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# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

Assessment of our performance 2016-2017



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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 2016-2017 financial year. We have focussed on the progress made on the delivery of our six key improvement objectives as outlined in the 2016-2019 Corporate Improvement Plan 'Rising to the Challenge'.

Despite the considerably better settlement from Welsh Government, we faced another difficult journey whilst setting the budget for 2016-2017. The priorities included in this Plan were set by the Council's administration following the local government elections in May 2012 and despite the difficult and financially challenging times we have faced, improvements have been delivered across all six of those priorities. Particularly those that support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our communities.

In our Children and Young People Services, the work undertaken during 2016-2017 has further safely reduced the number of children looked after by the Council and we supported more children to stay with their families. We also received positive results from the first Welsh Government's Citizens Survey: 92.7% of children and young people felt that their views about their care and support had been listened to and 85.7% of parents said that they had been actively involved in all decisions about how their child's/children's care and support was provided.

In our Education Service, our key stage 4 results have improved in nearly all key indicators and school attendance levels have broadly been maintained. There has been a rise in both fixed and permanent exclusions, to address this, a Wellbeing and Behaviour team has been established. We also opened our new, state of the art, all through 3-16 school, Ysgol Bae Baglan School

Our Adult Social Care Services, (in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014)) worked in partnership with the Health Board to promote clients independence and reduce the reliance on statutory health and social care services, through ensuring people utilise the resources available to them in the community.

We successfully delivered most of our planned activities under the 'Prosperity for All' priority, despite the continuing challenging circumstances surrounding the economy. We also continued to work with partners to support people from low income households to improve their financial circumstances. Concentrating on those people whose income was reduced as a result of the UK Government's Welfare Reform programme.

The implementation of our Waste Strategy continued. Thanks to the cooperation of our residents we have further increased our recycling and composting performance to 62.77%. We also completed the roll-out of our improved

Recycle+ weekly service to 64,000 homes.

Through our Digital by Choice Strategy, we completed our website redevelopment and more of our customers are satisfied with our website. More transactions are now completed online, however, there was an increase in the average customer waiting times in our One Stop Shops, due to additional enquiries arising from some service changes and reduced staffing levels.

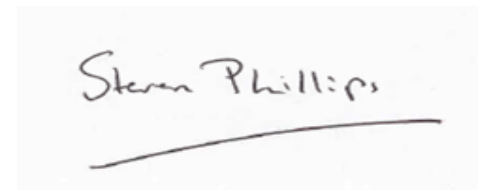
Since 2010, we have been proactive in forecasting funding gaps and delivered spending reductions of £77m and reduced our workforce by some 25% through a combination of redundancies, mainly voluntary, restrictions on external recruitment and the transfer of functions. For 2016-2017, we made the required budget savings of £11.552m and £3.147m was transferred into the Council's general reserves at year end.

Once again, 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 Rob Jones**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Rob Jones', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Chief Executive, Steven Phillips**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Steven Phillips', with a long 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 2016-2019 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; and
- Improving 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.

This Report covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 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 summary 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](mailto:improvement@npt.gov.uk)

## Section 1 Overall Assessment of Performance

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

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.

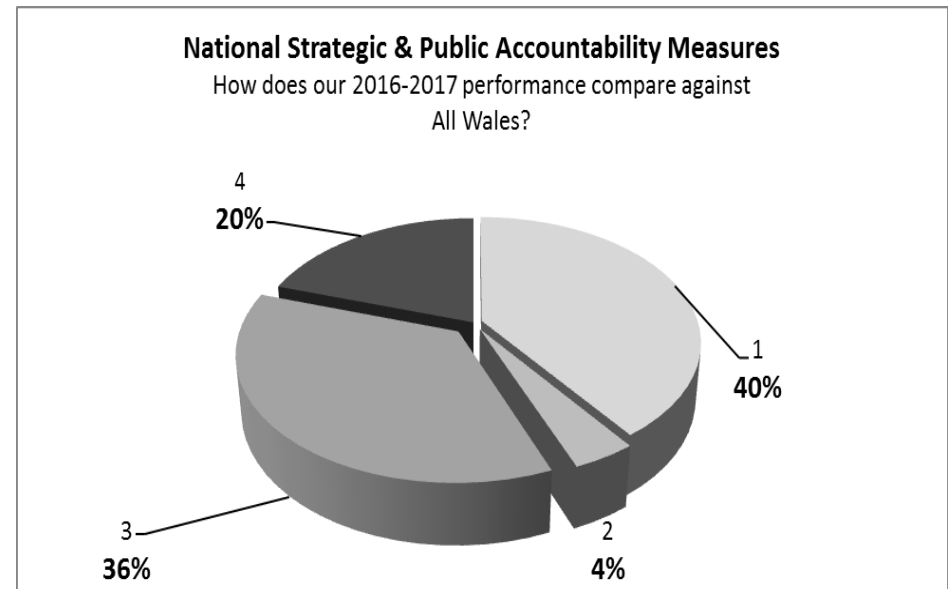
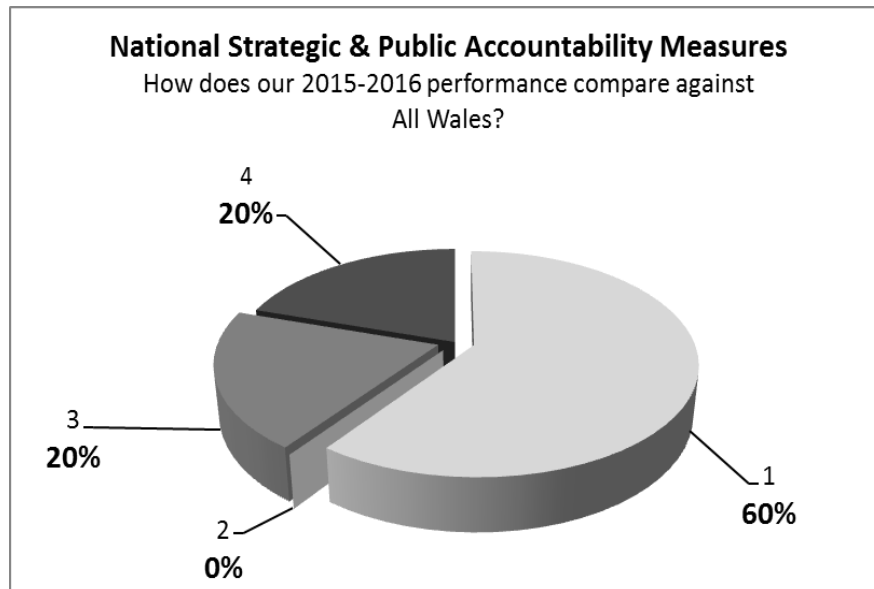
We also measure performance across a range of service areas and report performance of our full data set of 152 measures which are reported to scrutiny committees on a quarterly basis. The data set comprises of: National Statutory Indicators; Public Accountability Measures; - Social Services Health & Wellbeing Indicators, Service Improvement Data; and measures we have developed locally. 70% of our comparable performance measures improved or achieved maximum performance in 2016-2017 compared to 60% in 2015-2016. A number of new social services measures were introduced into the full suite for 2016-2017 and most of these do not have comparable data i.e. to the previous year, so caution should be made when comparing overall performance of our full suite between the two years. **Our full set of performance measures** (add 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 2016-2017 we were ranked 16<sup>th</sup> (9<sup>th</sup> in 2015-2016) out of the 22 local authorities, based on the number of comparable indicators in the upper quartile position for these national indicators.

Year	Upper quartile	Mid quartiles	Lower quartile
2016-2017	6	11	8
2015-2016	13	17	10
2014-2015	9	23	10

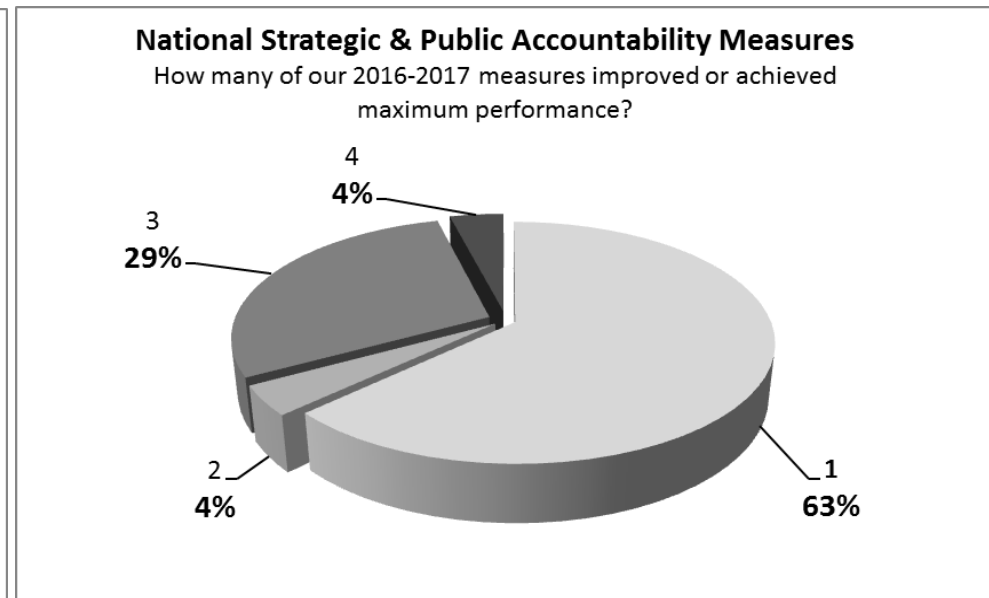
- 40% (10) of our 25 comparable measures were better than the All Wales performance figures, a reduction of 20% on 2015-2016 whereby 60% (24) of the 40 comparable measures were better than All Wales. Please note that there has been a significant reduction in the number of national measures to be reported for 2016-2017 as many were deleted from the national set following revocation of the statutory National Strategic Indicators at the end of 2015-2016 and prior to a revised set of Public Accountability Measures being introduced for 2017-2018. At the time of reporting this information (September 2017) 25 of the 28 2016-2017 measures were comparable against All Wales data compared to 40 of 41 measures in 2015-2016. Of the 13 measures that were deleted from the national set for 2016-2017, 8 of these measures had better performance than All Wales figures in 2015-2016:



- 1** Performance better than All Wales data
- 3** Performance is lower but within 5% of All Wales

- 2** Performance same as All Wales data
- 4** 5% or more below All Wales data

- 63% (17 of 27) of our 2016-2017 national measures either achieved maximum performance or improved, which is above the previous year where 59% (24 of 41) of 2015-2016 measures achieved maximum performance or improved. In 2016-2017 fewer of our measures saw a drop in performance of 5% or more i.e. 4% in 2016-2017 compared to 17% in 2015-2016. Of the 13 measures that have been deleted from the national set for 2016-2017, 9 had shown improvement in 2015-2016. Whilst our own performance has improved (we are placed 7th across Wales) in relation to comparing our own performance to the previous year, rest of Wales has improved at a faster rate in some performance indicators.



**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 28 performance indicators and rankings for 2016-2017 is available [here \(add link\)](#).**



## **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 positive work undertaken by the Service during 2016-2017 has further safely reduced the number of children being looked after to 348 children. 637 children were supported to stay with their families during the year.

