



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 - Annual Report 2021-2022

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Cymraeg

This document is also available in Welsh

www.npt.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	1
Developments during 2021-2022	2
Integrated Impact Assessments	2
Engagement	3
Strategies and Plans	4
Equalities in Employment	5
Progress on Objectives	6
Education	6
Health and Wellbeing	15
Employment.....	26
Participation	32
Living standards.....	42

If you require this report in larger print or in an alternative format, please contact the Corporate Policy Team on 01639 763010 or email: policy@npt.gov.uk

Introduction

This annual report, published in accordance to The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, provides an overview of our work in developing the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty. This annual report also sets out progress against the six equality objectives and associated actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Progress against our equality objectives and associated actions is predominantly reported on the above annual basis, however, there are instances where academic years and other time periods are reported, all of which are indicated.

Developments during 2021-2022

Integrated Impact Assessments

Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) continue to be carried out as part of policy/service development. As a public body we must consider 'relevant evidence in order to understand the likely or actual effect of policies and practices on people with different protected characteristics' (Assessing Impact and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Listed Public Authorities in Wales Equality and Human Rights Commission 2014).

With the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty in March 2021 guidance on undertaking assessments was updated and made available to all staff. The Socio-economic Duty is part of the Equality Act 2010 and aims to reduce inequality for people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

Three audits were coincidentally undertaken during the year; by our internal audit service, an external consultant and Audit Wales. The audits were to consider the completion of and compliance with legislation surrounding Integrated Impact Assessments, the quality of the assessments undertaken and the way that public bodies undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and what impact this has on decision making respectively.

Once all three audit reports are received all recommendations identified will be considered and implemented as necessary. However, in the two reports received to date, training has been recommended and so as to ensure no further time is lost a training programme has been arranged for autumn 2022.

Engagement

Community of Practice - we have continued to utilise this group of council staff who have well established links into our communities and local groups to help with engagement activities, most notably the Corporate Plan and the Public Services Board Wellbeing Assessment.

The involvement of our residents, local businesses and partners in policy development is key to the success of our policies, plans and strategies. During the coming year we will be placing greater emphasis on more effective engagement with our communities to ensure we all have a better understanding as to what is required and what can be expected.

Let's Talk Campaign - Over the summer 2021, we ran a campaign to engage with people from all backgrounds and of all ages with a view to testing our understanding of how the pandemic has impacted on different parts of our county borough and to also understand what matters most to local people as we take forward our recovery work. Almost 1,800 people engaged with the campaign with a mix of online and offline surveys completed and supplemented by focus groups in our five valleys, to ensure we heard from all sections of the county borough. Responses received via online and offline surveys identified staying/keeping safe; education; health/wellbeing/mental health; community relations/spirit/bringing people together/volunteering as amongst the main areas that mattered to them 'now and in the future'. Views held by those attending the focus groups were similar with some additional issues highlighted, such as the importance of transport in these areas.

During January/February 2022 we ran the second stage of the campaign to test whether or not we had captured what is important to people now and in the future; with most people agreeing with our draft wellbeing objectives as well as the focus of the actions.

The richness of the feedback and the timeliness of the engagement is such that these can be utilised by all services areas for future policy development.

Strategies and Plans

Corporate Plan - we reset and renewed our wellbeing objectives, priorities and values, taking into account what matters to our residents, businesses and staff; the impacts of Covid on our communities, the lessons learnt from our response to the pandemic as well as other wider changes such a climate change, digital disruption and government policy.

Feedback from the Let's Talk engagement campaign was instrumental not only in the early stages of our planning but also when testing whether or not we had captured what is important to people 'now and in the future' in terms of the changes we will make over the next 12 months, the next five years and the longer term.

Our wellbeing objectives are:

- All children get the best start in life
- All communities are thriving and sustainable
- Our local environment, heritage and culture can be enjoyed by future generations
- Jobs and skills - local people are skilled and can access high quality, green jobs

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) - the draft WESP details how we plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and our planning for future growth over the next 10 years. Following a period of public consultation in February 2022 Council granted approval for the WESP to be submitted to Welsh ministers for approval.

Equalities in Employment

At the time of writing the most recent [Equalities in Employment information](#) is for the period 2020-2021. The data included is for the 12-month period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, or where more appropriate, a snapshot of the workforce on 31 March 2021.

Our [gender pay gap report](#), a snapshot as at 31 March 2020 (published in June 2021) sets out the difference between the average pay of the men and women who work in the Council in 2020. The pay data has been taken from the Council's workforce at:

31 March 2019 - 3,784 employees which represents 1,277 (33.75%) males and 2,507 (66.25%) females

31 March 2020 - 3,630 employees which represents 1,290 (35.5%) males and 2,340 (64.5%) females

The pay data excludes casual employees and all schools' employees.

The median gender pay gap (excluding schools) in 2019 was 3.93% while in 2020 our median gender pay gap has reduced to 3.44 %.

The median gender pay gap, either including or excluding schools, is below the UK national average median gender pay gap of 15.5% in 2020.

Progress on Objectives

Education

To ensure children and young people are the best they can be

Priority 1.1 All Children and Young People will have improved levels of attainment

Action 4.5.4.01

We will work with schools to identify those children who require specific support at foundation phase and key stages

Progress 2021 – 2022:

- Our Inclusion Service continues to support schools to identify children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) who require specific support.
- Robust decision-making processes have been developed for those children who require support and will support the implementation of the new duty on us and schools to ensure the views, wishes and feelings of the child and the child's parent, or the young person, are at the heart of the decision-making process.
- All schools are invited to regular plan and review sessions and there is a comprehensive Inclusion training menu in place.

Action 4.5.4.02

We will provide targeted support to families in need, including Armed Forces families, to reduce the potential for children to have an adverse childhood experience

Progress 2021-2022:

- From the academic year 2021-2022 Welsh Government funding for armed forces children is now allocated directly to schools. While the 76 service children continue to be supported by the Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS), there is no longer a dedicated person to oversee this role.
- Building on the work undertaken previously, during 2021-2022, the VLS and the armed forces Regional Service Liaison Officer (RSLO) have worked with schools and the organisation Forces Fitness to engage with staff and service children to provide training and support. This will enable service children to develop and focus on confidence building, self-esteem and improvements to their mental health and wellbeing.
- Our Education Psychology Team is currently training a key member of staff from one of our comprehensive schools to become an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) working with and supporting service children and their families around wellbeing issues or educational concerns.
- Our Finance, Data and Grants Team has developed a more robust system of data collection with schools in relation to service children which will help when identifying and providing support to this group of students.

