

# Mid-Year Assessment of Performance 2022/23

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## About This Report

### What is the Mid-Year Self-Assessment?

As part of its performance management arrangement, Cardiff Council produces a Mid-Year and End-of-Year Self-Assessment of performance in delivering its Well-being Objectives for 2022/23.

These Well-being Objectives, including the steps the Council will take to achieve them and how performance will be measured, are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-25:

- Cardiff is a great place to grow up
- Cardiff is a great place to grow older
- Supporting people out of poverty
- Safe, confident and empowered communities
- A capital city that works for Wales
- Cardiff grows in a resilient way
- Modernising and integrating our public services

The Annual Well-being Report is the product of a comprehensive self-assessment process and draws on service performance, governance and risk, resources and other sources of performance information provided for each Well-being Objective:

- A strategic assessment of performance
- Key successes
- Areas of risk and challenge
- Areas of focus for the year ahead

In doing so, the report fulfils the Council's statutory duties in relation to both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

As part of the Council's planning and performance arrangements, a mid-year self-assessment of performance is also produced to ensure that Cabinet receives an update on the delivery of their policy agenda and performance of statutory services.

### How is the Mid-Year Self-Assessment Report developed?

The assessment of performance contained within the Mid-Year Self-Assessment is developed through a thorough process of self-assessment involving the political and managerial leadership of the Council, drawing from a wide range of sources of performance information.

#### Sources of Performance Information

Sources of performance information which contribute towards the performance assessment contained within the Annual Well-being Report include:

- **Performance against the Council’s Key Performance Indicators** – The Council’s [Corporate Plan](#) contains a suite of performance indicators which measure progress made in delivering the Well-being Objectives. Where applicable, targets are set against these performance indicators to demonstrate the desired level of achievement. Performance indicators are assigned a RAG status: **Green** where the indicator is on or above target, **Amber** where the result is within 10% of the target and **Red** where the result is greater than 10% from the target.
- **Progress against the steps in each Well-being Objective** – Each Well-being Objective within the Corporate Plan also contains a set of ‘steps’ or actions. Monitoring the progress of these steps provides an understanding of what has been achieved and where further work is required.
- **Consultation and Engagement** – The Council has a number of established consultation and engagement mechanisms such as the Annual Ask Cardiff Citizen Survey, the Budget Consultation, the Child Friendly City Survey as well as other surveys and consultation exercises which take place over the course of a year that provide residents, businesses and other city stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on a wide range of the Council’s services.

In addition, the Council’s [Annual Compliments and Complaints Report](#) provides valuable insight into where Cardiff’s citizens feel the Council needs to improve. The Corporate Plan contains a number of ‘qualitative’ Key Performance Indicators that relate to citizen satisfaction with services, and the findings of the consultation and engagement work forms an important part of the Council’s self-assessment process, policy development and budget setting process.

- **Finance Monitoring** – The Council’s [Outturn Report 2021/22](#) serves to inform of the Council’s financial position in respect of the year ending 31 March 2022 and its findings contribute to the assessment contained within the Annual Well-being Report.
- **Good Governance** – The Council’s Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed, controlled, and the means through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. The Council’s [Annual Governance Statement](#) sets out an assessment of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and internal control.
- **Risk** – Delivering objectives requires frequent management of a wide range of risks at both operational and strategic levels, particularly in the dynamic external environment in which the Council is currently operating. The Council’s Year End [Risk Report](#), and its Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers, provides an overview of the current risks and the actions in place to mitigate them.
- **Scrutiny Committees and Governance & Audit Committee** – The Council responds to the issues raised and recommendations made by the Committees, which help inform policy development and performance improvement.

- **Inspection Reports** – The Council is subject to a number of inspections from regulatory bodies including Audit Wales, Estyn (Education) and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Their findings help the Council to assess areas of strong performance, as well as identifying areas that require improvement.

## **Well-being Objective 1: Cardiff is a great place to grow up – Summary**

Ensuring that Cardiff is a city where children and young people are guaranteed access to a good education and given every opportunity to achieve their potential is a core priority for the Council.

The Council has demonstrated a sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of its education services, with good progress continuing to be made against the delivery of the Cardiff 2030 vision for educational learning. This assessment was reflected in the Estyn report of February 2022, which also noted how school inspection outcomes have been strong between 2017 and 2020. At the same time, schools continue to recover from the pandemic, demonstrating resilience and commitment to learner progress through effective engagement, assessment practices and teaching and learning strategies. Areas of good progress include the support and engagement work undertaken with pupils and headteachers ahead of the new academic year, improvements to digital technology in schools – with a ratio of 3:4 devices per pupil at Quarter 2, the implementation of the new curriculum and through the progress of the Child Friendly City programme.

Secondary schools successfully re-introduced external examinations for Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 pupils during the summer of 2022; the first time since 2019 after two years of grade determination by schools. The 2022 GCSE and A-level results achieved by pupils in Cardiff were higher than the average results achieved in Wales, presenting an encouraging picture of pupil performance.

While services are recovering from the immediate impact of the Covid-19 crisis, the medium-term impact on children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, is becoming more evident in some areas of the city. Lower attendance rates in schools, persistent absence, higher exclusion rates, increasing use of Pastoral Support Plans and greater demands for emotional, mental health and well-being support continue to require a sharp focus.

Schools are also facing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, including school-based counsellors, Welsh language teachers, specialist teachers and teaching assistants, with recruitment of the latter being supported where possible by the Council's Into Work Services.

The Education service has strengthened joint work with the Youth Justice Service (YJS), adding capacity to identify and help remove barriers to progression for young people supported by the YJS.

Children's Services continue to face high and rising demand and increases in case complexity. Both contacts to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the total volume of Children's Services open cases reached all-time highs in the period immediately following the Covid-19 pandemic, and these high levels have been sustained well into 2022/23, with around 2,000 contacts received per month by the MASH, and around 3,700

open Children's Services cases. This demand pressure is reflected throughout the child's journey, including increasing demand on services to address children's mental health and emotional well-being. At the same time, the service is facing challenges in the supply of residential placements for children and young people, with the market for children's placements not able to meet current demand levels. The service is also facing challenges with the recruitment of social workers, with 23% of social work posts filled by agency workers at Quarter 2, and an insufficiency of placements to meet the assessed need.

A programme of service, cross-Council and partnership interventions have been put in place leading to some demonstrable improvements in demand management and in the recruitment and retention of social workers. This area will, however, remain one of significant challenge for the Council over the remainder of the year and beyond.

## **A Child Friendly City**

Cardiff's ambition to be recognised as a city where all children and young people have an equal chance to thrive and reach their potential is one step closer to realisation as the submission to gain UNICEF Child Friendly City status was completed in September 2022. If successful, Cardiff will be the first city in the UK to gain UNICEF accredited status. The UNICEF assessment is scheduled for early 2023.

Work is ongoing to promote children's rights through workforce development and member training, delivering the Rights Respecting Schools Programme and the introduction of a Child Rights Impact Assessment which has been incorporated into the Council's policy and decision-making assessment framework. As part of the Rights Respecting Schools Approach, a further 10 schools have been accredited, bringing the total to 83 out of 127 schools (65.3%). While this is a positive improvement, this is slightly short of the target for Quarter 2 of 69% (or 88 schools). Of those accredited, 46 schools have achieved Bronze status, 25 have achieved Silver, and 12 have achieved Gold.

## **Deliver the Cardiff 2030 Vision for Education and Learning**

As reflected by Estyn, in its latest inspection report<sup>1</sup>, the Council has demonstrated a sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of its education services in recent years, with a drive towards the 'Cardiff 2030' strategic vision and priorities. In general, school inspection outcomes have been strong, especially in the primary sector, whilst outcomes for pupils across Key Stage 4 have been above or well above expectations. Additionally, the Council has established strong working relationships with principal improvement partners from the regional consortium and there are robust processes for the support and challenge to schools causing concern. Ensuring consistency in the quality of evaluation of education services will represent an area of focus moving forward to ensure that areas for improvement can be identified.

The Council continues to work towards the goals set out in the Cardiff 2030 vision, to build upon the quality and effectiveness of its education services. In the year to date, successes include the further investment in digital technology in schools, with the ratio of devices to pupils reaching 3:4; and the expansion of extra-curricular activities for all children and young people through the Passport to the City, delivered in partnership with Cardiff University, with 10 schools and 799 pupils enrolled with access to 258 different activities.

Schools continue to make progress implementing curriculum reform and in supporting those with additional learning needs (ALN), including the introduction of statutory support plans (known as Individual Development Plans).

In June 2022 Welsh Government published the new School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability. The Council is working closely with Welsh Government, Estyn and the Central South Consortium to implement the new requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Published in February 2022.



Following delays caused by Covid-19, the Band B 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme is committed to complete the new Fitzalan High School build, and to begin work at the Fairwater Campus site in early 2023. £20 million worth of improvements to existing schools is also on track to be delivered by the end of March 2023. Over the next year, the wider work programme includes the completion of a new primary school in St Mellons, the completion of works at the site of Ysgol Gynradd Groes-Wen Primary School, and the finalisation of the specification for Junction 33. Looking to the longer term, the School Organisational Plan will need to consider the latest population projections, the ongoing impact of Covid, the sufficiency of ALN provision and the impact of inflationary pressures on the delivery programme.