92.7% of children and young people feel that their views about their care and support have been listened to with 85.7% of parents responding that they have been actively involved in all decisions about how their child's/children's care and support was provided.

A programme of work has now been planned for 2017-2018 which will assist the outcome-focussed way of working to become further embedded into everyday social work practice in line with requirements of the Social Services and WellBeing (Wales) Act 2014. In addition, an effective monitoring and reporting framework has also been established against the requirements of the Act and this will continue to be developed during the coming year to ensure we are able to report robust performance management information with regards to the effectiveness of the impact of working co-productively with children, young people and their families.

## **During 2016-2017 we said:**

- 1. We will work in a way that will make a positive difference to the lives of children and the families we deal with, so that children are safer, remain in their family homes and get the best start in life.**

## **What did we do?**

- We have further reduced the number of children being looked after from 377 (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016) to 348 (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).
- An outcome focused model of Social Work practice has been embedded across all teams. This model of practice enables practitioners to work with children and families to consider their personal well-being goals and co-produce solutions so that children remain safe in their family home and get the best start in life. To support this, improvements to the IT systems are now underway to ensure the recording and reporting of 'personal outcomes' is more robust. This should result in an increase in the number of outcomes reported moving forward.
- New Assessment and Care Plan templates have also been introduced to support this new way of working and an exercise is currently on-going to convert all existing care plans/ pathway plans into the new style outcome focused format.
- An outcomes focused Conference has been arranged for partner agencies to ensure a joined up approach to working with children and families in a co-productive way and this will be supported by further work with partner agencies being taken forward by individual Social Work Teams within their catchment areas.
- In relation to well-being outcomes, performance is detailed below:
  - Number of children's outcomes that have been developed during the year (including those that have been withdrawn or achieved) : 817;
  - Percentage of children's outcomes that have had their progress reviewed during the year. 19.8% (162 of 817);
  - Percentage of children's outcomes that have been achieved during the year : 12.5% (102 of 817).
- The above measures are new for 2016-2017; they are on-going and can change. More outcomes will be

achieved over time. The meaning of “well-being outcomes” is a broad concept that relates to all areas of a person’s life. Everyone has a responsibility for their own well-being but some people need extra help to achieve this. In essence, this means multi-agency partners working together with people to identify outcomes that are personal to them and their individual circumstances that enable them to achieve well-being through appropriate care and support. An example of a personal well-being outcome might be; “I want to feel safe at night living at home with my family”.

## **2. We will have the right family support in place to ensure children and young people remain with their families.**

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

- As at 31st March 2017, the percentage of children within Neath Port Talbot supported to remain with their families was 64.8% (637 children).
- The Family Action Support Team’s (FAST) integration as part of Children and Young People Services has provided more flexibility and accountability in terms of delivering the vision set out in the Family Support and Looked After Children Strategies.
- A play therapist has been appointed and a clinical psychologist is soon to be appointed to help support Children and Young People Services in ensuring more children and young people remain at home, are rehabilitated at home or remain in a stable placement.
- A fully embedded resource panel has improved links with partner agencies e.g. health and education, in identifying and accessing resources for children and young people in need.
- A dedicated commissioning officer within Children and Young People Services continues to monitor Family Support Services to ensure agreed outcomes are being delivered and adhered to in support of children, young people and families.
- Joint strategic meetings between Children and Young People Services and the Education Directorate now take place bi-monthly. A work programme has been established to improve outcomes for looked after children and to provide support for children on the edge of care to keep them out of the care system.

### **3. Children, young people and families will have a say in the services they receive from us, tailored to suit their needs.**

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

- The results of the Welsh Government's Qualitative Questionnaire Process indicate that 92.7% of children and young people feel that their views about their care and support have been listened to with 85.7% of parents responding that they have been actively involved in all decisions about how their child's/children's care and support was provided. This information will help to shape future services in line with the needs of children, young people and their families.
- Monthly Thematic Case File Audits are conducted and provide the service with an understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved. Findings of these Audits are reported to Members as one of the quarterly key priority indicators.
- A new engagement & participation officer has been recruited to the service and a planned programme of work activity agreed to assist in taking account of the views and feelings of children and young people in relation to the services they receive from us.
- The service is currently in the process of developing a system for measuring the 'Active Offer' under advocacy to ensure the rights, views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are heard at all times.
- The "Percentage of carers responding "Yes" or "Sometimes" to the question "I have been actively involved in all decisions about how the care and support was provided for the person I care for", was not included in the Welsh Government's final draft questionnaire sent out to children and young people, therefore we have no data to report for this measure.



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

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

The new Ysgol Bae Baglan School opened in September 2016. The newly formed Melin Primary School opened after both Melin Junior and Infant schools merged. Building work is underway on a replacement school for Groes Primary and Dyffryn School; on a new build campus in the south of the county borough as part of the 3-18 Welsh-medium development; on a new build primary school at Briton Ferry, all of which will open in September 2018.

Work is continuing to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities 80% of our schools are categorised highly effective or effective (green and yellow schools) and 83.0% of pupils are educated within these schools.

Literacy and numeracy, outcomes at foundation phase have declined slightly whilst they have improved at key stage 2. Broadly, outcomes at key stage 3 have remained almost the same in nearly all key indicators and key stage 4 results have improved in nearly all key indicators.

Secondary school attendance for the academic year 2015-2016 has remained at 93.7% and primary school attendance has fallen marginally by 0.2%. There has been a rise in both fixed and permanent exclusions, to address this, a Wellbeing and Behaviour team has been established

## **During 2016-2017 we said:**

### **1. We will merge or relocate some schools; increase the capacity in others; and continue to build new schools; and to close some others.**

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

- The new Ysgol Bae Baglan (3-16) school opened on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016. In addition to providing state of the art facilities for our pupils and our communities, it will provide potential annual estimated school revenue budget savings of approximately £1.8m, which has reduced the Council's building maintenance and repair costs liabilities by £17m and reduced pupil surplus places by approximately 1,200. In the 7 month period up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 54,352 visitors have used the schools community facilities.
- The new Melin Primary school opened on 1st September 2016. The amalgamation of Melin Junior and Melin Infants schools utilises existing buildings and facilities and has generated potential annual school revenue budget savings of approximately £70k.
- Construction work has begun on a new 3-16 school at Margam, Ysgol Newydd Margam. Establishing this new school, which replaces Groes Primary and Dyffryn School, will increase capacity by approximately 160 pupil places to meet potential demand. The potential annual school revenue savings are estimated at approximately £700k. The estimated capital cost for the new build is £30m. Building maintenance and accessibility costs estimated at £7.5m are removed by this proposal. The new school will open in September 2018.
- Construction work has begun on a new school for the south campus of Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur. The proposal will increase pupil places by approximately 200 to meet potential demand. Capital build for this proposal amounts to approximately £34m. The new 3-18, Welsh-medium school will open in September 2017 with the south campus (11-16) in September 2018.
- We have increased the number of pupil admissions to Ysgol Hendrefelin, provided 30 additional pupil places and extended the age range for admissions.
- Construction work has begun on a new 3-11 school for Briton Ferry, Ysgol Newydd Briton Ferry. Establishing this new school will remove approximately 100 surplus places and deliver a potential annual school revenue budget saving estimated at approximately £167k. The estimated capital cost for the new build is £7.5m.

Building maintenance and repair costs liabilities estimated at £1.4m are removed by this proposal. The new school will open in September 2018.

- Officers continue to work with the developers on the new build school at Coed Darcy, although the continued effect of the economic climate on the housing market is impacting on the start date of this project.

Note: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme of new build capital projects is jointly funded between the Council and Welsh Government.

## **2. We will continue to implement our strategy for the provision of Welsh-medium education in Neath Port Talbot.**

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

- Work is continuing to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and plans for future growth in conjunction with Welsh Governments proposals for growing the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050. During the summer term 2016, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Forum met and the officer responsible for Welsh in Education Strategic Plan contributed to the regional working group and liaised with Welsh Government. As a result, the work of the seconded support teachers for both Additional Learning Needs (ALN) pupils and Welsh first language development have supported Welsh medium schools as well as a more strategic approach to supporting Welsh as a second language by the Athrawon Bro service. This support is more targeted according to need.
- There has been a slight reduction in the percentage of seven-year olds being taught through the medium of Welsh from 18.8% (academic year 2014-2015) to 18.4% (academic year 2015-2016). This is likely to be as a result of size of cohorts rather than a trend.
- The general trend for more learners transferring from Welsh Medium Primary to Welsh Medium Secondary School is positive in most years, however, the transition to secondary school whilst improving is below the target.



- Opportunities for learners aged 14 to 16 studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh have increased. The percentage of pupils entered for at least five further Level 1/2 qualifications through the medium of Welsh is at least 80% and exceeds the Welsh Government's targets of 62% by 2015 and 68% by 2020.
- More options are provided (currently 31 against a target of 30) for learners aged 16 to 19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools, colleges and work-based learning; however recruitment of suitable staff remains a challenge.
- Some specialist assessment through the medium of Welsh is available for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in the Educational Psychologist Service, the Support for Learning Service and from the Education Development & Inclusion Service. No formal arrangements have yet been established with other Local Authorities or consortia to develop enhanced Welsh language ALN provision.
- Schools continue to plan strategically for staff development and produce robust spending plans based on systematic analysis of need. At specific times there is a shortage of well qualified and experienced supply and short-term contract teachers. There were no unfilled teaching vacancies to teach Welsh.
- A new WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan) 2017-2020 has been produced and agreed by Council (on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017) following consultation. It is currently with Welsh Government awaiting approval.

### **3. We will ensure that the 14 -19 Learning Pathways programme supports all young people to achieve their full learning potential.**

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

- The percentage of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) post 16 has remained constant for the last two years at 3.6%. The Welsh average is currently 2%.
- The range and variety of courses has increased to give more young people a better chance of obtaining a recognised qualification (i.e. Health and Social Care, Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty, Additional Maths, Drama and Business).

#### **4. Improve literacy outcomes.**

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

- A regionally agreed menu of support has been provided for all schools and the delivery of these courses was identified during the core visits every school had during the autumn term 2015. These courses addressed a wide range of issues aimed at improving pupils' oracy, reading and writing. Courses were aimed at specific groups of learners, for example more able pupils.
- Literacy outcomes at the end of foundation phase have declined from 84.6% (academic year 2014-2015) to 82.0% (academic year 2015-2016). This may be partially due to the cohort but also more robust teacher assessments. Literacy outcomes increased by 1.5% at key stage 2, dropped marginally to 84.7% at key stage 3 and the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 threshold at the end of key stage 4 in language (English or Welsh 1st Language) has increased to 69.6%:

#### **5. Improve numeracy outcomes.**

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

- In our primary schools, the percentage of pupils achieving outcome 5 in mathematical development skills at the end of foundation phase has declined by 1% to 84.2% whilst key stage 2 numeracy outcomes have increase by almost 3% to 88.4%.
- In our secondary schools the percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 at the end of key stage 3 in maths dropped marginally by 0.3% to 83.1%, whilst at key stage 4, the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 threshold in maths has increased by 2.3% to 67.2%.

#### **6. We will improve the performance of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) in literacy & numeracy outcomes.**

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

- Continue to monitor how the Pupil Deprivation Grant is spent by each school. This is a specific line of enquiry in

each core visit and examples of the best and most effective practice have been shared with all schools.