Action 4.5.4.03

We will continue to work with schools and other relevant settings to support and provide access to work experience, training and professional development opportunities for those who are at risk of becoming not in education employment or training (NEETs) post 16

Progress 2021-2022:

- Our Youth Service Legacy Workers continue to work with schools to support those young people at risk of becoming NEET. The Legacy Youth Workers supported the previous year 11 cohort until 31 October 2021 and have reached out to 183 young people in the 2021-2022 year 11 cohort.

- Support provided by the Youth workers have included home visits, telephone calls, texts and arranging visits to College, Work Based Learning provisions, Skills and Training and arranging meetings with Careers Wales.

Action 4.5.4.04

We will work with schools to ensure all pupils, particularly those from low-income families and those where COVID-19 has had particular impact, can access appropriate digital devices

Progress 2021-2022:

- Through collaboration between schools and our IT Service, all digitally excluded learners identified as needing support have been catered for. During periods of home learning, this included requests for devices and mobile broadband.
- Schools have received additional IT resources under the EdTech programme; one device per secondary pupil, one device per two key stage 2 pupils and one device per 3.5 pupils at foundation phase.

Action 4.5.4.05

We will work with schools to identify those children who require enhanced non-academic support as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19 to help them to fulfil their potential

Progress 2021-2022:

- During 2021-2022 schools reported an increase in behavioural issues which could be linked to staff shortages due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, there has been an increased demand for support interventions (197 referrals were made by schools for early intervention support for children aged 5-16 years), systems and training opportunities which have been made available to pupils and to staff. The following are examples of the work undertaken:

- Training and strategies support to pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) have been provided to school staff and governors, newly qualified teachers and education welfare officers.
- School based counselling was extended to pupils suffering from anxiety due to the pandemic in years 1-6.
- Training for forest school leaders has been delivered to provide outdoor learning opportunities that promote wellbeing for pupils.
- Young people have been supported by our Youth Service within and outside of school; assisting young people identified by their schools as needing additional support on a range of issues as well as supporting year 11 pupils (a higher number with social anxiety than in previous years) in preparing for their post 16 destinations as well as delivering the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP).

Priority 1.2 All children of school age will have improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging

Action 4.5.4.06

We will continue to work with pupils, parents/carers and schools to reduce the number of instances of non-attendance and exclusions in all our schools

Progress 2021-2022:

- Education Welfare Officers continue to work with pupils and families on bespoke attendance packages tailored to individual circumstances that aims to remove any barriers preventing pupils from attending school regularly. The packages have included:
 - Guided after hours school tours to reassure pupils and parents of the effective and safe measures in place to best protect students from Covid-19.
 - Negotiating the use of short-term reduced timetables to encourage pupils back into the school system whilst they build their confidence and re-engage with old friendships.

- Proactively engaging with different agencies to agree a unified joint approach to supporting pupils already known to them.
- Covid-19 continued to be a barrier for attendance for a number of pupils, due to either receiving positive test results or being vulnerable through their own health care needs. Whilst staff absences and the national shortage of supply cover was an issue, throughout the year this appeared to have had little effect on the regular attendance of pupils; internal staffing arrangements were managed appropriately and any school closures were short with learning moved online.
- Education Welfare Officers engaged with pupils and parents to support regular attendance, however, a number of school refusers remained stubbornly high. With school-life now returning to normal there are signs that attendance is starting to improve.

Action 4.5.4.07

We will continue to work with parents/carers of pre-school children to ensure that they are prepared for school

Progress 2021-2022:

- Support for parents/carers and their children has taken a range of forms during 2021-2022; from funded childcare for 3 and 4 year olds (approximately 800 active applications as at 31 March 2022) to parent nurture courses; socialisation and interaction opportunities for parents/carers and children to contact through the Healthy Child Wales Programme (which includes screening, immunisation and monitoring along with supporting child development); activities to develop speech language and communication skills to referrals through our Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) service.
- During the year staff in our various Flying Start Programmes worked with 2251 individual children and their parents providing a variety of courses including parent nurture, school readiness, emotional wellbeing, support for children with disabilities as well as support for those experiencing domestic abuse.

Action 4.5.4.08

We will collect data from schools and support schools to address bullying and harassment in all its forms and work with them to address trends/issues

Progress 2021-2022:

- A new scheme for all primary schools to input data relating to bullying into schools information management systems will be rolled out in September 2022; this will enable us to identify trends and provide specific training for pupils and staff.
- Education Welfare Officers will continue to monitor and report bullying.
- Discussions between Secondary Head Teachers and our Education Welfare Service are to be held over the coming months to discuss bullying and harassment data and the links to Estyn recommendations. The Head of Service for Education Development, working in partnership with all Headteachers and safeguarding officers is developing a method of responding to the recommendations set out in Estyn's thematic guide, "We don't tell our teachers" Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales, December 2021.

Action 4.5.4.09

We will work with schools and other relevant settings to support pupils who are victims of bullying and work with perpetrators of bullying

Progress 2021-2022:

- Once the roll out of the new scheme (above) has been completed, trends can be identified which will enable us to be proactive in our support. We will provide training to enable young people to be heard.
- We will hold multi-agency panel meetings to identify support needs for victims and perpetrators of bullying.
- Education Welfare Officers continue to support young people who have been identified as victims of bullying resulting in attendance issues.

Action 4.5.4.10

We will continue to work with schools and other relevant settings to ensure that their learning environments are safe and nurturing, where there is respect and due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion

Progress 2021-2022:

- We are working with our special schools and learning support centres, to ensure that their indoor and outdoor environments offer accessible, safe, nurturing, high quality provision which is conducive to learning.
- In addition, we continue to monitor the Inclusive and Additional Learning Provision that each school has in place as part of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform.

