

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR



*"One council
working
together to
improve lives"*

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
How we assess our performance	9
Well-being Objective 1	11
Supporting a successful sustainable economy	
Well-being Objective 2	22
Helping people to be more healthy and resilient	
Well-being Objective 3	34
Smarter use of resources	
Consultations and engaging through social media	50
Financial Performance	53
What our regulators said about us	56
Important themes that underpin our work	58



Introduction

Welcome to Bridgend County Borough Council’s annual report. It evaluates our progress against our well-being objectives, outlined in our Corporate Plan. This report relates to our performance for the year April 2020 to March 2021.

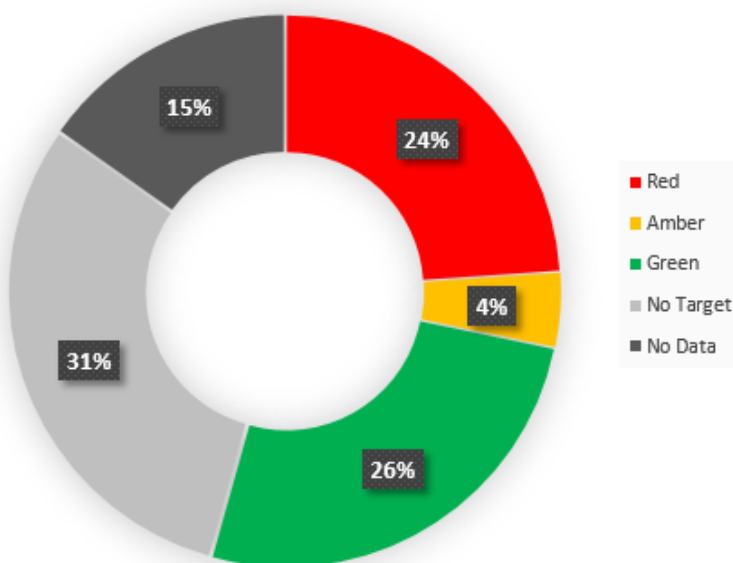
Our vision is to act as “one council working together to improve lives”. We will do this by delivering our well-being objectives. These represent our ambitions and commitments to our citizens and our contribution to Wales’ seven well-being goals as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act).

Progress against our well-being objectives

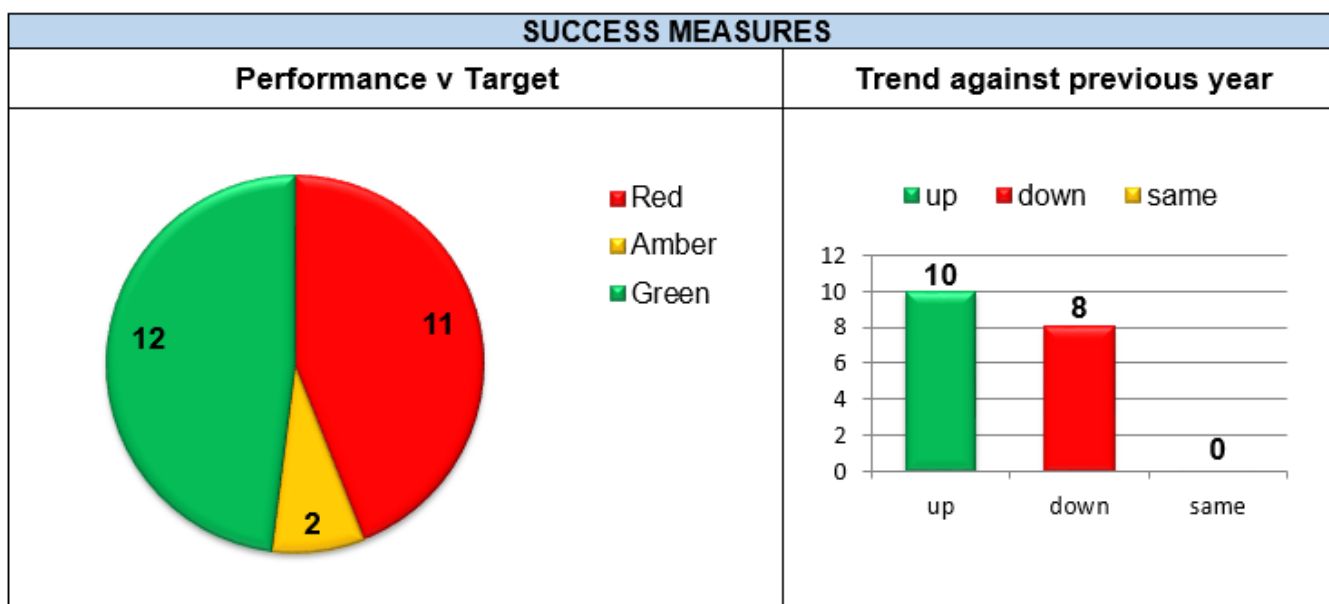
This report looks back on the progress we made together during 2020-21 on the steps to meet our well-being objectives. However, to take account of the changing priorities due to COVID-19, it was necessary to review the corporate plan and make appropriate adjustments. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges that have had a dramatic impact on the way we do business. The council’s priority has been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We did this effectively through enhanced collaboration, partnership working, committed, adaptable and resilient staff and an army of volunteers who helped us to keep delivering vital services and keep residents safe, providing support in particular to those most vulnerable across Bridgend County Borough. We are now prioritising the planning of our recovery from the pandemic to ensure we can continue to deliver services effectively moving forward. We are embracing the best of some of the changes that have occurred over the last year. We are also recognising some of the additional measures that will need to be implemented to address issues such as improved accessibility to services, wellbeing and the prioritisation of services where there is a legacy of increased demand.