- At the end of foundation phase, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving at least outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills declined from 72.6% (academic year 2014-2015) to 70.2% (academic year 2015-16) and declined in mathematical development from 72.6% to 72.0%. This reflects the general picture in foundation phase. This may be partially due to the cohort but also more robust teacher assessments.
- At the end of key stage 2, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving at least level 4 in language has improved from 72.4% to 77.2% and has significantly improved for mathematics 72.7% (academic year 2014-2015) to 80.0% (academic year 2015-2016).
- At the end of key stage 3, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving at least level 5 in has declined from 70.4% to 70.0%. Attainment in mathematics has improved from 67.2% to 68.4%.
- At the end of key stage 4, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving level 2 threshold in language has improved from 42.0% (academic year 2014-2015) to 43.2% (academic year 2015-2016) but has declined in mathematics from 45.2% to 43.5%.

## **7. We will improve pupil attendance.**

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

- Percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools has fallen marginally on the previous academic year from 94.8% (2014-2015) to 94.6% (2015-2016).
- Percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools has remained the same as the previous academic year at 93.7%.
- The Education Welfare Service works closely with both schools and parents to identify the cause of individual pupil absence with the aim of early intervention when and where needed. Individual pupil illnesses are monitored and challenged where there appears to be patterns of absence. Schools are encouraged to correctly code absences to allow for effective data tracking. Regular meetings are scheduled between Education

Welfare Officers and key school staff to discuss individual pupil cases and provide advice and support to determine appropriate course of actions. Education Welfare Officers will often attend at the home of the pupil to make enquiries as to the reason for the absence from school in an effort to assist and facilitate an early return to school and discuss with parents various strategies to encourage and improve regular attendance. Where these examples of strategies have been unsuccessful the Council has the available option of issuing parents with a fixed penalty notice or the commencement of prosecution via Court.

- Having carried out a data tracking exercise to assess the impact of issuing fixed penalty notices to parents for non-attendance, there is clear evidence that fixed penalty notices have a material effect in improving attendance. During the 2015-/2016 academic year 73 fixed penalty notices were issued.
- At the beginning of the academic year (2016-2017) having analysed comparative data across Wales, the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Directorate asked schools to concentrate efforts on reducing use of the 'I' (illness) code by not readily and always accepting at face value notification that a pupil is too unwell to attend school. Reported illness amongst Neath Port Talbot pupils is one of the highest in Wales. It is accepted that on occasion pupils suffer illness; however, evidence confirms that since schools have taken a tougher stance on the authorisation of holidays during term-time the number of pupils reporting as ill has increased dramatically. As a measure to reduce the growing number of reported illness absences schools were asked to consider challenging the reason for absence where there are patterns of similar absence i.e., regular Mondays or Fridays recorded as being ill or by asking for medical evidence for reasons of illness that are regular or recurring. This effort has seen a reduction during the 2016-2017 academic year in the recording of illness amongst primary schools (3.13% down from 3.53% of possible attendance) and an excellent reduction from secondary schools (3.84% down from 4.42% of possible attendance). The 2015-2016 Welsh average for primary school was 3.1% and for secondary schools it was 3.5%.
- Persistent absenteeism continues to improve year-on-year over the past 4 years. In 2012-2013 it was running at 5.8% of pupils classed as persistent absentees, however, for the 2015-2016 academic year it was down to 3.8% which is below the Welsh average.

## **8. We will provide better support for pupils with behavioural needs.**

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

- Exclusion data has been monitored closely and in response to the rise in fixed and permanent exclusions, a Wellbeing and Behaviour team has been established and a designated manager has been appointed to address this. In addition we have increased the capacity of assessment places across both the primary and secondary sector for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The establishment of this service and provision is a result of the reorganisation of the Education Other than at School Service (EOTAS) and has been implemented with Members agreement. The Wellbeing and Behaviour Team are also working with key professionals to develop a training package for all schools in meeting the needs of pupils with SEBD and this began to be rolled out during the spring term 2016-17. This change to services and provision will be in place in all schools as of September 2017 with the aim of embedding a continuum of support and increasing capacity within schools, as part of the LA's long term plan in ensuring the needs of pupils with SEBD are effectively met.
- The number of permanent exclusions has risen from 9 pupils (academic year 2014-2015) to 19 pupils (academic year 2015-2016), There has been a rise in both fixed and permanent exclusions when compared to 2014-2015 academic year, caution should be given when comparing like for like comparisons between the two academic years in relation to exclusions following the introduction of a new method of working.
- Overall, the number of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions in primary schools has risen from 216 days to 244 days and has risen from 1,257 to 1,417 days in secondary schools since the previous academic year.
- The percentage of pupils with behavioural needs who leave compulsory education, training or work based learning without and approved external qualification has risen from 0.5% (2 of 406 pupils) in 2014-2015 academic year to 0.7% (3 of 419 pupils) in 2015-2016 academic year.

## **9. We will continue to improve safeguarding practices and procedures. Protecting children and young people from abuse is a shared responsibility for all staff.**

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

- Over the last two academic years, 21 schools have been inspected by Estyn. Of these, twenty schools (95%) had no cause for concern in relation to safeguarding. Only one school was identified as having safeguarding arrangements that did not meet the requirements, those issues were resolved immediately.
- Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in relation to safeguarding; these are reviewed and discussed in internal fortnightly safeguarding meetings. These meetings also monitor progress in relation to all live safeguarding issues. Officers from the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Directorate attend the cross service operational safeguarding group and Corporate Safeguarding Group.
- Peer safeguarding reviews are programmed for all schools and impact positively on safeguarding standards across the authority. As part of the Peer Review process pupil voice is sought, both formally & informally, and the pupil voice therefore also assists in the raising of Safeguarding standards.
- The Wellbeing Team provides support for schools, staff and pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It consists of workers from a range of backgrounds, with extensive experience of engaging with vulnerable children and young people.

## **10. We will continue to deliver school improvement through the Education Regional Working Partnership.**

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

- Between April and July 2016 schools who had not received a second core visit in the first part of 2016 received a core visit. A core visit consists of at least two visits per year to all schools by Challenge Advisers, employed by NPT working for the regional team ERW (Education through Regional Working). The autumn visit evaluates performance and determines the amount of support that the school requires over the coming year. These visits were bespoke to the needs of each school but usually involved either scrutiny of pupils' books and/or lesson observations.
- Based on the new National Categorisation Model, in the 2014-2015 academic year, 73% of our schools were categorised as highly effective (green) or effective schools (yellow). During the autumn term 2016 all schools were visited and categorised and 80% are now highly effective or effective. 83% of our pupils are educated within a highly effective and effective school, an increase on the previous year of 79.6%.



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

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

We continue to improve the resilience of the Gateway Service. Our first point of contact provision has been strengthened by the recruitment of a Deputy Manager and Contact Officer.

Pobl (formerly known as Grŵp Gwalia) negotiations have concentrated on the Guaranteed Bed Commitment (GBC) for Phase II of the agreement (1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022). During October 2016 the Council agreed, following public consultation, a variation to the contract. Discussions with Pobl are ongoing.

There are now three dedicated POVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) co-ordinators. The Adult Safeguarding Team currently sits under the same management as Children's Safeguarding. Plans are in place to establish an integrated team term based on demand. We have also established an 'at risk' process at the point of referral in line with the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. We continue to make good progress as evidenced in two recent audits and a review by CSSIW (Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales).

Modernising provisions through a series of efficiency-improving exercises has saved £644k across Direct Services.

## **During 2016-2017 we said:**

### **1. We will develop community based early intervention and prevention services to support people to remain as independent as possible without formal care and support.**

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

- There is continued effort made towards supporting citizens within the community and remaining independent through a variety of preventative services such as assistive technology, local area co-ordination and via an Intake Reablement Model. Where people are eligible for formal care and support packages are appropriately sized to meet citizens' needs and encourage independence.
- The rate of older people (aged 65 or over) supported in the community per 1,000 population aged 65 or over has dropped from 109.7 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 to 90.5 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The reduction in this indicator is as a result of a change in the way we calculate the rate. Supported 'in the community' now measures only those with a care and support plan. As a result of this change, caution should be taken when making like-for-like comparisons with previous years data. However, a reduction in this indicator should be seen as positive and is in line with the principles of the Social Services Health and Housing Directorate and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A continued effort is being made towards supporting our citizens to remain independent as mentioned in the above paragraph. Such services minimise the need for commissioned care and support.
- The percentage of clients who are supported in the community during the year aged 65 and over has increased from 85.9% in 2015-2016 to 91% for 2016-2017. One of the factors for the higher turnover of clients can be attributed to the introduction of the Intake Reablement Model.

### **2. We will continue to improve the Gateway Service so we can be sure that people are getting the right response when they first contact adult social services.**

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

- We continue to improve the resilience of the Gateway Service to ensure the team is competent to appropriately deal with citizens' needs by ensuring there is a full complement of staff across contact officers and the Multi-



Disciplinary Team (MDT). We have collaborated with the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) working group to monitor the filtering and flow of calls into and out of the service. Our first point of contact provision has been further strengthened by the recruitment of a Deputy Manager and Contact Officer.

- The percentage of referrals screened within 24 hours has dropped from 74% in 2015-2016 to 62% in 2016-2017. The temporary relocation of the Gateway Manager out of the Gateway team has impacted on this performance.
- We have seen a slight decrease in the percentage of people diverted into well-being services from 87% in 2015-2016 to 86% for 2016-2017.
- The percentage of people contacting the Gateway Service whose needs can only be met by social services increased from 13% in 2015-2016 to 14% for 2016-2017.

### **3. We will increase the take up of direct payments to support service users and carers in exercising their right to have a choice and control over the way in which their care and support needs are met.**

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

- During 2016-2017 the Authority was able to claim back £432,361 from Direct Payment recipients via funding that had not been spent due to changes in assessed care and support plans, reduced employment liabilities and periods where a personal assistant was not working for the client.
- We have significantly increased the number of people receiving direct payments from from 284 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 to 351 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.
- In relation to the number of care and support hours met via direct payments, a new method of calculating the value of care packages has been adopted during the year which uses cash values rather than a 'hours-based' calculation, therefore, data for the full year 2016-2017 for this measure is not available.
- 3,300 people accessed care and support services from social services during 2016-2017. This includes services such as aids & adaptations, reablement, home care, direct payments, respite, residential & nursing care etc.

**4. We will implement 'Pathways to Independence' across community care to ensure adults of working age with care and support needs are assessed and supported in a way which maximises their independence.**

**What did we do?**

- A 'Pathways to Independence' approach now feeds into the funding and resource panel developed under the single work stream Adults Social Care Modernisation. This has been trialled within the complex disability team and is due to be rolled out across community networks later in the year. The trial indicated positive results whereby financial savings were made and clients were enabled to maximise their independence by ensuring their needs were being met in the most appropriate way.
- The percentage of clients who are supported in the community during the year: aged 18-64 has reduced from 94.1% during 2015-2016 to 74.1% during 2016-2017. A reduction in this indicator should be seen as a positive and is in line with the principles of the Social Services Health and Housing Directorate and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A continued effort is being made towards supporting our citizens to remain independent within their communities through services such as Local Area Co-ordination, Assistive Technology & the Community Reablement Intake model. Such services minimise the need for commissioned care and support.