Action 4.5.4.11

We will work with schools to explore the benefits of employing Family Liaison Officers or similar roles, including a cluster approach, out of delegated budgets in order to support pupils and parents to overcome challenges that impact negatively on learning and wellbeing

Progress 2021-2022:

- Schools have begun looking at the current roles of Teaching Assistants, pastoral officers and other staff to assess the capacity and levels of support they are able to give pupils and families as we recover from the impact of the pandemic. Following this review, schools will be in a better position to determine if the role can be performed by existing staff members or if employment of a Family Liaison Officer is required.
- Work is underway to determine effective family engagement and interventions in ensuring 5-18 year olds at the highest risk of absenteeism and/or exclusion attend, positively engage with, and remain in school or college. This work will help support their progress towards the four core purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and reduce the likelihood of them becoming NEET's or excluded from school.

Action 4.5.4.12

We will work in partnership with schools and local organisations to ensure our children and young people ‘are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world now and in the past and respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society’

Progress 2021-2022:

- Over the last year, our Education Support Officers have worked with schools on setting out a clear vision for the Curriculum for Wales.
- Each school has received training on the characteristics of the four purposes, which are the foundation of the new curriculum. One of these purposes is that pupils develop as ethical, informed citizens who are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world now and in the past and respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society.
- We have produced a strategy for developing pupils’ thinking skills to assist schools in teaching how to make ethical and informed decisions, which is being rolled out across all schools.

Action 4.5.4.13

We will work with schools and local organisations to ensure teaching of the new curriculum reflects the multi-ethnic nature of Wales

Progress 2021-2022:

- In November 2020, the NPT BME Community Association (the Association) worked with the VLS to engage with pupils and the feedback helped inform the Welsh Government’s Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. This feedback was also shared with our education service and has in turn assisted with the considerations in relation to particular aspects of the new curriculum for Wales in Neath Port Talbot.

- During 2021-2022 our Education Support Service and VLS met with the Association to discuss the curriculum for Wales (being introduced in September 2022) and the Association's potential contribution to the delivery of specific aspects of the curriculum.
- We are supporting schools in developing and maintaining a shared understanding of what progress looks like which informs each school's curriculum design.
- Each school must ensure that their curriculum reflects the multi-ethnic nature of Wales and during the summer term 2022 schools will need to evidence how they plan to address this and other mandatory elements of the curriculum. Our Education Support Service and the VLS will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this design as the curriculum rolls out from September 2022.

Health and Wellbeing

To promote wellbeing and good mental health and tackle mental health stigma and discrimination

Priority 2.1 Our Staff will be supported and appropriate services promoted

Action 4.5.4.14

As an employer we will raise awareness of mental health and support services

Progress 2021-2022

Awareness raising initiatives have included:

- Time to Change Wales Employee Champions Network - 12 employee champions, trained by Time to Change Wales, are instrumental in providing mental health and wellbeing support for employees within their service areas and assist with rolling out corporate health and wellbeing initiatives across the Council.
- We have established a dedicated intranet webpage, weekly electronic newsletters, and more recently, created a Health and Wellbeing Group on the staff Yammer platform.
- Our HR and Occupational Health Unit signpost employees to the wide range of support available as part of ongoing employment processes.

Action 4.5.4.15

As an employer we will update and implement policies to address mental health in the workplace

Progress 2021-2022:

- We have introduced Virtual Working Guidance to support the workforce that continue to work from home as a result of Covid-19 mitigation measures, and this includes guidance and support for employees and managers on how to support their mental wellbeing whilst working from home.
- The Hybrid Working Framework, which is the stepping stone to our Future of Work Strategy, places employee mental health and well-being as a key consideration in working arrangements.
- Covid-19 workplace risk assessments and manager guidance include the emotional well-being impact of the return to workplaces, as well as the physical arrangements that are necessary.
- As an accredited Disability Confident Employer, we ensure that disabled people and those with long-term health conditions have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations.

Action 4.5.4.16

We will provide information to employees about mental health and signpost to support services

Progress 2021-2022:

- We have developed a Staff Wellbeing Yammer group which provides and promotes courses, tips, information and awareness of mental health and wellbeing.
- A range of literature promoting mental health and wellbeing as well as links to support services are available to staff via our internal webpages.

Action 4.5.4.17

We will continue to implement our Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge Action Plan

Progress 2021-2022:

- The Time to Change Wales Campaign's Employer Pledge provides a framework for the council to work within to support employees with their mental health.
- As a consequence of the pandemic the implementation of some actions in the action plan have had to be delayed while others have been developed, and implemented, as a necessity to support our workforce during the pandemic. Examples of the latter include Wellbeing Through Work, School Counselling Service Helpline for school-based staff and an online First Aid for Mental Health amongst others.

Action 4.5.4.18

We will provide training and resources for staff to help raise awareness of mental health issues and help reduce the stigma associated with mental health

Progress 2021-2022

- Training and resources are provided to our employees to help raise awareness of mental health issues and to reduce the stigma associated with mental health.
- Our Employee Champion Network have been trained by Time to Change Wales and our training team provide a suite of training courses for employees around this.

Priority 2.2 Our Children and young people can access appropriate support**Action 4.5.4.19**

We will redesign our systems relating to Emotional, Mental Health Wellbeing support to provide a simpler integrated access to services

Progress 2021-2022:

- A Multi Agency Mental Health Clinic, which includes Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Educational Psychology Service (EPS), School Based Counselling Service (SBCS) and Wellbeing team, has been established and is accessible to all schools in Neath Port Talbot.
- The SBCS is now able to provide support to pupils across school years 1-11 while working with the Regional Partnership Board Strategic CAMHS group has ensured schools have more direct access and support from Primary CAMHS workers.
- An Emotional Health and Well-being Strategy is being developed to ensure greater alignment with grant funded resources and interventions, as well as developing clear pathways to access support and services.

Priority 2.3 Our Communities that need support will be able to access appropriate services**Action 4.5.4.20**

We will honour our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, ensuring that no veteran, or family member of serving personnel or a veteran, is disadvantaged by their service, when accessing health and wellbeing support and services

Progress 2021-2022:

- The Council has been awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Bronze award, which demonstrates that we support the armed forces community by upholding the Armed Forces Covenant; work is now ongoing towards achieving the Silver award.
- Our Armed Forces Liaison Officer (AFLO) works closely with other regional AFLOs to share good practice and ideas as well as working in partnership with a range of organisations, such as Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE), local Health Boards and the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to support and signpost veterans to appropriate services.