Good progress has been made to advance Co-ordinated Admissions arrangements, with more schools – both primary and secondary – joining the scheme. Work is ongoing to support and encourage the remaining schools to participate in the coming years.

A further area of focus is the enhancement of Youth Services. The final report from the Youth Service Review is due to be presented to Cabinet in early 2023 as the first step towards delivering a more integrated service offer by September 2023.

### **Schools: Pandemic Recovery Challenges**

In preparation for the 2022-23 academic year, a number of initiatives were taken forward by the Education directorate to re-engage pupils following the pandemic. These included appointing additional Education Welfare Officers to overcome certain language barriers, offering additional summer support for Year 11s and Post-16s, running a marketing campaign on school attendance, and developing a persistent absence review tool. Fixed Penalty Notices for poor attendance will also be reinstated this year after being paused during the pandemic.

Regarding attendance, secondary school attendance has fallen the most (a 9% drop from 94% in 2018/19 to 85% in 2021/22). Following the pandemic, the Education Welfare Service highlighted a significant number of pupils where anxiety was a barrier to attendance. Anxiety, along with other mental health problems, have been heightened by the pandemic, affecting both pupils and staff. Concerning trends in persistent absence have also been noted; this is now being closely monitored and reported on, with pupils and families affected being provided with more support where possible. Regarding exclusions, the number of children being excluded from school, either on a permanent or fixed-term basis, has shown an increase in the 2021/22 academic year and continues to cause concern. This is more pronounced in secondary schools than primary schools, where aggressive behaviour was the leading cause of permanent exclusion.

Re-engagement activities, both within and beyond the school, delivered in partnership with Youth Services and wider partners, are also playing a critical role in supporting schools to recover from the pandemic. Collaboration between Council Services to support schools, which evolved rapidly during the pandemic, is also being developed further into a

sustainable Team Around the School model, commencing in the schools serving the most challenged communities.

Another challenge being faced by schools relates to workforce and the availability of both core and agency staff, with a particular challenge being the recruitment of school-based counsellors. The Education Management Team have been working closely with schools to support them in filling both teaching and non-teaching posts, with a particular focus on those with specific requirements, such as Welsh speakers and specialist teachers.

The service faces acute financial pressures relating to specific areas of service delivery. A key pressure contributing to this overspend is in relation to School Transport due to rising costs in fuel and driver supply, combined with the increased number of pupils with ALN requiring transport. There are also significant pressures in respect of out of area placements and school catering services, the latter being impacted by price increases in relation to food and transport costs combined with reduced income from paid school meals. These rising costs, alongside the pay award, largely account for the forecasted overspend within the Service Area. The directorate are actively pursuing a number of steps to respond to budget pressures arising in key areas, with key strands of work relating to the management of out of county placements, managing rising costs of schools catering and addressing the cost of school transport.

### **Protecting the Well-Being of Vulnerable Children, Young People, and Families**

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, Children's Services face rising demand, stemming from an increase in the number and complexity of cases. Contacts to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), along with overall caseload volumes, reached an all-time high immediately following the pandemic, and these high volumes have been sustained. At the same time, the service is facing challenges in the supply of residential placements for children and young people, with the market for children's placements not able to meet current demand levels. The recruitment and retention of children's social workers, despite significant improvements over the past 18 months, remains a challenge. As a result, as of September 2022, Children's Services is forecast an overspend of £8.3 million (£7.6 million exclusive of the pay award).

In direct response to the demand pressures and forecast overspend, a multi-disciplinary cross-Council response has been put in place, including a series of projects and workstreams aimed at reducing the volume and cost of expensive placements, while still ensuring that the needs of the young person are met. Ongoing reviews are being undertaken by Children's Services to identify cases which can be stepped down, particularly for those aged over 16 who are ready to move on to become more independent. Work is also being undertaken with partners and providers, including the Young Person's Gateway, to increase capacity for accommodation and move-on options both internally and within the external support market. A review has been undertaken on the Foster Carer Assessment Process, and data dashboards have been set up by Children's Services to provide managers with real-time data to support case-level decision-making and caseload management.

Parallel to this, work is underway to implement the Interventions Hub and to establish 'The Right Place' model. The Interventions Hub has been launched and is working well to co-ordinate integrated support for children and families and ensure demand is met for most types of provision. There is currently a long waiting list for Family Support. In response, families on the waiting list have been risk assessed and consultation with social workers has taken place and a business case has been prepared to extend provision to meet this demand.

The Council is working to implement 'The Right Place' model, a new approach to working with children and young people experiencing complex journeys, based on a successful model used in North Yorkshire. Through an independent review, this model was shown to result in improved outcomes for children and young people, including a reduction in the number of children looked after along with significant financial savings. Further work is planned to establish governance for this new model, and to raise awareness and understanding of the model with key stakeholders.

The improvement and intervention work undertaken by the service has helped to flatten the trend on the overall number of children looked after, with volumes of children looked after increasing at a much slower rate than the overall demand on the service. The challenges facing the service, however, remain significant.

### **Children's Services Workforce**

Children's Services is dealing with ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers, particularly experienced social workers, leading to a reliance on agency staff. This is a long-standing issue affecting the social care workforce, which the Council has been proactively working to address with work progressing throughout the year to improve the Cardiff offer for social workers. Successes to date include the development of the training offer for social workers, the creation of new support roles enabling social workers to focus more on core social work and less administrative work, and a review of pay and conditions, including the market supplement.

The social worker vacancy rate at Quarter 2 is 22.7%, showing a small improvement from 24% in Quarter 1. Whilst this is below the current target of 18%, this more ambitious target was set for this financial year in view of the improved arrangements which had been established. Over the long-term, significant improvement can be seen in this indicator, which was as high as 39% at the start of 2020-21.

### **All Our Futures Youth Justice Strategy**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) has undertaken an inspection of the Youth Justice Service which recognised the positive distance travelled since the last inspection in 2020. As a result, the service has de-escalated from its prior priority status. This de-escalation is recognition of the progress which has been made over the last two years and demonstrates the confidence that HMIP have in operational management and senior leadership in Cardiff to continue to deliver improvement and positive outcomes for children and young people. The Youth Justice Service is seeing fewer first-time entrants, with only 9

individuals in Quarter 2, against a target of 70, as well as lower re-offending rates than those measured prior to the pandemic. Re-offending rates are measured over a period of 6 months for each cohort, so the Quarter 2 data is not yet available. However, the rate in Quarter 1 was 31%, which is below the current target of 40%.

The Youth Justice Service has updated the 'All Our Futures' Youth Justice Strategy and work is ongoing to implement this. In Quarter 2 the Youth Justice Service completed its management restructure and agreed the action plan to deliver the All Our Futures Strategy with HMIP.

## **Well-being Objective 2: Cardiff is a great place to grow older – Summary**

The population of older people in Cardiff is increasing, as is the number of older people with life-limiting conditions, with the estimated number of people aged 65 and over having grown by 16%<sup>2</sup> over the last 10 years. The Council continues to deliver effective support for older people across a range of services areas, however significant pressures remain, particularly in areas of delivery heavily impacted by the pandemic over the last two years.

In Cardiff, as is the case across the UK, the social care sector is facing acute pressures through rising demand and increasingly complex service requirements. While the supply of care has improved significantly over the year, the care market remains fragile due to an ongoing shortage of care workers. Recruitment and retention of social workers and occupational therapists is a significant issue, and this is placing severe pressure on an already stretched social care system.

The Council continues to work in close partnership with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and the care sector to support older people live independently at home for as long as possible. Strengthened arrangements have been established to support discharge from hospital as soon as it is safe to do so by ensuring effective community support arrangements are in place. This will continue to be a strategic priority for the Council and its partners over the winter and into 2023/24.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the population estimates for Cardiff, 2011-2021, Nomis

## **Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an age-friendly city**

Loneliness and social isolation have a significant impact on the health and well-being of older people. Preventing social isolation by enabling older people to connect digitally and stay active in the community remains a key priority for the Council.

The “Cardiff Working towards an Age-friendly City” campaign was officially launched at Cardiff Castle in June 2022. Age-friendly City information has been distributed to a wide variety of organisations engaged in delivering services and support to older people within Cardiff. In the first half of the year, the Community Digital Team issued over 50 devices to older people as part of the Tablet Gifting Scheme. The scheme supports individuals deemed digitally deprived who have never owned or used a device. In addition, the team have developed a digital training offer targeted at older people, with a focus on delivering courses in Cardiff North.

The city’s Day Centre activity programme has been expanded in consultation with the Carers Impact group, service users, family members and staff. This has included introducing therapeutic arts and crafts sessions, family dementia sessions, and visits to Hubs, parks and garden centres. Day Centre facilities have been further enhanced by the Tovertafel interactive technology and driving reminiscence pods, bringing service users together and creating enjoyable, mentally stimulating environments. In addition, Fairwater Day Centre is now operating on a Saturday on a pilot basis, providing further opportunities for service users and their carers.

Consultation with the Carers Impact group has also provided invaluable insight into age-specific activity provision within the Hubs. As a result, the team are now widening the offer to include activities more appropriate and attractive to older people, including individual and one-on-one activities.