Inevitably, the pandemic has impacted most of the services we provide, and resources were redirected to the areas of most need. Due to the ongoing uncertainty around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, targets were removed for 14 of the 46 measures, leaving 32 available for assessing performance. At year-end, data was unavailable for 7 measures, and these are predominantly in education following the Welsh Government decision to postpone exams and use alternative arrangements to determine grades for students.

Success measures



Analysis of performance shows that for the remaining 25 success measures for which we have data, performance is set out below. Trend data is also available for 18 measures, shown below:



In addition to our measures of success, we also made 32 commitments to support the delivery of our well-being objectives. We delivered what we said we would, with 13 (40.6%) of our commitments successfully completed (green) and 19 (59.4%) achieving most of their milestones (amber). Breakdown by well-being objective is set out below:

Well-being Objectives	Commitments			
	TOTAL	Red	Amber	Green
Well-being Objective One: Supporting a successful sustainable economy	12	0	5	7
		0%	41.7%	58.3%
Well-being Objective Two: Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient	9	0	8	1
		0%	88.9%	11.1%
Well-being Objective Three: Smarter use of resources	11	0	6	5
		0%	54.5%	45.5%
Total for all Well-being Objectives	32	0	19	13
		0%	59.4%	40.6%

A full analysis of 'how did we do' by well-being objective is set out in the body of the report, but notable achievements include the following:

Well-being objective one:

- 4 out of 5 commitments relating to growth and prosperity progressed as planned.
- The financial value of externally funded town centre regeneration projects underway/in development, reached £13.5m, exceeding our target for the year of £13m.
- The employability scheme progressed as planned, helping 401 participants into employment, exceeding our target of 200.
- The number of business startups increased to 540, from 475 in 2019-20, in what has been a very challenging year for businesses.

Well-being objective two:

- Percentage of households threatened with homelessness who were successfully prevented from becoming homeless exceeded our target of 52%, at 67.2%, and was also improved compared to 2019-20 when it was 66.2%
- We exceeded our targets in the percentage of individuals in managed care supported in the community at 75.34% and those in managed care supported in a care home setting at 24.66%.
- Our focus was very much on supporting those most vulnerable during the pandemic, which meant we narrowly missed making the progress we had planned in some of our commitments. This work will continue into 2021-22.

Well-being objective three:

- 3 out of 4 commitments relating to environmental sustainability progressed as planned.
- We completed as planned the enhancement projects and biodiversity schemes across the county borough.
- Although there has been a delay in completing the new recycling centre, it was pleasing to note that though we did not set a target for recycling rates due to the disruption / closure last year of our recycling centres, the percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted was 69.15%, an increase on that achieved in 2019-20 of 67.66%.
- We also progressed as planned in transforming the council's estate by disposing / releasing surplus land and buildings.
- In doing this, we exceeded our target of £600,000, generating some £3.09m of capital receipts to enable us to use on other projects including our 21st century schools modernisation programme.

We continue to work hard to change and improve services at the same time as having to make significant budget reductions. For 2020-21, we had to make total budget reductions of £2.413 million with a further £1.76 million proposed for 2021-22. Making smarter use of our resources will include prioritising our spend better. It will also mean investing in those things that make the most difference to outcomes for local people, and particularly the political priorities around young people and society's most vulnerable.

The implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act (SSWB) continues to be a priority and is a driver for change and for new ways of working. The principles underpinning the SSWB Act align with the sustainable development principle enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

This report focuses on the key activities carried out during 2020-21 to help achieve our well-being objectives. We use a combination of quantitative (measures of success) and qualitative (case studies) evidence to measure progress.