**5. We will deliver full integration of community health and social care for frail older people, underpinned by the formal partnership agreement for intermediate health and care services.**

**What did we do?**

- Council approved a formal pooled fund arrangement for the delivery of the Intermediate Care Services between Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board in accordance with Section 33 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006. Anticipatory Care Planning has been launched across the council in collaboration with GP practices, with the aim of proactively managing vulnerable people with complex care needs who are at risk of losing their independence. Early indicators are showing positive results.
- The rate of delayed transfers of care from hospital for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over

changed from 4.36 during 2015-2016 compared to 3.88 in 2016-2017. Prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016, this indicator included all clients aged 18 years and over. From 2016-2017 Welsh Government guidance stated that this indicator should include clients aged 75 years and over only. As a result of this change, caution should be taken when making like-for-like comparisons with previous years data.

## **6. We will increase efficiency and value for money of direct services provided by the Council.**

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

- The savings for full year (2016-2017) was £644k across direct services. This is attributable to modernising provisions through a series of efficiency-improving exercises (e.g. sickness management, remodelling of service delivery), supported by management of change and voluntary redundancy opportunities. However, this has been offset by an increase in external care of approximately £200k (full year cost).
- The number of people accessing care and support from the Council's home care services as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 was 711 (602 external care / 109 in-house care). This has been complemented by the Homecare Rapid Response team (HRRT) which assisted over 300 people during the year.
- The financial cost of in-house services/hours for 2017-2018 budget has reduced as a result of efficiency improving exercises implemented during 2016-2017.

## **7. We will review the partnership arrangement with Grŵp Gwalia to ensure it remains fit for purpose.**

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

- Pobl (formerly known as Grŵp Gwalia) negotiations have concentrated on the Guaranteed Bed Commitment (GBC) for Phase II of the agreement (1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022). During October 2016, the Council agreed, following public consultation, a variation to the contract. Discussions with Pobl are ongoing.
- Fewer residential beds were commissioned in 2016-2017, 143, compared to 173 in 2015-2016. The number of short term residential beds commissioned during the year remained at 32.

## **8. We will continue to implement the safeguarding action plan to further improve safeguarding practices.**

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

- We have further improved safeguarding practices by having in place three dedicated POVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) coordinators and plans are in place to establish an integrated team with Children's Services. We have established an 'at risk' process at the point of referral in line with the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A practice note has been distributed across the service outlining duties in terms of adults at risk and POVA. We continue to make good progress as evidenced in two recent audits and a review by CSSIW (Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales). Scoping and planning continues in relation to developing an integrated service that includes education and children's and adults safeguarding. We have also implemented a duty safeguarding rota. The duty officer sits in the Gateway Service as part of the multi-agency triage team and offers advice on safeguarding referrals which is working very well.
- The number of adult safeguarding referrals received has increase from 229 during 2015-2016 to 348 during 2016-2017. One of the factors for an increase in referrals is due to a small number of homes experiencing escalating concerns. Under these circumstances we often experience more referrals as the threshold for the referral is lowered.
- Performance in relation to the percentage of adult protection referrals completed where the risk has been managed was 100%, the same as the previous year.

## **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:**

#### **Regeneration**

Despite continuing challenging circumstances surrounding the economy throughout 2016-2017, we successfully delivered most of our planned activities. A number of the Vibrant & Viable Places projects have been completed this year, some continue to progress and several more are due to come on-line shortly. In addition, the second phase of the Neath town centre redevelopment is now progressing.

We continue to provide the infrastructure and facilities to further grow the visitor economy in the County Borough, including the recently completed adventure golf course on Aberavon seafront and the forthcoming Camping & Caravanning Club site at Margam Park.

We have supported the creation of 131 jobs, helped safeguard 255 existing jobs and assisted 32 new business start-ups including supporting 31 companies, supported the creation of 37 new jobs and safeguarded 121 jobs in the valleys.

On key regeneration projects we helped 65 people back into work, supported 38 apprenticeships, 16 trainees and 13 work placements amounting to 3,909 training weeks with 100 local companies securing contracts in excess of £15.5 m and 98% spend with contractors in Wales.

#### **Anti-poverty**

The people affected by the reduction in the benefits cap were identified. Partners are working to ensure those individuals are aware of how their income will be affected and will target support as necessary. There are no unmet

needs identified at present but this may change as the UK Government implements its Welfare Benefits Reform Agenda.

Proposals to develop the Council's Family Information Service to provide a comprehensive online directory of community services has been approved by the Social Care Health and Housing Cabinet Board and the NPT Community Directory went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

The Council has received recognition by the Welsh Government re: the Digital Inclusion Charter. The Charter was approved in May 2016 and discussions have taken place with partners who have agreed to support this work which will assist more people to become digitally included and enjoy the benefits that they can experience from being online. Work to upskill staff in relation to digital literacy is progressing with the support of trade unions.

## **Housing**

Significant improvements have been made in the number of empty properties being brought back into use through the Houses to Homes Loan Scheme and we have increased the number of properties that were made warm safe and secure.

Tai Tarian (formerly now known as NPT Homes) achieved its target of 100% of properties WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) compliant by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

The Review of the Homelessness Service has been partially completed and ongoing preparatory work remains on target for the production of a draft Homelessness Strategy in the autumn of 2017. The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least six months increased to 94% during 2016-2017.

## **During 2016-2017 for Regeneration we said:**

- 1. We will encourage inward investment and bring forward a range of opportunities, including residential, retail and commercial developments.**

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

- We are continually progressing and seeking a range of funding opportunities including Buildings for the Future, Vibrant & Viable Places, Coastal Communities, amongst others. Funding secured for 2016-2017 amounts to £8.2m.
- Inward investment and expansion enquiries have been received from across a number of different sectors. In total for 2016-2017, we have successfully managed 12 expansion schemes for businesses already located within the area and 17 inward investments projects with the potential to create more than 200 new jobs and support economic growth.
- The granting of Port Talbot Waterfront with Enterprise Zone status has resulted in increased interest by companies looking to set up in the area

- 2. The next phase of Neath Town Centre redevelopment will be completed.**

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

- Following the successful completion of the first phase which included the new multi-storey car park and Wilko retail unit, planning has been approved for the next phase of the scheme. This will see the construction of up to six new retail units and 12 apartments on land at the rear of Boots service yard and will result in improved linkages between the town centre and key facilities such as the Gwyn Hall and the bus station. The project will further improve the attractiveness of Neath as a shopping destination and a place to visit and provide additional living space to help further improve the vibrancy of the area.
- We will continue to work with Coastal to deliver community benefits based on employment, training and work experience opportunities linked to the construction of the retail units. Coastal have agreed to adopt suggested

targets and added them to their tender.

**3. The development of leisure and commercial opportunities at Aberavon Seafront will continue and will include a new adventure golf course.**

**What did we do?**

- We are working with existing businesses and potential new investors to further develop leisure and commercial opportunities at Aberavon Seafront.
- We opened a new 12-hole adventure family golf course in July 2016 supporting the on-going regeneration of the seafront.
- We also, supported an additional two existing businesses with external improvements resulting in the potential creation of 6 new jobs, the safeguarding of more than 30 jobs and up to £45k of additional private sector investment.

**4. Caravan and camping facilities at Margam Park will be developed.**

**What did we do?**

- We worked to provide the enabling infrastructure to bring forward the scheme which will improve tourism and visitor numbers to Margam Park and the area as a whole.
- We also established a proposed start on site for caravan and camping facilities is planned for autumn 2017.

**5. We will access funding to refurbish, repair and maintain locally important buildings and structures.**

**What did we do?**

- We have continued to source funding and identify potential partners to deliver projects that enable the refurbishment, repair and maintenance of locally important buildings and structures.



- We are currently seeking a range of funding opportunities including an application under Buildings for the Future programme which include The Plaza, Port Talbot Magistrates Court, 8 Wind Street, Neath,. Vibrant & Viable Places and Coastal Communities, amongst others.
- In total for 2016-2017, approximately £1.2m of funding has been secured to deliver nine projects to improve locally important buildings and structures including the refurbishment of the former Turbine House in Margam Park which originally supplied electricity to Margam Castle.

**6. We will drive forward regeneration projects in the valleys, to encourage tourism and improve employment opportunities.**

**What did we do?**

- We continued to drive regeneration projects in the valleys to encourage tourism and improve employment opportunities, a key objective of the Regeneration and Economic Development Team.
- The regeneration team lead on the delivery of the Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan. The Destination Management Plan allows the Council and its partners to secure funds for the delivery of tourism related initiatives in the area. Task and Finish groups are being established with private sector tourism operators in the valleys areas in order to deliver the priority actions set out within the Destination Management Plan.
- The Rural Development Plan funded Business Development Officer for Tourism is now in post. Key activities to be delivered include a business development needs mapping exercise, developing product knowledge on things to see and do in Neath Port Talbot and delivering high quality videography and photography to enable tourism operators to promote the area more effectively.
- In total for 2016-2017, we have supported 31 companies within the valley areas of NPT to deliver investment projects valued in excess of £126,000. These projects have supported the creation 37 new jobs and the safeguarding of 121 jobs. In addition we have supported a further four key regeneration projects to encourage tourism development within our valley communities.

- The Rural Development Programme has provided funding for 10 projects in NPT's rural communities to date. These projects are aimed at a variety of interventions based on evidenced need. Project types include: skills development, promoting business partnerships, increasing volunteering opportunities and enhancing natural and cultural heritage.

## **7. We will continue to deliver the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme to combine support for people and places whilst encouraging partnership working.**

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

The Vibrant and Viable Places Programme consists of 12 projects to be delivered over a three year period. The programme ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March with a near full claim made to the Welsh Government. Some projects will continue to be delivered over the next 12-15 months. The status of each of the projects is outlined below:

- Housing Renewal – Phase 3 of the housing renewal scheme delivered. Schemes in Oakwood Street and Talbot Road completed.
- Integrated Transport Hub – scheme on site with works being undertaken by Andrew Scott Ltd.
- Aberafan House – project underway and due for completion early 2018.
- Glan Afan School site – site acquired by Coastal Housing, planning permission secured. Demolition works to be undertaken shortly prior to the redevelopment of the site for homes and new commercial space.
- Former Police Station - site acquired by Pobl, planning permission secured. Demolition works to be undertaken shortly prior to the redevelopment of the site for homes and new commercial space.
- Green Park Housing – project completed.
- Green Park Riverside – Phase 1 completed with Phase 2 due to commence in June 2017.
- Employability Centre – project completed.
- Homes Above Shops – Pobl will not be proceeding with this scheme due to viability concerns.

- Plaza Cinema – application submitted for Buildings for the Future grant.
- Houses to Homes Loans – scheme being delivered.
- Burrows Yard – pre-development work ongoing in partnership with Coastal Housing.

**8. We will identify supply chain opportunities for local companies within major developments in the county borough by working in partnership with developers/organisations who are delivering substantial investment programmes.**

**What did we do?**

We continue to deliver community benefits on key regeneration projects to improve the economic prospects of local people, businesses and communities. In total for 2016-2017, the following were delivered:

- 65 local people helped to get back into work, lower than the 75 we supported the previous year. However we are still waiting for some contractors to report outputs and these will be carried forward into next year.
- Supported 38 local apprenticeships, 16 trainees and 13 on work experience, a total of 3,909 training weeks provided. The previous year we provided 270 training weeks.
- 100 local companies secured contracts to a value in excess of £15.5m.
- We supported 90 companies.
- 98% spend with contractors in Wales.