The Dementia Friendly Volunteer Programme was launched on World Alzheimer’s Day, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022. The scheme will recruit and train Dementia Friendly Ambassador Volunteers to support local shops, businesses, and organisations to work towards becoming Dementia Friendly, recognising the impact of dementia, understanding how it changes customer needs and considering how to support those affected. So far, business sign up to the Dementia Friendly Pledge has been below target (4 businesses in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 against a target of 20), however the number of digital Dementia Friendly City events held has exceeded targets (637 events in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 against a target of 300), raising awareness and promoting the support available. Within the Council, the percentage of staff completing the Dementia Friendly training module remains significantly below target (50% of staff in Quarter 2 against a target of 85%).

## **Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services**

Enabling older people to live independently at home improves their sense of well-being as well as reducing pressures on the public purse. The Council’s preventative services are vital to ensuring that people can remain living at home for longer.

The development and upskilling of the First Point of Contact (FPOC) team is continuing; however progress has been impacted by high demand. Some new capabilities and relevant training have been delivered, for example, FPOC staff can now prescribe low-level safety at home adaptations. The percentage of new cases dealt with directly at FPOC with no onward referral to Adult Services is lower than in previous years and is currently below target (Quarter 2 result is 66% against a target of 75%). However, the way in which the FPOC Community Contact team and the FPOC Social Work team manage the assessment process has changed, and as a result direct comparisons with previous years' figures is not possible.

The Community Occupational Therapy (OT) team offers practical support to enable people to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. Through use of equipment aids and adaptations, they help people remain at home and ensure an appropriate level of care through "right sized" support packages. The service is now working on the development of a trusted assessor model, a collaboration between OT and Social Work to enable the completion of care plans by Occupational Therapists. During the first half of the year, there has been an ongoing programme of recruitment for Occupational Therapists, however the process has taken longer than previously experienced, leading to a delay in recruitment. A shift to recruiting non-qualified staff has however proved successful and the service is developing proposals for growing its own qualified OT staff, providing a career path for carers and OT assistants.

The Community Resource Team (CRT) is a partnership between Health and Council services, it supports people to stay at home or return home from hospital through health and care services and through reablement support. A review of the Council's CRT homecare is now complete and work towards a customer-focussed care model is in progress. Meetings have been held with Health colleagues, looking at a clear division of responsibilities with a view to providing more fluid therapy support in CRT. The Council's Community Occupational Therapists are helping to triage cases for CRT, resulting in a more streamlined and efficient service with fewer hand offs. A CRT homecare Quality Assurance framework is also in development and the service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales during Quarter 1, and this provided assurances that there was good management oversight of the service, and that compliance with regulatory requirements was good.

Despite this progress, there has been a significant and consistent drop in the number of people accessing CRT (775 in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 against a target of 1,000) and likewise in the total hours of support provided (20,401 hours in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 against a target of 25,000). This is due to low workforce capacity caused by leave, sickness and inability to fill vacant posts, combined with the increased complexity of some of the cases referred into the team, some of which require double-handed care. Vacancies are continually advertised and the team co-ordinate with Cardiff Cares Academy, attend job fairs and are in touch with universities to see whether those working towards OT/Social Worker qualifications are interested in providing care as part of their learning. The service is also examining whether it can simplify the recruitment process, which would align it with private providers. It is anticipated that a recent increase in the grade for the CRT homecare posts will improve recruitment in the future.

## **Working in partnership to deliver high-quality sustainable care and support**

Work is ongoing to develop integrated local Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) that prevent hospital admission and facilitate hospital discharge. The new integrated discharge hub with hospital-based MDT is now up and running in the University Hospital of Wales (UHW). Dedicated social worker and OT resource has been identified, and two Care Co-ordinators have been recruited and expected to start in post in early Quarter 3. This will ensure the right mixture of support to focus on the safe and timely discharge of citizens back to settings in the community.

The “Trusted Partner” model gives our commissioned providers the ability to adapt care to meet individual needs, for example by stepping down care for older people from double-handed to single-handed as their needs dictate. This ensures the right level of care and secures value for money for the Council as costs are streamlined. During the first half of the year a pilot of the “Trusted Partner” model was rolled out and is now operational across the care sector.

In addition to domiciliary care staff registering with Social Care Wales, there will also be a requirement for care home staff to register from October 2022. There is a risk that these new requirements may impact recruitment and retention in a sector already facing acute workforce challenges. To mitigate this risk, the Council has actively promoted social care as a positive career choice. The Cardiff Cares Academy pilot has also been evaluated with a number of the recommended changes enacted and resulting in a greater number of candidates going in to care roles. Furthermore, additional measures have been established to support recruitment including the appointment of an Employer Liaison Officer, dedicated mentors, full training package and assistance with vetting and recruitment.

The number of people in residential care aged 65 or over per 10,000 population has increased from 66 in Quarter 1 to 69 in Quarter 2. In tackling the increase in demand, the Council aims to use Extra Care and Community Living housing as an alternative to residential care for both respite and permanent care. The Extra Care waiting list is now managed alongside the housing waiting list for sheltered and community living. There is regular communication between Linc Housing Association, Adult Services and Rehousing Solutions regarding clients’ suitability for independent living via the Housing Waiting List or through Extra Care accommodation. Extra Care applications are also now being received from the UHW Housing resettlement officer. Intelligence data is being captured to inform a cross directorate group which will evaluate the effectiveness of the service and discuss next steps.

Work is ongoing to develop a Quality Assurance framework for care homes alongside the IPC (Institute of Public Care) and it is expected that Cabinet will consider the review of care home provision later in 2023. A new Escalating Concerns policy has also been finalised and signed off by the Regional Commissioning Board and Adult Services Management Team.



## Older persons housing

The Council is committed to delivering modern, older persons housing that supports independent living, however the construction market continues to face the impact of supply shortages, financial difficulties and rising material prices, resulting in increases in costs for developments and challenges finding suitable suppliers.

The Addison House development to deliver 44 care-ready apartments in Rumney is progressing well, with handover scheduled for July 2023. An invitation to tender has been issued for a development of 44 apartments for older people in Bute Street, with returns expected in Quarter 3.

A planning application has been submitted for the development of older persons' accommodation at Moorland Road, with work on-site expected by January 2023. Progress on the development of 101 care-ready apartments at the Maelfa and St. Mellons has stalled as a result of the appointed contractor falling into administration. Alternative options to ensure the sites are re-started and completed at pace are being considered in parallel with legal requirements.

A contractor has recently been chosen for the development 35 older person apartments on the site of Canton Community Hall, it is anticipated that work will commence in early 2023.

Early-stage master-planning is underway on the proposed well-being village on the former Michaelston College site which will deliver in the region of 250 new homes. Alongside this will be a wide range of public buildings providing a range of facilities for the local community with a focus on older people and health and well-being. It is anticipated that the planning application for the development will be submitted by February 2023.

The means test for eligible Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) has been removed. An initial evaluation of removing the means testing on adaptations has resulted in amendments being made to the process. These changes have been implemented and a follow up evaluation will take place in December 2022 to determine their effectiveness. During Quarter 2, the average number of calendar days taken to deliver a DFG was 103, against a target of 185, an improvement from 154 calendar days in Quarter 1.

## Well-being Objective 3: Supporting people out of poverty – Summary

The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on many households with inflationary pressures making essential day-to-day items more expensive. Coming so soon after the Covid-19 pandemic, this crisis has compounded the pressures that many people face and deepened inequalities.

In response, the Council has established an enhanced programme of advice and support for citizens, supported by a communications and engagement campaign. Despite seeing a significant increase in demand – with calls to the Adviceline increasing by over 20% – the Council’s Advice Services are continuing to be delivered effectively. Similarly, the Council’s Into Work Services are responding effectively to rapid increases in demand and are performing in line with the targets set in the Corporate Plan, at the half year point. Concerns remain, however, regarding the volume of demand and the scale of challenges individuals and households face given the nature of the cost-of-living crisis and the draw on household income.

Rough sleeping remains at historically low levels within Cardiff with 11 individuals sleeping on the city’s streets at the end of September 2022. However, the number of people and families presenting as homeless has increased significantly with severe pressure now seen across the housing system. Increasing demand and a lack of available, affordable housing, particularly in the private rented sector, are the forces driving the pressures facing the service. Waiting lists to enter temporary accommodation have doubled over the last six months and hotels are now being used as temporary accommodation for some families. A programme of immediate and long-term actions is in place and making an impact. Given the scale and the cross-service impact of the issue, this will, however, remain a strategic priority for the Council.

## Cost-of Living Crisis

The Council is doing everything in its power to ease the burden on those households in the city who are affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

More residents are seeking assistance from the benefits, homelessness prevention and advice teams. For example, calls to the Adviceline have increased by 21.7% since April 2022 and in September 2022, 41% of all calls received by the team were related to the cost-of-living crisis. In addition to this, the number of clients seeking face-to-face advice has more than doubled since April 2022

The Council has established a Cost-of-Living Task Force with internal departments and external organisations, including Citizens Advice, C3SC (Cardiff Third Sector Council), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Welsh Government, Cardiff Foodbank and Registered Social Landlords. All parties are working together to share best practice and raise awareness of all of the support on offer.

