

# Mid-Year Assessment of Performance 2023/24

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## About This Report

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

As part of its performance management arrangements, Cardiff Council produces a Mid-Year and End-of-Year Self-Assessment of performance in delivering its Wellbeing Objectives.

These Wellbeing 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 2023-26](#).

These are:

1. Cardiff is a great place to grow up
2. Cardiff is a great place to grow older
3. Supporting people out of poverty
4. Safe, confident and empowered communities
5. A capital city that works for Wales
6. One Planet Cardiff
7. Modernising and integrating our public services

For each Wellbeing Objective, the areas of progress and performance and risk are summarised with next steps identified.

In undertaking the mid-year and end-of-year assessments, the Council fulfils its statutory duties in relation to both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and the publication of the reports ensures that Cabinet receive an update on the delivery of their policy agenda and performance of statutory services.

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

The assessment of performance contained within the Mid-Year 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 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 Wellbeing 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 more than 10% from the target.

- **Progress against the steps in each Wellbeing Objective** – Each Wellbeing Objective within the Corporate Plan also contains a set of ‘steps’ or actions. Monitoring progress against 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 the year that provide residents, businesses and other city stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on a wide range of Council services and initiatives. In addition, the Council’s [Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2022/23](#) 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 Month 6 Budget Monitoring Report (link when published) serves to inform of the Council’s financial position in respect of the year ending 31 March 2024 and its findings contribute to the assessment contained within the Mid-Year Assessment Report.
- **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.

## Wellbeing Objective 1: Cardiff is a great place to grow up

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for ensuring Cardiff is a great place to grow up 2023/24:

- Becoming a Child Friendly City
- Supporting education recovery post-pandemic
- Continuing to deliver the Cardiff 2030 vision for education and learning
- Shifting the balance of care: place
- Shifting the balance of care: people
- Shifting the balance of care: practice
- Protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and families

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators



#### Steps



A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

## A Child Friendly City

Cardiff became the first British city to be awarded Child Friendly City status by UNICEF with formal recognition received in September 2023 followed by a formal agreement in October. A sustainability plan has been agreed with UNICEF outlining a programme of work for the coming three years.

## Deliver the Cardiff 2030 Vision for education and learning

The Council continues to demonstrate a sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education in Cardiff. Attainment outcomes for pupils have been above or well above the Welsh average for GCSE and A-Level results in Summer 2023 for A\* to A and A\* to C results. School inspection outcomes have been good, especially in the primary sector. Of the 41 Estyn school inspections since March 2022, only two have been placed in a statutory category.

Cardiff Commitment engagement continues to improve, with 300 work experience placements secured through the What's Next project and additional partners onboarded including Cardiff and Vale Health Board, BBC Studios, construction providers and several Council departments.

Schools are, however, experiencing a number of pressures and challenges impacting children and young people post-COVID. These include:

- **School Attendance:** The fall in attendance levels post-pandemic remains an area of concern, having yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. In primary schools, attendance in 2022/23 was 91.7%, compared with 88.87% in 2021/22 and around 95% prior to the pandemic. In secondary schools, attendance was 88.20% in 2022/23, compared with 86.03% in 2022/21 and around 94% prior to the pandemic. The percentage of persistent absence (below 50% threshold) in secondary schools is also below target at Quarter 2. In response, the engagement programme with pupils, parents and schools is positively impacting the position, with the figures for academic year 2022/23 showing improvement.
- **Fixed-term exclusions:** Exclusions in both primary and secondary schools have risen in the 2022/23 academic year. These rates remain higher in secondary schools than in primary schools, with secondary schools reporting an increase of around 35% in 2022/23. The Education directorate continues to work closely with schools to support those with high rates of exclusions and supporting schools on pupil behaviour.
- **Additional Learning Needs:** The Council has made good progress on meeting the requirements of the new ALN reforms, with all specified year groups transferred to the ALN system in accordance with Welsh Government timescales. At Quarter 2, 131 new ALN places were created against a target of 141, though the supply of places is not keeping up with the rising demand. In July 2023, Cabinet approved plans to progress with projects to increase the total number of ALN places, covering a range of ages and complex needs, to 1,755.

- Pupil Development and Early Years – there has been a reduction in pupil development at reception into Primary School, with, for example, expected language ability well below pre-pandemic levels.
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing: The increase in the number of children with emotional health and wellbeing needs remains an ongoing challenge.
- Electively Home Educated: There has been a significant increase in the number of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) following the pandemic. The cohort in Cardiff has doubled in size between 2019 (219 children) and 2023 (443 children), though similar increases have been seen across Wales. The Council has a statutory responsibility to meet with a child who is being educated at home at least once a year to ensure the suitability of education is maintained and that the child is making suitable progress; during the pandemic this annual visit became a phone call. Concerns remain in relation to the attainment of EHE pupils and potentially safeguarding risks that will need to be actively managed.

Schools are also facing significant budgetary challenges, driven by a combination of record levels of inflation (which has devalued spending power despite the Council providing funding to schools above the Welsh Government settlement level), increasing and increasingly complex demand (see above) and an increase in vacant places across the city's school system (see below).

As of the Month 6 Budget Monitoring position, the Education directorate is projecting a £1.775m annual overspend with home-to-school transport, catering, and out-of-county placements sources of cost pressure. Further to this, meeting the cost of Universal School Meals represents an area of risk as the Council awaits confirmation that the funding levels received will be sufficient to meet the cost of provision.

Over the medium term the fall in birth rates projected across the city is projected to result in an increase in the number of vacant places across schools in Cardiff. These demographic trends will bring additional financial pressures to several schools in the short term and, over the medium term, is projected to impact the financial sustainability of the wider school system.

For 2023/24, the Council has committed circa £66m to the Schools Asset Programme to invest in the school estate to increase capacity where needed and improve the condition of school buildings. A Strategic Framework for Schools Organisational Planning is being progressed which will deliver additional secondary places at five secondary schools, including additional Welsh-medium places, and a new Early Years Unit. However, inflationary pressures are impacting on the Council's investment programme, both on maintaining the quality of existing schools and on the delivery of the School Organisation Programme.

## Shifting the balance of care and protecting vulnerable children and young people

Though significant pressures on the service remain, the Council has made good progress in delivering the Striving for Excellence in Children's Services Strategy 2023-26. This progress can be evidenced by a demonstrable shift within the balance of care where, at Quarter 2, there has been a reduction in the proportion of children placed in external residential placements and an increase in the number of children fostered by local authority foster carers, as well as an increase in the number of children returned home from care.

