prevention services were retendered in 2014-2015 and became operational in 2015-2016. These services are commissioned and monitored by Children and Young People Services.
- We appointed a full-time Monitoring Officer. Monitoring visits are carried out on all service providers on a quarterly basis which include reviewing and reporting on the quality and performance of the services, outcomes,

areas of activity and any other findings. Any actions identified during a monitoring visit will be included within a service improvement plan. Arrangements have been put in place to take performance monitoring reports to the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board every 6 months.

- We consolidated joint working between: Children and Young People Services, the Team Around the Family, Youth Offending Team, the Integrated Family Support Service, the NSPCC Neglect Programme and the Calan DVS project. The Team Around the Family was brought under the remit of Children and Young People Services and is now located alongside the intake team, resulting in greater clarity of thresholds.

7. Enhance our approach to participation and engagement of children, young people and their families by:

- **Taking account of their views.**
- **Co-producing service delivery.**
- **Implementing our new participation, engagement and advocacy protocol.**
- **Appointing an engagement and participation officer.**

What did we do?

- In March 2015 a Participation and Engagement Working Group was established to work directly with children, young people and their families. An Engagement and Participation Officer was appointed in July 2015 to support the Working Group.
- A report measuring the impact of the participation and engagement strategy will be submitted to the Children, Young People & Education Committee in October 2016.
- Our existing Participation, Engagement and Advocacy Protocol will be reviewed and revised to reflect the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.



Raise educational standards and attainment of all young people

Overall summary of our progress:

During 2015-2016, we continued with the 21st Century Schools Programme and rationalised school buildings which reduced school surplus spaces and also significantly reduced the school building maintenance backlog. We worked towards getting Ysgol Bae Baglan ready to open in September 2016, as planned.

We continued to implement our strategy for the provision of Welsh medium education across the County Borough.

There are more effective and highly effective schools across the County Borough than previously. The Key Stage 4 Level 2 threshold indicator (5 GCSE's including English/Welsh first Language and Maths) increased by nearly 3% to 58.4% in the 2014-2015 academic year and is higher than the Wales average. In the Key Stage 4 Level 2 threshold indicator (5 GCSE's or equivalent) we were the highest in Wales for the 3rd consecutive year.

10 of the 16 literacy and numeracy measures (including free school meals measures) improved, however most of those that saw a drop in performance were at Foundation and Key Stage 2 level. The percentage of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (N.E.E.T.) has reduced to 3.6%.

Both primary and secondary school attendance increased by 0.2% to 94.8% and 93.7% respectively in the 2014-2015 academic year. We also reduced the number of permanent exclusions and days lost to fixed term exclusions.

During 2015-2016 we said we would:

- 1. Continue with the delivery of the Strategic School Improvement Programme which includes: merging or relocating some schools; increasing the capacity in others; continuing with our arrangements to build new schools; and to close some others (subject to consultation and completion of the relevant statutory processes).**

What did we do?

- We worked towards getting Ysgol Bae Baglan ready to open in September 2016, as planned. The proposal will rationalise school building stock by removing four schools with combined backlog maintenance and repair liability of circa £17m and reducing surplus places by circa 1,250. To date there have been no compulsory redundancies and 218 posts have been created at the new school. Plans are also in place to undertake a formal 21st Century Schools gateway review of the Council's reorganisation programme, for which Ysgol Bae Baglan will be the focus.
- The plan to have a new build 'all-through' school at Aberafan, which would have replaced St Joseph's Catholic School & Sixth Form Centre, St Joseph's Infants and St Joseph's Junior School, has now been removed from the Council's school reorganisation programme, due to trustee/diocesan authority capital funding not being secured.
- Members have approved the development of a substitute new build scheme based on Dyffryn (upper) School/Groes Primary; the outline business case has in principle, received Welsh Government approval. The new build would remove the split site arrangement that currently exists at secondary level, provide 'all-through' 3-16 education and allow associated management/split site revenue costs efficiencies from a single site configuration to be realised. The proposal also removes a category condition grade D (bad) building and circa £7m backlog maintenance and repair liabilities.
- A business case for a 3-11 school at Briton Ferry to replace Brynhyfryd Primary, Llansawel Primary and Ynysmaerdy Primary Schools has in principle been approved by Welsh Government. Consultation has taken place and implementation of the scheme has been determined by the Council's Cabinet. The new school will

open in September 2018 and the proposal will rationalise school building stock by removing three schools with combined backlog maintenance and repair liability of £1.4m.

- A 3-11 school at Port Talbot was established in September 2015 to replace Central Infant and Central Junior Schools and the pupils have transferred to the merged school which operates from the same sites as the existing schools.
- A 3-11 school at Neath Abbey was established in September 2015 to replace Neath Abbey Infant and Mynachlog Nedd Junior schools and the pupils have transferred to the merged school which operates from the same sites as the existing schools.
- A new 3-11 school at Coed Darcy village will not be operational by the planned date of September 2016. This scheme is dependent on developers' funding, triggered by an agreed 'new house build' threshold. The proposal is a matter of ongoing discussion with the developers which has resulted in slippage in the initial programme. A revised timeframe has yet to be agreed.
- We rationalised school buildings by closing 5 schools, namely Bryn Primary, Clun Primary, Pontrhydyfen Primary, Tonmawr Primary and YGG Cwmgors and all the pupils have transferred to alternative schools. The closure of these schools has removed circa £2.4m backlog maintenance and repair liabilities and the reduction of circa 480 surplus places.
- An evaluation of the school improvement and pupil wellbeing impacts, resulting from reorganisation, will be undertaken approximately one year after pupil transfer to new arrangements. An in depth evaluation is underway with a number of schools who have already undergone school reorganisation with relevant data having been collected and interviews with key stakeholders having taken place. An analysis of the findings will be undertaken during the early autumn.
- In relation to new build schools, community benefits will be reported at the end of the build process via the Welsh Government's community benefits tool.

2. Commence work to establish a 3-18 Welsh-medium school over two sites, one in the north and the other in the south of the County Borough. This school will replace Ysgol Gyfun (YG) Ystalyfera and YGG Y Wern (subject to consultation and completion of the relevant statutory processes).

What did we do?

- A revised implementation date of September 2017 (originally September 2016) for the new 3-18 Welsh-medium school has been approved by Cabinet, this is to allow more extensive refurbishment of the south campus (Sandfields Comprehensive/Traethmelyn Primary site) where work on a new build for pupils age 11-16 is due to commence in August 2016. Work has already begun on the first phase of the build programme on the north campus (Ystalyfera site), with the 3-11 build scheduled for completion by September 2018 (as planned).
- As the new, 3-18 school operates from the existing secondary school site in the north, including additional accommodation for the 3-11 primary phase pupils and additional secondary phase accommodation in the south there is no resultant reduction in surplus places. This is in line with the promotion of Welsh-medium education.
- Backlog maintenance and repair liabilities circa £1.5m at YGG Y Wern will be removed and circa £9m will be significantly reduced at the YG Ystalyfera site (north campus). Existing buildings at the south campus will be substantively demolished to make way for a new build school. An evaluation of the school improvement and pupil wellbeing impacts, resulting from reorganisation, will be undertaken one year after pupils transfer to new arrangements.

3. Continue to implement our strategy for the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot and will measure our success across 7 outcomes.

What did we do?

- **OUTCOME 1: More seven year-olds being taught through the medium of Welsh.** 18.5% of Year 2 primary school pupils study Welsh as a first language, whilst this met our forecast for the 2014-2015 academic year, it is significantly below Welsh Government target for this outcome of 25% by 2015. The new south based Welsh medium secondary school due to be operational in September 2020 should improve our performance in this measure.
- **OUTCOME 2: More learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school.** More Year 6, Welsh 1st Language pupils, (80.2% in 2014-2015 academic year compared

to 76.5% in 2013-2014 academic year) transferred to a Year 7 Welsh medium school.

- **OUTCOME 3: More learners aged 14-16 studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh (% courses taught through the medium of Welsh).** YG Ystalyfera has increased their menu of subjects available through medium of Welsh to include minority subjects.
- **OUTCOME 4: More learners aged 16–19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools, colleges and work-based learning (% courses taught through the medium of Welsh).** YG Ystalyfera has increased their menu of subjects available through medium of Welsh to include minority subjects which have become sustainable over a period of time. This has included Public Services Level 2 & Level 3 (development of skills and knowledge to gain employment) and now includes Performing Arts and Engineering. Childcare, a successful pathway at Level 2 and Level 3 has now become a partnership course with Mudiad Meithrin (a voluntary organisation which is the main provider of Welsh-medium early years care and education in the voluntary sector), and is offered entirely through the medium of Welsh at YG Ystalyfera.
- **OUTCOME 5: More learners with higher skills in Welsh.** Two of the four outcomes across the four key stages, improved compared to the academic year 2013-2014, i.e. at foundation phase (92.6% achieved outcome 5+ Literacy Communication Welsh) and Key Stage 2 (90.1% achieved key stage 2 L4 Welsh 1st Teacher Assessment). The percentage of pupils achieving GCSE A*-C Welsh 1st Language dropped significantly from 80.6% to 71.7% in the 2014-2015 academic year and the percentage of key stage 3 pupils achieving L5+ Welsh 1st Teacher Assessment, dropped by 1% to 85%.
- **OUTCOME 6: Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN).** A consultant has been employed to explore the need for developing ALN provision in the Welsh Medium sector. Consultation with schools is ongoing, and as a result of the Inclusion Review meeting, a local authority officer has been asked to collate information on the numbers of pupils transferring from Welsh first language provision to a local authority Special Education Needs Unit. Contact has been made with the Additional Learning Needs Support Team (ALNST) and the Admission Officer regarding this data. A learning support assistant has been appointed to work with these children and has been given specific training by ALNST and will work closely with them to ensure that these children are given the appropriate provision. Some specialist assessment through the medium of Welsh is available in the Educational Psychologist Service, the Support for Learning Service and from Education Development Service. Centrally based Welsh speaking specialist teachers provide assessment

and support in the areas of learning difficulty, speech and language and communication, hearing impairment and vision impairment.