The Council's Money Advice Team provides local, practical support to residents who are struggling to manage. A wide-reaching publicity campaign, including social media and radio adverts as well as publicity in Hubs and outside advertising, was run to increase awareness of the support available. Letters were also sent to all households in the city illustrating the help on offer. Food and Fuel Champions provide additional support to advice officers in Hubs across the city, offering information, guidance and advice on maximising income, benefit and grant checks, and tips on how to shop on a budget. New designated cost-of-living 'information stations' have been placed in every Hub across the city, which provide information and practical tips on how to reduce costs and save money. The Money Advice Team with the Food and Fuel Champions can also support residents by providing emergency foodbank vouchers and fuel vouchers. A specific cost-of-living support leaflet has been produced that is placed in all Foodbank bags. The Council provided direct support to Cardiff Foodbank by grant funding £46,000 via the Household Support Fund to purchase food stocks.

In June, Cabinet approved the Council's Cost-of-Living Discretionary Support Scheme. Welsh Government provided a grant to pay £150 to nearly 90,000 eligible households in the city, but they also allocated the Council £2.193 million for a Discretionary Scheme. This allows the Council to support households it considers need extra help with their living costs. The Council's Discretionary Scheme has both means-tested and non-means-tested elements. This combination provides a more inclusive offer as it can help those on benefits and those experiencing in-work poverty. This scheme further enhances other national support on offer and encourages residents to engage with the services available to ensure that they were claiming all the payments they are entitled to. The Cost-of-Living Discretionary Support Scheme will end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

The Money Advice Team are providing bespoke advice to care leavers who choose to participate in Welsh Government's three-year Basic Income pilot. Monthly money advice drop-in sessions have been set up for both the young people and their Personal Advisors.

With all of this support, it is hoped that the financial stability of the basic income will give young people the opportunity to make positive life choices as they leave care

The use of volunteers is being increased to help support paid staff and deal with the increased demand on advice services. Whilst advice officers are still able to support residents to claim benefits, grants, and discounts, it is proving more difficult for them to reduce clients' outgoings when completing budgeting statements. Switching tariffs to find cheaper alternatives for energy costs is no longer a viable solution and with costs continuing to escalate, it is becoming more difficult for advice officers to use budgeting as a complete solution to money issues.

Welsh Government has announced that means-tested free school meals will continue to be provided to children during the school holidays, up until the end of next year's February half-term. It is anticipated that around 40,000 applications will be made to the Winter Fuel scheme in the autumn.

Over the winter months Hubs and Libraries will offer warm welcome spaces to any residents concerned about rising costs of heating their own homes. Funding will also be made available via the Council to third sector organisations to provide warm welcome spaces from other community buildings, providing a space for residents to access across the city.

As demand continues to increase, Advice Services will be constantly reviewed to ensure that there are adequate resources to support all the residents who need help and bids for external funding will continue to be made as and when it becomes available.

### **Supporting those most impacted by the economic crisis into work, education or training**

Advice and support to help people into work, education or training is more vital than ever. Throughout Quarter 2, Into Work Services delivered a number of engagement events, primarily focused on the southern arc of the city. This led to an increase in referrals and over 300 individuals attended events in August. A jobs and wellbeing event was also hosted by the team in September in the Capitol Shopping Centre. The team worked in partnership with employers including St David's Hotel, Cardiff Bus and Aldi; 485 job seekers attended the event.

The Job Club has expanded their provision by providing additional sessions in RISE (the Council's specialist support service for victims of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence), Job Centres, Grange Pavilion and, most recently, in the Ukrainian Welcome Centre. Tailored into work programmes have been also delivered for specific groups such as young people not in education, employment or training, and care-experienced young people.

At the end of Quarter 2, 561 clients have secured work as a result of support received through the Employment Gateway against an annual target of 1,100. 188 employers have also received assistance from the Employer Liaison Team.

Within the Council, 30 apprenticeships were approved in August as part of the Corporate Apprentice & Trainee Scheme. Roles offered through this scheme are designed to encourage increased diversity of applicants and removes many traditional barriers to employment.

The new model of delivery for Adult Learning has also been rolled out. This provides quick one and two full-day accredited courses which support those with work skills rather than term-based courses for two hours a day over several weeks. This will make clients job ready more promptly and therefore able to access employment more quickly. More courses are also provided from more community locations. Further work will be done in the coming months to offer more courses from schools as the Community Schools programme is rolled out further.

Into Work Services were also successful in a bid to the DWP to deliver a three-year local supported employment programme supporting individuals with learning difficulties and autism.

### **Continuing our Living Wage City ambition**

Continued progress has been made in Cardiff's Living Wage work, with the city's status as a Living Wage City renewed for the next three years, following confirmation from the Living Wage Foundation and the city's 100<sup>th</sup> private sector organisation accredited as a Living Wage employer. At the end of Quarter 2, there were 184 accredited Real Living Wage employers in Cardiff against a target of 210 by the end of March 2023. Around 67,500 people are employed by accredited Living Wage employers in the city and almost 11,000 of them received a pay rise as a result of the accreditation. Recognising this progress, the Council's Real Living Wage initiative won the 2022 Local Government Chronicle award for Best Public/Private Partnership.

Over the next three years, Cardiff has set new targets for 300 accredited Living Wage employers in Cardiff, employing 95,000 staff of whom 13,900 have seen their pay uplifted to the Real Living Wage.

### **Embedding our new approach to tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping**

Rough sleeping remains at historically low levels within Cardiff (11 at the end of Quarter 2). However, the number of people and families presenting as homeless has increased significantly during 2022/23. At the end of Quarter 2, 177 people were waiting to enter the Single Persons' Gateway – a single point of access pathway into a range of supported accommodation for single people and couples – and 90 families were waiting to enter the Family Gateway. A further 803 single people and 515 families were in temporary accommodation. Waiting lists to enter temporary accommodation have increased dramatically; a 426% rise since July 2021. This demand is felt equally for family accommodation, the waiting list for which has increased by 378% over the same time period.

A lack of available housing, particularly in the private rented sector, is the primary factor behind the demand pressures facing the service. Rents in the private rented sector have also become unaffordable with only a small proportion within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate, the maximum amount that can be claimed in benefit. Tenants need to make up any shortfall from their other income and this is putting the option of renting privately out of reach for many. In a sample of the market taken during Quarter 2, 98% of properties were being let at least £100 per month above the LHA. The average shortfall across all property types is £318 per month.

To assist service users, a number of steps have been taken to offer additional support for those who are either already homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Mediation is also offered between private landlords and tenants, providing advice and support in order to help tenants keep their homes. Where an individual's current accommodation cannot be sustained, practical assistance is provided to individuals to help them find alternative accommodation such as Home Finder Workshops.

The Council's mortgage debt advisors have also recently been fully aligned with the Money Advice Team, providing specialist advice for homeowners who are struggling to maintain their mortgage payments.

The Welfare Liaison Team supports Council tenants who are struggling to pay their rent; appointments with this team have more than doubled compared to last year. The Advice Teams work closely with Registered Social Landlords to ensure that their tenants have access to funds that can support them too. The rent arrears pathway is open to all tenants regardless of their tenure or income type. Financial support can also be offered in the form of a bond, rent in advance payments and support with rent arrears alongside guidance from the Money Advice Team. Last year 1,375 tenants who were at risk of becoming homeless were given financial assistance as well as practical support to prevent them from facing eviction.

At a strategic level, the prevention element of the Housing Support Programme Strategy is being reviewed to ensure that every avenue has been explored to prevent homelessness, so that people are supported at an early stage before they reach crisis point. The Prevention Team has recently been fully aligned within the Advice Services alongside the Housing Solutions Team. This will provide a robust service which can be accessed through the Housing Helpline and Community Hubs, and which will provide home visits. Except for very straightforward cases, residents seeking assistance will be allocated a specialist prevention officer and caseloads will be monitored closely providing bespoke help to each family or individual threatened with homelessness.

To address homelessness, a range of other solutions are being put into place which includes increasing temporary accommodation provision (potentially through acquiring new properties as appropriate), allocating more social housing to homeless clients and supporting access to the private rented sector through financial incentives. Increasing the availability and supply of settled accommodation is vital, which is why the Council launched the new Landlord Enquiry and Tenancy Service (LETS). LETS is working actively with landlords across the city and providing incentives to encourage them to support those with

the greatest housing need. The Council is also participating in the Welsh Government's Leasing Scheme, which aims to provide secure, long-term lets to households at affordable prices. The Council manages the properties in this scheme, where landlords can claim up to £5,000 for repair works to the property. The Council has secured 22 properties as part of this scheme so far and it is hoped that at least a further 10 properties will be secured before the end of the financial year. LETS also manages the Council's own tenant matching scheme which offer a range of support services and benefits to both the applicant and the landlord with the aim of making tenancies successful for both parties.

## **Well-being Objective 4: Safe, confident and empowered communities – Summary**

The Council has maintained momentum with its house-building, neighbourhood regeneration and Community Hubs programmes, with targets for new homes hit at Quarter 2 and several major community schemes completed. However, conditions in the construction market, including increasing costs, the supply of materials and labour, and a slow-down with regards to contractors bidding for projects, have impacted the pace of delivery. This has resulted in the Council falling just short of its target of completing 1,000 new homes by December 2022, though those homes are currently in development. With 822 new homes completed within a challenging delivery environment, 385 more in construction and a further 86 new homes with appointed contractors due to start in 2023, good progress continues to be made.