The Council is also progressing the delivery of its Accommodation Strategy to address the rising demand and increasing costs of placements for children looked after. The Strategy aims to increase in-house residential provision for children looked after by securing additional properties within Cardiff, reducing the Council's reliance on external providers. This is critical given that the Month 6 Budget Monitoring position projects an overspend of £3.185m in Children's Services, primarily due to sustained demand and higher prices for accommodation for children looked after. This does represent a significant reduction from the £6.6m overspend at year-end in 2022/23 and points to the impact of the Accommodation Strategy.

Despite this work, finding suitable accommodation for children and young people, particularly those with complex needs, has been challenging. The percentage of children looked after in regulated placements in Cardiff is 56.9% against a target of 60%, and the percentage of children looked after in regulated placements either in Cardiff or a neighbouring local authority is 76.7% against a target of 80%. Equally, and despite the progress made in delivering the Accommodation Strategy, the percentage of children placed in regulated placements (excluding kinship) and in in-house residential placements is short of the target set at Quarter 2.

To accelerate the shift in the balance of care, operational process improvements have continued to be delivered within the Council's Fostering Team to promote in-house fostering. In Quarter 2, 135 children were placed with in-house foster carers, exceeding the target of 130. Progress in this area is key in reducing the Council's reliance on private independent fostering agencies and bringing down placement costs.

The sector continues to face a national workforce crisis, but the strategic interventions identified to respond to this locally are having an impact. Vacancy rates in Children's Services have improved throughout the year, reducing from 27% in March 2023 to 16% in September 2023.

In addition to local demand pressures, national policy decisions are causing additional pressures on the Children's Services system. The aspiration to eliminate profit from the care sector is exacerbating the lack of availability of accommodation for children and young people. The widening of the National Autism Strategy to include all neurodiversity is leading to additional demand on already stretched services.

Children's Services is one of a number of important services that support vulnerable children and young people. With demand rising and budgets constrained across public



services, partners are reducing their services, leaving Children's Services increasingly as the service of last resort. The introduction of the Right Care Right Person framework by South Wales Police over the coming period will, in particular, place new pressures on Children's (and Adult) Services.

The implementation of the new Youth Justice 'Building Safer Futures Together' Strategy continues to be delivered effectively with first-time entrants and re-offending rates well below targets. Whilst there has been a reduction in entrants to the Youth Justice System, the impact of diverting children from youth justice has placed significant pressure on other services for young people within Cardiff.

## Wellbeing Objective 2: Cardiff is a great place to grow older

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for making Cardiff a great place to grow older in 2023/24:

- Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an Age-Friendly City
- Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services
- Working in partnership to deliver high-quality sustainable care and support
- Supporting unpaid carers and valuing their role
- Ensuring our services meet the needs of those living with dementia

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators



#### Steps



A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

## **Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an age-friendly city and ensuring our services meet the needs of those living with dementia**

The Annual Age-Friendly Cardiff Highlight Report, due to be published in November 2023, will set out the good progress being made in relation to the Council's priorities. Corporate awareness of Dementia is increasing with the percentage of staff completing the Dementia Friendly training module up to 58%, though this is short of the 85% target.

Areas of notable progress involves supporting older people into work, with the appointment of employment mentors. At Quarter 2, there were approximately 150 individuals, aged 50 or over, being supported into either employment or training by the mentors. Older people are also supported to improve their digital skills, with training offers available across the city to help build confidence and improve familiarity with common digital products, such as Microsoft Office.

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

Care provision is generally good following a period of real concern about the resilience of the service. Access to domiciliary care is very good with all cases allocated to care provider by the end of each day whilst the availability of residential care is generally good, with some issues in accessing more specialist care home placements.

Despite excellent work to stabilize the provision of care, challenges remain. The recruitment and retention of qualified social workers and occupational therapists is a national challenge that remains clearly evident in Cardiff. As of Quarter 2, the percentage of adult social work vacancies stood at 21.98%, which is above target. There are also assessment delays in the community demanding that all cases are carefully prioritized. An Adult Services Workforce Strategy has been developed in response and a series of interventions are being progressed, including the launch of a "Social Work Cardiff" brand to promote recruitment to the service, the development of a Trusted Assessor approach to empower staff and reduce duplication, the recruitment of Resource Assistants to reduce administration for qualified staff and the introduction of a new streamlined Assessment and Care Planning process.

Excellent progress has been made to support the preventative agenda, with a programme of support offered across the city. Citizen feedback suggests the interventions are successful with 98% of people reporting that they feel able to live independently at home following support from the Independent Living Service. Further to this, 90% of people who contacted the First Point of Contact team have not contacted the team again for at least 6 months and Occupational Therapists now review all cases at the front door to identify alternative solutions to care. Service development is ongoing to further develop technology enabled care, aids and adaptations, which will support more people to remain independent. The Community Resource Team (CRT) homecare service modernisation programme is leading to improved continuity of care. At mid-year, 100% of service users were satisfied with the service which is now offering a rapid bridging service from its emergency unit to prevent admissions.

Despite good progress against key corporate plan steps, financial pressures continue and an overspend is projected at Month 6. This is offset by underspends and other budget planning arrangements, so a balanced position is currently shown with full detail available in the Budget Monitoring report considered by Cabinet in November. The spend on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) to deliver disabled adaptations is over budget, necessitating a pause in the allocation of facilities to support independent living if no additional funding found. Not only does this represent budgetary challenge, but also impacts prevention. Further budgetary challenges are likely to arise with an anticipated reduction to the Regional Integration Fund next year.

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

The Council continues to work closely with Health colleagues to ensure a smooth, safe, and timely transition from hospital to help free up beds. Significant improvements to hospital discharge arrangements have been secured with the Integrated Discharge Hub and new hospital discharge pathways working well. Work is ongoing to develop a suite of new performance indicators to clearly demonstrate these improvements and the impact of the Council's interventions. In the meantime, the service is recording and reporting interim measures at Directorate level. On average, 43 discharges with care are being achieved each week, contributing to improved patient flow and increased bed capacity across all University Health Board (UHB) sites. In Quarter 2, 73% of referrals to the Integrated Discharge Hub were triaged within one working day against a target of 85%. The deep dive review of hospital social work has also improved flow, with hospital social work cases down from 160 in April to 107 and minimal unallocated social work cases at present.

The availability of specialist care homes for those with dementia and nursing, however, remains an issue, often resulting in the need to pay above the cost of care. The current commissioning arrangements also require reform as they do not allow effective market management or certainty for providers, leading to a risk that care providers may withdraw services. This is being mitigated as far as possible by ongoing communication with the sector. A cost of care exercise is under way for care homes. A long-term plan for Adult Services is currently being developed based on prevention, alternative models of care and cost-effective commissioning, to ensure the Service is sustainable into the future.

Changes to the legal environment present additional risks following a Supreme Court ruling that local authorities must provide and pay for "after care services" for out of county placements following re-admission to hospital under section 117 of the Mental Health Act. Given the size and scale of Cardiff this is likely to disproportionately impact the Council with potentially significant cost and delivery implications.