- **OUTCOME 7: Workforce planning and continuing professional development.** Welsh medium professional support and training is provided for all Special Educational Needs co-ordinators and whole school training in relation to ALN issues has been provided for all YG Ystalyfera staff. At specific times there is a shortage of well qualified and experienced supply and short-term contract teachers and filling vacancies in YG Ystalyfera can sometimes prove difficult. Training needs for the Welsh first language sector are identified by a Welsh Medium Head teacher Group (PENTAN) in tandem with the advisory Teacher for Welsh who is a member of the all-Wales training programme (led by the Welsh exams board, Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)). Schools that are changing linguistic category to deliver subjects through the medium of Welsh will receive targeted school based support and Welsh medium resources.

4. Ensure that a school led improvement model is promoted and supported through: school to school collaboration; cluster development; improving partnerships; and increasing the number of mainstream schools which are highly effective (green)/effective (yellow).

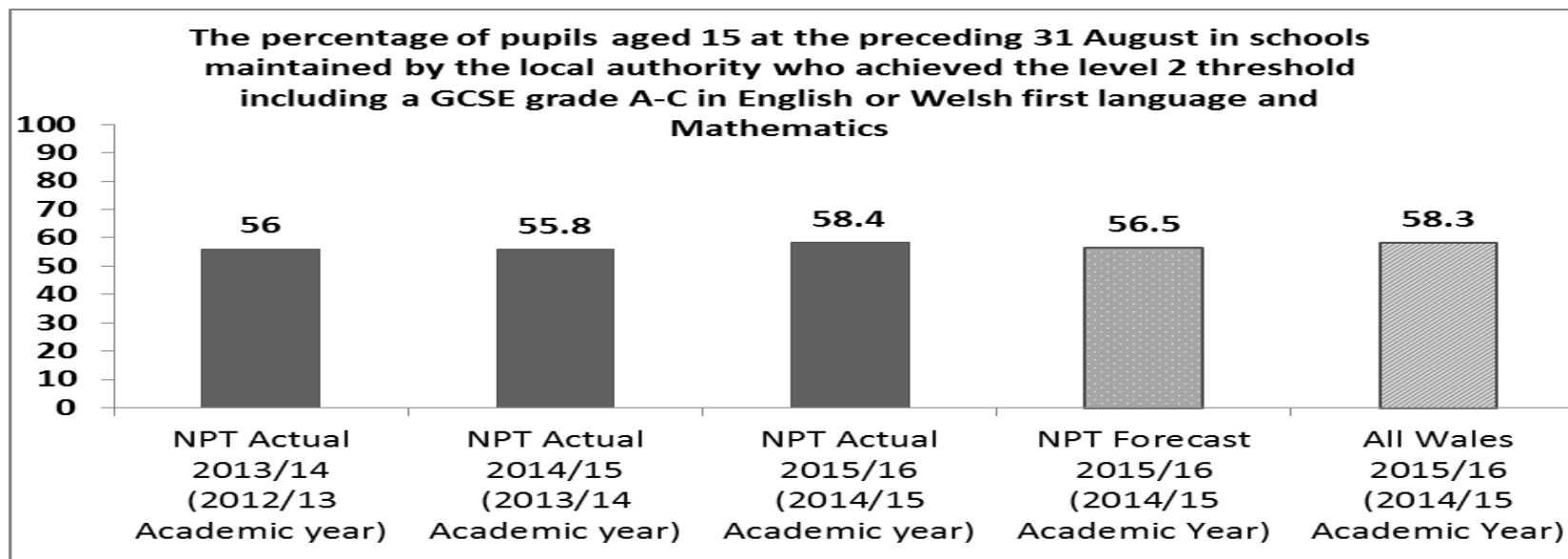
What did we do?

- How schools are categorised has changed. Based on the new National Categorisation Model, there are more highly effective (green) and effective schools (yellow) in the 2014-2015 academic year (73%), than in the 2013-2014 academic year (68%).
- 69% of our primary schools and 90.9% of our secondary schools were categorised as highly effective and effective in the 2014-2015 academic year. In addition, 79.6 % of our pupils are educated within a highly effective and effective school. This is an improvement on the 2013-2014 academic year of 78.5%.

5. Ensure that the 14-19 Learning Pathways programme supports all young people to achieve their full learning potential and reduce the percentage of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (N.E.E.T.) to 4% and increase the percentage of pupils who achieve level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A – C in English or Welsh first language and Mathematics and the average capped points score at key stage 4.

What did we do?

- The percentage of year 11 school leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (N.E.E.T.) as at October 2015 was 3.6% compared to 3.8% the previous year and an improvement on our forecast for the year of 4%.
- In the Key Stage 4 Level 2 threshold indicator consisting of five GCSE's or equivalent, we were the highest in Wales for the 3rd consecutive year.
- In the Key Stage 4 Level 2 threshold indicator consisting of five GCSE's including English/Welsh first Language and Maths, we increased by nearly 3% to 58.4% and are higher than the Wales average of 58.3% (11th across Wales) - see graph below:



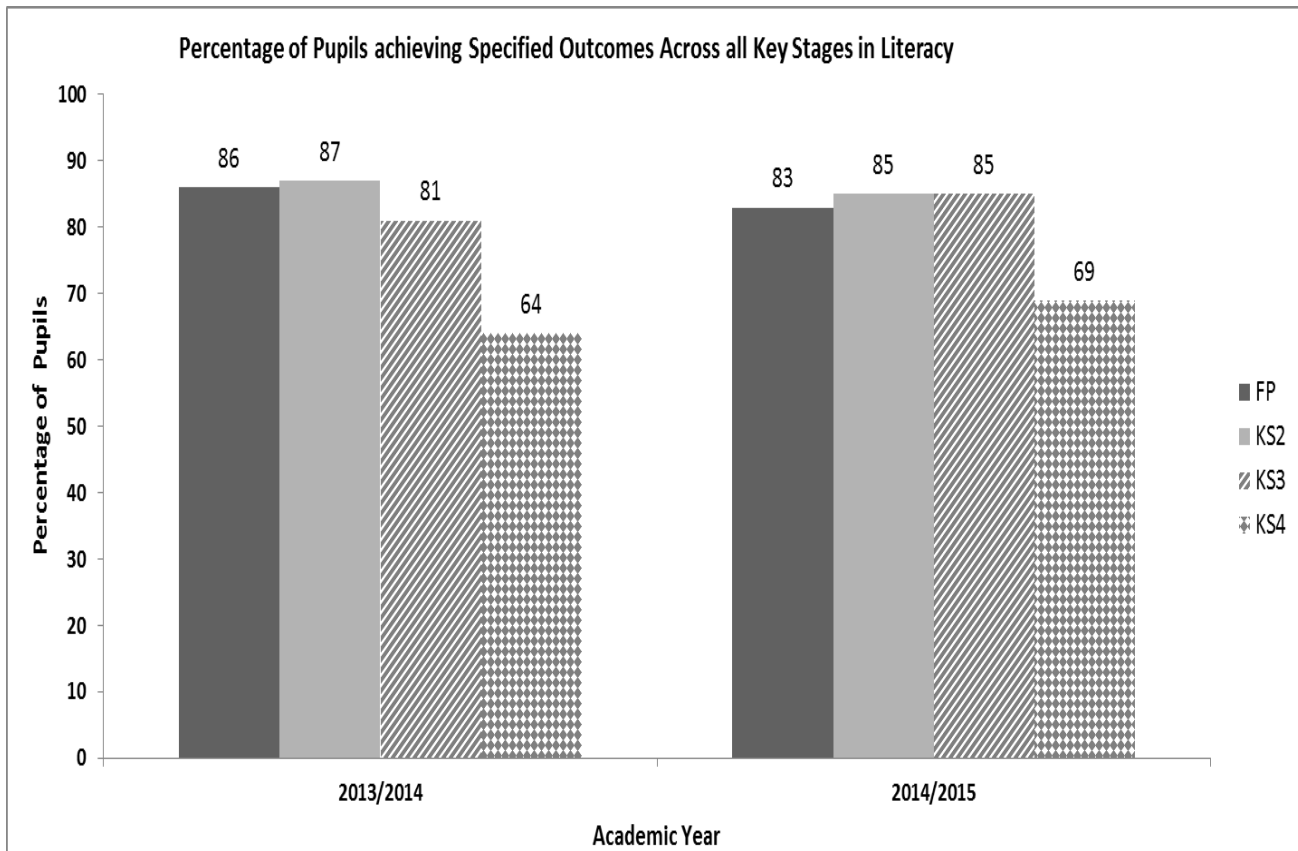
- For the 2014-2015 academic year at Key Stage 4, the average wider points and capped points score (best 8 results), we were placed 2nd and 3rd in Wales respectively. In relation to the average capped point's score of 359, whilst this was an improvement on the previous year it was marginally below our forecast of 360 for the

year.

6. Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes by supporting schools to assess pupil attainment and progress, enabling schools to support each other in implementing National Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks and provide expertise to schools needing the most support to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes.

What did we do?

- Two of the four key stage literacy measures (Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4) improved and were at least 3% above their forecast performance for the year. Two measures at foundation and Key Stage 2 saw a drop in literacy attainment outcomes for the year – see graph below:



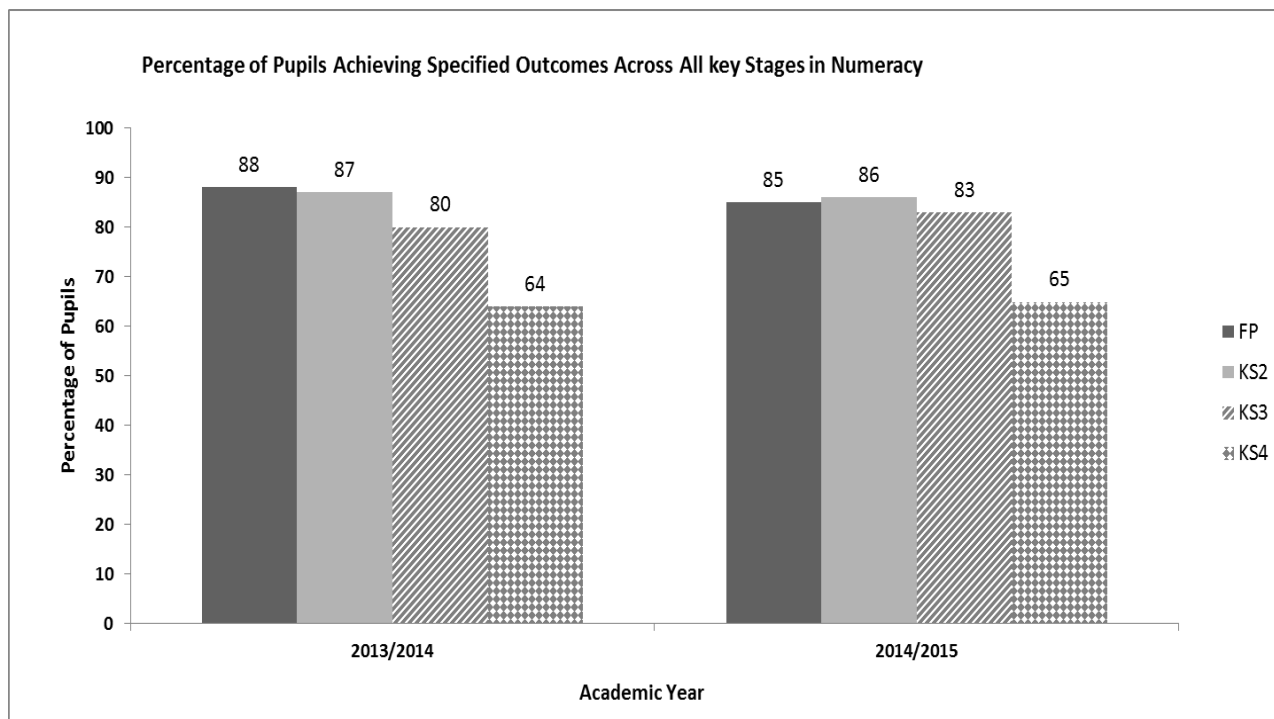
FP - % of pupils achieving outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills at the end of the Foundation Phase