The pressure on the housing market, especially the cost and lack of availability of homes in the private rented sector, is causing significant demand and cost pressures across numerous Council services. As in other areas of the Council, increasing rates of inflation are impacting upon the Council's neighbourhood regeneration programme and the emerging energy crisis can be expected to impact the sustainability of community services, including the leisure services contract with GLL.

The Council has continued to deliver a targeted multi-agency problem-solving group approach to localised complex anti-social behaviour hotspots. The problem-solving approach has been expanded and now includes a programme of activity in the city centre and Cathays, supported by additional funding secured from UK Government.

Over the course of the spring and summer, the Council led a city-wide response to the Ukraine refugee crisis, ensuring that refugees were welcomed, given a place to stay and that the city's wider public services were available and ready to support them. The number of arrivals, and the often-complex nature of their needs, means that demand pressures will continue to be felt across the public service system and so maintaining a cross-public service Ukraine response will continue to be a priority for the remainder of the financial year.



## Building new Council homes and investing in community facilities

The Council continues to do everything in its power to maximise the amount of affordable, energy-efficient and low-carbon housing in the city as well as investing in communities.

Cardiff Living, the Council's house-building programme, continues to deliver new homes at scale with 822 new homes completed to date and a further 385 currently being built on site.

As part of the investment in the South Riverside Business Corridor, Tudor Street has been regenerated to appeal as a shopping destination for both local residents and the wider community. The £5 million scheme has delivered improvements to the public realm, business environment, transport infrastructure and the shopfronts of 30 business premises. Two estate regeneration schemes have recently commenced at Pennsylvania and Lincoln Court in Llanedeyrn. The schemes will deliver safer and more attractive environments and improve the quality of residents' lives. Funding has been agreed for a further three schemes. Community engagement and consultation on the multi-generational Michaelston Wellbeing Village is continuing.

The Council is working in partnership with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board to deliver new, integrated facilities which will enhance community health and wellbeing provision at key locations around the city. Maelfa Health & Wellbeing Hub opened in July, delivering Cardiff's first integrated community health and wellbeing centre, supporting joined-up service provision and partnership working. The number of visitors to Hubs and Libraries has increased by 15% between Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 this year. Views to the Hubs website are 334% higher in Quarter 2 this year than at the same time last year. These increases are, at least, in part fuelled by the increased demand for money and advice services. In spite of the increased demand, 98% of customers were satisfied with the service they received.

Despite one of the largest house-building programmes in the UK, at the end of Quarter 2, 8,204 households were on the common waiting list for a Council or Housing Association property in the city. In the first six months of 2022/23, 831 properties were let. On average over 400 new applications are received each month. Current market conditions are affecting the pace at which house-building schemes can be completed. The sector as a whole is being affected by the knock-on effects of the pandemic and the increasing costs of energy and materials with a number of well-established contractors recently ceasing trading.

In response, the Council is looking to increase the number of properties it purchases as well as expanding the modular builds on the Gasworks site. Work is also continuing to further decarbonise the house-building programme; in partnership with Welsh Government, the Council is undertaking its first net zero pilot housing project at the St Teilo's site in Llanedeyrn – the scheme will deliver 50 new zero carbon Council homes. A new Regeneration Strategy is being developed to support district and local centres across the city. Following the opening of the first health and wellbeing centre in the east of the city, work is continuing on the second, the Ely & Caerau Parkview Wellbeing Hub. Further joint Hubs will be developed on strategic planning sites.

## Ensuring children and adults are protected from risk of harm and abuse

Safeguarding and child protection remain key priorities for the Council. Almost 80% of Council staff have now completed safeguarding awareness training and the Level 1 online module of the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Despite the improvement in the number of staff completing the safeguarding awareness training, some service areas have low overall compliance figures. Targeted training work in those service areas is scheduled to begin in Quarter 3. The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy will also be reviewed following the publication of best practice by Welsh Government due in Quarter 3.

Although the volume of referrals to adult protection has remained stable, the increased complexity of queries means that each case requires more resources.

The Council has also continued to ensure those receiving care are empowered to retain a voice in the provision of the service they receive. In August, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out an inspection of the Council's domiciliary care services. The report highlighted that people appear happy with the support they receive, and their physical, mental, and social needs are recognised and supported. The inspection found that services showed commitment to achieving positive outcomes for their service users. The Inspector also described interactions between people and staff as warm and positive, and recognised that staff are familiar with the needs and likes of the individuals they support.

Difficulties in recruiting to posts has had an impact on services – the roll-out of collaborative communication training to social services staff has been delayed and while RISE (the Council's specialist support service for victims of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence) has recently been successful in filling some roles, there is a delay while new staff are trained. To address ongoing issues with the recruitment and retention of staff within Adult Services, branding and marketing activity has been refreshed with web and social media presence enhanced to raise the profile of Adult Services vacancies. Work also continues with Cardiff Cares Academy. Since it was set up in 2021, 256 people have been supported by the Academy and 86 have found jobs within the sector.

Working in partnership with the Integrated Health and Social Care Team, the Council continues to develop the @home programme. This will provide the foundation for delivering services within the community, with staff working in a geographical setting aligned to GP clusters. The trial of the first integrated working hub on the site of the former St Isan care home in Llanishen is also being finalised, with health colleagues and local providers working together to meet the holistic needs of individuals within the locality setting.

## Creating safe and inclusive communities

The Council has continued to deliver a targeted multi-agency problem-solving group approach to localised complex anti-social behaviour hotspots. Successful project work with partners has taken place in locations such as St Mellons Skate Park and Lydstep flats and park in Gabalfa which have both led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour, and Clifton

Street in Adamsdown which focused on complex issues. Additional project work is currently underway in Cowbridge Road East, Canton to tackle street drinking and anti-social behaviour. Following the successful Safer Streets Fund bid for £750,000 in July 2022, planned initiatives with partners to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour, and women's safety have been taking place in the city centre and some residential areas of Cathays. With additional funding received from UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, the Community Safety Team is expanding, which will provide more support to delivering the priority areas of the Community Safety Partnership – Street Based Lifestyle, Problem Solving and Violence Prevention.

Over the course of the spring and summer the Council led an effective city-wide response to the Ukraine refugee crisis, ensuring that refugees were welcomed, given a place to stay and that the city's wider public services were available and ready to support them. The number of arrivals, and the often-complex nature of their needs, means that demand pressures are being felt across the public service system. A dedicated in-house team was quickly established to support the Ukraine response, including a move-on team to deliver transition to long-term housing arrangements.

The delivery of wraparound support for Afghan nationals at two bridging accommodation settings has continued, including commissioning additional support services and delivering Cardiff's resettlement quota. A strong partnership approach is in place with the Ministry of Defence, Home Office, Council departments, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and voluntary sector. The work of the service was recognised through being awarded the UK Housing Hero Awards 2022 'Team of the Year award'.

Parenting support and a dedicated team for refugee families with under 5s, in partnership with health visitors and maternity services, has also been put in place, and a dedicated refugee employability service is based in Central Library Hub. A move-on service for new refugees coming through the asylum route has also been established, with effective partnership between Housing Options and the Welsh Refugee Council which prevents homelessness during the 28-day move-on period.

Work is ongoing to transition the commissioned support service in-house to become a generic refugee support team which works flexibly across the broader range of schemes.

### **Promoting the Welsh language**

The number of Welsh speakers in Cardiff has increased over the last ten years, despite a decline in other areas of Wales. The 2021 census showed that the number of people who could speak, read and write Welsh has increased by almost a quarter – 23.0% or over 6,500 people – which is the largest numerical and percentage increase across all Welsh Local Authorities. The proportion of people with no skills in Welsh in Cardiff also fell from 83.8% in 2011 to 82.5% in 2021.

Work has also started on Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary School, the first dual-stream school in Cardiff – a school with one form of entry for Welsh-medium education and one form of entry for dual-language education in English and Welsh. The new school is expected

to admit its first pupils in September 2023 and represents real innovation in the way language will be taught.

### **Working together to support a healthier and more active population**

A programme of work to tackle health inequalities has been commenced in partnership with the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board. The work will focus on tackling inequalities in childhood vaccination uptake, bowel screening rates and levels of childhood obesity, informed by the joint approach to data analysis developed in partnership during the pandemic.

Work is continuing to promote health screenings and increase activity levels within the Hubs. Hub staff have received Public Health Wales (PHW) Screening Champion training to provide them with the tools to talk to customers about appropriate screening programmes. Gentle exercise classes, such as Elderfit, Low Impact Functional Training (LIFT) classes, walking football/netball etc., have been offered at Hubs throughout the city as part of the preventative health agenda.

Work is also taking place in collaboration with Sports Cardiff to work towards progressing Eat Well Move More including the provision of free sports equipment to children and young people via their library cards as well as staff training in the 'Dragon Play to Learn' initiative which aligns storytelling with physical activity.