## **9. We will continue to support local businesses to help them prosper; create more jobs and business start-ups.**

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

- We had 628 business enquiries resulting in advice, information or financial support to existing companies. An increase on the previous year's figure of 584. We continue to service a high volume of enquiries from businesses looking for support on issues such as property, rates relief, local contract opportunities, tendering, events, etc. Throughout 2016-2017, we have also concentrated on delivering high quality events and business support activities which has had a positive impact on performance as outputs.
- 341 new business start-up enquiries were assisted, 271 were assisted the previous year. We continue to work in collaboration with key partners such as the Department of Works & Pensions, Neath College, Prince's Trust and Business Wales to ensure that people in the community who are considering starting their own business are provided with relevant support and advice. In addition, the team successfully run an Enterprise Club from Sandfields Business Centre that provides guidance on self-employment; these 12 sessions have been popular and attended by 107 local people.
- We assisted 32 new business start-ups through Innov8 programme during 2016-2017; we assisted 29 the previous year.
- 131 jobs were created as a result of financial support by the Council. Even though job outputs are lower than those achieved in 2015-2016 (184), we have actually managed more funding applications than the previous year. This has enabled us to support more local businesses with key investments in areas such as capital equipment, website development, accreditations, training and general marketing activities and in doing so safeguard 255 existing jobs which is a substantial increase on the previous year.
- We managed the £7.5m EU funded South West Workways+ project delivering training and paid work experience opportunities to long-term unemployed across the region to help them get their lives back on track.

- We supported new businesses and development/investment projects in established businesses..
- We supported the Port Talbot Enterprise Zone Board to promote benefits including helping 35 local businesses to successfully apply for rates relief.
- We also played a key role in supporting the £500m City Deal bid for the region to Welsh and UK Governments.

**During 2016-2017 for Anti-poverty we said:**

**10. We will deliver the commitments in the partnership agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support the introduction of Universal Credit.**

**What did we do?**

- As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, there were 1,210 claimants in receipt of Universal Credit in Neath and Port Talbot and an estimated 425 have now had housing costs paid in their Universal Credit. (These would have been housing benefit claimants prior to the introduction of Universal Credit).
- No one has, to date, requested help to complete their Universal Credit claim form on line. This support would be provided by us if requested. This suggests that people are coping with administering their claims on line.
- During 2016-2017, 71 claimants have requested and taken up the specialist money management support service.
- The partnership agreement with Department for Work and Pensions was successful and similar arrangements are in place for 2017-2018.

- 11. We will work with partners, to identify the impact of the next set of Welfare Benefit changes announced by the UK Government.**

**What did we do?**

The people affected by the reduction in the benefits cap have been notified and their entitlement to benefit adjusted accordingly. Partners continue to target support as necessary.

- 12. We will map existing community resources that can be drawn upon to mitigate the impacts of Universal Credit and Benefit changes. Focusing particularly on: digital inclusion; financial literacy; employment support; and benefits advice.**

**What did we do?**

- Proposals to develop the Council's Family Information Service to provide a comprehensive online directory of community services, were considered and approved by the Social Care Health and Housing Cabinet Board on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016, which will also enable support available to people on lower income to be easily accessed.
- There is a programme of work in place to extend the scope of data held in the system which includes digital inclusion, financial literacy, employment support and benefit advice.
- A mapping exercise has been integrated into the NPT Community Directory which went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

- 13. We will work with partners to ensure citizens and service providers are aware of the community resources and how they can be accessed.**

**What did we do?**

- The development of the NPT Community Directory is supported by a comprehensive communications & training plan that will ensure all relevant stakeholders are aware of the service and how to access it. Proposals were considered and approved by the Social Care Health and Housing Cabinet Board on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

- The NPT Community Directory went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. We will monitor the number of hits to the website and its rating by customers on an ongoing basis.

**14. We will develop an understanding of unmet need across the county borough and produce partnership proposals to address the unmet need.**

**What did we do?**

- There are no unmet needs identified at present but this may change as the UK Government implements its Welfare Benefits Reform Agenda.
- Universal Credit is not fully rolled out until 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Arrangements are in place to ensure all partners are briefed and working collaboratively.

**15. We will further develop our Digital inclusion plans with partners.**

**What did we do?**

The Council has received recognition by the Welsh Government re: the Digital Inclusion Charter. The Council is promoting the charter to local partners and a partnership group is exploring how more people can be supported to get online. The Council is also working with the trade unions to improve the digital literacy of its workforce and has also secured the support of the local third sector to apply for the Charter and to undertake a research project to establish capacity and capability across the Neath Port Talbot communities. Both the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee and the Town and Community Council Liaison Forum have resolved to support the Council's work on digital inclusion and the Public Services Board endorsed this as a priority for the Board in December 2016.

## **During 2016-2017 for Housing we said:**

- 16. Tai Tarian (formerly known as NPT Homes) will continue to meet the Council's promise (as detailed in the 'offer document') to bring all former council housing up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and to regenerate communities.**

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

During 2016-2017 Tai Tarian (formerly now known as NPT Homes) made excellent progress in the delivery of its major investment programme and all 9,019 (100%) properties were WHQS compliant by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 deadline as set by the Welsh Government

- 17. We will provide loans to effectively target empty properties to bring them back into use and make sure existing housing stock is safe, warm and secure.**

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

- The delivery process for the issuing of Home Improvement Loans is continually being reviewed and seven properties were made warm, safe and secure during 2016-2017 (five properties in 2015-16).
- The continued interest in the Houses into Homes Loan Scheme saw an increase in the number of empty properties being brought back into use: eight in 2015-2016 compared to 20 during 2016-2017.

- 18. We will undertake a homelessness review and we will prioritise those most in need by implementing single point of access arrangements for Supported People-funded homelessness prevention support services.**

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

- The review of the Homelessness Service has been partially completed and the resultant change in structure and process will be implemented during the first quarter of 2017-2018. The remaining elements of the review



have been postponed to coincide with a planned wider service area review later in 2017.

- The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least six months increased from 91% in 2015-2016 to 94% during 2016-2017.
- Arrangements have been put in place to recruit a Gateway officer who will manage the single point of access arrangements for the Supported People programme which will take effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2017-2018.
- The number of private rented tenancies made available that were suitable and likely to be available for at least six months has reduced from 92 during 2015-2016 to 86 in 2016-2017. The 6.5% variance in performance represents six properties and is reflective of greater preventative success in saving the existing tenancies of households threatened with homelessness, rather than re-housing them.

**19. We will develop a Homelessness Strategy that will ensure co-operation agreements are in place with our Housing Association partners to deliver the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act and monitor the contribution they make to help the Council fulfil its duty.**

**What did we do?**

- Ongoing preparatory work remains on target for the production of a draft Homelessness Strategy in the autumn of 2017.
- Housing Associations Co-operation Agreements are currently being developed under the auspices of Community Housing Agreement arrangements.
- The percentage of Housing Association partners with stock in the county borough the Council has a co-operation agreement with, will be measured once the above strategy and agreements are embedded.



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

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

With the completion of the roll-out of our improved Recycle+ weekly recycling service to 64,000 homes, together with the implementation of our side waste restriction policy, which is in addition to the fortnightly collection of residual waste and smaller wheeled bins, we have continued to promote the shift from a throwaway society to one that recycles first.

The current recycling performance for the full year 2016-2017 is 62.77% up from 58.32% in 2015-2016. The current statutory targets to reuse, recycle or compost are 64% of waste by 2019-2020 and 70% by 2024-2025.

We continue to realise performance through current arrangements for waste treatment and disposal, whilst work is ongoing towards putting in place a new waste services contract.

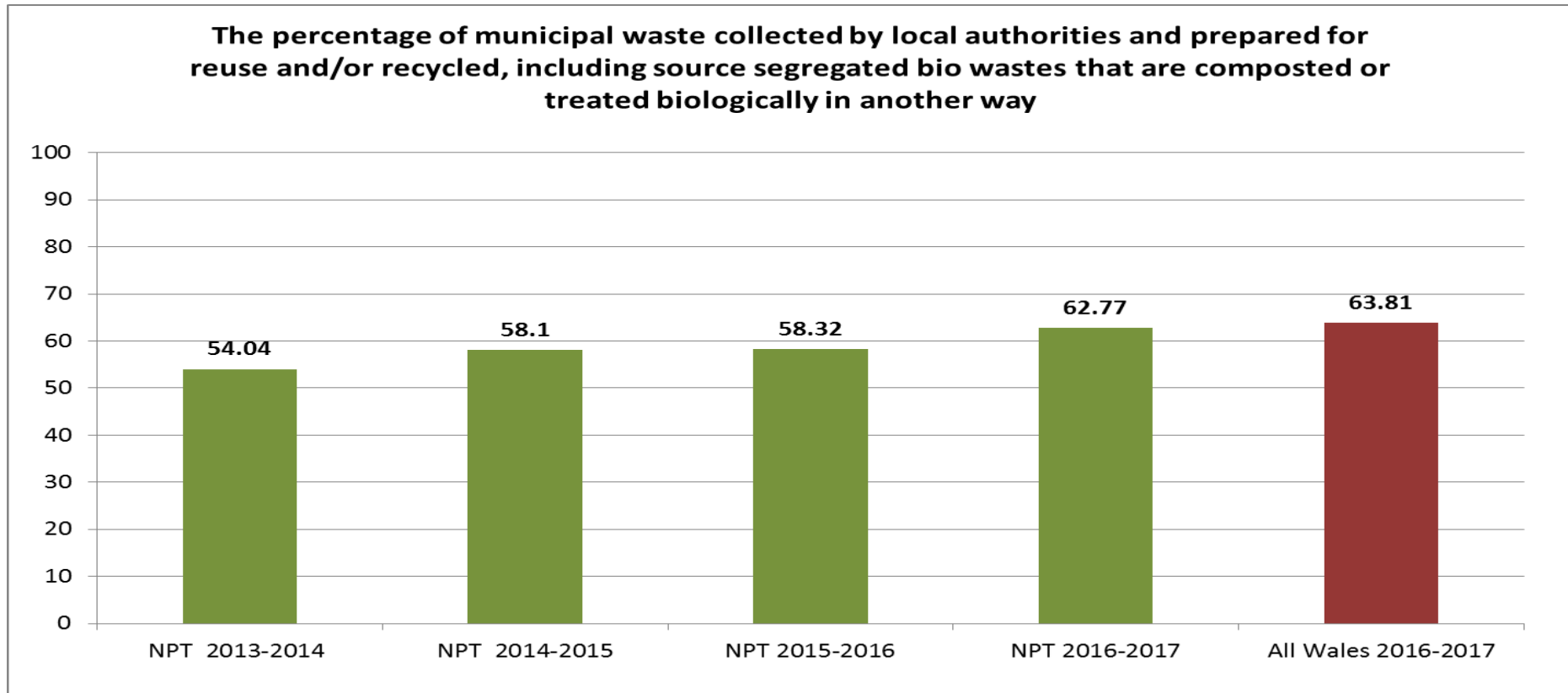
## During 2016-2017 we said:

- 1. More people will have an extended recycling service (e.g. collect more items such as batteries) and their waste sorted at the kerbside.**

### What did we do?

- A further £688,840 in grant funding was secured from the Welsh Government under the Collaborative Change Programme funding regime, part of which was used to supplement the roll out of the third and final phase of the Recycle+ service. Phase 3 roll out is now complete and approximately 64,000 properties are now serviced by the new scheme.
- The only properties that are not serviced by Recycle+ are remote properties and farms and some terraced houses with collections in rear lanes. Smaller vehicles that can access these areas are currently being designed and procured.
- The last household participation survey, which was completed in January 2015, indicated an 80.5% participation rate although indications are that this has now increased. It is proposed to conduct another survey during the autumn 2017, which shall give the new Recycle+ service time to bed in and provide a more accurate reflection of household participation. Communication and engagement work has continued as resources have allowed and have included school visits, road shows/ local events, social media and local press/radio promotions.
- The first phase of the side waste restriction policy was introduced in June 2016 to further increase household recycling. To date 1,220 properties have been issued with exemptions, 44 applications have been rejected. Exemptions are only issued to householders that can demonstrate that they are already recycling as much of their waste as possible, but still produce large quantities of non-recyclable waste. The second phase of implementation of the restriction policy is proposed to be implemented during 2017.
- Waste analysis has been carried out which is used to inform future awareness activities/promotions.
- High trade waste producers are being contacted and encouraged to recycle.