KS2 - % of pupils achieving level 4 in language, literacy and communication skills at the end of KS2

KS3 - % of pupils achieving level 5 at the end of key stage 3 in language, literacy and communication skills

KS4 - % of pupils achieving level 2 at the end of key stage 4 in language, literacy and communication skills

- Two of the four key stage numeracy measures for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have improved (one of these measures met its forecast performance for the year). Two measures at foundation and Key Stage 2 saw a drop in numeracy attainment outcomes for the year – see graph below:



FP - % of pupils achieving outcome 5 in numeracy skills at the end of the Foundation Phase

KS2 - % of pupils achieving level 4 in numeracy skills at the end of KS2

KS3 - % of pupils achieving level 5 at the end of key stage 3 numeracy skills

KS4 - % of pupils achieving level 2 at the end of key stage 4 in numeracy

- On-going work on improvement is continuing via a number of channels such as: the Securing Teacher Assessment Program (STAP) process, Schools Challenge Cymru, best practice on leadership courses and use of the lesson observation intelligence tool to identify need for support.
- **Note Key Stages are as follows:**
- **Foundation Stage** = 6/7 year old pupils / **Key Stage 2** = Year 6 pupils (final year of primary school)

- **Key Stage 3** = Year 9 pupils (secondary school) / **Key Stage 4** = Year 11 pupils (final year of compulsory education in secondary school).

7. Improve the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) in literacy and numeracy. This will include providing support and guidance for effective intervention, identify and share good practice, improving the quality of teaching to improve outcomes for pupils entitled to FSM; improving engagement with parents/carers and identify and facilitate opportunities for pooling resources, for example through Communities First and Flying Start projects.

What did we do?

- Six of the eight measures improved and two measures (literacy and numeracy foundation stage) saw a drop in performance. Five of the measures exceeded their forecast performance and three of the measures did not achieve forecast performance for the 2014-2015 academic year.

8. Enhance scrutiny and monitoring arrangements to enable Members to have a greater insight of performance at a school level.

What did we do?

- The School Standards Partnership Group, made up of Elected Members, scrutinised 13 schools during the year (lower than the forecast of 18). Key emerging and common themes or concerns were reported back to Members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee. Next steps will focus on training for members on the common themes identified, what the key lines of enquiry are and are the right questions on standards, teaching and leadership being asked.

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

What did we do?

- Primary school attendance increased by 0.2% to 94.8% and secondary school attendance increased by 0.2% to 93.7%. The ongoing core visits to schools which include looking at attendance issues and targets with an

action plan and evaluation, has positively impacted on attendance levels. In comparison across Wales, our primary school attendance is ranked 13th, and our secondary school 15th.

10. Continue to improve safeguarding practices and procedures to ensure that all schools judged by Estyn meet statutory requirements. This will be done by reviewing safeguarding procedures within schools, ensuring there are appropriate training opportunities for school staff, ensuring that schools adopt safer recruitment practices, ensuring schools self-evaluate their own safeguarding policies and procedures at least annually and improving our partnership working and work more closely with Children's Services.

What did we do?

- Estyn reports for the 2014-2015 academic year show that all schools meet the safeguarding requirements and are not a cause for concern. We will continue to improve practice via our rolling programme of peer reviews; safe recruitment audits; and stronger scrutiny of agencies supplying staff to our schools to meet our standards.

11. Improve and enhance behaviour management by aiming to have less permanent exclusion across all our schools and to reduce the number of days lost to fixed term exclusions. This work will include improving capacity within schools to manage behaviour, so that intervention is employed at the early stages of challenging behaviour and specific support for targeted schools on behaviour management and by developing a high level flexible learning programme for disaffected pupils at Key Stage 4 (Year 11 pupils).

What did we do?

- There has been a fall in fixed and permanent exclusions in the primary and secondary sectors. For the 2014-2015 academic year, the number of permanent exclusions was nine, a fall of two on the previous year. The number of days lost in primary sector fell to 203 days (262 the previous year) and the number of days lost in secondary sector fell to 1,255 days (1,598 the previous year). As a priority we are still working to further improve performance in this area.

12. We will continue to deliver school improvement through our partnership in ERW (Education through Regional Working). A South West and Mid Wales consortium made up of six partner authorities which are

Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthen, Powys, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion who will: share best practice amongst schools in the ERW region; monitor school performance; support school leadership; co-ordinate high quality governor training, and ensure that the delivery of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework is effective across all schools.

What did we do?

- We contributed to the regional Key Stage 4 Level 2 threshold (5 GCSE's including English/Welsh first Lang and Maths) measure by raising our performance by nearly 3% to 58.4%, which is higher than the Wales average.
- We have more effective and highly effective schools across the County Borough than previously.
- A comprehensive leadership programme has been developed by the region which has a focus on improving leadership at all levels from initial teacher training through to experienced head teachers. There is a particular focus on middle leaders in secondary schools and deputy heads in primary.
- The menu of support provided by the Eastern Hub and region provides a range of courses and school to school provision, aiming to address key areas in literacy, numeracy and digital competency.
- A governor support programme is supported by Challenge Advisers, who frequently attend governor training and conferences as well as providing bespoke support for schools.
- The School Improvement Team continue to develop the intelligence they hold on schools with regards to best practice and this is a good source of information to support and direct school to school work which is beginning to become an important factor in a self-improving school 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

Overall summary of our progress:

There were significant changes in Adult Social Care during the year, with some service areas reconfigured, changes in practice and the senior management structure reorganised.

We achieved in year savings targets of £1.167m across the community care placements budget through the 'Pathways to Independence' project and developed an intake service which went live in October 2015.

The new residential care home at the old Caewern site was completed and occupied during 2015-2016. Plas Bryn Rhosyn opened in November 2015.

We improved response times for brand new referrals into the Gateway Service. We continued to implement our safeguarding action plan to further improve safeguarding practices and more needs to be done to measure practice standards in terms of supervision, timeliness of response and quality.

We reduced the average time taken to deliver a disabled facilities grant and delivered more grants, 338 in 2015-2016 compared with 323 in 2014-2015. We continued to work with our partners to support carers, and year on year, 100% of carers are offered an assessment or review of their needs.

During 2015-2016 we said we would:

1. 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.

What did we do?

- We improved our response times for new referrals and 78% of service users were screened within 24 hours, higher than our forecast for the year of 70% and an improvement on the previous year's performance of 60%. Systems have improved which has enabled the multi disability team to respond within 24 hours.
- We achieved our target of reducing (by 2.5%) the number of people referred for full assessment. Working in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Gateway are now working towards ensuring that service users access community services before entering statutory services.
- The number of people being diverted into wellbeing services, for the year was 858 which is lower than the forecast figure of 1,270. However, new systems are now in place to collect information previously not recorded.

2. Modernise social work practice to ensure we meet or exceed practice standards in terms of supervision, timeliness of response and quality.

What did we do?

- A Supervision Policy was drafted and systems are in the process of being developed (this includes care response measures) in order to support implementation.
- We introduced additional quality audit standards within Adult Social Care of the Team Manager Development programme to ensure all managers meet or exceed standards in terms of supervision, timeliness, response and quality.
- The Safeguarding and Quality team give all families of residents in care homes a questionnaire on the quality of the service they receive. Reviews are conducted in line with a quality of life framework. A case file audit tool was developed across the service. The service user feedback process was primarily used as a means of

highlighting any concerns via narrative response. Baseline customer satisfaction levels were not measured during 2015-2016 but will be recorded going forward.

3. Continue to implement the safeguarding action plan to further improve safeguarding practices.

What did we do?

- A safeguarding guidance note was produced and distributed to partner agencies and staff. Training has been undertaken with a number of care homes and training is also scheduled within home care services.
- A draft policy has been written on how to manage the new at risk category within the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and a plan is being drawn up to implement this.
- We have increased the number of appropriately trained Designated Lead Managers, Best Interest Assessors and Non-criminal Investigators.

4. Improve disabled residents' ability to remain independent in their own homes through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants for adaptations to houses to meet their needs and reduce the average number of days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant.

What did we do?

- The average time taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant has improved from 252 to 228 day, which ranks our performance as 10th across Wales and is better than the All Wales performance of 241 days. The data indicates the quicker process can be attributed to improvements in the system and a change in the type of demand. Demand for extensions was down 30% in 2015-2016 compared to 2014-2015. The service has shown marked improvement on the predicted 250 days target for 2015-2016. Customer satisfaction surveys reveal a very high level of satisfaction, over 96% of respondents indicating that their quality of life had improved as a result of the adaptation and 100% agreeing that they no longer need to consider moving home. We also exceeded our target of 275 and delivered 338 grants in the year.

5. Build on our partnership work with the ABMU Health Board, Neath Port Talbot Carers Service, carer representatives, Third Sector organisations and others to improve the support to carers in Neath Port Talbot through our Commissioning Strategy.

What did we do?