### **Leisure Services**

The significant budget pressures faced by local authorities over recent years has led numerous Councils to reduce the level of their leisure service provision and some have chosen to close leisure centres. Despite the pressures, Cardiff Council has remained committed to keeping all its leisure centres open and to retaining and enhancing the level of service. Following the sustained impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Cabinet was updated on the implications for GLL who had suffered a significant loss of income across their business. Whilst short-term funding was made available through government hardship support to keep the leisure industry afloat, the main implication for the contract in Cardiff was that GLL were no longer able to fund a deficit in Cardiff from surpluses elsewhere. In response, Cabinet authorised a detailed review of the GLL Leisure Services contract to identify potential variations that would improve the long-term sustainability of the contract and protect service delivery. The recent energy crisis has accentuated the problem and, prior to the UK Government intervention, was forecast to more than double the anticipated operating deficit of the leisure contract operator. Following the review of the Leisure Services Contract, a number of variations to improve the financial performance of the contract were agreed by Cabinet in October 2022. This included an agreement in principle to upgrade the energy infrastructure at each leisure centre to provide lower cost renewable energy.

The Leisure Services Follow-up Review published by Audit Wales in October 2022 noted that there was a "a clear leisure vision for the city supported by a five-year strategy" and that the Council has strengthened its governance and oversight arrangements of the GLL contract.

Whilst the Council has made swift and good progress addressing Audit Wales's proposals for improvement, the focus moving forward will be to ensure the sustainable development principle fully drives future leisure provision.

## **Well-being Objective 5: A capital city that works for Wales – Summary**

Building on the close partnership with the private sector, which provided significant and proactive support to businesses during the pandemic, the Council continues to make good progress supporting the city's economy through delivery of its recovery strategy, major projects programme and portfolio of regeneration activity.

To drive up productivity, a focus on delivering more – and better – jobs continues to be maintained, with the Council playing an active role in creating and safeguarding 483 new jobs at Quarter 2. Major projects, including Central Square, Central Quay and Canal Quarter, are also continuing on-site and the Indoor Arena project is progressing well. Phase 1 of the Canal Quarter scheme will be completed in summer 2023. The Council's capital programme is, however, exposed to risk associated with cost inflation, particularly construction materials and labour, which will need to be actively managed to ensure that projects progress in line with the timescales intended.

More broadly, the city centre continues to perform well; footfall has recovered to just under pre-pandemic levels, with figures at Quarter 2 showing figures as just over 11.2 million, and live and cultural events, as well as the music scene, are returning. A focus is being placed on rebuilding the city's event and cultural offer, ensuring that the impact of its creative and cultural assets is maximised. Income recovery at Council venues will remain an area of challenge as, across the UK, the cost-of-living crisis is likely to impact recovery.

Looking ahead, the cost-of-living crisis and a likely recession will impact local businesses, with energy costs representing a major challenge. As ever, the Council will continue to work alongside the city's private sector to develop a co-ordinated response.

## Leading the economic recovery in Wales

Cardiff's city centre footfall has recovered well with figures for the first two quarters of this year just under pre-pandemic levels and recovery continues across the commercial sector, with data for the first half of 2022 showing that office take-up in Cardiff reached 215,000 square feet. This is the highest half-year take-up since 2016, according to a recent report by property consultancy Savills. There also remains significant investment interest in the city, evidenced by the number of new premises being opened and the latest ONS data highlights that Cardiff has the highest positive margin between new start-up firms and failures in the UK.

The hospitality trade is reporting a positive outlook, though concerns remain that the impact of the cost-of-living crisis will become more apparent if the national economic outlook deteriorates. Confidence in key sectors, such as fintech and the creative industries, also remains high. FinTech Wales' latest report indicated that the sector has created over 1,000 jobs during the past year, with a significant number concentrated in Cardiff. The launch of Media.Cymru, a Council-supported £50 million collaboration, will further support research and development in Cardiff's creative and media cluster.

A decision is still awaited regarding the Council's bids to UK Government's Levelling Up Fund; a £50 million bid for the Metro link between the city centre and the Bay, as well as a £20 million bid for the Atlantic Wharf public realm development, were submitted over the summer. Work is also ongoing to maximise the benefits of the Shared Prosperity Fund, which is to be allocated to places across the UK on a needs basis. A Cardiff Capital Region Regional Investment Plan has been submitted to UK Government, and a response is awaited. A Shared Prosperity Fund Delivery Team has been established to work with service areas in the Council to deliver the Shared Prosperity Fund Programme once approved.

## Major Projects

To support recovery from the pandemic, work continues in taking forward the Council's portfolio of major projects, including the Arena, Atlantic Wharf and the International Sports Village. The volatility of the construction market in terms of the price and availability of labour and materials does, however, pose a risk to major projects, with substantial cost increases due to inflation. The Council is working to ensure that sufficient capacity and resource is allocated to projects to ensure that they progress in line with the timescales intended. The Arena's Development Funding Agreement will be completed by March 2023, enabling a review of cost following significant price inflation, whilst a full business case for the Velodrome and Closed Loop Circuit will also go to Cabinet in Quarter 4.

## Leading a recovery programme for the City Centre and Bay

As part of the City Centre Recovery Action Plan, the Council continues to engage with businesses on issues such as return to work strategies and the cost-of-living crisis. Moving forward, the Council will share best practices amongst businesses in the city centre, as well as explore the establishment of new retail models – involving charities and community businesses – in order to raise footfall levels. Furthermore, progress is being made in terms

of ensuring that the city centre is cleaner, safer and better maintained, with the city centre management team effectively co-ordinating activity with public and private sector partners.

Additionally, work is ongoing to protect and revitalise historic buildings in Cardiff Bay. A planning application for the regeneration of Merchant Place and Cory Buildings – into a sixth form college – has been submitted for approval. The Council is also in discussion with the current lease holders of the Coal Exchange regarding development fundraising opportunities for the building.

### **Supporting innovation and business development**

The Council continues to support the development of small business infrastructure, recently helping Tramshed Tech to expand its co-working space in the city centre through the Transforming Towns scheme. This will provide additional space for knowledge-based businesses in Cardiff, helping to provide a platform for some of the most innovative and exciting new enterprises in the city to flourish.

The Economic Development Team has also put in place a Business Park Roadshow programme aimed at meeting local companies across the city and holding face-to-face sessions with local companies. The first location of the Business Roadshow programme was Cardiff Business Park in Llanishen, with a face-to-face session taking place on a new electric bus in November 2022.

Moving forward, to further support innovation and following a period of consultation, a final Smart City roadmap is to be completed and presented to Cabinet in Quarter 4. The roadmap will act as a catalyst for collaboration, innovative thinking, better designed services and will allow the city to exploit advances in technology.

### **Supporting the recovery of the cultural sector and major events programme**

The cultural sector was particularly impacted by the pandemic with venues having to close their doors and Cardiff's major events programme suspended. The city is now working to rebuild its event and cultural offer, maximising the impact of its creative and cultural assets.

Following publication of the Welsh Government's National Events Strategy over the summer the Council is developing its own Event Strategy which will be informed by the Welsh Government's approach. Alongside this, a funding application – to Welsh Government – is currently being developed by the Council for Cardiff to host an international music festival. The Council is also in the process of developing a bid to be a host city for the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship, which will be submitted to UEFA in the new financial year.

There is a need to be mindful moving forward of the continued impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality sector which, alongside skills shortages, is impacting the availability of staff to support the delivery of shows and projects. Additionally, the cost-of-living crisis has reduced the amount of disposable income many have to spend on events and culture.



## Well-being Objective 6: Cardiff grows in a resilient way – Summary

The Council has recognised the challenge presented by the Climate Emergency and developed a pathway to become a net zero carbon city by 2030. This includes key actions across areas such as transport, energy, housing, and food, which will not only improve the local environment, but improve the well-being of residents and visitors. For instance, the Council has invested to accelerate the shift in sustainable and active travel, with pop-up cycle lanes introduced in the pandemic now made permanent. Additionally, monitoring data shows that air quality has improved since pre-pandemic levels and work is ongoing to ensure that compliance continues into the long-term.

The impact of cost inflation, particularly on the One Planet capital programme, does represent a strategic risk for the Council, however, with transport schemes, renewable energy generation projects and the Council's housing retrofit programme subject to delays and price increases. Schemes related to enhancing the city's flood defences have been particularly impacted - costs have increased by over 75% against original estimates – and will need to be closely monitored moving forward.

Cardiff remains one of the best performing core cities for recycling; the cumulative half-year position for current recycling rates is just above the 64% target set by Welsh Government, at 64.02.%. A new Recycling Strategy has been approved which outlines steps that the Council will take to meet statutory recycling targets going forward.

## Delivering One Planet Cardiff

In response to the climate emergency, in October 2021 the Council published its One Planet Cardiff Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out priorities for delivering a net zero Council and city by 2030. To ensure that the city is on track to become carbon neutral, a 'pathway' analysis tool has since been developed, to determine the potential carbon impact of One Planet schemes and interventions. This provides a mechanism to justify interim carbon targets and will aid prioritisation and decision-making throughout the One Planet Cardiff programme.

A key decarbonisation project of the programme is the Cardiff Heat Network, which will bring low-carbon heat to both Council and non-Council owned buildings in Cardiff Bay. Whilst construction began on site in January 2022 – and was set to complete in three years' time – general delays, largely due to supply chain issues, has resulted in an additional six months being added to the completion date. On-site timing issues may also affect the eventual 'Heat-On' date. Nonetheless, these issues are manageable, with no immediate cost implications. Uncertainties are arising, however, regarding the detailed design of the Network, particularly interfaces with linked Council projects, such as the Indoor Arena and County Hall. Implications for the project's Business Plan are not yet known but scenario planning is being undertaken to assess potential impacts.