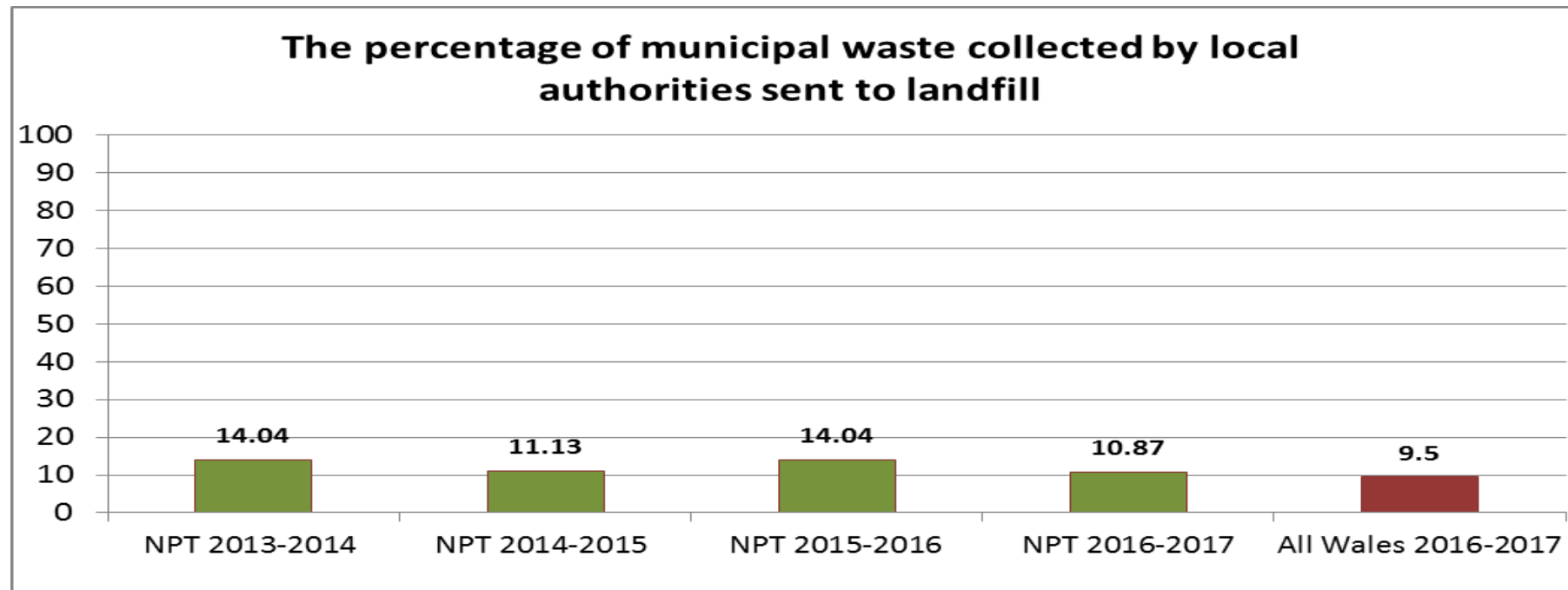
- Having achieved the 2015-2016 statutory recycling, reuse and composting target of 58%, performance has increased from 58.32% in 2015-2016 to 62.77% in 2016-2017, which is 1% below All Wales performance of 63.81% for 2016-2017. We are well on the way to achieving the next statutory target of 64% by 2019-2020.



**2. New contract arrangements will be in place for waste treatment and disposal to ensure we are getting the best deal for the Council.**

**What did we do?**

- Materials Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) procurement including food waste treatment is on-going.
- A longer term cost model for Neath Port Talbot to achieve the 70% target is planned to be produced once the issue of longer term waste treatment/disposal arrangements is resolved.
- 10.87% of municipal waste was sent to landfill during 2016-2017, lower than the 14.04% sent to landfill during the previous year. The All Wales performance for 2016-2017 is 9.5%



- 33.04% (23,165 tonnes) of municipal waste was used to recover heat and power, an increase on the previous year of 29.2%
- The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) carried out a Waste Finance Project in 2015-2016 which indicated that when compared with other local authorities in Wales, on a per household basis, Neath Port Talbot are ranked the lowest cost out of the 22 authorities in Wales for waste and recycling services provided.



**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:**

Through our Digital by Choice Strategy, we completed our website redevelopment and more of our customers are satisfied with our website. More transactions are now completed online, however, there was an increase in the average customer waiting times in our One Stop Shops, due to additional enquiries arising from some service changes and reduced staffing levels.

99.9% of our website is available in Welsh; the one remaining page is in the process of being translated.

Our website customer satisfaction measures all show improvement and we have improved the professional rating of our website page rating from a 2 star to 3 star (maximum rating is 4 star).

A Digital Inclusion Charter was approved in May 2016. Discussions have taken place with partners who have agreed to support this work which will assist more people to become digitally included and enjoy the benefits that they can experience from being online. Work to upskill staff in relation to digital literacy is progressing with the support of trade unions.

Roll out of the iProcurement System is ongoing and the volume of electronic orders placed continues to rise year on year, work has commenced to explore new income generation opportunities.

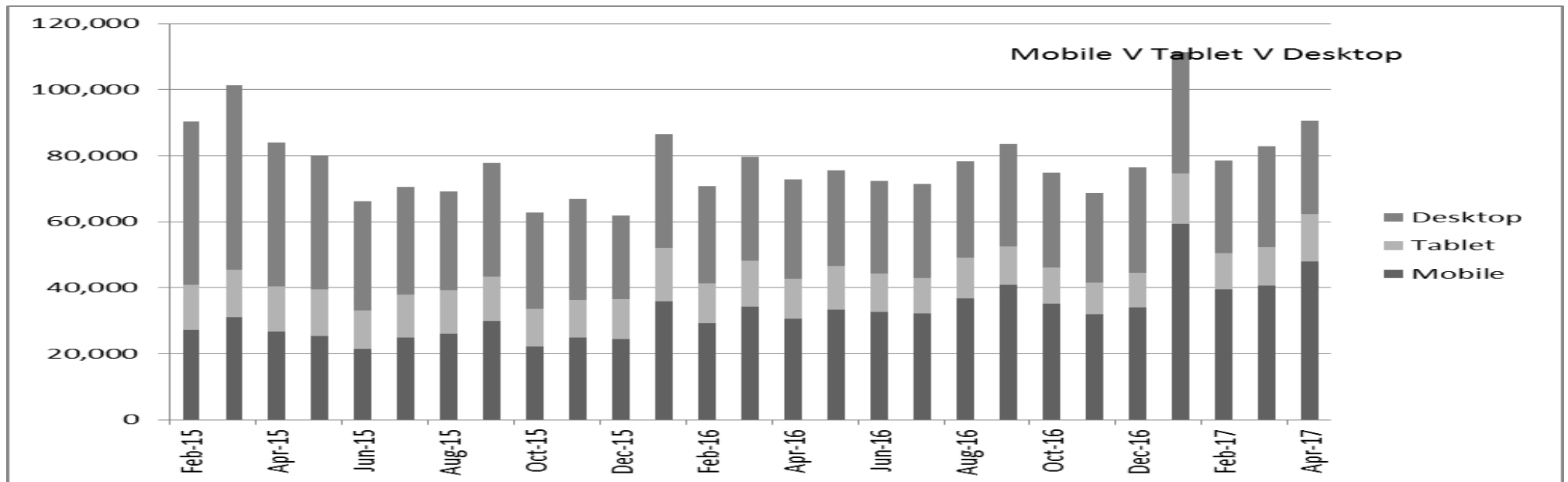


**During 2016-2017 we said:**

**1. Our website will be easier to access and more services will be available online.**

**What did we do?**

- The website has been redeveloped and is ‘top task’ orientated making information easier to find. There are currently eight new fully online transactional services available on the website with many other services partially web enabled. A further four are under development, 14 at business case stage and 41 ideas currently being scoped. For those services fully on-line, on-line transactions have increased from 56.9% in 2015-2016 to 67.7% in 2016-2017.
- The graph below illustrates which device our customers use when they have contact with us on-line:





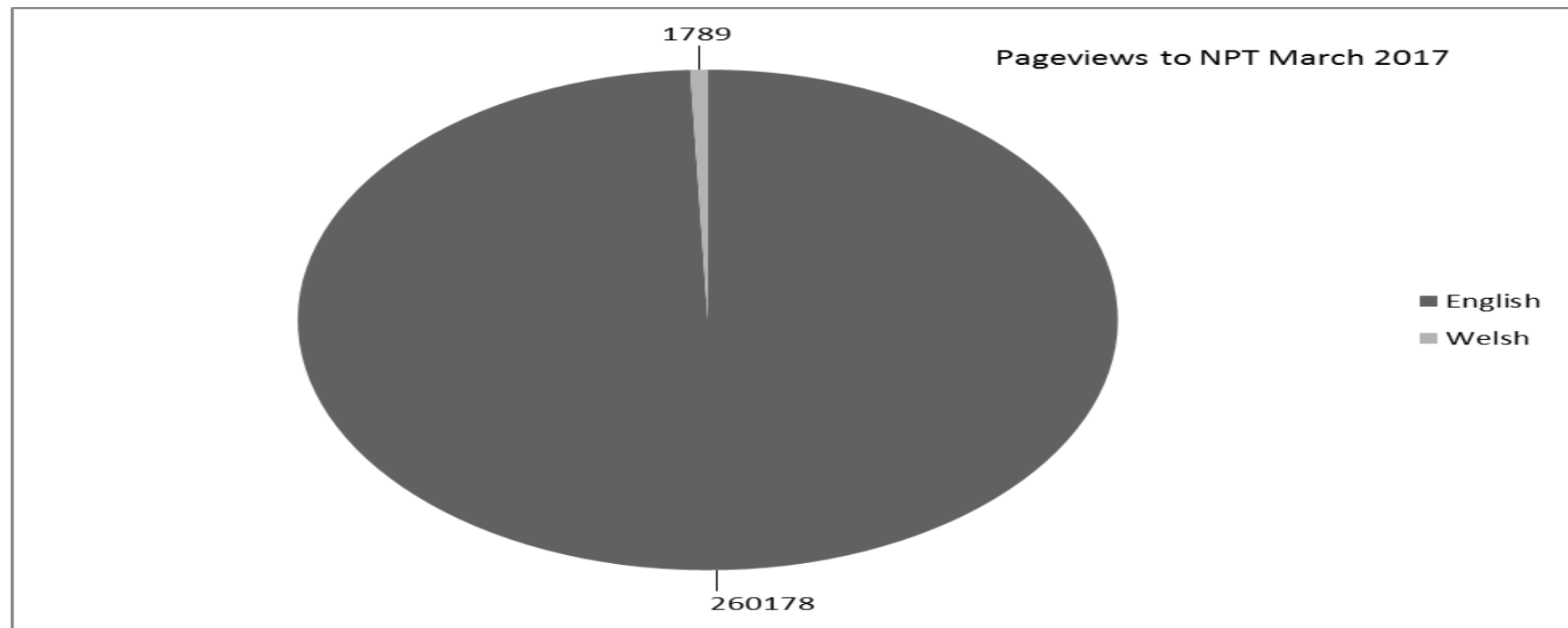
- We have improved the professional rating of our website page rating from a 2 star to a 3 star (highest rating is 4 star). No local authority in Wales has received a 4 start rating.
- Our website customer satisfaction measures all show improvement (see table below). The Council undertook a survey on Web Usage during September/October 2016 and this has shown an improvement on the previous year, highlighting that the work done to date has had a positive impact on the way people communicate with us via the website. We have:
  - made the website ‘mobile friendly’ which means the website is now accessible on mobile phones and tablets as well as on PC’s and laptops;
  - introduced a series of ‘call to action’ buttons which make it easier to request services from the Council; and
  - introduced a series of digital libraries, where the public can download documents straight to their devices.