### **Supporting unpaid carers and valuing their role**

The support for carers continues to be improved through the effective delivery of key Corporate Plan steps. The Hubs for All approach has been successfully developed allowing people with care and support needs to access sessions within their community and a package of support measures has been made available to support unpaid carers. Within

Care Hubs (Day Centers), over 3,600 service user sessions have been delivered so far this year, providing person centered activities, social activity and invaluable unpaid carer respite.

### **Older persons housing**

The Council is committed to delivering modern, fit-for-purpose older persons housing that supports independent living and has an ambitious delivery plan for developing new schemes. Following the success of two supporting living schemes for individuals with mental health and learning disabilities – Blue Dragon and Llys Maelfryn – further schemes are due to open in December which will further allow for the step down from residential care. A Pipeline of schemes for the next 3 years has also been developed.

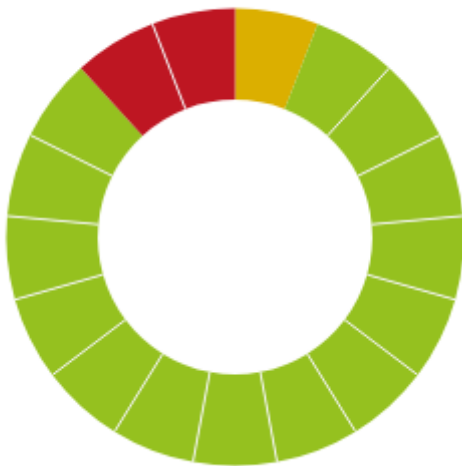
## Wellbeing Objective 3: Supporting people out of poverty

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for supporting people out of poverty in 2023/24:

- Supporting those most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis
- Continuing our Living Wage City ambition
- Tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators



#### Steps



A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

## **Cost-of-Living Crisis**

In response to the cost-of-living crisis the Council's support offer continues to be delivered effectively. Between April and September 2023 almost 3,300 people were helped with Universal Credit financial support; this figure has already exceeded the number of people anticipated to need help during 2023/24. During the same period the Money Advice Team has identified additional weekly benefit of over £10m for its clients. The Council has also reviewed its cost-of-living support to ensure that it is relevant and meets prevailing needs with key interventions, such as warm spaces at Community Hubs, planned from the end of October 2023. The Council's early intervention policy also ensures that Council contract holders (tenants) are contacted at an early stage to prevent rent arrears from escalating.

The alignment of Council support services, such as the Welfare Liaison team and Money Advice Team, has ensured additional capacity that has unlocked support for longer hours, including late nights and Saturdays. Services are now provided from eight Community Hubs on a drop-in basis including Ely & Caerau, St. Mellons and Grangetown, increasing the reach of the team.

The impact of inflation and rising costs on households means that, despite the Council's programme of support, the crisis is having an impact on the lives of many people which in turn is leading to service pressures across the Council. Housing costs, for instance, are becoming unaffordable due to the rising costs of mortgages, rent, food and energy. This has led to an increase in social service referrals for vulnerable people and greater demand for Council support services.

There is also uncertainty about Welsh Government funding for support schemes going forward, and the Department for Work and Pensions has reduced the total amount of Discretionary Housing Payment allocated to the Council. In response the Council is seeking to identify additional external funding and reviewing available budgets to meet demand.

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

Good progress has been made on supporting the progression of local people into work, education or training. Of those who received support from the Employment Gateway, 620 have secured work during the first six months of this financial year and 1,600 Council posts have been filled through placements from Cardiff Works during the same period. The Council has also created 35 new apprenticeship and trainee placements during this time, bringing the total number of apprentices and trainees working in the Council to 120.

A new city-wide engagement plan has been developed to reach priority groups, such as those with Additional Learning Needs, people who are economically inactive, carers, those at risk of homelessness, and people living in the southern arc of the city. Provision has also been enhanced to support individuals with learning difficulties and young people within the Youth Justice Service. The Into Work Advice Service has created bespoke packages for different employment sectors and the Teaching Assistant Recruitment Scheme has been expanded. Since April 2023, the scheme has enrolled 72 candidates and of those, 17 have entered employment and seven have completed work placements in local education

settings.

The Into Work Advice Service continues to work with the Economic Development directorate and the Commissioning & Procurement team to assess and influence contractors' social value commitments for all developments related to Atlantic Wharf. A new action plan will be developed during Quarter 3 to capitalise on the employment and skills opportunities afforded by major developments in Cardiff, with a focus on supporting citizens living in the nearby communities.

The Into Work Advice Service have three employment mentors supporting individuals in employment to up-skill or to secure higher paid or sustainable employment. There has been an increase in the number of individuals in employment accessing the services including the Cardiff Cares Academy, Teaching Assistant Academy and Onsite Construction Academy. Between April and September 2023, 558 individuals in employment have been supported with mentoring provision, 151 individuals have gained a different job following support and 144 individuals have successfully achieved a qualification.

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

Cardiff is now recognised as a leading UK Living Wage City with the partnership continuing to meet all its delivery targets. In 2017, 20.7% of the workforce in Cardiff – around 42,000 people – were not earning the real Living Wage; the latest Office for National Statistics survey results show that this has now decreased to 7.9%, or 18,000 people. Cardiff has also achieved one of the highest uplifts in the number of employees being paid the Real Living Wage, with over 13,200 workers in the city now benefitting. Cardiff University estimate the value of this to be £68m for the Cardiff economy since 2012. There are now 210 accredited employers in Cardiff with Admiral, the only Welsh FTSE listed company, amongst the most recent organisations to be accredited.

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

The unprecedented demand for housing is placing significant pressure on Council services. Waiting lists for temporary accommodation are high across all Gateways. Waiting lists for temporary accommodation are at historically high levels, having increased by 150% over the last two years. At Quarter 2, all temporary accommodation units in Cardiff were full with extensive use of hotels for families.

The number of people recorded as sleeping rough in the city has also increased substantially. On average 39 individuals are now sleeping on the city's streets every night, compared with 11 at the same time last year. Many of the individuals have either no local connection or no recourse to public funds. The Outreach and Multi-Disciplinary Teams continue to engage with clients, either by supporting them into appropriate accommodation or in the case of those with no local connection, to encourage them to seek support in their local area.

The Council has delivered a number of interventions to help manage demand, with all support services continuing to operate effectively in the face of exceptionally challenging



circumstances. However there remains a significant lack of available and affordable properties to support people moving on from temporary accommodation. A report will be considered by Cabinet in December 2023 to set out the extent to which the situation in Cardiff now qualifies as a 'housing emergency' and to outline a comprehensive, system-wide response.