- The percentage of carers of adults who were offered an assessment or review of their needs in their own right during the year is consistently 100% (All Wales performance for 2015-2016 was 94.5%).
- The percentage of carers of adults who had an assessment or review of their needs in their own right during the year had a marginal drop in performance from 40.5% in 2014-2015 to 39.4% in 2015-16. However we exceeded our target (37%) for the year.
- The percentage of carers of adults who were assessed or re-assessed in their own right during the year who were provided with a service improved from 71% last year to 81% this year. This could be partly attributed to an increased awareness of Direct Payments.
- Of those carers which were offered an assessment and said 'yes', the percentage that had an assessment or review of their needs in their own right during the year increased to 73.5%. Whilst this is an improvement on the previous year, it is lower than our forecast of 82%.

6. Through partnership working, 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.

What did we do?

- We reduced the number of people aged 65 and under in residential care from 118 in 2014-2015 to 109 in 2015-2016.
- We achieved in year savings targets of £1.167m across the community care placements budget.
- Pathways to Independence performance measures have not been developed as of yet. Person centred

outcomes are monitored at an individual level and providers are more aware of organisational outcomes.

7. Through partnership working, we will deliver the next phase of the Western Bay Programme to integrate those health and social services that help people retain or regain their daily living skills.

What did we do?

- The number of people aged over 65 in residential care increased from 597 to 617. Our target for the year was 587. The increase can be attributed to a number of self-funding clients whose income fell below the threshold and individual's requiring a higher level of dementia care which is unable to be met at home even with a package of home care. Whilst for this year, we saw a slight increase, we remain committed to reducing the number of people being admitted into residential care by supporting people to remain independent as long as possible.
- In October 2015, the Council approved a formal pooled fund arrangement for the delivery of the Intermediate Care Service between us and ABMU Health Board in accordance with Section 33 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006. Intermediate care is short term care that helps older people avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, remain as independent as possible after a hospital stay or illness and avoid moving permanently into a care home before they really need to. The service completed the financial year in a balanced position.
- The Intake Reablement Model went live in October 2015, and referrals increased as a result. The purpose of this model is to ensure as much preventative input at the start to promote independence, reducing the need for long term care, and ensuring the right sizing of any ongoing packages of care.

8. Implement the Multi-Agency Transition Policy and protocol to ensure all young people receive high quality advice, information and support to enable them to plan for their future as they move into adulthood.

What did we do?

- Every young person will have a multi-agency plan in place which identifies their ambitions and goals in the future. A [Transition Protocol](#) was developed and implemented to ensure the smooth transition from Children

and Young People Services to Adult Services for children and young people assessed as eligible and in need of services. An Inter-Agency Policy to support the Protocol is being developed.

9. Ensure the next phase of residential care homes are delivered by Grŵp Gwalia which includes a new residential care home at the old Caewern site completed and occupied during 2015-2016.

What did we do?

- The new residential care home at the old Caewern site was completed and occupied during 2015-2016. Plas Bryn Rhosyn opened in November 2015.

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

Overall summary of our progress:

We continued with our regeneration work, completing a number of important physical regeneration projects, such as the new multi-storey car park and retail space in Neath Town Centre, Aberavon's new £13.4m Leisure and Fitness Centre and the redevelopment of Port Talbot Parkway Station and Harbour Walk. We also supported and progressed 12 projects within the 'Vibrant and Viable Places' framework.

The Economic Development Team assisted 32 business start-ups and supported the creation of 184 jobs. In light of the recent announcement of significant job losses at Tata, and the continued uncertainties about the future of the site, the team are working with Careers Wales, DWP and Welsh Government to help those facing redundancy and in providing support to the many local businesses affected within Tata's supply chain.

We established a Partnership Agreement to ensure multi-agency support is in place for claimants' transition to Universal Credit. The Agreement enabled us to provide 62 people with money management support. We also launched our Digital by Choice Strategy which will encourage us to change the way we deliver services in our One Stop Shops, promote the use of online services and tackle digital exclusion across the County Borough.

We helped to renovate 177 houses in the year, delivered 95 units of affordable housing, helped secure 92 private rented tenancies for the homeless and 8 properties have been made available for sale or let through the Houses to Homes scheme. NPT Homes are making good progress to ensure they meet all 118 promises they said they would deliver on.

During 2015-2016 for Regeneration we wanted to:

- 1. Continue work on Harbourside by developing pedestrian links and brown field land to bring forward further commercial development opportunities.**

What did we do?

- Harbour Walk was completed in June 2015, providing improved pedestrian and cycling access to and from the railway station, Harbourside and the town centre for residents and visitors.

Below is an image of Harbour Walk:



- 2. Deliver the Neath Town Centre redevelopment. First phase will include a new 600 space multi-storey car park, and 23,000 square foot of new retail space.**

What did we do?

- The first phase, of a new 600 space multi-storey car park and 23,000 square feet of new retail space opened on 1st October 2015.

- A planning application has been submitted for the next phase of the scheme which will include a parade of smaller retail units and residential apartments. This part of the development will front the pedestrian thoroughfare between Water Street and Orchard Street and will improve the linkages between the new development and the existing town, including the Gwyn Hall and bus station. It will further improve the attractiveness of Neath as a place to visit and to shop in, and the apartments will enable more people to live in the town centre itself, improving its overall vibrancy.

3. Complete construction work on the new leisure centre on Aberavon sea front.

What did we do?

- Aberavon's new £13.4m Leisure and Fitness Centre was operational in January 2016 and was officially opened on 24th February 2016. The centre is the largest addition to a range of new and planned future attractions for Aberavon seafront and has already proved very popular since opening its doors at the start of the year. The purpose-built beachfront centre, with its distinctive wave design roof, features a 25 metre pool with moveable floor, multiple changing facilities, gym/fitness suite, spin room, dance studio, four court sports hall and cafe and community rooms. Below is an image of Aberavon's new £13.4m Leisure and Fitness Centre:



4. Continue to drive forward regeneration projects in the Valleys, to make enhancements to tourism, employment and public realm.

What did we do?

- Work on the gateway project at the Sarn Helen Trail at Banwen was completed in July 2015; improvements included planting, footpath improvements, a mosaic feature and seating area.

5. Develop projects and programmes to maximise the impact of the next round of European Funding.

What did we do?

- During 2015-2016 the European & Strategic Funding team worked with departments across the Council to secure:
 - £7.5m of European Social Funding to deliver the Workways+ project. The aim is to support over 4,000 people in the region into sustainable employment by increasing their employability. The project will run until November 2018.
 - £1.5m of European Social Funding to deliver the Cynnydd project. The aim is to support those 11 –19 year olds who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- The team also initiated the European Regional Development Fund application process for the following:
 - Port Talbot Integrated Transport Hub (£2m European Funding), to improve connectivity for businesses and the public.
 - Harbourside Strategic Employment Site (£2m European funding), to increase the economic prosperity of the area through leveraging in additional private sector investment by improving the site.
 - The Plaza, Port Talbot Magistrate's Court and 8 Wind Street, Neath, to increase investment and employment opportunities in the area.
 - A number of energy schemes to tackle fuel poverty.

6. Complete the redevelopment of the Port Talbot Parkway Station by autumn 2015.

What did we do?

- We completed the redevelopment of Port Talbot Parkway Station in mid-February 2016, which now provides compliant, easy and safe access to trains from both sides of the railway line and 24 hour pedestrian/cycle link between the town centre and Harbourside. The new 200 space car park benefits passengers and created a park and ride facility. The redevelopment improves the image of town centre and will benefit visitors, local residents and encourage investment and development.

7. Implement the Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework to combine support for people and places and encourage partnership working by the public, private and third sector. We will monitor the delivery of the 10 projects within the framework:

What did we do?

- The number of projects within the Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework has increased from 10 to 12 as we have been successful in adding two projects to the framework. Progress on each of the 12 projects during 2015-2016 is listed below:
 - **Houses above shops – Station Road** - Schemes designed for 4 properties on Station Road, planning applications have been submitted and the project will provide 14 new residential units.
 - **Glanafan School Housing Redevelopment** - Coastal Housing are progressing the scheme design and Design Commission for Wales has been consulted.
 - **Green Park Housing Redevelopment** - Contract work is in progress, with completion scheduled for October 2016.
 - **Police Station Housing Redevelopment** - Planning application submitted but the decision has been delayed due to concerns from National Resource Wales.
 - **Plaza Cultural Centre** - Consultants have been appointed to undertake detailed design work and now awaiting decision from Welsh European Funding Office.

- **Connections and Linkages** - Harbour Walk scheme completed in June 2016 and Green Park Riverside phase 1 scheme completed in May 2016.
- **Former Fire Station Employability Centre** - work completed April 2016.
- **Integrated Transport Hub** - Planning application submitted but decision delayed due to concerns from National Resource Wales. Also awaiting decision from Welsh European Funding Office.
- **Housing renewal to some properties** - Second Stage works completed and energy efficiency improvements undertaken to 164 properties.
- **Houses to Homes** - Grant process agreed and applications invited.
- **Burrows Yard** - Site investigation and design work progressing with Coastal Housing.
- **Aberafan House** - £2.7m of Vibrant and Viable Places grant awarded for the redevelopment of Aberafan House for residential use. Project to commence in 2016.

8. Develop caravan site facilities at Margam Park in partnership with the Camping & Caravanning Club to enhance visitor numbers to the County Borough.

What did we do?

- We continue to work towards providing the enabling infrastructure to bring forward a scheme which will improve tourism and visitor numbers to the Park and to the County Borough as a whole.

9. Continue to 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.

What did we do?

- During 2015-2016, the Economic Development Team worked with partner organisations and projects such as Neath College, Cyfle Shared Apprenticeship Scheme, Communities First and the Lift project to identify training, employment and supply opportunities to benefit the County Borough.

- Of the four completed contracts during the year (i.e. Plas Bryn Rhosyn new residential care home, Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre, Neath Town Centre and Baglan Link Bridge), the Welsh Government measurement tools reported the following community benefits:
 - 86% spend with contractors in Wales
 - 75 local people helped to get back into employment
 - Over 270 completed apprentice training weeks, traineeships and work experience opportunities
 - 90 contract opportunities secured by local businesses

10. Identify historic buildings with the potential to refurbish, repair and reinstate to bring back into productive use.

What did we do?

- Building for the Future applications have been submitted for The Plaza, Port Talbot Magistrates Court and 8 Wind Street (Neath), we are awaiting a decision from Welsh European Funding Office.

11. Link strategic employment sites between key towns within the City Region.

What did we do?