<b>Digital by Choice – Neath Port Talbot Website Customer Satisfaction Measures</b>			
<b>PERFORMANCE MEASURE</b>	<b>NPT 2015-2016 performance</b>	<b>NPT 2016-2017 performance</b>	<b>Direction of Improvement</b>
Percentage of customers <b>very satisfied/satisfied or OK</b> with improvements made to services available on-line – General look and feel	<b>91%</b>	<b>97%</b> (196 out of 203)	↑
More of our customers find the website easier to use: Percentage <b>very satisfied/Satisfied or OK</b> with ease of getting around site.	<b>83%</b>	<b>91%</b> (184 out of 203)	↑
More of our customers can access the information/service they want (on our website) first time: Percentage <b>very satisfied/Satisfied or OK</b> with ease of finding information/Services.	<b>78%</b>	<b>84%</b> (169 out of 199)	↑

## 2. More of our website pages will be available in Welsh.

### What did we do?

- 99.9% (1,095 of 1,096 pages) of the website is available in Welsh. The remaining webpage is in the process of being translated. All new web pages developed are translated into Welsh as a matter of course before being published to the Web.
- The graph below illustrates the number of Neath Port Talbot website page views Welsh v English for the month of March 2017



### **3. We will change our one stop shops and support people to carry out transactions on-line to make it easier for people to access digital services.**

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

- Demand on Customer Services in total for the both One Stop Shop (OSS) sites has increased. Total callers during 2016-2017 were 71,589 compared to 65,481 during 2015-2016 - an increase of 9.33%. This is mainly due to an increase in recycling enquiries following the roll out of recycle+ and an increase in council tax enquiries.
- There has been an increase in customer wait times – average of 6.5 minutes (2016-2017) as opposed to 5.4 minutes (2015-2016). This can be attributed to the increase in footfall at a time when overall resources have reduced. This also explains the change in the percentage of customer walk offs, which was 0.12% in 2016-2017 as opposed to 0.07% in 2015-2016.
- The £200k Forward Financial Plan savings target was achieved and the budget is now much reduced. There are consequently fewer staff available to deal with customers.

### **4. More people in our communities will have the digital skills to access services.**

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

- A Digital Inclusion Charter was approved in May 2016 which will assist more people to become digitally included and enjoy the benefits that they can experience from being online. Work to upskill staff in relation to digital literacy is progressing. At its meeting on the 19th September, the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum agreed to promote the Digital Charter across the third sector and also supported the undertaking of a sector wide review to assess the level of digital skills/gaps across the third sector to support and strengthen our approach to tackling digital exclusion across the county borough.
- The Digital Inclusion Group continues to meet to oversee and co-ordinate the implementation of the Charter.
- The Town and Community Council Liaison Forum is exploring how the Council and the Town and Community Council can work together on this agenda.

- A 'learn and share' event was scheduled to take place in 2017 but was suspended to enable the 'Google Garage' to be the focus of attention. The 'Google Garage' ran for two days on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2016.
- The Public Services Board agreed at its December 2016 meeting to prioritise Digital inclusion within its work programme.
- A senior leaders digital learning event was arranged in November for Directors and Heads of Service to help equip senior officers with the skills they need to lead in a digital environment. A programme of learning is being developed to build on this initial session.
- Trade Unions continue to support the Council to address the workforce digital literacy and we now have 12 union learning reps that will help deliver digital skills training.
- Data in relation to 'increasing the number of people we support to develop digital skills to access services' is not available. Work has been refocused to develop a more strategic approach.

## **5. All services will use our on-line ordering and payment system replacing manual processes.**

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

- Roll out of the iProcurement System is ongoing and the volume of electronic orders placed continues to rise year on year. During 2016-2017, 47.7% of transactions were processed through the iProcurement system.

## **6. Introduce self-service options across internal support services, starting with a self-service employee portal.**

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

- The portal has been developed and is currently in the testing phase. It is being trialled by approximately 50 employees. Trade unions have been consulted on the portal and support the ongoing development. Focus groups were held in May/June 2017 with a cross section of employees to ensure that the development is user

friendly and will engage the workforce. A site visit took place in May 2017 to explore how robotics technology may assist the Council in its ongoing work to transform and reduce expenditure.

- The Employee Portal will enable the HR team to provide the Council with a more efficient workforce information service with better and more reliable data, as well as releasing capacity within the reduced HR team. The Employment Support Team, which provides HR administrative services to the Council has reduced by 50% since 2011 and therefore it is imperative that new and innovative ways of working are identified. The released capacity will enable the team to focus on other volume work within the service such as employment contract provision and administering safe recruitment checks.

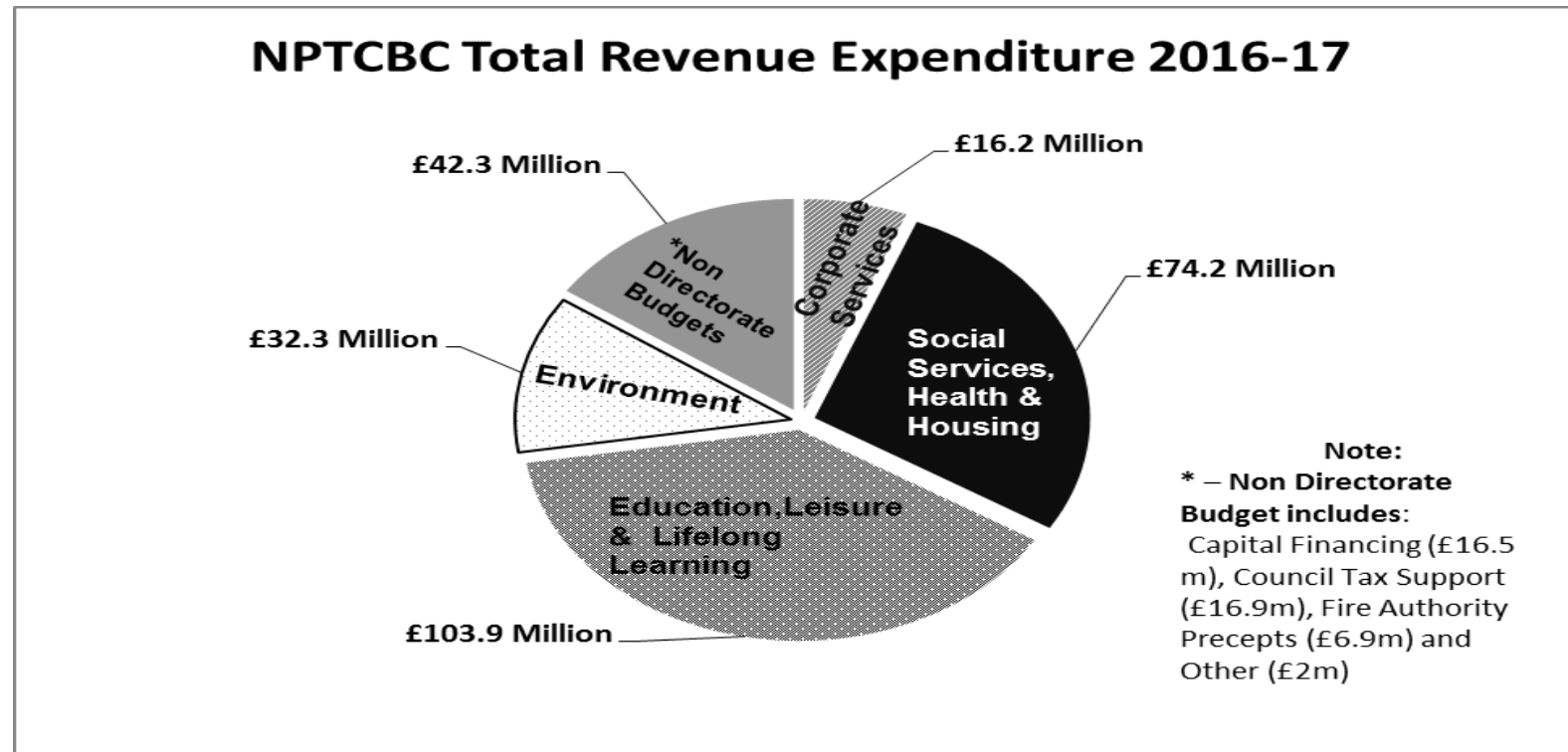
## **7. Increased and new income generation opportunities.**

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

A draft Corporate Charging Policy has been developed. A cross directorate working group is identifying increased and new income generating opportunities. A report was prepared in early November on its initial findings, and work is currently ongoing on the identification and progression of opportunities for increasing income for the Council.

### Section 3: Finance and Spending

Since 2010, we have been proactive in forecasting funding gaps and delivered spending reductions of £77m and reduced our workforce by some 25% through a combination of redundancies, mainly voluntary, restrictions on external recruitment and the transfer of functions. For 2016-2017, we made the required budget savings of £11.552m and £3.147m was transferred into the Council’s general reserves at year end.



In terms of our revenue budget, during 2016-2017 it cost just over £268.9m to provide all our services. The largest areas of expenditure were on Education and Social Services.

Actual spend on the Capital Programme during 2016-2017 totalled £53.758m which represents significant investment within the county borough and has led to community and service improvements. Among the projects that make up this spend are completion of the ‘3-16’ new build Ysgol Bae Baglan (which opened to pupils in September 2016), continuation of the construction and re-modelling works at the Welsh Medium ‘3-16’ School Site in Ystalyfera, Ysgol Newydd Gymunedol Gymraeg and ongoing improvements to the Council’s Street Lighting Infrastructure.