## Wellbeing Objective 4: Safe, confident and empowered communities

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for delivering safe, confident and empowered communities in 2023/24:

- Building new Council homes and investing in community facilities
- Ensuring children and adults are protected from risk of harm and abuse
- Creating safe and inclusive communities
- Promoting the Welsh language
- Working together to support a healthier and more active population

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators



#### Steps



A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

## **Building new homes and making more homes available**

The Council continues to do everything in its power to increase the amount of affordable, energy-efficient and low-carbon housing in the city:

- The Council remains on track to deliver 1,000 new homes by December 2023 with 890 homes completed at Quarter 2. Progress is set to continue with nine active development sites projected to deliver over 400 further homes and work is due to commence on 245 new homes across six new sites before March 2024.
- The Council continues to make progress in the delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP), with a total of 3,295 new homes being completed across five strategic housing sites in Cardiff. Over the last five years of the plan, an average of 1,242 homes have been completed per annum. Despite this success, the plan faces site assembly, legal, and logistical challenges, meaning delivery is still slower than initially anticipated.
- Empty homes continue to be brought back into use, enhancing the available housing stock and as at Quarter 2 the Council is on track to meet its target, with 46 empty properties brought back into occupation to date.

Good progress has been made in driving up housing standards in the private rented sector with the Rent Smart Wales scheme tackling rogue agents and landlords. The Council has also continued to intervene where enforcement action is needed against landlords or where safety hazards in homes need to be addressed. Regarding Council housing stock, over 25,000 repairs were carried out in the first six months of this year, with just over 1,000 new jobs and around 2,400 follow-up jobs outstanding at the end of September. Between 93% and 96% of emergency repairs were completed on time. A new online repairs system is due to be launched before March 2024, making it easier for tenants to report and monitor repairs they need carried out in their properties.

The Council retain a focus on addressing critical repairs such as damp and mould in its housing stock, with regular monitoring in place. To further improve the Council's ability to respond, a new dedicated team is being established to provide a rapid response to issues raised. A strengthened approach will also be introduced to ensure that maintenance persons have ready access to a range of intervention to address damp and mould issues.

However, the pressure on the housing market, especially the rising cost and lack of availability of homes in the private rented sector, remains a strategic challenge for the Council, causing significant demand and cost pressures in housing and homelessness services and across numerous Council services, including social services, advice services and refugee and asylum seeker support (see Wellbeing Objective 3). As noted above, a report will be considered by Cabinet in December 2023 to set out the extent to which the situation in Cardiff now qualifies as a 'housing emergency' and to outline the response. This will include both immediate, short, medium and longer-term interventions and detail innovative proposals to substantially increase the number of new-build temporary accommodation units across the city.

## **Investing in communities**

Performance monitoring at Quarter 2 indicates that the target of securing £1m in external funding is set to be achieved for investment in local communities. Good progress is also being made with the ongoing development of Community Hubs with notable progress in the delivery of the Wellbeing Hubs at Ely and Caerau Parkview, Lisvane and Plasdwr, the Michaelston Hub and the City Centre Youth Hub.

A range of performance indicators demonstrate that the existing network of libraries and hubs are highly valued community assets, being both well attended – with over 1 million visitors recorded so far this year – and achieving high customer satisfaction ratings. Though visits to the Council’s volunteer portal are higher at Quarter 2 than they were at the same point in the previous year, this has not translated to an increase in the number of volunteering hours committed within Housing & Communities. This is due to recruitment challenges in the Into Work Service, though these posts have now been filled and volunteer hours are expected to improve.

Work to ensure that the Council’s high-rise housing blocks meet stringent fire safety standards and that tenants receive regular updates and reassurance is progressing well. In Quarter 2, recladding work is proceeding at the Lydstep high-rise blocks with tender documents being prepared for the recladding of Loudan & Nelson House. Sprinkler installation has been completed at Lydstep and Loudan & Nelson House, with sprinkler designs planned for Beech & Sycamore House. Further to this, good progress is also being made in relation to Shared Regulatory Service commitments included within the Corporate Plan, with the delivery of relevant steps all marked as green.

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

The wellbeing of vulnerable children and adults remains the Council’s highest priority, working closely with partners across the region to coordinate safeguarding activity. The governance arrangements supporting the Regional Safeguarding Board have been strengthened with an increased focus on data-driven decision-making and the implementation of the Safeguarding Adolescents From Exploitation (SAFE) Model continues to be implemented effectively. As part of this implementation, the Council has focussed on raising awareness of the various forms of exploitation, strengthening partnership working, embedding contextual safeguarding approaches, and ensuring clear guidance, procedures, pathways, and services are in place to respond to exploitation.

Corporate awareness of safeguarding is high, following a concerted programme of management action, and the percentage of staff who have completed Safeguarding Awareness Training is now well above the target of 85%.

The number of adult protection enquiries recorded has increased significantly in 2023/24 with 1,280 enquiries received at Quarter 2, compared to only 654 at Quarter 2 in 2022/23. This increase is primarily due to recording changes made in January 2023, where more accurate recording practices were implemented in the social care case management system to better reflect the full workload of the safeguarding team. While the data displayed does

not provide an accurate comparison with the previous year's data because of this, the service has still observed a moderate increase in demand over this period. Despite an increase in demand, the Council has still maintained its performance standards in completing 99% of enquires within seven days through Quarter 2.

The Council continues to employ a strengths-based approach to support vulnerable people, ensuring that they retain a choice in how their care is provided. Several strength-based mentors have been nominated across Adults' Services to promote and embed this approach and existing provision has been enhanced, with particular emphasis on overcoming language and cultural barriers to care.

The pressures on mental health services have continued during the year, in line with the ongoing pressures on health and social care services generally. The Council is working with the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to identify a suitable venue for the new Sanctuary service for those facing a mental health crisis. However, at Quarter 2 this project has been delayed as no suitable venue has been found. Work continues between the Council and the Health Board to find a way forward for this project.

### **Creating safe and inclusive communities**

The Council is working with partners to expand its multi-agency problem-solving approach to localised, complex anti-social behaviour (ASB) hotspots. In the city centre, the Council has utilised the UK Government Safer Streets Fund to commission murals in three pedestrian underpasses which were inspired by Cardiff's history<sup>1</sup>, along with installing CCTV in targeted areas in the city centre and Cathays. Using an evidence-based approach, the Council has successfully secured further funding for the fifth round of the Safer Streets Fund, which will help to deliver interventions in Adamsdown and Riverside, including CCTV, youth intervention and education initiatives on bike safety, violence, and park security. Further work is also planned for Ely, Butetown and Splott.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 the community of Ely saw serious disorder following the tragic death of two young boys in a road traffic collision. In response, an in-depth community engagement exercise is being led by Action for Ely and Caerau and an Ely and Caerau Community Reference Group to understand the community's priorities for the future. These will form the basis of a Community Plan which will be presented to the Cardiff Public Services Board in Spring 2024.