- During 2015-2016 the Swansea Bay City Region Board prioritised two regeneration initiatives impacting on the County Borough, to progress to funding applications which were the Port Talbot Integrated Transport Hub and Harbourside Strategic Employment Site. The development of the City Deal 'Internet Coast' prospectus superseded the proposed City Region Action Plans. In February 2016, the UK Treasury invited the region to progress with the City Deal proposal which aims to tackle the structural challenges holding back the region's economy. It is proposed that the funding package will be in excess of £500m.

During 2015-2016 for Enterprise and Employment we said we wanted to:

- 1. Through our Business Development Team, provide an effective and supportive service to local businesses to help them prosper; create more jobs and business start-ups.**

What did we do?

- The Economic Development Team has continued to receive a significant number of requests for support throughout the financial year which have in general, been of a more positive nature than the previous year. In particular, there has been an increase in the number of applications received for funding to support plans for expansion and growth. These new investments have helped attract new private sector investment and have supported the creation of new jobs within the County Borough. The number of jobs created has broadly been maintained at 184 for the year. However, compared to the previous year we saw a reduction in the number of: new business start-ups we assisted (32 compared to 38 last year); new business start-up enquires (271 this year, 361 last year); and general business enquiries assisted by the team (584 this year, 686 last year).
- In light of the recent announcement of significant job losses at Tata, and the continued uncertainties about the future of the site, the Team are continuing to work with Careers Wales, DWP and Welsh Government to help those facing redundancy and provide support to the many local businesses affected within Tata's supply chain. Consequently, the Team anticipate more demand for business support services throughout 2016-2017 to help companies deal with their staff losses and find new markets and an increase in the number of people considering self-employment.
- In particular, the Economic Development Team has been involved in delivering workshops to those affected by the Tata redundancies. Working in partnership with DWP and Business Wales, the Team are already experiencing an increase in the number of people looking for support to start up a new business through the Council's Innov8 programme.

During 2015-2016 for Anti-poverty we said we wanted to:

1. Establish a partnership agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support the introduction of Universal Credit.

What did we do?

- We established a Partnership Agreement to ensure close working between us and the DWP in supporting claimant's transition to Universal Credit. The Agreement worked well in 2015-2016 and in order to address the requirements for 2016-2017, a new one is now in place.
- No claimants requested assistance under the Partnership Agreement to make their claim online, suggesting that people are managing to make their Universal Credit claim online. At any one time there are over a thousand live Universal Credit claims completed online (1,134 as at 7th July 2016).
- 62 people have been provided with money management support during 2015-2016 under this Agreement, although landlords may also have provided assistance outside of the Agreement.

2. Extend the work completed in Pontardawe (where a number of partners have co-located to make it easier for citizens to access support) to other parts of the County Borough.

What did we do?

- In 2013-2014 we undertook a 12 month pilot of a multi-agency one stop shop in Pontardawe, which came to an end in March 2014. Following the pilot a number of agencies still remain on the site and these include: Housing Benefit/Council Tax; NPT Homes and their Financial Inclusion Unit; Credit Union; Citizens Advice Bureau; and JobCentre Plus (who attend on an occasional basis). Since the pilot was undertaken, we launched the Digital by Choice Strategy which has overtaken the potential expansion and concept of a multi-agency one stop shop, partly due to reducing the reliance on face to face provision and partly due to the plan to promote online transactions. Changing the way services are delivered in the two one stop shop sites in both of our Civic Centres is one of the work streams in the Digital by Choice Strategy.

3. Bring forward, with partners, a plan to improve the skills of the general population in relation to ICT based services.

What did we do?

- Since August 2015 we have met with a group of representatives from several organisations including, Coastal Housing, NPT Homes, NPTCVS, Digital Communities Wales, Communities First and others to consider digital inclusion across Neath Port Talbot. In February 2016, Digital Communities Wales launched a Charter which calls on organisations in Wales to promote basic digital skills and to help people to get online.
- The Digital Inclusion Charter has been developed by the Wales Co-operative Centre which delivers the Digital Communities Wales project. The Charter includes six pledges and is a simple way for organisations to show how they are helping digitally excluded people; particularly older people, people with disabilities, unemployed people, social housing tenants and families in poverty; enjoy the benefits of the internet. It is hoped that agencies within Neath Port Talbot will sign up to the Charter, as commitment to the Charter will help reinforce our work in this area and also promote the importance of helping more people get online, amongst partners and the wider community.
- Our commitment to tackling digital exclusion is included in our Digital by Choice Strategy.

During 2015-2016 for Housing we said we wanted to:

- 1. Continue to renovate properties in the authority's three Housing Renewal Areas – Neath East Renewal area, Sandfields East & Aberavon Renewal area and the Vibrant and Viable Housing Renewal area based around Port Talbot Town Centre.**

What did we do?

- We carried out energy saving upgrades and renovation works to 177 properties over the three housing renewal areas listed above. The works included external and internal wall insulation, loft insulation, boiler upgrades, new roofs, windows and doors and external rendering. The benefits of this work not only improve the look of the property but also save the home owner money on their fuel bills.

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

What did we do?

- 64% of social housing across the County Borough region now meets the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). During 2015-16, NPT Homes (the biggest Registered Social Landlord in the County Borough) significantly increased the number of their homes to meet the WHQS and 51% of their homes are now compliant. One of the key elements of the Offer Document is the completion of the WHQS works programme by 31st March 2017. NPT Homes are making good progress with the programme, having completed the following works since the transfer of stock from the Council: 6,486 kitchens, 6,016 bathrooms, 5,020 heating system installations, 1,802 roof replacements and 2,322 window and door installations.
105 of the 118 promises in the offer document have been completed with the remaining 13 in progress, as detailed in the [latest NPT Homes progress report](#) reported to the Social Services Health and Housing Cabinet Board in May 2016.

3. Continue to offer the “Housing to Homes” interest free loans to encourage landlords, developers and home owners to renovate empty houses that have fallen into disrepair to allow them to be offered back into the housing market for sale or rent.

What did we do?

- During 2015-2016, we had planned for 12 units to be completed and made available for sale or letting but only eight units of accommodation were available. However, a further seven units of accommodation are undergoing renovation works and will be available in 2016-2017.
- In addition, a single application worth £150k had been approved and will provide an additional 8 units of accommodation. Further to this, other enquiries are being progressed through to approval with a value of £130k. If all approved and issued this will mean a further 10 units of accommodation being made available for sale or letting.

4. Work with our housing partners to deliver affordable housing through the Social Housing Grant (including Smaller Properties Programme and revenue funded schemes) and the Welsh Housing Partnership, whilst continuing to explore other and innovative funding solutions.

What did we do?

- Working with its strategic partners, the Council delivered 95 (72 grant funded and 23 non grant funded) units of new affordable housing and in doing so fully utilised the available grant and additional funding from Welsh Government. In the previous year we delivered a total of 89 units (52 grant funded and 37 non grant funded). There is an ongoing programme of delivery of affordable housing with schemes nearing completion, underway or starting this year.

5. Continue to prevent homelessness for a high percentage of potentially homeless households for at least six months.

What did we do?

- The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months declined slightly compared to the previous year (a drop from 95% to 91%). Although this is only a minor decline, it should be noted that this could have been significantly higher were it not for the Homelessness Grant Transitional Funding made available by the Welsh Government. Also the amount of grant allocation for 2016-2017 has significantly reduced, consequently, ongoing performance at this level cannot be guaranteed.
- At 92, the number of private rented tenancies made available by the Housing Options Service that were suitable and likely to be available for at least 6 months greatly exceeded the annual cumulative target of 50. This success was largely due to the Homelessness Grant Transitional Funding made available by the Welsh Government.



Increase the percentage of waste recycled and composted

Overall summary of our progress:

We are progressing with the implementation of our Waste Strategy and achieved the 2015-2016 statutory recycling and composting target of 58%. The contribution toward recycling performance from kerbside recycling increased further due to service improvements.

Grant funding was secured to part fund the second phase of the roll-out of Recycle+, which has now been rolled out to approximately 37,000 households and helped us to purchase seven Romaquip kerbside sort recycling vehicles.

A new 'side waste' policy was agreed in January 2016 and has been implemented with effect from June 2016 which will help encourage recycling and composting. We also commenced our work with route optimisation.

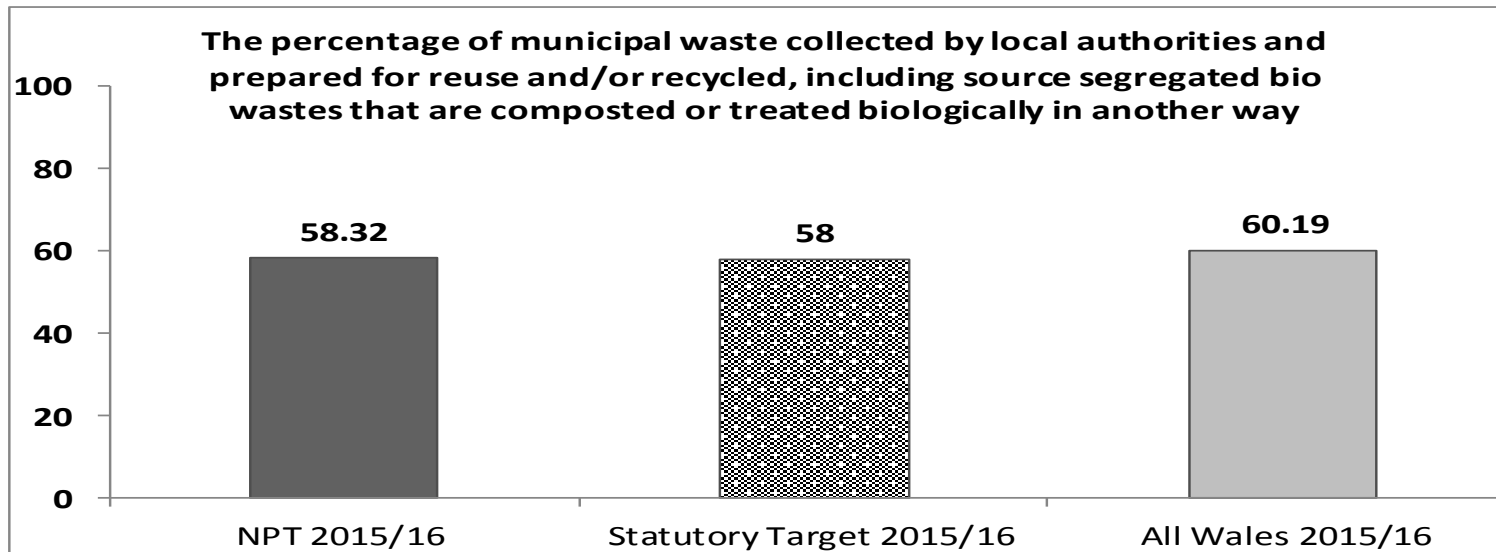
We are now pursuing a new contractual arrangement for waste treatment and disposal to ensure we are getting the best deal for the Council.