Action 4.5.4.21

We will contribute to the Public Services Board's work to reduce suicide rates in the county borough

Progress 2021-2022:

- The Safeguarding Board oversees a Suicide Rapid Response Group (SRRG) which looks at all instances of suspected suicide (Adult) and unexpected death (Child). A suite of data is reported to the Safeguarding Board on a quarterly basis and trends and themes are tracked. The purpose of the SRRG is to reduce risk and harm to those remaining and prevent other suicides.
- NPT Council continues to be represented on the Strategic Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Group led by Public Health Wales; now reconvened following a pause due to pressures relating to the pandemic.
- With the support of survivors, we have begun to develop a regional process for responding to significant suicide attempts along with an associated suite of data to monitor and learn from this area of practice.

It is anticipated that this process will be approved by the Safeguarding Board for launch later in 2022.

Action 4.5.4.22

We will provide information to the public about mental health and signpost to support services from our website

Progress 2021-2022:

- As part of our Information, Assistance and Advice Service, people are signposted, as required to mental health services such as SPOA (single point of access), to the Community Mental Health Team or their GP or to DEWIS Cymru (a website for information or advice about well-being), depending on individual circumstances.

Action 4.5.4.23

We will work with Public Health Wales and Swansea Bay University Local Health Board to help address the impact of COVID-19 on health and social care staff

Progress 2021-2022:

- Working closely with Public Health Wales and Swansea Bay University Local Health Board, we have developed wellbeing support tools which have been shared with staff.
- The jointly developed [wellbeing resources](#) are also accessible via NPT and Swansea University Health Board webpages.

Action 4.5.4.24

We will work within the regional NHS Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) Service to engage all people, including those with protected characteristics in the health protection programme and we will also ensure that all people who need to access the TTP service can do so, ensuring access caters for all

Progress 2021-2022:

- During the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, there were 41,922 Index Cases (Positive Cases) of which 40,219 were eligible for follow up. The Test, Trace and Protect Service (NPT) successfully followed up 34,170 cases (85%).
- There were a total of 76,473 Contact Exposures (Contacts) with 65,139 cases eligible for follow up. The Test, Trace and Protect Service (NPT) successfully followed up 54,106 cases (83%). Successful follow-ups were above the service's performance targets as set by Welsh Government (80%).
- The service continues to focus on the Prioritisation Framework developed by Welsh Government and regional partners in triaging cases, with an aim to reducing Covid-19 transmission and hospitalisation of those individuals deemed most vulnerable, and/or those working with individuals who are vulnerable, such as the health and care sector. We are working closely with care homes, support services and special schools providing advice and guidance in managing clusters of Covid in those settings.

Personal Safety

To ensure people and communities are safe, respected and free from violence and abuse

Priority 3.1 People feel safe in their homes

Action 4.5.4.25

We will increase the reports of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Neath Port Talbot, through awareness raising and challenging attitudes

Progress 2021-2022:

- This is an ongoing action for the Community Safety Partnership and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Leadership Group.
- We continually work to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse, in all its forms, particularly as some people do not recognise themselves as a victim, some feel too afraid or ashamed to seek help, and the continuing perception that Police or Social Services involvement is inevitable and a negative.
- We continue to consider different ways to engage with minority groups in our communities, including LGBTQ+, older people and disabled people and recognise there is more to be done to raise awareness of Coercive Control and Emotional Abuse.

Action 4.5.4.26

We will increase awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong

Progress 2021-2022:

- Our Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Group has responsibility for the development and implementation of a lesson pack (which includes key topics on puberty, sex education and healthy relationships) for all schools. Hafan Cymru, a local specialist service, continue to deliver their Spectrum Programme to schools, which complements our wider programme.
- A task and finish group, with membership from a range of service areas and partner organisations, was set up during early autumn 2021 to address concerns over the limited delivery of RSE lessons during the pandemic, the outcome of which would be piloted by one school for roll out to remaining schools if successful. Unfortunately, the implementation of the pilot was delayed by the ongoing pandemic situation but is to be revisited in the coming year. Until this time the issue is being addressed as best as possible within schools while relevant service areas and partnership groups remain sighted on the concerns of the disruption to RSE roll out in schools.
- During the latter part of 2021-2022 over 1800 pupils received a lesson on healthy relationships and we are hopeful that roll out across schools will continue.
- It was not possible to hold Crucial Crew or It's Our World events (for years 6 and 8 respectively), both of which explore domestic abuse and healthy relationships, in 2021 due to restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. However, a virtual Crucial Crew film was developed and uploaded onto the Hwb network for use by schools.

Action 4.5.4.27

Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Neath Port Talbot

Progress 2021-2022:

- Work continues on a commissioning review of all specialist support services across the county borough, to ensure we are meeting people's needs and are able to offer a wide variety of supported accommodation,

emergency accommodation and community-based support, for all those who need it. This work was significantly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic but has now resumed. Work continues on ensuring we have accessible appropriate services for people from marginalised groups in our communities.

Priority 3.2 People feel safe in the community

Action 4.5.4.28

We will work with members of local equality groups, partners and our communities to encourage the reporting of hate incidents/crime and ensure people get support which is fit for purpose

Progress 2021-2022:

- The Community Cohesion programme continues to be rolled out across the region. There is one regional coordinator in post, and 3 community cohesion officers, one of whom is based within the NPT Community Safety Team (vacant as a result of the original post holder taking up a secondment in July 2021). Following a protracted recruitment exercise the new Community Cohesion Officer will take up the role in May 2022. With this and the lifting of restrictions, we anticipate a resumption of face-to-face engagement with our various communities.
- During the year we have used and increased our online presence with a series of initiatives, awareness raising campaigns, webinars and workshops held with a number of partner organisations and members of the public, including those from minority groups. This work has been delivered in partnership with South Wales Police local Hate Crime Officers.
- The Community Safety Partnership Board was advised of an increase in the number of reported incidents of hate crime towards the end of 2021-2022 which was due to ongoing partnership work and engagement with residents to raise awareness of what constitutes a hate crime and increasing people's confidence in reporting.

Action 4.5.4.29

We will support the use of the BME Community Association Access Card (to help breakdown language barriers when accessing service)

Progress 2021-2022:

- Progress was suspended with the outbreak of the pandemic. As restrictions were lifted towards the end of 2021-2022 it is likely that the Community Association will progress the introduction of the Access Card during 2022-2023.