Engagement work to date has identified community safety, preventing ASB and criminal exploitation of young people as community priorities. Joint work is planned for Quarter 3 to explore these and co-produce new responses between the community and the city's public services.

The Council remains committed to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls. In May 2023 the Council's Cabinet agreed a new Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for 2023-28 and the associated Implementation Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> [New murals inspired by Cardiff's history and musical heritage \(cardiffnewsroom.co.uk\)](https://www.cardiffnewsroom.co.uk)

Corporate awareness is also demonstrably high, with 82% of staff having completed the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence training.

The Council has continued to play a leading role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those arriving from Ukraine and Afghanistan. In addition to responding to the immediate needs of those arriving in Cardiff, the Council is focussed on transitioning individuals and families into sustainable long-term provision where possible. To date, Cardiff has welcomed over 1,200 Ukrainian nationals into the city for long-term settlement, all of which are due to be matched and settled into long-term accommodation by January 2024. The Council has also supported 800 people from Afghanistan into local temporary bridging accommodation as part of a national process where they are matched into long-term homes across the UK. These processes, however, can place strain on other parts of the housing system. For example, those granted asylum may present immediately as homeless, seeking assistance from the Council to support them into accommodation. This impact is placing significant pressure on homelessness and wider housing services. It is anticipated that the recent decision by the Home Office to significantly accelerate the approval decision-making process will create further demand pressures in Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 2023/24.

### **Promoting the Welsh language**

The 2021 Census showed that the number of people who could speak, read and write in Welsh has increased by 23%, or over 6,500 people, since 2011, the largest numerical and percentage increase across all Welsh local authorities. The growth of high-quality Welsh Language Education and the promotion of opportunities to speak Welsh across the city, delivered through the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Bilingual Cardiff Strategy 2022-27 respectively, have helped to support this growth.

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

The Council continues to promote and facilitate physical activity through the delivery of its Physical Activity & Sport Strategy 2022-27<sup>2</sup>. A report on Sport Wales's Regional Sports Partnerships is planned for Cabinet in Quarter 3 which will determine the future of any regionalisation proposals.

The Council has also made good progress in improving public and green spaces in Cardiff. Two more green spaces, Parc Tredelerch and Western Cemetery, have been awarded Green Flag status, bringing the total number of Green Flag parks in Cardiff to 18. Work to increase Cardiff's tree canopy, deliver the Allotment Strategy, and support volunteer work has also been taken forward effectively. Work on the development of a National Park City for Cardiff, however, has been paused in 2023/24 subject to establishing appropriate governance and delivery arrangements.

The Council continues to closely monitor its contract for leisure services with the provider GLL. A report proposing investment in Pentwyn Leisure Centre was approved by Cabinet in

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<sup>2</sup> [Physical Activity and Sport Strategy](#)

June 2023 however the sustained high cost of energy remains a major challenge for both GLL and Parkwood, the operators of the International Swimming Pool.

The Llanishen Reservoir has also been opened, delivering 5km of circular paths around the reservoir and opportunities for a range of water sports, welcoming around 75,000 visitors between July and August 2023.

## Wellbeing Objective 5: A capital city that works for Wales

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for ensuring that the Capital City works for Wales in 2023/24:

- Leading the economic recovery in Wales
- Leading a recovery programme in Cardiff
- Supporting the recovery of the cultural sector and major events programme

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators\*



#### Steps



*\*Many Key Performance Indicators in this chapter are reported on an annual basis which is why there are few RAG ratings to report at Quarter 2.*

A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).



## **Leading the economic recovery in Wales**

Last year, Cardiff was allocated £42m over two and a half years from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the UK Government's new regional development funding programme. Working with the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), a robust governance structure has since been developed to deliver the programme – including the creation of a Regional Investment Plan – which is funding a range of local business support, transport, skills and community safety initiatives. In July 2023, an open call for proposals was launched, to allow eligible organisations to propose projects or schemes that will deliver the SPF outputs and outcomes. The proposals are currently being assessed, ensuring that they fill a gap in terms of need, and are aligned with the city's priorities, as identified in Stronger, Fairer, Greener and Cardiff's Local Well-being Plan.

In addition, the Council, in partnership with Transport for Wales, has secured £50m from the Levelling Up Fund to improve public transport in the city, which will be match funded by a £50m Welsh Government grant. The funding will be utilised to implement Cardiff Crossrail Phase 1, improving connectivity to and from the Cardiff Bay area; the full business case is currently in development.

## **Leading a recovery programme in Cardiff**

A range of projects are being progressed as part of Cardiff's recovery programme, supporting investment in visitor infrastructure. This includes a successful submission to Welsh Government for funding for the restoration of Cardiff Market, establishing new city centre warden arrangements and utilising the Transforming Towns facility to encourage the take-up and refurbishment of space for hospitality purposes in the city centre.

Economic challenges – including inflation in the construction sector and higher interest rates – are impeding the development of new commercial premises in the city. Nonetheless, it is imagined that when pressures begin to ease, because of underlying demand trends, there is likely to be a resumption of new commercial property development. Work on Central Quay has continued, with the first phase of residential development well underway (delivering 700 units) and work on the new multi-storey car park set to begin in Quarter 3.

As part of the Industrial Strategy for the East of the city, a significant amount of work was undertaken to prepare statements to support the Cardiff Parkway proposal through Welsh Government's planning application 'call in' process in Quarters 1 and 2. A decision is anticipated by Welsh Ministers in Quarter 3.

The Council has continued to progress projects related to the regeneration of Cardiff Bay. The Council is on target to complete the Red Dragon Centre business case by the end of the year; work continues to conclude the agreement to lease the Graving Docks; a disposal strategy was agreed by Cabinet in July 2023 for the International Sports Village and the option agreement has since been concluded and entered with the developer.

Work is ongoing to refine the funding strategy for the Indoor Arena following the changed economic environment and cost inflation. In Quarter 1, Cabinet agreed to the extension to

the pre-construction services agreement to enable the completion of a funding strategy to be considered at Cabinet in November 2023. If agreed, the project will move towards financial close in May 2024 with project delivery set to begin in mid-2024.

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

Visitor economy recovery has been impacted by the cost-of-living and energy crises, nonetheless, the Council continues to work with event promoters and cultural venues to support the capital city's event and cultural sector. Attendance at the Council's cultural venues was 14.87% above target at Quarter 2, with over 310,000 visits recorded. The development of the new Events Strategy is progressing in tandem with the development of a new Tourism Strategy, as well as a new Cultural Strategy. The Council has secured funding from Welsh Government's Events Wales to deliver an International Music Festival in Autumn 2024 and Cardiff has been confirmed as a host city for the 2028 UEFA European Championships.