During 2015-2016 we said we wanted to:

- 1. Progress with the implementation of our Waste Strategy to increase recycling and composting and to achieve the 2015-2016 statutory recycling target of 58%.**

What did we do?

- We are progressing with the implementation of the Waste Strategy and achieved the 2015-2016 statutory recycling and composting target of 58% (our performance was 58.32%). The next target is 64% by 2019-2020. All Wales performance for 2015- 2016 was 60.19% (see graph below):



2. Complete the MREC (Materials Recovery and Energy Centre) procurement project moving to a new contractual arrangement based upon tonnage.

What did we do?

- Tender documents were issued in June 2015 to begin the process of moving to a new contractual arrangement based upon tonnage. However, Cabinet Members agreed to end the tender process as only one non-compliant tender was received. The Council is now pursuing a single negotiated (substantially the same) tender as provided for under the procurement regulations.

3. Develop a long term cost model and complete the roll out of ‘Recycle+’.

What did we do?

- We secured Welsh Government grant funding from the Collaborative Change Programme, allowing us to roll out the second phase of Recycle+ to 20,000 households (bringing our total to approximately 37,000 households now on the scheme). Grant funding has also been secured to assist in the roll out of the final third phase to all households during 2016-2017.

4. Put in place longer term arrangements for the treatment of food waste by anaerobic digestion (which means composting food waste to produce energy and fertilizer).

What did we do?

- During 2013-2014 we worked with our partners in the South West Wales Regional Waste Partnership to progress the build of an infrastructure (within the boundary of one of the partner authorities) that treats food waste and increases composting performance. Unfortunately, planning permission was refused and as a result the preferred bidder withdrew from the process. Subsequently the regional procurement exercise did not proceed. Interim arrangements have continued with us recycling at the Council's MREC. This work continues to be ongoing and is included in the single negotiated tender mentioned in point two above.

5. To comply with new waste regulations, we will change our collection service to include the separate collection of glass (to those households not on 'Recycle+').

What did we do?

- As mentioned in point three, we have identified funding for the continued roll-out of Recycle+. Up to the end of 2015-2016 approximately 37,000 households have received the improved service which includes the separate collection of glass.

6. Seek funding under Welsh Government's Collaborative Change Programme, to support service changes that will help us achieve the statutory recycling targets.

What did we do?

- We secured £804,000 of funding, allowing us to purchase seven Romaquip kerbside sort recycling vehicles. This has improved the Recycle+ service and leading to greater household recycling. Also moving away from single-use plastic bags and toward weekly collection of plastics is better for the environment. Service changes and improvements include the collection of household batteries for recycling which, are helping to remove high pollution heavy metals from going to the landfill.

7. Review our 'side waste' policy (extra waste not in wheelie bins) and consider the implications of any changes upon larger families and other people.

What did we do?

- Following a Member scrutiny task group and recommendations from the Environment and Highways Scrutiny Committee (on 28th January 2016), the Environment and Highways Cabinet Board Members agreed a [side waste policy](#) and it was implemented with effect from June 2016. The aim of the side waste policy is to help encourage recycling and composting.
- Black bag/wheeled bin waste collections will be restricted to one 140 litre wheeled bin plus one black bag per households (in areas on the wheeled bin service) or 4 black bags per household in all other areas; the policy also includes exemptions.

8. Progress route optimisation to deliver improvements and maximise efficiency in the waste collection service.

What did we do?

- Consultants were engaged during 2015-2016 and the resultant mapping of existing rounds was useful, although limited with respect to establishing optimised rounds going forward. The work is now being progressed in-house for implementation immediately after the final roll out of Recycle+ during 2016-2017.



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

Overall summary of our progress:

The Council adopted the Digital by Choice strategy in November 2015. We continued to work on improving the content of our website, bringing it up to date, making it easier to use (e.g. access via mobile devices) and our overall SOCITM website rating improved from one star to a two star (maximum rating is a four star). SOCITM is a professional body for people involved in the leadership and management of IT and digitally enabled services delivered for public benefit. We also significantly increased the number of our webpages that are available in Welsh.

We increased the volume of transactions completed online and more customers accessed digital channels to complete transactions such as ordering recycling equipment or requesting van permits.

We made good progress in rolling out the i-procurement system, reviewed our personnel and payroll systems and a draft corporate policy on income generation has been developed.

We have also completed the review of corporate arrangements for grant aiding the third sector.

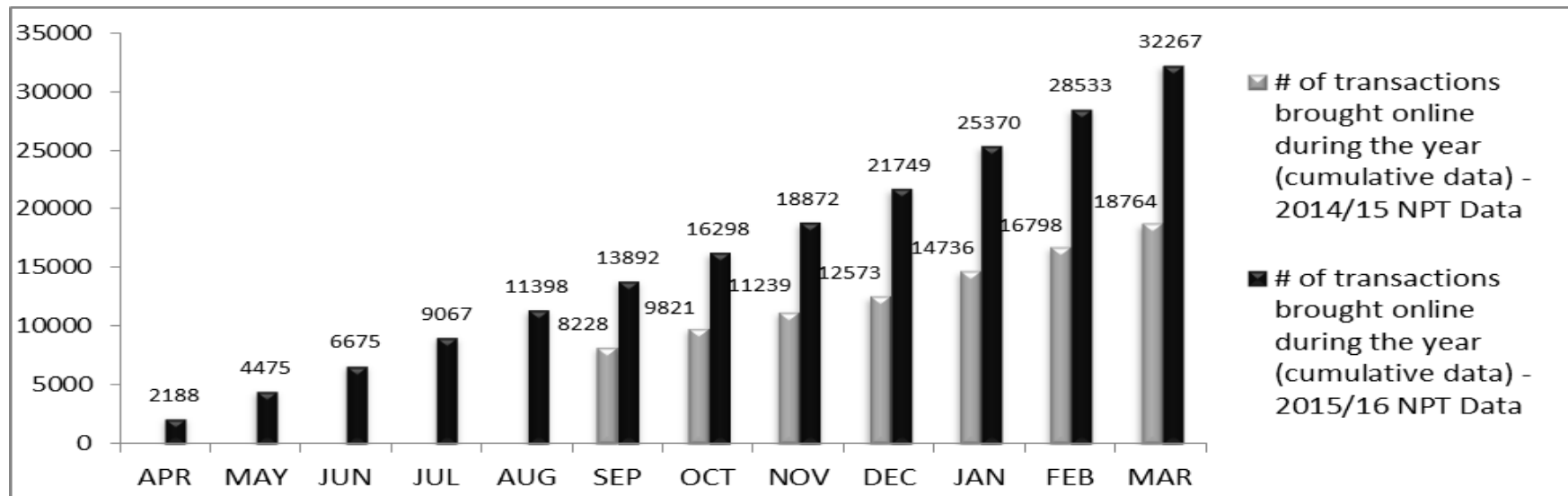


During 2015-2016 we wanted to:

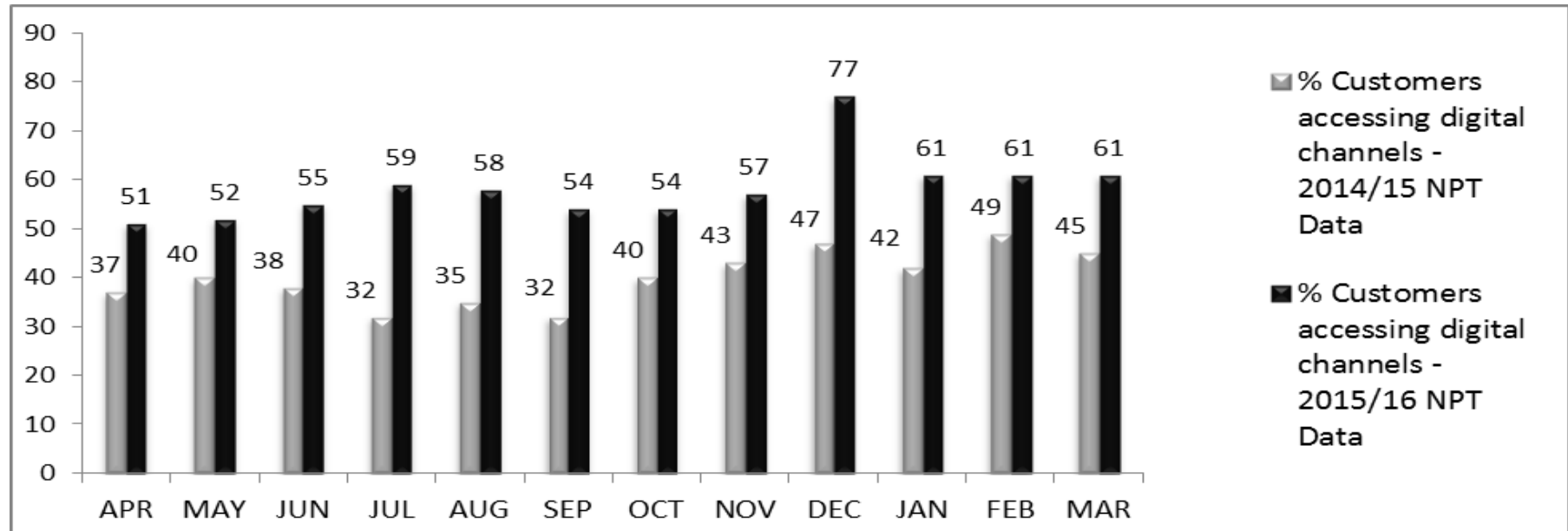
1. **Extend the number of services available on-line and market those services to ensure there is a good take up of those services by our communities.**

What did we do?