In order to develop options for other potential large-scale renewable energy projects on Council land, a delivery options analysis has been completed, along with a request to draw down funding for the next stage of design. Next steps, if the request is approved, include developing a full business case for consideration.

Furthermore, bid negotiation with Welsh Government is in progress to fund a 252 mixed-tenure external wall insulation scheme on unimproved British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF) properties in Llandaff North and Rumney. An Agreement in Principle has been received from Welsh Government but a Ministerial decision on funding is awaited to progress the scheme.

## Improving Air Quality

To assess air quality levels across Cardiff, Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations are monitored at locations across the city, as well as within Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). This includes Castle Street, which was previously assessed as the most polluted street in Cardiff. Additional real time monitoring is also undertaken at specific locations across the city, where pollutants such as particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>) are also monitored.

The Council's Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2022, which presents monitoring data captured in 2021, shows that air quality has improved since pre-pandemic levels, with all locations monitored compliant with 'limit values' for pollutants as set out in legislation. This improvement in air quality is likely linked to less vehicle usage as a result of the pandemic and from measures implemented as part of the Council's Clean Air Plan. Further work is being undertaken by the Council to ensure that long term NO<sub>2</sub> compliance on Castle Street is

achieved and, in line with a Welsh Government Direction, work has commenced on the assessment and modelling of options for a permanent transport scheme. Due to the complexities of the data and additional schemes being assessed, the timetable to complete the modelling assessment works is challenging. However, ongoing dialogue is being undertaken with Welsh Government to ensure that the feasibility works remain on schedule, to enable a decision to be made by the Council's Cabinet early in 2023.

To further improve real-time air quality data and assess and identify trends in pollution, work has been ongoing to finalise additional monitoring locations, with installation due to commence early in 2023.

### **Delivering Sustainable New Communities**

Consultation has been undertaken on the Vision, Issues and Objectives for the Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) and Strategic Growth and Spatial Options. The comments received during these consultations, together with a detailed review of evidence base studies and assessments, are being considered to inform the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, which is the first formal stage of consultation on the Replacement LDP. Whilst it was anticipated that this stage would commence in early 2023, there is a need to ensure that the Replacement LDP meets current and emerging priorities around housing and employment need, addresses the declared nature and climate emergencies, whilst supporting high-quality development through the promotion and delivery of sustainable communities. It is anticipated that the Preferred Strategy will be presented to Council in advance of formal public consultation commencing over summer 2023.

Despite the economic downturn, housing completions and associated infrastructure on many of the LDP strategic sites are being delivered in accordance with the master-planning principle. Further brownfield and greenfield developments are progressing to provide a range and choice of new developments across the city, including affordable housing.

### **Cardiff's Public Transport and Active Travel Systems**

Road traffic is one of the city's biggest contributing factors to climate change, as well as air pollution. The Council has therefore invested to accelerate the shift in sustainable and active travel, with pop-up cycle lanes introduced in the pandemic now made permanent. The new Active Travel Network Map for the city was submitted to Welsh Government for approval in June 2022. Once approved, the map will be published on the Council's website. The delivery of a city-wide cycle network is progressing with Route 1 from the city centre to the University Hospital of Wales nearing completion. Consultations on next stage routes are also in progress.

Key Transport White Paper projects also continue to be progressed; for instance, stage one of the Northern Bus and East-West Corridor WelTAG studies (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance: a process of optioneering and proving the case for transport projects in Wales) was completed earlier this year. Furthermore, major progress is being made on the design of the enhancement to Cardiff Central as well as the roll-out of Metro schemes. In

particular, the delivery of Phase 1 Cardiff Crossrail City Centre to Cardiff Bay Metro is in detailed planning stages.

Due to ongoing capacity constraints within the Council's Transport function and persistent recruitment difficulties, all 'Healthy Streets' projects have been suspended. A review is being undertaken to determine future deliverability, with a focus now placed on delivering other grant-funded projects and the city's Intelligent Transport System (ITS). The ITS involves combining information, communication and control technologies in a way that enables users to make better, safer and more co-ordinated use of transport networks. As part of this work, a draft ITS strategy was published for consultation over the summer. The feedback will be utilised to inform preparation of the final ITS Strategy, which will be reported to Cabinet in March 2023.

### **Flooding and Coastal Erosion**

Parts of the city's existing fluvial and coastal flood defences require improvement to meet the challenges of the climate emergency. Efforts to progress schemes have been subject to a range of pressures, including delays associated with Covid-19 and the scale of funding required. The costs have increased by over 75% against original estimates and capacity challenges within the Flood Risk Management Team have limited the pace of progress. As a result of these pressures, a decision has been taken to reduce the coastal defence improvement schemes in Cardiff East, with agreement from Welsh Government. An extensive amount of work has been undertaken on the full business case, tender and award process to reduce, as much as is reasonably practicable, the risks to Cardiff Council. Welsh Government's award process must be completed before the end of the financial year, as this is the cut-off point for funding.

Pressures have also resulted in delays in developing the Sustainable Water, Flood and Drainage Strategy for Cardiff, as required by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and the Flood Risk Regulations (2009) respectively. Limited staff resource in the Council's Flood Risk Management Team – compounded by recruitment issues due to a shortage of expertise in the current labour market – means that meeting the required timescale of 2023 for completing the Strategy is challenging. Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and neighbouring Local Authorities regarding an extension of the adoption and publication deadline.

Moving forward, an enhanced engagement programme will be developed with partners to support the public to enhance their own resilience to flooding. This includes improving communication regarding what to do in a flood, as well as raising awareness of the risk.

### **Waste and Recycling**

Cardiff's current recycling rate – as reported as the cumulative mid-year position – is just above the 64% target set by Welsh Government, at 64.02%. Whilst this is an improved position, the risk of failing to meet Welsh Government's statutory targets exposes the Council to a potential fine if it fails to meet the target and places additional financial costs on waste services. In October 2022, Audit Wales published a report which assesses waste

management in Cardiff, where it was noted that the Council will need to “*change its approach to recycling if it hopes to meet the statutory recycling target of 70% by 2025.*”.

Measures are continuing to be progressed to improve performance. After extensive engagement with Welsh Government and WRAP Cymru, and following consultation with the public, a new Recycling Strategy has been approved. The Strategy sets out the steps that the Council will take to meet statutory recycling targets, with attention now turned towards producing a phased implementation programme. Domestic collection trials, including segregated recycling and reduced residual waste, across the city will continue to inform implementation as the roll-out of the Strategy progresses.

The Council’s Month 6 budget monitoring report points towards overspends in collections – of just over £1.6 million. This reflects several factors, including higher staff costs – caused by greater levels of sickness and overtime – as well as increased vehicle costs, in particular the inflationary impact of fuel.

### Street Cleanliness

Cardiff is performing well overall in street cleanliness, with Quarter 2 results showing 92.02% of highways land inspected by the Local Authority being of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness. The Council also measures cleanliness on a ward basis, with a Key Performance Indicator on the number of wards where at least 90% of highways inspected meet the high or acceptable standards of cleanliness. At Quarter 2, 22 out of 29 wards (measured using the ward boundaries as they were at the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year) pass the 90% threshold, although the target is for all wards to be above 90%. While performance against this indicator has not met this target since the indicator was first introduced, performance has improved in 2022/23 (up from only 16 out of 29 wards meeting standards in Quarter 4 of 2021/22). The methodology for this Key Performance Indicator will be reviewed moving forward as overall, street cleanliness has consistently met targets, with over 90% of streets meeting cleanliness standards.

Nonetheless, to address the gap a programme of service reform continues to be progressed. Love Where You Live ‘Blitz’ teams have been deployed in Cathays and Plasnewydd, and a robust student plan is now in place for both areas. Additionally, litter bin sensors in free standing bins are now in place across the city to help the service manage demand more efficiently. Success has also been experienced with businesses signing up to the Council’s Commercial Trade collection, following targeted enforcement action in Grangetown. Moving forward, a focus will be placed on utilizing and interrogating data, to help further target resources where they are needed across the city.

## Well-being Objective 7: Modernising and Integrating Our Public Services – Summary

The pandemic was a time of significant challenge, but also one of change, dynamism, and innovation in Council services. The Council is committed to continuing the approach to service innovation, digitalisation, flexibility, and continued partnership working that characterised the pandemic response into business-as-usual post-Covid.

The Council faces significant in-year and medium-term budgetary challenge due to a combination of the legacy of the pandemic, energy pricing, pay pressures and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. The overall revenue monitoring position, as at Month 6 of the 2022/23 financial year, reflects a total projected net annual Council overspend of £7.394 million. Whilst there is continued pressure across several service areas, there are various factors impacting on the bottom-line position, many of which were not evident when budgets were set in March 2022. This will require ongoing corporate oversight, financial discipline at every level of the organisation and effective planning to manage areas of high or escalating cost.

Good progress continues to be made embedding hybrid working across the Council, supported by the effective deployment of technology and the creation of new office spaces in County Hall. In parallel, the Council is responding in year to the increases in energy costs in its operational estate and new short- and medium-term options for core and operational estate which allow the Council to continue to respond effectively to the new hybrid working model and the impact of rising energy costs are being developed and will be presented to Cabinet in early 2023. Progress has also been made in reducing the scale of the Council's asset footprint whilst improving the quality and environmental impact of buildings.