Following changes to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advice in the Summer of 2023 on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in public buildings, intrusive surveys were undertaken on the roof of St. David's Hall, with appointed engineers categorising the building as a RED risk, resulting in the building's closure until the roof is replaced and the building refurbished. The building was in the process of being leased to the Academy Music Group (AGM), however, considering recent developments, it has been agreed that the lease will be conditional for a period to enable them to work towards identifying a viable solution for the required works.

While visitor numbers across Council venues are improving, income generation has not quite returned to pre-COVID levels and remains short of budgeted income targets. The closure of buildings – including St. David's Hall and City Hall – are also impacting on budgets in year.

## Wellbeing Objective 6: One Planet Cardiff

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for delivering a One Planet Cardiff in 2023/24:

- Decarbonising the city and leading a green recovery
- Transforming Cardiff's public transport and active travel systems
- Putting sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the city's growth
- Enhancing Cardiff's flood defences
- Building resilience into our highway network
- Making Cardiff a world-leading recycling city
- Working as one team to keep our streets clean

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators



#### Steps



A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

## Decarbonising the city and leading a green recovery

Significant progress has been made by the Council and its partners in developing a robust governance structure to deliver change, as well as making major carbon reduction improvements. This includes developing detailed studies and work programmes for major decarbonisation work areas, such as estates retrofit, fleet decarbonisation, low carbon procurement policy and supporting One Planet action planning within schools. However, constraints and challenges relating to cost and timescales for implementation are now being encountered, which look likely to affect the 2030 net-zero ambitions set out in the One Planet Cardiff Strategy. These constraints and challenges are being experienced by public sector partners across Wales, with regional and national-level discussions underway to consider holistic, partnership-led solutions.

Project updates include:

- Heat Network: Works to install the heat network are progressing well, with the Energy Centre nearing completion and internal works complete in two major customer buildings. However, issues regarding the interface of the scheme with proposed Council developments remain unresolved and under detailed discussion.
- Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation: Initial findings from an ecology survey of the Wentloog solar farm proposal site have given confidence to move to the next stage of ecological investigation. A recent change to Welsh Government policy on development in areas with ecological protection status has, however, placed the viability of the scheme in doubt. Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government and Welsh Government Energy Services to establish whether there are any routes through. Moving forward, a clear picture of Council land that may be available for additional renewable schemes, subject to favourable business case analysis, will be established. The Lamby Way Solar Farm continues to perform above the expectations set in its business plan, and a series of improvement actions at the Radyr Weir Hydrogeneration Plant have delivered upgraded performance.
- Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofit: The programme is progressing well, following successful recruitment into some key vacancies in the team. The number of energy efficiency measures installed in Council-owned domestic properties is currently above target at Quarter 2, at 416. The success of this scheme is demonstrated by the energy performance of Cardiff's council homes being better than the average for any tenure<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, work undertaken within private rented sector properties – to improve energy efficiency - has led to an estimated carbon dioxide improvement of 72.4 tonnes.
- Electric Vehicles: A decision has been taken not to proceed with the Fleet Replacement Strategy, with delays also experienced in terms of the implementation of Fleet Replacement programme. The number of Council vehicles which are electric is above target at Quarter 2, however, at 85. Furthermore, the first part of the Electric Vehicle

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<sup>3</sup> The requirement for Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is a SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating of 65. Average SAP ratings for Cardiff Council stock: 72; Cardiff Council New Build: 85; Owner-occupied: 62; Rental (private): 63; and Rental (social): 71.

Infrastructure Road Map has been completed, examining levels of demand, current technology and delivery options.

- Healthy, Local and Low-Carbon Food: A £2m Cardiff Capital Region funded innovation programme is in progress, sponsoring new and innovative ways to grow, distribute and decarbonise the local food sector.

An annual update on the One Planet Cardiff programme is expected in January, which will present Council and city-wide emissions for 2022/23, although it is recognised that further work is needed to understand more precisely the required reductions in emissions due to changing methodologies related to Welsh Government's reporting framework.

### **Transforming Cardiff's public transport and active travel systems**

Whilst good progress has been made to deliver the Council's programme of investment in public transport and active travel, several projects have been subject to delays, as well as difficulties in securing funding:

- Cardiff and Regional Metro: Whilst the Metro network continues to be progressed, issues have arisen in terms of securing commitment for the delivery of network improvements, including frequency improvements to Coryton and Radyr and new stations in Cardiff. Work is ongoing with partners to secure the funding needed to deliver the improvements.
- Bus Services: A Bus Priority Infrastructure Plan has been developed and is expected to be presented to Cabinet in January 2024, whilst the feasibility and optioneering work for several bus corridors is continuing. Further reductions in funding for bus services have, however, been announced by Welsh Government, with the Bus Transition Fund – which replaced the Bus Emergency Scheme - ending in March 2024. This is a significant risk for the Council and one which, unless mitigated, will result in a gap in bus service provision across the city.
- Wales 20mph Default Speed Limit: Work is ongoing to manage the transition to a default 20mph city; the implementation of Phase 1 of the 20mph default has been installed, including all necessary signage and carriageway amendments. Phase 2 of the programme has now been commenced.
- Active Travel: Work continues to develop a segregated cycle network across the city, with design work progressed for the majority of schemes. However, work on Blackweir has been placed on hold due to a lack of funding. Work to develop a data-led approach to prioritise Active Travel Network Map routes is ongoing, as well as work with schools to support the implementation of Active Travel Plans.
- Road User Charging Options: To develop a new source of long-term infrastructure funding the Council resolved, in April 2023, to consider a range of road payment schemes. Consultation with stakeholders has taken place in the autumn with further

stakeholder engagement and detailed business case work expected to take place throughout 2024.

- Intelligent Transport System (ITS): Preparation of the ITS strategy is on hold. The opportunity to comprehensively progress the strategy – and define the scope of what can be achieved – is dependent on reliable sources of funding, which may not be determined until 2025 subject to a robust business case and alignment with the potential road payment scheme.

## **Air Quality**

Poor air quality is now considered the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK with clear scientific evidence that air pollution exposure reduces life expectancy. Substantial progress has been made with regards to implementing clean air improvement projects in the city centre; City Centre East Phase 1 is nearing completion whilst Welsh Government have agreed, in principle, to fund the full Castle Street scheme, subject to approval of the updated business case which has now been submitted to Welsh Gov. A final decision on funding is expected by Welsh Government in Quarter 4. Furthermore, design work has progressed to a final concept stage for the Boulevard De Nantes scheme, although a decision is needed from Welsh Government as to the source of funding.