- The Digital by Choice Strategy was adopted by Council on 25th November 2015 and was subsequently published on our website. The Strategy aims to ensure that citizens access the channel most appropriate to their needs, but at its core, it aims to significantly extend the range of services available online and to increase citizen uptake of the online options.
- The number of transactions brought online during the year increased from almost 19,000 in 2014-2015 to 32,000 transactions during 2015-2016. This increase has been achieved by redesigning the corporate website, making it easier for the public to access online services, increasing the number of services available online and by increasing marketing and advertising of our online services. The graph below shows month on month cumulative data since September 2014:



- More customers accessed digital channels to complete transactions such as ordering recycling equipment or requesting van permits. Online take up significantly increased from 39% in 2014 -2015 to 57% in 2015-2016 (for those services that are fully online). The graph below shows month on month activity (not cumulative) over the last two years:

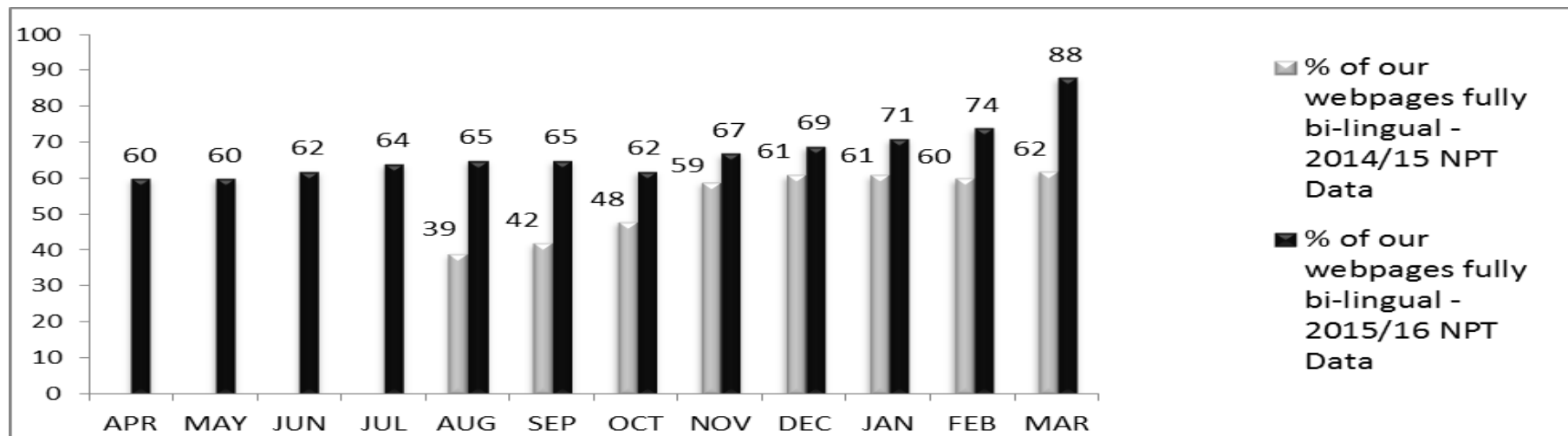


- We reviewed the Council’s Facebook accounts to ensure they were fit for purpose. We also increased the number of Council Facebook posts of stories and links to other organisations and events, and the number of people engaging with us on Facebook increased compared to the previous year. As at 31st March 2016, 13,376 people engaged with us (doing something with what we posted on Facebook) in the previous 90 days (on the Council’s main corporate account).
- The number of Twitter followers on the Council’s main Twitter account significantly increased from 6,301 in March 2015 to 9360 as at 31st March 2016. We have seen a slight drop compared to the previous year in the number of people engaging with us on Twitter.

2. Complete the review of our website content; ensuring it is simpler and easier to access, up to date and fully bi-lingual.

What did we do?

- We continued to work on improving the content of our website, bringing it up to date, making it easier to use (e.g. access via mobile devices). 91% of our website customers said that they were very satisfied/satisfied or found our website OK in terms of the general look and feel of improvements made to services available online. 83% of our website customers said they were very satisfied/satisfied or found our website OK in terms of ease of getting around our site. 78% of our website customers said that they were very satisfied/satisfied or found our website OK in terms of ease of finding information and services.
- As at 31st March 2016, 88% of our webpages were available in Welsh, with a further 9% awaiting translation. The Digital Services team have been working with service areas to redesign their web pages and as new web pages are being generated, they are being translated into Welsh as a matter of course. The graph below shows the monthly as at position since August 2015, which shows a significant increase in our webpages that are available in Welsh.



3. Create an online catalogue of public information, ensuring our leaflets and plans are available in downloadable formats. We will adopt a digital by default policy for the publication of plans and public information.

What did we do?

- An online Public Information Catalogue is in the process of being developed and populated. A trial system has been set up and is being tested and will move to a live site during the summer of 2016.
- Our overall SOCITM website rating as at 31st March 2016 was two star, which was below our target for the year of a three star rating. Further improvements to our website during 2016-2017 should see an increase in our next star rating which is due in March 2017.

4. Continue to implement the i-procurement system (electronic ordering and payment system).

What did we do?

- The i-procurement system was rolled out to a large percentage of services across the Council as planned and this work will continue as we address the smaller purchasing units within the Council. The percentage volume of transactions processed through i-procurement which, as at 31st March 2016, was 45.5%. Originally we had planned to measure progress through the amount of spend processed through i-procurement, however the volume of transactions better reflects progress of work undertaken.

5. Review the scope and plan for improving our personnel and payroll system.

What did we do?

- We carried out an evaluation and scoping exercise to determine the viability of moving to the new version of the 'Reachout' system ('Reachout' refers to a set of Human Resources products that use modern self-service techniques to extend system use to the whole workforce). The evaluation findings were presented to the Digital by Choice Programme Board and the Board determined that 'Reachout' was not viable at that time, but will

consider it in the future. In the meantime, five priorities for action were agreed and will be progressed in 2016-2017. These are: control establishment (measures in place to control established jobs on the Council's structure), personal and equalities data, absence management, maintenance of job related information such as work email addresses, network ID's etc. and biquery.

6. Introduce an improved process for making grants to Third Sector organisations.

What did we do?

- We completed the review of our corporate arrangements for grant aiding the third sector to further improve value for money and governance arrangements. In July 2015, a new scheme was approved by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board Committee. Applications received under the new scheme were assessed and recommendations on which organisations were to receive grant funding during 2016-2017 then approved by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board on 3rd December 2016.

7. Clarify the corporate policy on income generation and charging to ensure a consistent approach to concessions and target groups.

What did we do?

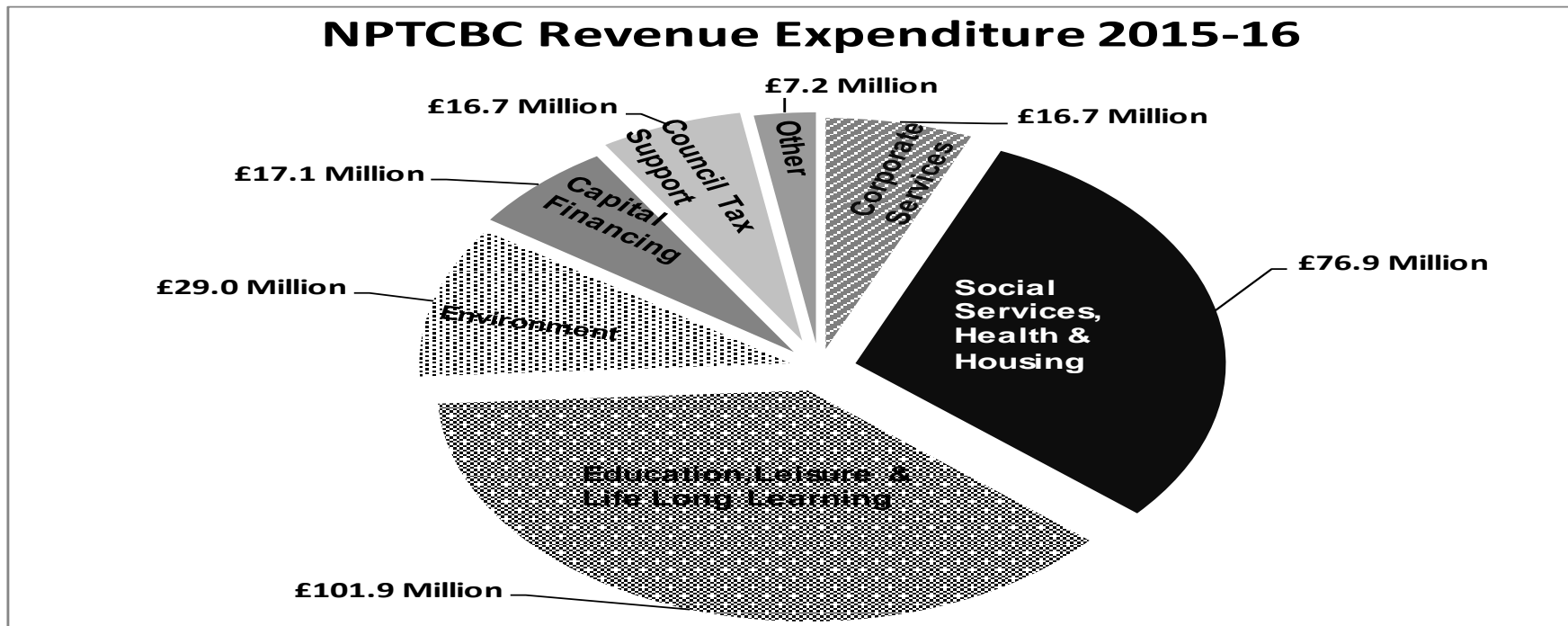
- A draft corporate policy on income generation has been developed; however it has not yet been formally agreed. A cross directorate working party was set up early in 2016-2017 to look at income generation opportunities. This work will be further progressed in 2016-2017.

Section 3 Finance and Spending

Since 2010, we have been proactive in forecasting funding gaps and delivered spending reductions of £60m and reduced our workforce by some 20% through a combination of voluntary redundancies and the transfer of functions. For 2015-2016, we made the required budget savings of £14.8m and an additional £2.8m was transferred into the Council’s general reserves at year end.

Actual spend on the Capital Programme during 2015-2016 totalled £63m and we delivered significant achievements, some of which included large scale modernisation and improvement projects such as: Ysgol Bae Baglan (£21.5m), YG Ystalyfera re-modelling (£4.9m) and Aberafan Leisure and Fitness Centre (£7.4m).