## 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.

### a) Planning for improvement

- **Key Plans** – our plans are reviewed each year to ensure improvement activities supporting the improvement objectives are reflective of priorities and in line with our budget proposals.
- **Forward Financial Plan** – we undertake extensive consultation on the savings strategies we might adopt to close the budget gap each year.
- **Financial Management arrangements** – we have sound financial management arrangements in place (including a range of policies and procedures such as financial regulations, financial procedures, contract standing orders, accounting instructions and officer delegations). These arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Financial Accountancy) Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010), all relevant legislation and within the terms of the Council’s Constitution. Last year as part of their follow up audit work on Financial Resilience, the Wales Audit Office commented they were satisfied with our arrangements. Corporate Directors are responsible for the financial management of their respective services and are supported by regular financial management information, which includes monthly financial monitoring reports. In addition, quarterly budget and Forward Financial Plan monitoring reports are submitted to the Council, Chief Officers and Scrutiny Committees, culminating in the production of the statutory Annual Statement of Accounts.
- **Asset Management arrangements** - we maintain a number of asset plans to ensure we get value for money from our assets (these include Property, Fleet, Highways, Bridges and Structures and ICT). Last year the formalisation of the Strategic Asset Management Group was completed last year (including terms of reference

for the Group). The Group met regularly to discuss a range of accommodation issues/pressures at a strategic level. The Property Asset Management Plan was updated and links to a range of other corporate plans, programmes and strategies, including the Forward Financial Plan, the ICT Strategy and Workforce planning. Property asset management is also included in the Council's business planning process to ensure the identification of any property consequences of the delivery of the Council's priorities. The ICT Asset Management Plan has been linked to the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan and the ICT Strategy and is a regular agenda item at the Corporate Governance Group. An exercise is underway to project asset depreciation and on-going needs over the next five years; highlighting any significant pressures and identifying the funding required.

- **Workforce Capacity and skills – Workforce Capacity and skills** – our key strength is our ability to deliver our priorities through workforce-related change. To date we have implemented five voluntary redundancy programmes as well as a number of other measures to reduce the headcount of the Council. In 2016-2017, 186 employees left the Council by means of redundancy, 86% of these voluntary arrangements. In addition 98 employees at risk of redundancy were successfully redeployed to suitable alternative posts in the Council. Restrictions in recruitment and partnership working with the Joint Trade unions have supported these actions. As a result of 5 years of cumulative workforce reductions, the Council faces 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.

Following our revision of the performance development review process, a single Performance Appraisal Policy has been developed and implemented in 2016-2017. A review of the implementation has led to some minor



changes in the process for 2017-2018, and shows encouraging signs that the policy is being adopted at operational level. We have also developed a new, improved staff induction process. Workforce planning was 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 2017-2018.

## 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 Directors by the Chief Executive and formally included in their personal objectives for the year. The appraisal system introduced for the Directors is the means through which the Chief Executive assesses progress.

Personal objectives for each Director 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. During 2016-2017 we have again reviewed and strengthened the arrangements 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 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.

- **Risk Management arrangements** - During 2016-2017 we continued to make significant progress on the improvement work required to provide and sustain effective corporate risk management by liaising with our external regulators to seek assurance on work undertaken on our Corporate Risk Register. This has led to a number of officers receiving training to support the risk management processes within directorates and help build capacity across the Council in relation to maintaining the Corporate Risk Register. During 2016-2017,

training was undertaken with members of the Audit Committee to support their role contained within the Corporate Risk Management Policy.

### c) Monitoring and Evaluating Improvement

**Performance Review** - we further improved existing mechanisms during the year. Our performance monitoring arrangements are set out 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 progress and achievements, performance data and risks. These highlight reports have been scrutinised by the Corporate Directors' Group who act as the over-arching programme board and by relevant scrutiny committees.
- **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 the local government national measures.
- **Business Planning** – business plans were completed by all service areas and approved by relevant cabinet boards.
- **Service Report Cards** – Service report cards provide information on service performance, financial performance and include important employee and customer information which provides a clear overall picture of the operational service area and whether each service is on track to achieve the priorities set out in relevant business plans. During 2016-2017, 67% of services have reported their service report cards to relevant scrutiny committees, which is an improvement on the 48% reported during 2015-2016.
- **Scrutiny** – Our external regulators (Wales Audit Office) supported us with our improvement work in performance scrutiny and attended scrutiny committees and held a number of workshops with Members to

get feedback on the purpose of scrutiny, understanding of their roles in driving improvements, performance reports and key things that would help Members to scrutinise performance better. Feedback from Members about the workshops was positive and they generated some practical ideas for improvement, which are being implemented and have contributed to the new Member Induction Programme for 2017-2018.

- **Information Technology and Information Management** – Information Management remains a key priority for the Council as it introduces further mobile and agile technologies. Targeted and focussed training is delivered to key parts of the organisation, to ensure individuals are aware of their responsibilities in keeping the Council's information assets safe whilst mobilising those assets to transform the way they deliver their services.

## Section 5 Underpinning Principles

**a. Equalities** – During 2016-2017 there has been considerable progress made towards meeting the equality objectives, including the development of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy, improving digital inclusion and the ongoing improvements to the environment particularly with the regeneration programmes undertaken in the area.

Understanding the impact of our policies and services on people who share protected characteristics remains a key part our work. We are acutely aware that we need to continually improve our understanding and ultimately reduce/remove the significant barriers that some protected groups face on a daily basis which impact on their participation in the community life and when accessing services.

Over the year we have worked with representatives of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Forum and Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service to recruit and appoint a development worker specifically to support the development of the Forum. This support will help develop the capacity and skills of its members, to empower them to be participate fully in the wider community and provide a voice for, and be representative, of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Neath Port Talbot.

The Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2016-2017, due to be published in late autumn 2017, will include further information on progress against the equality objectives

**b. Welsh Language** - The Welsh Language Commissioner issued a Compliance Notice containing 171 Welsh Language Standards for imposition from 30<sup>th</sup> March and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016. However, we did not feel able to fully comply with the all of the standards and consequently submitted a challenge to 54 of the standards to the Welsh Language Commissioner in January 2016, setting out our arguments and supporting evidence that they were unreasonable and or disproportionate.

Since this time we have been in contact with the Welsh Language Commissioner and her representatives to further explain our position and to seek a way forward. As a result of this ongoing dialogue a number of the issues have been resolved and we have been able to accept a number of standards, some with



modifications and extended imposition dates, and are minded to accept the remaining standards with the inclusion of additional modifications and/or qualifications

Although there remains some concern in respect of a few standards we are mindful of the time and effort that has been spent on the process to date and we acknowledge that continuing with the challenge is considered neither a good use of public money nor an ideal position for public bodies to be in.

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Board on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 agreed the latest submission which reflected this position with the requirement that dialogue continues to seek a mutually acceptable agreement.

While involved with the challenge we have also implemented the remaining 117 standards which include standards relating to service delivery and policy development as well as internal processes. The Welsh Language Officer Group has been instrumental in supporting implementation across all service areas as well as being responsible for the introduction of key initiatives to help meet the requirements of the standards; establishing an employee directory of Welsh speakers developing text to determine a person's language preference, etc.

Information on how we have implemented these standards can be found in the [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2016-2017](#).

- c. Sustainability** – work is underway to meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which will ensure the Council acts in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Act places a duty on the Council to make sure that when making its decisions it takes into account the impact it could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future (long-term view).
  
- d. Engagement** – we have a number of channels of communication and engagement in place with all sections of the community, stakeholders and staff. Our corporate communications and engagement system comprises of internal and external networks. Internal networks include: staff monthly e-newsletter - which features stories on our improvement objectives and other important information relevant to staff; staff Intranet – acts as an internal information portal ( including press releases); staff consultations – e.g. consultation on 2017-2018 budget proposals and Children and Young People Services staff survey; and Chief Executive Roadshows – a series of

'Chat with the Chief' sessions were held with staff to explain the Forward Financial Plan and its implications. The external networks include: public consultations – we undertook a number of public consultations/surveys throughout the year on various topics, e.g. residential care, home to school transport, young carers, carers and Local Development Plan. Last year as part of the 2017-2018 budget setting process, an extensive public and staff consultation exercise took place over three months (September–December) which generated over 600 responses from a wide range of stakeholders which shaped the final budget proposals. Other consultation and engagement activities have been reported in individual reports that have been considered by our Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet Boards.

- d. Partnership Working/Collaboration arrangements** – during 2016--2017 we continued to work on a number of partnerships as follows: Think Family Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, Low Income Families Partnership, Digital Inclusion Partnership, and Third Sector Partnership. Partnership working with our trade unions and teaching associations is a predominant feature of the Council's culture in relation to workforce engagement. It involves elected Members, managers, employees and trade unions developing and implementing a way of working based on mutual respect and trust, shared objectives and joint ownership of problem solving.

Working in partnership with trade unions and the Council's formal employee relations framework is an important feature in how we engage with our employees. We have Staff Council at the highest level in the organisation, the LGS (Local Government Services) Green Book Negotiating Forum, LSPG (Schools trade union partnership forum), Service Joint Consultative Groups, and the Corporate Health & Safety Trade Union Forum. All of these groups meet regularly and are an opportunity for two way information sharing, consultation (formal and informal) and where necessary, negotiation. As part of our approach to partnership working, trade unions have representation in other forums; for example, trade unions sit as an integral part of the Head of Service Voluntary Redundancy Group.

We continued with our regional working arrangements via Education through Regional Working, Western Bay, City Region and Waste Services. A number of reports have been brought forward to the Council to ensure the participation of the Council in these regional arrangements is properly authorised.

## 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 findings of this year's Annual Improvement Report (based on the audit work undertaken during 2016-2017, within the Council) are that: 'The Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2017-2018' and no formal recommendations were made. 'However a number of proposals for improvement have been made.' More details of the Report can be found on the Wales Audit Office website under [publications](#).

**b) Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSiW):**

**Neath Port Talbot Homecare Service:** The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales published their inspection report in January 2017. The inspection focused on the quality of life of people using the service. The inspection identified that whilst there were no significant areas of outstanding practice, there were no non-compliance notices issued. The three recommendations made since the last visit in January 2016 had been taken on board. To improve the service a good practice recommendation has been made to include signatures of people using the service (or including a statement where they are unable to sign) within care documentation. CSSiW inspectors also observed on four home visits to people that staff had been kind, caring and compassionate and interacted with users of the service, positively. The report also includes a number of positive comments from users of the homecare service. The report can be found [here](#)

**c) Estyn:** During the 2016-2017 academic year, 11 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):

- One school was assessed as Good and Excellent;
- Three schools were assessed as Good and Good;
- One school was assessed as Adequate and Good;
- Five schools required further monitoring by Estyn. Four of these schools were assessed as Adequate

(1) and Adequate (2) and one as Good (1) and Adequate (2).

- One school was placed in the Estyn category of 'Special Measures', as a consequence of receiving two unsatisfactory judgements.

If an inspection team judges that a school has some important areas for improvement, 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. Our Estyn school inspection report can be on the Estyn website: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/>



## Section 7 Have your say on what matters to you

Please share your thoughts with us about this report.

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

Visit our website: [www.npt.gov.uk](http://www.npt.gov.uk)



Follow us and add your comments to the Council's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NeathPortTalbotCBC>



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**This report is also available in Welsh**