An annual update on air quality monitoring will be presented to Cabinet in December 2023. The report sets out that, in 2022, all Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within Cardiff were compliant with the relevant objectives for NO<sub>2</sub>. However, one non-automatic monitoring site located within the Llandaff AQMA was close to the annual air quality objective limit of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> with a result of 39.3µg/m<sup>3</sup>. The Clean Air Strategy & Action Plan will therefore be subject to a full review in 2024/25 and a specific focus will be afforded to improving the NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the Llandaff AQMA.

## **Putting sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the city's growth**

Work continues on a full review of the Local Development Plan (LDP), with consultation completed on the Replacement LDP Preferred Strategy, which received over 1000 responses. Resourcing challenges, however, threaten to compromise the delivery of the next stage of the Replacement LDP within agreed timescales. Similar difficulties have led to a delay in the preparation of the Green Infrastructure Plan and Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (BRED) Forward Plan, a requirement under Section 6 of the environment (Wales) Act 2016. This work is now not expected to commence until Quarter 4.

There has been a continued drop in the percentage of householder planning applications determined within agreed time periods; the Quarter 2 position was 72.9% against a target of 85%. A number of contributing factors account for the drop in performance, including staff vacancies and unprecedented workload demands. New technology is being deployed which will assist Officers with the timely completion of applications.

## **Enhancing Cardiff's flood defences**

Some work related to enhancing Cardiff's flood defences have been subject to delay. For instance, pressures – related to staff recruitment and a recognised shortage of skills in the field - have resulted in delays in completing the Sustainable Water, Flood and Drainage Strategy for Cardiff, as required by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and Flood Risk Regulations (2009) within Welsh Government proposed timescales. Although considerable development work has been undertaken, the March 2024 publication deadline will not be achieved, and discussions are therefore taking place with Welsh Government regarding a revised deadline.

In terms of coastal defence improvements in Cardiff East, the construction contract has been formally awarded. A delay in the legal process for granting the contract led to the commencement of the enabling works being pushed back to October 2023. However, progress has been made in the development of outline and full business cases, with 100% Welsh Government funding, for flood alleviation schemes at key flood risk locations within the city. The Council is also working to mitigate flood risk relating to Roath Park Dam, considering the design of schemes and preparing a planning application for the proposed works which can be delivered in line with heritage requirements and budget allocation.

## **Building resilience into our highway network**

Good progress has been made to deliver improvements to Cardiff's roads and footways, with localised road and footway surfacing taking place across the city. Looking ahead, a risk-based approach will be utilised to identify further work programmes, governed by asset deterioration and related conditions. In addition, the programme to place all 24,000 residential lighting to low-energy LED lighting is now approximately 95% complete, with 22,000 new LED units installed. Substantial completion is on track for Quarter 3 of 2023/24.

In terms of civil parking enforcement, deployment maps have been created to cover all areas within the city that have parking restrictions, building in patrol frequency and efficiency of service delivery. The 'Report a Parking Problem' section of the Cardiff Gov App has also been amended to capture further details of the problems being reported. This will enable Civil Enforcement Officers to prioritise problems and tackle specific areas of concern whilst undertaking their patrols.

## **Recycling and Street Cleanliness**

Following the publication of its new Recycling Strategy (2022-25), the Council has begun to implement a major programme of reform to waste and collection services to improve efficiency and resilience. This includes a move towards segregated recycling across the city, with a timetable for implementation now in place, as well as an expansion of kerbside collection services. Recycling performance continues to fluctuate throughout the year, as the tonnage of waste collected varies monthly. In addition, waste collection services have also been impacted by recent industrial action. Further work is therefore needed to meet the 70% target by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. In Quarter 1, recycling performance was slightly below the current 64% target, at 63.59%, whilst in Quarter 2 recycling

performance was 61.11%. The Council remains in regular dialogue with the Welsh Government and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) as it works towards achieving the 70% recycling target in 2024/25.

The percentage of highways inspected found to be of a high or an acceptable standard of cleanliness is above target, however it is recognised that areas of the city require improvement and levels of investigation and enforcement are below target at Quarter 2. In response, a programme of service reform has been developed to transition street cleansing from a 'reactionary' service which responds to cleansing issues as they emerge, to a proactive service area with good digital infrastructure which responds to data and intelligence. Despite a period of disruption, the service has established effective interim arrangements to maintain a baseline service.



## Wellbeing Objective 7: Modernising and Integrating Our Public Services

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for Modernising and Integrating Our Public Services in 2023/24:

- Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings, and protecting the Council’s historic buildings
- Improving the Council’s digital offer and enhancing the use of data
- Supporting a highly-skilled and productive workforce with the wellbeing of staff at its core
- Using the power of the public purse to support the city’s recovery
- Ensuring the Council represents and responds to the diversity of Cardiff’s communities

### Overview of Performance at Quarter 2

#### Key Performance Indicators



#### Steps



A detailed assessment of performance against each Key Performance Indicator and step is accessible via the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

## Financial Resilience

The Council continues to face unprecedented challenges following year-on-year reductions to its budget in the face of increasing demand and pressures on services. A predicted budget gap of in excess of £40m for the 2024/25 financial year and a total of £119.2m across the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan present significant immediate and medium-term budgetary challenges that will test the Council's financial resilience.

The overall monitoring position at Month 6 reflects a total projected net annual Council overspend of £5.388m. Areas of significant budgetary pressures include:

- Education Services, due primarily to home-to-school transport, out-of-county placements, and catering. The Council is also still awaiting Welsh Government's decision on price-setting for the new Universal Free School Meal offer.
- Children's Services continue to experience an increase in placements costs for the Council's children looked after cohort. This, along with sustained demand pressures and price increases have resulted in costs exceeding budget.
- The planned closure of City Hall continues to impact the Council's capacity to generate income, from both functions and catering. The closure of St. David's Hall, due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) has also had an impact on income for the Council.
- Energy, food, and fuel inflation, and the staff pay award, combined with an increasing demand for services from the 'long tail' impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, have significantly increased the levels of risk. The Council continues to face unprecedented challenges in terms of financial resilience which will require close monitoring and management during this year and into the medium term.

## Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings

The Council's land and property estate is considerable, with property running costs (approximately £38m) representing the second largest call on the Council's budget after staff costs. Managing, operating, and maintaining the estate presents its own challenges, due to the age and condition of many properties. The Council has worked to reduce the size of its estate to manage the rise in operational costs and to mitigate the growing maintenance backlog. The Council's ability to maintain and renew its existing assets, constrained by the lack of availability of capital funding for maintenance, is also emerging as a key risk in this area.

The delivery of capital receipts also remains a critical objective of both the Council's Property Strategy and the 2023-24 Annual Property Plan. A target of £3m was set to be achieved from the sale of property and, at the end of Quarter 2, £183,000 had been achieved. This programme will be closely monitored to ensure the target can be achieved.