The Council faces a number of workforce challenges. Difficulty recruiting and retaining staff – ensuring sufficient capacity and appropriate skills – is particularly acute in Children's Services and in Adult Social Care, but it is also having an impact across all directorates and is impacting the delivery of all Well-being Objectives. Discrete initiatives are in place to respond to acute service pressures and an enhanced approach to workforce planning at a corporate level has been put in place. Sickness absence has also increased with the Quarter 2 results showing that 12.3 working days shifts, per full-time equivalent Local Authority employee, have been lost. Rates are greatly reduced when Covid-19 related sickness are considered.

## Financial Resilience

The Council faces a significant in-year and medium-term budgetary challenge due to a combination of the legacy of the pandemic, energy pricing, pay pressures and the cost-of-living crisis. The overall revenue monitoring position, as at Month 6 of the 2022/23 financial year, reflects a total projected net annual Council overspend of £7.394 million. Whilst there is continued pressure across several service areas, there are various factors impacting on the bottom-line position, many of which were not evident when budgets were set in March 2022. In financial terms, the pressures within Children's Services are the most significant and in the main, relate to the high numbers and costs of residential placements. Across broader services, post-pandemic recovery has been overshadowed by the energy and cost-of-living crisis, which has resulted in significant expenditure pressures in areas such as food costs, fuel and utilities.

Within Children's Services an urgent programme of work has been established to seek to reduce spend and deliver improvements across a range of services linked specifically to the issue of external placements. Across the Council as a whole, given the continued pressure on the budget position, all services have reviewed opportunities to deliver further in-year efficiencies. Between Month 6 and the financial year end, every effort will continue to be made to reduce the overspend to a balanced position or to identify other sources of available funding, in order that financial resilience is maintained. It is therefore important that Council directorates retain a focus on their financial positions and ensure that tight financial controls are in place over the remainder of this financial year.

A sharp focus will also need to be placed on the capital position – the Council's capital investment programme plays an essential role in both stimulating the local economy and delivering local services during the post Covid-19 recovery period. Construction cost inflation is significant, however, resulting from increased tender activity, material availability and labour shortages. This represents a delivery and affordability risk to projects to remain within estimated budgets following the outcome of tenders and may require re-prioritisation of schemes to be undertaken, including changes in specification, where this allows the same outcomes to be met. It remains important that directorates continue to allocate sufficient capacity and resource to ensuring projects progress in line with the timescales intended, and robust business cases continue to be essential.

Council will consider the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Strategy and a refreshed five-year Capital Programme in Quarter 4 of 2022/23.

## Building upon our digital agenda

The Council recognises the opportunities offered by technology to deliver services more efficiently. As a result, the Council's digital offer has been improved and expanded, including the breadth of services available to citizens on online platforms. For example, citizens are now able to report graffiti and can check digital parking permits via the Council's website, Chatbot and App. Quarter 2 results show that the Council is slightly behind target in terms of the number of customer contacts using digital channels, as well as the total number of webcast hits.

Digital is at the heart of the transformation agenda for Council Services. This includes developments planned in 2023 to utilise new technology to automate tasks and speed up back-office processes.

The Council is also continuing to improve the collection, presentation and analysis of data across the public service system, to join up data sets and better inform decision-making. A Corporate Performance Dashboard, which presents updates on the steps and KPIs within the Council's Corporate Plan, was published earlier this year, whilst a Management Dashboard, which improves the accessibility and usage of key data sets – such as training compliance and sickness absence – for managers within the Council has completed its first testing phase. Additionally, a City Performance Dashboard, which brings together a number of data sets to present a picture of life in Cardiff, has been created and published on the Council's website.

### **Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings**

The Council's land and property estate is considerable, with property running costs representing the second largest call on the Council's budget after staff costs. Changes to the way in which the Council delivers its services is linked to the management of its operational property estate and therefore strategic estate management offers an ongoing opportunity to unlock efficiency and improve service delivery. This is particularly relevant in the post-Covid recovery period, as services adapt to working in new and different ways, such as hybrid working.

For hybrid working, new touchdown spaces have been created, including flexible workspaces, meeting rooms with hybrid facilities and online desk booking systems in County Hall and this work will continue to be developed in line with the Council's Medium Term Core Office Strategy.

The delivery of capital receipts remains a critical objective of the Council's Property Strategy and the 2022/23 Annual Property Plan, approved in September 2022, sets a target of £5.5 million. At the end of Quarter 2, £2.5 million had been achieved. Another critical objective of the Property Strategy involves the modernisation of the Council's estate, with a target to complete 100% of programmed Priority 1 asset works each year. The 2022/23 programme is currently progressing subject to affordability and contractor availability. A key piece of ongoing work relates to carbon reduction refit proposals, to ensure maximum value for money and impact within the retained estate. Reducing the carbon footprint of the build environment is also an important component of the One Planet Cardiff Strategy and a Build Environment Carbon Reduction Board has been established to strengthen oversight of progress.

### **The Council's Workforce: Sickness Absence**

Following a substantial reduction in sickness absence during the pandemic, sickness rates have increased. The Quarter 2 results shows that 12.3 working days/ shifts – per full-time equivalent (FTE) Local Authority employee – have been lost due to sickness absence. This is



against a target of 9.5. Much of this increase relates to a large number of staff absent due to Covid-19, with the result dropping to 10.12 FTE days if Covid sicknesses are removed. Sickness absence is also not uniform across the Council, with sickness particularly high in Street Scene and Adult Services. A targeted approach will continue to be applied to improve performance.

Work is also continuing to support staff wellbeing generally, with additional support provided to staff suffering with poor mental health. As part of this work, a series of support sessions are currently being rolled out to Line Managers and Trade Unions, to ensure that they are aware of what support services are available across the Council, for promotion to staff.

### **The Council's Workforce: Recruitment and Representation**

The Council faces a number of workforce challenges in ensuring sufficient capacity, appropriate skills and in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly given the level of competition for some professions. This challenge is particularly acute in Children's Services and in adult social care, but it is also having an impact across all directorates and Well-being Objectives. To respond to these challenges, a new five-year workforce strategy is in the process of being developed and a consultation commenced in Quarter 2. The Strategy will be finalised and presented to Cabinet in March 2023.

Another key element of this work is ensuring that the Council's workforce is representative of the communities it serves. The Council is currently working to respond to the recommendations of the Race Equality Task Force and the Cabinet will formally respond to the recommendations of the Task Force in December. Further to this, the Council's wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is being reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose and to consider which components should be mandatory for all staff. Cardiff Works has also created a comprehensive engagement plan, which covers raising awareness of vacancies within the community and providing support to those wishing to register with the service.

### **Socially Responsible Procurement**

The Council spends over £550 million a year procuring a diverse range of goods, services and works from over 8,000 suppliers and contractors. Whilst the Council's primary responsibility is to manage public money with probity and to ensure that value for money is achieved, procurement enables the Council to progress a number of its priorities such as decarbonisation, fair work and community benefits. Recognising this, in October 2022, the Council published a new Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy (2022-2027), which has a number of key objectives, including contributing to the aim to be a carbon-neutral city by 2030 and increasing the community benefits delivered through Council contracts. The delivery of the Strategy will be managed through an annually updated Delivery Plan, with progress reported and published on an annual basis.

One of the key objectives of the strategy is to make procurement spend more accessible to local small business and the third sector. Quarter 2 results show that the Council is slightly behind target in terms of the percentage of overall spend within Cardiff-based organisations

(50.43% against a target of 52%), as well as the percentage of overall spend with Cardiff Capital Region-based organisations (63.66% against a target of 66%). A detailed spend analysis has been undertaken to identify opportunities to increase local spend, with a detailed project plan – to drive this forward – finalised.

### **Public Engagement**

In line with the Local Government Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council is currently in the process of developing a new Citizen Engagement Strategy, with a focus on engaging and involving hard-to-reach groups in decision-making. Stakeholder engagement has been completed, whilst direct engagement is currently being undertaken with individuals and organisations who can offer insight and guidance into how the Council can strengthen engagement and consultation practices with underrepresented groups.

In addition, the Council's customer service agenda continues to be delivered. Online Customer Service Training was launched in October 2022, which is mandatory for all staff to complete. Additionally, Customer Service Strategy Standards have been circulated to all staff and will be made available on the Council's website in due course.

### **Pandemic Management**

Due to the success of the vaccination programme, the course of the pandemic has changed, and the link between the virus, serious illness, hospitalisation, and death has been weakened significantly. The national policy position has graduated beyond crisis response towards the ongoing management of Covid-19 as a vaccine-preventable disease. Following the removal of the majority of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2022, the Test, Trace, Protect Services has been scaled down and the required reduction in staff numbers has taken place, with most staff repurposed. All staff have been supported throughout this transition, with a register of leavers maintained should scale-up be required.

The situation, particularly in high-risk settings, will continue to be monitored moving forward. A live reporting tool has been created which highlights clusters of cases within Health and Social Care settings. Multi-agency meetings, related to Adult Services, will continue to take place monthly, with Public Health Wales colleagues attending Care Provider Forums to provide updates. The Council, alongside partners, remains ready to respond to any changes in national policy – should it be needed – to keep citizens and staff safe.