In terms of our revenue budget, during 2015-2016 it cost just over £265.5m to provide all our services. The largest areas of expenditure were on Education and Social Services. A breakdown of our spending by area is shown below:



Section 4 Progress made on securing continuous improvement

We have a general duty to ‘make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of the Council’s functions’. 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 Corporate Assessment of our arrangements and they presented their findings to Council in January 2015. There were no statutory recommendations made and no significant shortcomings were identified. However, a range of proposals for improvement were made for our consideration and we have either completed or are in the process of completing these. The improvement work is overseen by the 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 2015. There remains broad support for the six objectives we have selected.
- **Forward Financial Plan** – we undertook extensive consultation on the savings strategies we might adopt to close the budget gap in 2015-2016.
- **Financial Management** – the improved reporting and budget monitoring arrangements are now firmly established and have assisted greatly in enabling us to maintain expenditure within approved budget. The review of Accounting Instructions is an on-going process and a new Corporate Charging Policy will be available for Member scrutiny in the new financial year.
- **Asset Management Plans** – following the Corporate Assessment the Wales Audit Office made a number of proposals of ways we could improve our property and ICT asset management arrangements. To address these proposals we are updating our ICT Strategy and developing an Information Strategy which will outline the Council’s approach to better use, security and governance of information. Progress will be reported annually in

conjunction with the Council's Annual Governance Statement. We 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 in their business plans.

We had planned to update the Property Asset Management Plan during the year but due to limited resources this work will not be finalised until early 2016-2017. We also intended to formalise the arrangements of the Council's Strategic Asset Management Group but due to a number of staff losses and restructuring this work will also be completed early in 2016-2017.

- **Workforce Capacity and skills** – our key strength is our ability to deliver our priorities through workforce-related change. 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 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; and
 - 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.

We have made good progress in addressing the three proposals for improvement from the Corporate Assessment. Following our revision of the performance development review process, a single Performance Appraisal Policy has been developed and implemented. We have also developed a new, improved staff induction process. Workforce planning is being introduced at a service level via the 2016-2017 business planning process and the information provided will support the development of a Corporate Workforce Plan by the end of 2016-2017.

b) Implementing improvement actions

- **Performance and Programme Management** – our improvement work is implemented through our corporate performance management framework. The framework was revised 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 annual report is assigned to relevant Chief Officers by the Chief Executive and formally included in their personal objectives for the year. The 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 further 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 service report cards and the way they are used in the scrutiny process, which has informed further improvements to the framework during 2016-2017.

During the summer of 2015, the Wales Audit Office undertook a follow up review to the proposals for improvement from the Corporate Assessment they completed 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. Their findings were that:

- The corporate performance framework has been improved and managers are committed to using the new processes.
- Heads of Service are planning more consistently but there is scope to continue developing and refining

the business plans and report cards.

- We are beginning to improve the coordination and presentation of performance information to support decision making and scrutiny but we do not yet have a complete overview of performance.
- We introduced guidance that encourages improvements in business planning practice across the organisation.
- We adopted a service report card template that has the potential to strengthen the evaluation of service performance, linked to resources and corporate priorities.

Although the findings of the review were largely positive the Wales Audit Office made additional proposals for improvement relating to the refinement of the business plans, service report cards and performance management reporting. These additional proposals will be addressed through ongoing improvement work during 2016-2017.

- **Risk Management** – 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.

During the summer in 2015 the Wales Audit Office reviewed our risk management arrangements. The review concluded with the following proposals for improvements:

- 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

These proposals have been addressed, in part by the revision and implementation of the Policy and will be further advanced as our approach to managing corporate risk continues to mature. A copy of the Wales Audit Office report can be found [here](#)

c) Monitoring and Evaluating Improvement

Performance Review - we strengthened existing mechanisms to bring together financial and performance information so that a clearer picture of how we make use of our available resources can be seen (see below):

- **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 are submitted to the Council, chief officers and scrutiny committees.
- **Benchmarking (compare and share)** – we continue to share and compare our performance information with partners, other councils and key stakeholders to improve our services. We also compare our performance with other councils through benchmarking groups. Our assessment of our nationally reported performance indicators in this report gives us 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.
- **Scrutiny** – between January and May 2015, the Wales Audit Office observed scrutiny meetings to assess developments and found the following:
 - 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:

- more clarity about how pre-scrutiny items are resolved
- better time management at scrutiny meetings
- reducing the time members spend on pre-decision scrutiny

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.

- **Information Technology and Information Management** – we maintained a focus on information management in 2015-2016 to ensure we secure the ongoing trust in our ability to safeguard data as we started to increase the range of services we provide online. Our Digital by Choice Strategy was launched at a keynote event on the 4th March 2016, alongside the 'Switch - Save Time, Do it Online' campaign which promotes the new council website and the benefits of using digital services. The four key areas of the campaign are:
 1. channel shift - making council services available online and promoting the benefits of accessing them this way;
 2. behavioural insights - different ways of encouraging people to use online services;
 3. digital inclusion - support available to residents to learn new digital skills; and
 4. digital support - provided by the IT department for staff.

Section 5 Underpinning principles

a. Equalities – during the year we revised our Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives through active engagement with equality groups, elected Members and officers. A 12-week public consultation during the summer gave us assurance that our equality objectives are still relevant. However, we amended the actions in each objective to reflect progress made to date, the changing needs of people who share protected characteristics, the work that is already being undertaken and the current financial climate. Our revised [Strategic Equality Plan](#) and associated three-year action plan were approved by Council in October 2015.

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 our wider improvement priorities.

The physical integration of both the Strategic Equality Plan and the Corporate Improvement Plan did not take 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.

b. Welsh Language - On 30th September 2015, we received a Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice containing 166 standards from the Welsh Language Commissioner. We 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 Policy and Resources Cabinet Board assessed the final Compliance Notice and agreed that a formal challenge to 55 standards should be made on the grounds 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).

Following receipt of the Welsh Language Commissioner's initial consideration of the challenge to 54 standards, we made further representations in July 2016 and now await the Commissioner's final determination.

During 2015-2016 a number improvements were made in readiness for the standards which include re-establishing the Welsh Language Officers group (which supports revising the complaints policy in relation to Welsh language, improvements to our website including translating most of our Webpages into Welsh, and completing an employee directory of Welsh speakers.

- c. Sustainability** – we are 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 social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales”. At a local level, when making decisions we already have 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 the County Borough now and in the future. However, there are significant changes required to both community and corporate planning arrangements and these changes will be progressed in 2016-2017.
- d. Engagement** –we undertook an extensive programme of consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to explain the financial forecasts we had made and to receive feedback on proposals we developed to close our budget gap. We consulted and engaged on two levels – on the “package” of measures and on individual proposals. We have had a significant response from stakeholders and have summarised responses to the “package” in our 2016-2017 budget report [\(insert link\)](#).

Other consultation and engagement activities have been reported in individual reports that have been considered by our scrutiny committees and cabinet boards. We will be reviewing the approach we took this year to identify how we can continue to improve the way we engage with partners and the public.

- e. Partnership Working/Collaboration** - the key regional collaborative arrangements that we support include: Swansea Bay City Region; Western Bay Social Services and Health Collaborative; Regional Waste Committee; Education through Regional Working (ERW) and the Public Services Board (PSB).

In relation to local collaborative working, the priorities we focused on are set out in the [Single Integrated Plan \(2013-2023\)](#). Over the last twelve months we:

- **Further developed our Think Family Partnership** – in November 2015 we launched a single point of contact for services for children and young people who may need extra support. We developed a unified referral form for services to simplify the referral process for professionals and the public as they now only need to complete one form.
- **Refocused our Health and Wellbeing Partnership to support local implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act** - the Director of Public Health chairs the Western Bay Steering Group, who continue to oversee the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. A Consultant from Public Health Wales is supporting the Western Bay partnership in the preparation of the population needs assessment for the region.
- **Refocused our Community Safety Partnership to ensure there are effective responses to domestic abuse; anti-social behaviour; substance misuse** - we reviewed the local domestic abuse support services, developed a new leadership structure and a put a work-plan in place. Based on the findings of the review, we are drafting a local Violence against Women (VAW) Strategy to reflect the responsibilities contained within the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. It is anticipated that the strategy will be published at the start of 2017.

Training, awareness raising and consultation events have informed Community Safety Partnership staff and local partners of the details contained within the new anti-social behaviour legislation. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) provides simpler, more effective powers to the police, the Council, social landlords and other organisations to tackle low level crime and anti-social behaviour.

We have reviewed local arrangements to tackle substance misuse. We have prioritised action to tackle the problems surrounding supply and use of 'new psychoactive substances' and ensured local action on wider substance misuse is co-ordinated alongside the Area Planning Board.

- **Continued work to mitigate the impact of welfare benefit changes through our Low Income Families Partnership; and developed a partnership response to Digital Inclusion** – we effectively implemented the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Partnership Agreement to support claimants affected by Universal Credit. Requirements for 2016-2017 have been considered and a new agreement is in place for the year ahead.

In February 2016, Digital Communities Wales launched a Charter which encourages organisations to promote basic digital skills and to help people to get online. Signing up to the Charter is a simple way for organisations across the County Borough to show how they are helping digitally excluded people enjoy the benefits of the internet.

Section 6 What our Regulators said

a) Wales Audit Office: The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment and to publish an Annual Improvement Report for each improvement authority in Wales. The Annual Improvement Report which was recently published in June 2016 summarises the audit work undertaken since our 2014 Corporate Assessment and combined Annual Improvement Report which was published in November 2014. The report also includes a summary of the key findings from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW); Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn); and the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Annual Improvement Report can be found [here](#)

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 three years. The report can be found [here](#)

They also recently (October 2015) published an Annual Performance Evaluation Report (2014-2015) for Neath Port Talbot. This report sets out CSSIW's evaluation of our performance in delivering our social services functions. A summary of the report findings and the full report can be found [here](#).

c) Estyn: During the 2015-2016 academic year, nine 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): However 1 school was only inspected in mid-July and the report has not yet been published.

- 2 schools were assessed as Good & Good;
- 2 schools required some local authority monitoring. 1 was assessed as Good and Good, the other as Adequate and Good.
- 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;

- Estyn school inspection reports can be found by visiting the Estyn website: www.estyn.gov.uk

Section 7 Have your say on what matters to you

Please share your thoughts with us about this report and our future priorities for improvement in order to help us make 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 and engagement events for a number of our services; these can be accessed on our website: <http://www.npt.gov.uk/haveyoursay>

Visit our website: www.npt.gov.uk



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