In efforts to reduce running costs and assist with carbon reduction targets the Council has taken the decision to close two wings of County Hall, reflecting the reduced numbers of staff working from County Hall on a regular basis. Alongside this, it has also been agreed to

relinquish Willcox House and consequently the ARC (Alarm Receiving Centre) and Telecare Services have been moved to County Hall.

The hybrid working model has been further developed over the last two Quarters and an engagement programme will be undertaken with staff and services areas in the second half of the year. This will inform the detailed requirements of the new Core Office working environment to be included in the full business case.

### **Improving the Council's digital offer and enhancing use of data**

Good progress continues to be made by the Council as it expands its digital offer and explores technology opportunities to enable citizens to interact with the Council through multiple platforms, as well as enabling services to be delivered more efficiently.

The Council continues to see increases in the numbers of citizens interacting with the Council digitally, with over 82,500 citizens registered to use the Cardiff App, a 12% increase over Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, 2023/24. Further updates to the App include the ability for residents to report faults with Street Lighting. This reporting functionality was also made available on the Council's website. In the first three months 284 of the 360 reports (78.8%) were received digitally.

Work will continue to expand the services available on online platforms to shift demand to lower-cost channels and an emphasis will be placed on ensuring the customer is supported effectively to enable digital interactions. Customer feedback channels are being reviewed to give better insight to the citizen experience when using digital services and work has been undertaken on the Chatbot to improve its capabilities.

The Council has focussed on moving high-volume processes, including the updating of Council Tax details, away from the Council's customer service team towards lower-cost digital channels. This digital shift has helped the Council more effectively manage demand on services, with the number of telephone calls for Council Tax falling from 1,612 per Quarter to only 35. This has also helped to reduce call waiting times for more complex enquiries while maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction. Similarly, successful initiatives have been delivered for waste enquiries, where approximately 95% of requests are now dealt with digitally.

### **Supporting a highly-skilled and productive workforce with the wellbeing of staff at its core**

The Council continues to face a number of workforce challenges, including ensuring sufficient capacity, appropriate skills and in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly given the level of competition for some professions. In response, an enhanced approach to workforce planning at a corporate level has been put in place with detailed plans developed supporting the seven strategic themes from the 2023-27 Workforce Strategy. Where the challenge is particularly acute, for example in Adult and Children's Services, tailored approaches to recruitment and retention have been implemented.

Managing sickness absence continues to be a significant challenge to the Council, at the mid-year position results show a forecasted year end position of 11 working days/shift per full-time equivalent (FTE) lost to sickness absence, against a target of 9.5 days lost per FTE. This is an improved position when compared to the same period in 2022/23, which predicted an outturn result of 12.3 days lost per FTE. A targeted approach continues to be applied to areas with high sickness absence, such as Adult Services, Parks & Sports and Neighbourhood Services, particularly through the provision of support to managers on dealing with complex long-term absence cases. Non-work-related stress and Musculo-skeletal remain the two highest categories for sickness, and measures are in place to manage these types of absences through initiatives such as counselling services, referral to occupational health, employee network support groups and wellbeing sessions.

Following the agreement of the nationally negotiated pay award the Unite Trade Union continued their dispute against the national pay settlement, pursuing discontinuous strike action from September. The Council were informed at the start of this dispute that the mandate for strike action in Cardiff was the national pay settlement with the Council making clear its commitment to the collective pay bargaining process. The Council has worked to ensure the continuation of Council services during this period and recognises the effort of all staff who have continued to provide services during this challenging time when demand has never been greater across all services. The Council continues to have in place well-established trade union partnership meetings which provide an opportunity for Trade Unions to raise issues of concern, make representations for changes that are not part of the national collective agreement and discuss areas of policy development collectively.

### **Using the power of the public purse to support the city's recovery**

The Council spends over £600m a year procuring a diverse range of goods, services and works from over 8,000 suppliers and contractors. As well as achieving good value for public money spent on these, the Council is committed to ensuring it has robust procurement systems in place. Whilst the amount of social value secured within contracts is below target at Quarter 2, the Council Wide Framework for ensuring this is achieved has only recently been established and several potentially significant contracts are also currently being progressed. The Council's Senior Management Team continue to receive regular updates on procurement spend and compliance, including issues such as off-contract spend.

During the first half of the year the Council has established the Ardal procurement services, which delivers a collaborative procurement partnership with Monmouthshire, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. The partnership will tackle inequality, help protect the environment and support the adaptation to climate change by working in partnership with suppliers to deliver social good. This will involve working with suppliers to adopt fair work, equity and safeguarding practices whilst also supporting small local businesses and the third sector to access the Council's procurement opportunities.

### **Ensuring the Council represents and responds to the diversity of Cardiff's communities**

The Council is currently in the process of developing a new Public Participation Strategy, with a focus on engaging and involving seldom-heard groups in decision-making.

Stakeholder engagement has been undertaken as well as a policy development session of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee and engagement sessions with members. The draft Participation Strategy was approved by Cabinet in July 2023 for a period of public consultation and the final draft of the strategy, including a response to the consultation feedback, will be considered by Cabinet in January 2024.

In June 2023, the Council launched a new pilot Cohesion Fund to support community groups seeking to create more inclusive communities and to build bridges between the city's diverse communities. The fund received a very large number of high-quality applications, and the Council is currently considering options for future rounds over the year ahead. This year the Cohesion team launched a new small grants scheme. The initiative enables grassroots community organisations to apply for microgrants for activities which support community cohesion objectives and received over 140 expressions of interest. Of those applying for funding, 11 applicants were successful and all are projected to be complete by the end of the financial year.

Work is ongoing to ensure the Council's workforce is representative and inclusive of the communities it services. Governance and Oversight arrangements have been developed and embedded for the Cardiff Race Equality Task Force with a half-year progress update completed for all 31 recommendations across the five thematic areas. Demonstrable progress was made against the Task Force recommendations, with notable progress made in relation to:

- Workforce development with the Council becoming a signatory to the Cardiff Community Jobs Compact and a pilot Leadership and Development Programme being launched for groups under-represented at senior management level.
- Improving ethnic minority representation in the local labour market through the development of a city-wide network for employees to encourage good practice and collaboration on employment action.
- Increasing the participation of minority ethnic groups in the Into Work Advice service. At Quarter 1, 53% of those who engaged with Into Work Advice service were from a minority ethnic background.
- Improving access to, and visibility of, Cardiff Works for minority ethnic groups. Data from April to August 2023 shows minority ethnic background represented over 55% of applicants.

The Cardiff Race Equality Taskforce will reconvene in May 2024 and will be provided with a year-end position as at 2023/24. The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is also being reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and that it addresses identified skills gaps, and the development of a diverse recruitment panel process.