Action 4.5.4.30

We will support the BME Community Association to build on the work already undertaken in the Community Profiling exercise as well as to extend its scope

Progress 2021-2022:

- The BME Community Association consultation exercise undertaken in November 2020 to help inform Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan provided some further insight into the lived experiences of members of our BME communities.
- Work to address some of the issues raised during the consultation has begun, notably the issue of bullying/racism in schools as well as closer work between the education directorate and the BME Community Association on the new curriculum.

Action 4.5.4.31

We will develop an action plan in response to the feedback from the Community Cohesion Survey

Progress 2021-2022:

- Consideration is being given as to the appropriateness of developing an additional action plan. However, incorporating any potential actions into existing/future plans may be more appropriate and the Community Cohesion Officer will play a key role in ensuring actions are progressed.
- Feedback from recent surveys, most notably the BME Community Association's consultation (November 2020) and the Let's Talk Survey (which closed on 30 September 2021) are being considered to determine future actions.

Action 4.5.4.32

We will continue to work with the BME Community Association to further understand the lived experiences of members of our BAME communities, particularly in relation of their experiences of hate incidents/crimes

Progress 2021-2022:

- Work to better understand and address the lived experience of children and young people, particularly in relation to school life, is still in the early stages with a commitment to work to progress this over the coming months.
- Work is being progressed to address issues raised during the 'Black Lives Matter (BLM) – a Conversation' event in September 2020 as well as during the BME Community Association's consultation (November 2020), undertaken to help inform the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan; these provided an insight into the lived experiences of people from our BME communities.

Employment

To ensure our workforce is more reflective of our community, our policies are fair and equitable and gender pay gaps are reduced

Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies

Action 4.5.4.33

We will ensure a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process that encourages a wider talent pool and facilitates a more equal gender balance

Progress 2021-2022:

- Seven Recruitment & Selection training courses have been held; with a total of 31 attendees.
- The anonymised application form process has yet to commence but will be tested and rolled out as part of the work on the new iTrent system.

Action 4.5.4.34

We will promote, facilitate, analyse and monitor flexibility in the workplace at all levels, to enable women to progress and to ensure compatibility with a multi-generational workforce

Progress 2021-2022:

- Staff wellbeing along with updates on, and benefits of, our flexible working policies continue to be raised at Senior Management Meetings and are cascaded across all service areas as well as referenced within our recruitment and selection training sessions.
- We introduced a Hybrid Working Framework, following significant staff engagement, which will offer greater flexibility for staff.

Action 4.5.4.35

We will collect and monitor data in more depth related to flexible working

Progress 2021-2022:

- With a large number of staff working from home since the outbreak of the pandemic there has been a reduction in requests for flexible working. This has been further enhanced by the introduction of hybrid working arrangements – a manager led process taking into account staff preference as well as business requirements.

Action 4.5.4.36

We will scrutinise the Shared Parental Leave uptake to monitor gender balance and encourage uptake across genders

Progress 2021-2022:

- We will continue to monitor the take up of shared parental leave, with the new HR system and the implementation of associated processes will improve our ability to effectively scrutinise this and other policies.
- With a large number of staff working from home since the outbreak of the pandemic along with the introduction of more flexible working arrangements with the new Hybrid Working Framework it is appropriate to consider the validity of this action going forward.

Action 4.5.4.37

We will, in the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant, include a guaranteed interview scheme for recently discharged members of the Armed Forces

Progress 2021-2022:

- We continue to offer a guaranteed interview scheme for Armed Forces veterans, which is included within our application process, providing recruiting managers with clear instruction of any applicants who are eligible. We provide guidance on this process as part of our recruitment & selection training for managers.
- We have attained a bronze award, employer recognition scheme as part of the Armed Forces Covenant, details will be added to the new recruitment website shortly.

Action 4.5.4.38

We will consider how our policies and practices impact on our staff who are employed on casual and temporary contracts and part time contracts

Progress 2021-2022:

- We continue to ensure equity and transparency of approach when employing casual/temporary staff throughout the Council whilst ensuring employment rights are maintained. This action will require review following the implementation of the hybrid working policy.

Action 4.5.4.39

We will develop a BAME Equality and Diversity Action Plan, developing a set of evidenced based actions with the aim of improving equality and diversity amongst the Council's workforce

Progress 2021-2022:

- We have refocused our proposed internal BAME Equality and Diversity plan to reflect the Anti-Racism approach taken by Welsh Government.
- Following feedback from Welsh Government officials as well as from an Achieving Racial Equality in Wales conference it is now considered more appropriate for the action plan to be devised by the recently established 'Ethnic Minority Employee Forum'.

Action 4.5.4.40

We will work to improve our Corporate Culture, to ensure each member of staff is valued and respected

Progress 2021-2022:

- Following significant engagement with our communities and staff during 2021-2022 the council's vision and values have been reset; further information can be found in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027. These along with our corporate priorities will form the core of our new Organisational Development Strategy which will be the foundation of our internal work and practices going forward. It is anticipated to have this strategy in place by October 2022.

Action 4.5.4.41

We will work with staff to determine the appetite to form a BAME Employee Forum to help ensure voices are heard

Progress 2021-2022:

- Following feedback from staff with a Black minority ethnic (BME) background an Ethnic Minority Employee Forum has been established with support from the Chair of UNISON Cymru Wales Black Members Group. The Chief Executive, and a number of officers from key service areas, and representatives from the NPT BME Community Association supported the inaugural meeting in March 2022.
- Future meetings will be open to those members of staff from BME backgrounds and other officers at the request of the group – for example, the group have requested the ongoing support of a HR Manager for the foreseeable future.

Action 4.5.4.42

We will offer opportunities to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to help them gain experience and skills in order to enter the world of employment

Progress 2021-2022

- Despite the closure of the Cam Nesa, resulting in the reduction in the number of youth workers in the Keeping in Touch (KIT) Team, along with additional staff shortages during the period we continue to help and support young people into a more positive Education Employment Training status.
- 210 NEET young people received support during the year, with 144 (69%) young people achieving a successful outcome; either employment, education, training or engaged with a specialist service.

Action 4.5.4.43

We will revisit staff training on equalities, particular re-visiting people's understanding of disability, including non-visible disabilities

Progress 2021-2022:

- We continue to support staff by offering a range of both general and specific equalities courses, including equalities in the workplace, unconscious bias and cultural competence and Anti-Racism training; with a total of 83 staff attending these courses during 2021-2022.

Priority 4.2 Our Gender Pay Gaps are reduced

Action 4.5.4.44

We will implement the Fair Play Employer Scheme Gender Diversity Action Plan

Progress 2021-2022:

- We continue to implement the action plan, with the assistance of Chwarae Teg, with progress and actions reviewed on a quarterly basis.

- In March 2022, a proposal on mentoring for women in lower paid roles, the final element of the action plan, will be implemented during 2022-2023.

Action 4.5.4.45

We will address the gender pay gap within the Council by implementing the Fair Play Employers Action Plan

Progress 2021-2022:

- The Council's median gender pay gap for 2021 (the latest data available) was 3.86% (a slight increase from 3.44% in 2020) whereas the mean is 6.59% a decrease from 7.2% in 2020. This means that the difference in women's average hourly rate has stayed the same in 2021 as it was in 2020.
- The Council has signed up to the Fair Play Employer Scheme for a third year to assist us with strategies to reduce our gender pay gap. Some of the work undertaken includes introducing the Hybrid Working Framework which has focussed managers on communication with their teams regarding more flexible ways of working.
- Managing and motivating Hybrid Teams training rolled out and delivered 2021/2022 and sessions on reward/recognition and constructive feedback for leaders and managers developed and delivered in conjunction with ChwaraeTeg.

Participation

To ensure services are accessible for all and people and communities are able to better influence decisions that affect them

Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all

Action 4.5.4.46

We will continuously review and update our website to improve its accessibility

Progress 2021-2022:

- We have continued to introduce components and patterns from the GOV.UK Design System into NPT.GOV.UK as part of our continuous improvement of the website to improve its accessibility. This has resulted in the website receiving an accessibility score of 95% rated excellent in an independent review conducted by Silktide (a web governance platform that helps organisations improve accessibility and content quality).

Action 4.5.4.47

We will work to address the barriers people and organisations face to participate on-line

Progress 2021-2022:

- Working closely with the Centre for Digital Public Services Wales (CDPS) we continue to conduct user research with residents to ensure our digital services meet their needs and to understand what people need from us to participate online.

Action 4.5.4.48

We will work to identify the opportunities across the County Borough for citizens to improve their digital skills and understanding

Progress 2021-2022:

- Our Digital Ambassador works closely with the Community Safety Partnership and Trading Standards, keeping up to date on online scams and frauds and distributing the information to various community groups.
- The Accessing Digital Services NPT Facebook page is regularly updated with latest information and has reached approximately 250 people per month between January and March 2022.
- Working in partnership with Digital Communities Wales, a further 10 employees have been trained as Digital Partners to work alongside existing Digital Partners, enabling them to support colleagues, family and friends by sharing their digital knowledge.
- Digital literacy, 'Techie Taster', digital inclusion and online safety sessions (online and face to face sessions) have been delivered to a number of groups including NVQ hairdressing students, Baglan Men's Society and Aberafan Court Assisted Learning Centre.

Action 4.5.4.49

We will work through the Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Board to prevent Cybercrime and protect people against exploitation

Progress 2021-2022:

- Cyber Crime and Scams is a standing agenda item at all board meetings as well as on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Operational Tasking Group, which focuses on frontline work, campaigns, initiatives and events. This work is supported by our Digital Inclusion Ambassador, Trading Standards team and South Wales Police.

- Engagement events on a range of topics including Cyber Crime, Scams and Loan Sharks have now resumed following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.
- Key messages continue to be shared via our social media platforms and network of partners.
- The CSP continues to keep abreast of this ever-changing area of work with scammers capitalising on latest events, e.g., Ukraine nationals seeking refuge or needing financial support, Covid-19 related scams etc.
- Schools' events, including Crucial Crew for Year 6 pupils, will resume during 2022-2023. These events provide an opportunity for children to learn about online safety and associated risks and receive age-appropriate advice and information.

Action 4.5.4.50

We will improve physical access to the committee facilities in both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres

Progress 2021-2022:

- A scheme of work planned to improve access to our Civic Centres was suspended at the outbreak of the pandemic. With civic buildings closed to the public and all but essential staff, improvements to committee facilities were not a priority. During 2021-2022 with restrictions being lifted and with civic buildings used, the schedule of works to improve accessibility was revisited.
- Works to improve physical access to the Council Chamber in Port Talbot Civic Centre is due to be undertaken during the summer recess in August 2022 which will coincide with the installation of broadcasting and translation equipment.
- Works have already been carried out to install a new disabled fire refuge system (linked to an emergency call system) in the accessible toilets in Port Talbot Civic Centre.

Action 4.5.4.51

We will ensure that the many services available to the Armed Forces Community are accessible online, but also by telephone through the Veteran Gateway.

Progress 2021-2022:

- Local organisation information is currently being compiled as some organisations have not returned following the pandemic. New Hubs and other organisations are in the process of being set up throughout the Western Bay region. Updated information will be added to Veteran's Gateway via Welsh Government when available.
- Social media pages are being set up to ensure information is available and shared across the regions.

Action 4.5.4.52

We will work with local businesses and organisations to explore alternative arrangements in accessing retail services for those experiencing difficulties due to limited digital access etc

Progress 2021-2022:

- We have targeted retail businesses via our Community Renewal Fund funded Digital Project, to ensure businesses have the skills and knowledge to exploit the potential of digital technology, to innovate for growth and long-term sustainability and to help adapt to changes in consumer behaviour, i.e., on-line shopping, click and collect, etc.

Action 4.5.4.53

We will continue to support the key principles as contained in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021: including programmes to support disabled candidates standing at elections, and the production of a public participation strategy

Progress 2021-2022:

- We continue to develop our response to supporting the key principles as contained in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This has included working with Welsh Government and Disability Wales to develop and promote the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales, which seeks to remove barriers faced by disabled people seeking elected office by providing financial assistance towards the cost of reasonable adjustments and support.
- In addition, we are proceeding to utilise the information obtained from our self-assessment to help refine our Public Participation Strategy with a view to the document being brought forward for Member consideration in due course.

Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion**Action 4.5.4.54**

We will support local groups, including the BME Community Association, to develop community activities and events

Progress 2021-2022:

- Our third sector grant scheme supports local groups to deliver activities that will help to further develop community capacity/collaboration and building on the community action that has supported the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Applications for the financial year 2022-2023 closed on 15 October 2021 with grants to 27 organisations with a value of nearly £540k awarded in December 2021.

Action 4.5.4.55

We will further develop our links with our faith communities

Progress 2021-2022:

- Some of our faith communities are represented on and regularly attend and contribute to our Equality and Community Cohesion Group. We continue to be mindful that not all faiths in NPT are represented on the Group and are looking at ways to better engage with these communities as part of our wider engagement work and review of the Equality and Community Cohesion Group during autumn 2022.

Action 4.5.4.56

We will provide information and a signposting service for those who wish to learn English and/or Welsh

Progress 2021-2022:

- All training courses are advertised on our staff Yammer platform as well as being sent to all accountable managers for circulation to their staff.
- 'Use Work Welsh' courses are advertised to all staff at Intermediate, Higher and Proficiency level to increase confidence in using Welsh in the workplace.
- 37 employees have attended Welsh language courses in 2021-2022.

Action 4.5.4.57

We will develop/strengthen policies to respond to an aging population and support the formation of a new group to address this

Progress 2021-2022:

- Progress on this action was delayed due to the pandemic but will be progressed as part of the Councils recovery planning work. A report published by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales "State of the Nation" brings together a wide range of evidence, research and data to provide an overview of people's experiences of growing old in Wales which will be helpful when developing / strengthening policies.

Action 4.5.4.58

We will work with members of the Trans community to help raise awareness

Progress 2021-2022:

- Unfortunately, since the outbreak of the pandemic we have been unable to progress this action. However, during 2022-2023, using relevant feedback from the Let's Talk survey and other relevant consultation exercises, we will engage with members of the community to begin to explore ways to raise awareness amongst our workforce, employer and the wider community of NPT.

Action 4.5.4.59

We will develop a rights-based approach to our work, with a focus on children's rights working with Youth Mayor, Youth Council amongst others

Progress 2021-2022

- The Youth Council, Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor continue to champion support and live the ethos of children's rights, presenting to and discussing their concerns and plans with Cabinet at quarterly meetings.
- The top three topics identified by NPT respondents to the Make your Mark consultation (run by the British Youth Parliament (on which NPT has a representative) to find out what issues matter most to young people) will be the Youth Council's priorities for the next year; health & wellbeing; environment and poverty.

Action 4.5.4.60

We will establish engagement mechanisms, for example a new Citizens' Panel, and use responses to ensure that the Council's policy making and service development is informed by what matters to people

Progress 2021-2022

- We launched our Citizens' Panel in January 2020 with membership open to all residents we have ensured it represents the diverse population of Neath Port Talbot. The Citizens' Panel complements formal consultations, by providing another way for residents to have their voices heard and to be involved in decision making.
- The Council's Community of Practice (a group of officers from across the Council who undertake engagement activities) has undertaken a significant role in ensuring the Council's Let's Talk campaign has maximum reach to ensure the areas of work the Council focuses on going forward is based on what matters to people. Our engagement mechanism will be further developed as part of the Council's recovery work.

Action 4.5.4.61

We will work with organisations that support the Armed Forces Community to help reduce isolation and loneliness, which is felt by many when they leave the services or by a member of the family when the serving family member is deployed on active service or training

Progress 2021-2022:

- Our AFLO has met with individuals and various organisations across the region, including Veterans NHS Wales and the Bulldogs Boxing and Community Activities that support the local Armed Forces Community.
- The AFLO has also worked in partnership with Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) to support Month of the Military Child (April) and works closely with the Vulnerable Learners Service who help ensure that Service Children receive appropriate support.
- We are currently facilitating a grant for Armed Forces charities and organisations locally to fund training for their staff and to help fund events to support the Armed Forces Community.

Action 4.5.4.62

We will implement the action plan in support of the Digital Charter Award for which we have recently been recognised

Progress 2021-2022:

- During the year, the number of staff in our Digital Partners network increased to 47 (39 in 2020-2021). The Network helps staff to gain digital confidence and overcome any barriers to becoming digitally active in both the workplace and their personal lives.
- Additional training programmes have been delivered to 193 staff across the council services to improve digital skills.

Action 4.5.4.63

We will work in partnership with relevant groups to address our shared history and explore ways to better express this within our communities

Progress 2021-2022:

- The Corporate Plan 2022-2027 recognises the role culture and heritage play within our communities and activities have been included to reflect this.
- Discussions have already begun between our education service and the BME Community Association on how the Association can help support the delivery of the new curriculum for schools. This will provide opportunities for more learning and greater understanding not only of our local history but also a more balanced understanding and acknowledgement of historical periods and events that have contributed to and shaped our lives.
- Work on a proposed Culture and Heritage Strategy has also begun which will aim to recognise and celebrate the cultures and shared history of all our communities in NPT.

Action 4.5.4.64

We will support local small businesses in implementing the ever-changing requirements of the Welsh Government's guidelines in response to the COVID-19 outbreak

Progress 2021-2022:

- Our Covid Enforcement Team supported local businesses in implementing the requirements of the various alert levels imposed throughout the year; helping businesses embed the health protection and risk assessment principles contained in the Coronavirus legislation into business as normal was one of the key areas of work. Generally, businesses have welcomed the visits however, understanding and keeping up with the changes brought about by the introduction of the various 'Alert Levels' during the year has been problematic for some businesses and the public alike: particularly with public perception of the pandemic and issues with businesses implementing the rules and regulations.
- Although restrictions have been lifted incrementally over the latter half of the year and lifted even further toward the end of March 2022 (and completely removed in April apart from in health care settings) we have continued to be proactive with visits to support businesses and help ensure the work undertaken in response to the pandemic is aligned with traditional health and safety at work interventions.
- While a large number of visits to businesses were made between April and October 2021 (5,213 visits made, including 1,873 visits as a result of complaints received from the public) this number has dropped dramatically over the last six months with just 203 visits made in March 2022. In the first six months, 418 warning letters for non-compliance were issued with three fixed penalty fines issued while in March 2022 there were just 15 instances of non-compliance with most cases receiving 'words of advice' as the level of non-compliance was minimal. These figures are testament to the work undertaken by the team in supporting local businesses throughout the changing regulatory landscape of the last year.

Living standards

To work to reduce poverty and support independent living

Priority 6.1 People and communities will benefit from interventions to alleviate poverty

Action 4.5.4.65

We will develop an action plan to address the issues for those with low net disposable income

Progress 2021-2022:

- Work is ongoing to ensure the Council is offering support to households to ensure they are maximising their income. We are in the process of reviewing and updating the Council's webpages that advise on the direct financial support available internally and externally to ensure all the available information is up-to-date and accessible. More than £150k from the Welsh Government has been managed and administered to enhance local support services to assist those facing food poverty in a number of ways, including: financing additional supplies and storage solutions for local food banks, paying for 'FareShare' membership, family cooking courses and community growing schemes.
- In March 2022, a £2million Council hardship fund was announced to further support residents facing financial pressure due to Brexit, the legacy of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis. Work has started to identify how best to target and administer this support with Cabinet on 29 June granting authority to the Chief Finance Officer to enter into a partnership agreement with Warm Wales to facilitate delivery of the NPT Hardship Relief Scheme.
- In addition, work is ongoing with partners in Swansea Council, NPTCVS, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS) and Swansea Bay University Health Board to address issues around bed poverty. A process has been put in place to distribute the bed and mattresses that were urgently procured for the local Covid-19 field hospitals to people who really need them, free of charge.

Action 4.5.4.66

We will embrace the new Socio-economic Duty

Progress 2021-2022:

- Three separate audits of our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process (amended to consider various legal requirements including the socio-economic duty) were undertaken during 2021-2022. Two of the audits were delayed from 2020-2021: one identified in the Annual Governance Statement and undertaken by internal audit focusing on how well the framework is embedded into our decision-making process; the other by an external consultant, Red Shiny Apple Ltd., concentrating on the quality and effectiveness of the assessments. The third audit was undertaken by Audit Wales to consider Equality Impact Assessments and their use in decision making. The two former audit reports were completed in March 2022 with the latter audit due to be completed by July 2022.

Recommendations from all audits will be considered and will inform any further revision of the IIA tool as appropriate.

Action 4.5.4.67

We will ensure those families entitled to free school meals continue to receive support throughout the school holidays in line with Welsh Government guidelines

Progress 2021-2022:

- All families entitled to free school meals (FSM) received payments throughout all school holidays.
- 'Isolation payments' for those children who have been instructed to self-isolate by the school or track and trace have been introduced during the year and will continue up to 30 June 2022.

Action 4.5.4.68

We will work with local organisations and local businesses to explore how to maintain access to appropriate cultural foods during periods of restricted movement/lockdown going forward

Progress 2021-2022:

- We have targeted retail businesses via our Community Renewal Fund funded Digital Project to comply with this action. We will also encourage food providers to sign up to the Council's 'Buy Local' scheme to promote their services to local residents.

Priority 6.2 People will benefit from programmes and support to live as independently as possible**Action 4.5.4.69**

We will support the Regional Partnership Board to develop and continue to provide a sustainable range of services that meet demand, enabling individuals to remain at home maintaining their independence for as long as possible receiving appropriate support at times of need

Progress 2021-2022

- We continue to engage with the Regional Partnership Board on the development and implementation of the Discharge to Recover and Assess Model, which will ensure people receive the right care in the right place, enabling them to remain independent at home for as long as possible.
- Regional partnership working continues to progress with the following work streams taking priority: Home First the Discharge to Recover then Assess model (D2RA), Carers, Mental Health and Learning disabilities.

Action 4.5.4.70

We will continue to help people to learn and interact with others so they can be part of their communities

Progress 2021-2022:

- While addressing and promoting community cohesion is key to the role of the Community Cohesion officer (post currently vacant), it is not solely the responsibility of one person or service area. Consequently, current and future plans and strategies will contribute to ensuring our communities are more cohesive.
- The recently adopted Wellbeing Objectives, detailed in our Corporate Plan 2022-2027, and the actions identified to meet them reflect our commitment to and the work currently being undertaken towards meeting this action.

Action 4.5.4.71

We will help support people to live as independent a life as possible

Progress 2021-2022 4.5.4.71

- Our Reablement Service continues to support people to remain as independent as possible within their own homes, through the delivery of reablement at home, virtual ward support and via hospital discharges.
- Opportunities for the use of Technology Enhanced Care (TEC), with regards to falls prevention ARMED (Advanced Risk Modelling for Early Detection), and mental health wellbeing triage (CANTAB triage for significant cognitive difficulties, mood and ability to carry out daily living tasks) are being scoped out into project plans for delivery later in the year.
- Further TEC opportunities are being scoped out for the development of an independent living hub to support young people with learning disabilities to transition into independent living where possible.
- We have developed new relationships and continue to strengthen existing ones with the third sector in order to offer people wrap around support thereby enabling them to remain as independent as possible.

Action 4.5.4.72

We will consider the continuation of the Safe and Well scheme to help support vulnerable members of our communities

Progress 2021-2022

- The Safe and Well scheme remains operational, supporting community members with a volunteer led service response linking in with wider community services such as the Local Area Coordinators and third sector where necessary.

Action 4.5.4.73

We will improve communications with our vulnerable groups through a wide range of formats to better inform and support them to live as full a life as possible during the current coronavirus outbreak

Progress 2021-2022

- We have expanded our communication channels since the outbreak of the pandemic to better connect with our vulnerable groups; these have included virtual meetings, social media, the corporate website, SMS as well as the more traditional channels – telephone calls, letters and face to face meetings when restrictions allowed.

Priority 6.3 Transport links are maintained or enhanced**Action 4.5.4.74**

We will support community transport initiatives

Progress 2021-2022:

- Community transport schemes have continued to receive Bus Service Support Grant funding at the same level as prior to the pandemic. In addition, several schemes have received grant funding to install electric vehicle charge points and purchase electric vehicles, which, will contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions in the area, with further expansion of electric vehicles perused in partnership with the Community Transport Association (CTA).

Action 4.5.4.75

We will work together with partners on the regional Swansea Bay City Deal transport plan

Progress 2021-2022

- Corporate Joint Committees will be working with the region on developing the local bus network with the City and County of Swansea identified as the lead authority for transport in the region. Work is ongoing with Welsh Government (WG) and Transport for Wales (TfW) on the strategic bus network review. The following projects are currently being explored:
 - TfW are looking at the feasibility and impact of a through bus service from Ystradgynlais to Mumbles.
 - Hydrogen Bus Project - WG are looking at the feasibility of introducing Hydrogen Busses on some of the strategic bus network.
 - The Council is currently re-tendering its subsidised local bus network and a Fflecsi Bus option (a demand responsive service that can be booked via an App or by telephone) being explored to offer innovative transport solutions to our rural communities.