Service reform and new ways of working introduced in extremely short timescales have provided insight into the benefits of doing different things to support communities. This included Civic Offices closed to the public, which resulted in very quickly creating processes via telephone and online channels to allow services to continue to be supported. The council is committed to maximising the lessons learned to inform our planning and service design to deliver better outcomes for people who live, work and visit Bridgend County Borough.

Please look at our annual report and let us know what you think. For those readers that would like to see more in-depth information, the report includes many links to detailed reports and data. We encourage you – our residents, businesses, partners, and stakeholders – to participate in our engagement activities and consultation exercises, as it is only with your

involvement that we can truly recover from these challenging times and understand the priorities that are important to you so that together we can create a successful and economically sustainable county borough that focuses on improving the well-being of all, whilst using those resources we have for maximum impact. Please consider signing-up to our Citizens Panel to have your say and follow our social media pages to see what we are doing. We welcome comments on how we have done and how we can further improve our services for those, we serve.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Huw David".

Cllr Huw David – Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Shephard".

Mark Shephard – Chief Executive

A snapshot of Bridgend County Borough

In Numbers



Population	147,539
Area	98.5 square miles
Households	64,766
Average House Price	£187,812

Primary schools (excluding Welsh & Faith schools)	48
Secondary schools (excluding Welsh & Faith schools)	7
Special schools	2
Faith schools	6
Pupil referral unit	1
Welsh language schools	5
Wards	39
Councillors	54
Constituency Members of Senedd (MS)	2
Regional Members of Senedd (MS)	4
Members of Parliament (MP)	2
Council staff –excluding schools (Full time equivalent)	2,159

Our Services include:

Bridgend County Borough Council delivers a variety of services, these include:

- schools
- social care
- safeguarding vulnerable adults & children
- maintaining highways and public transport
- highways, refuse and recycling
- street cleaning and safety
- parks and play areas
- elections
- collecting revenues and administering benefits
- leisure, arts and libraries
- supporting business and tourism
- special events and festivals
- environmental health
- planning and building control

Well-being

Below is a snap shot of economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being across Bridgend County Borough. These categories of well-being are prescribed in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act:

Economic well-being

- 75.4% of the working age population are in employment
- April 2020 to March 2021, the Employability team helped 1,255 people engage in the programme, including 60 in work clients supported to improve their labour market position; 408 achieved qualifications and 398 are now in employment.
- During the pandemic, the council has assessed and distributed 6,500 business grants and over £50m to businesses in the borough.
- Bridgend County Borough Council charges one of the lowest prices in Wales for school meals and has agreed to a price freeze for the fourth year in a row.

Social well-being

- 31% of adults take part in sport 3 times a week
- 70% of adults feel they have good or very good general health
- Up to three times as many people are using the local rights of way network compared to before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
- The top three most popular walking routes in the county borough are the Nant Brynglas Circular Walk, the River Ogmore and Merthyr Mawr Circular Walk, and the Miners Path in Pencoed
- During lockdown there were 400 individual users of the Halo@home programme with 3,331 visits to virtual classes
- 136 people participated remotely in the national exercise referral scheme
- 4,444 people were identified as needing additional supported during lockdown. The support provided includes, 721 shopping trips, 2993 prescriptions, 225 food security, 312 telephone befriending, 1126 shielding checks
- 1,300 additional volunteers came forward during the COVID-9 pandemic to help their communities, the 3rd highest in Wales
- 446 volunteers trained in specialised support. This includes 119 telephone befrienders, 29 Age Cymru, 102 shopping support, 30 shielding visitors, 73 pharmacy volunteers, 21 foodbank support, 50 penpal writers, 2 dog walkers, 20 emergency list volunteers

Cultural well-being

- 69% of adults attend or participate in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year
- 65% of people strongly agree that the 'Welsh language is something to be proud of'
- 21% of adults volunteer
- Library opening hours are the highest in Wales
- Library membership has increased from 346 per 1000 population in 2018/19 to 377 in 2019/20.
- Books at home, which started because of the pandemic, has supported 437 individuals, issuing 15,226 books based on 3,036 home visits
- 89,413 digital library resources issued and 53,664 physical issues
- 1,137 people engaged in cultural or leisure programmes during lockdown

Environmental well-being

- More than 4,350 tonnes of absorbent hygiene products have been diverted away from landfill and recycled as part of Bridgend County Borough Council's 'purple bag' scheme
- 69.15% of waste in Bridgend County Borough is recycled which is above the Welsh Government target of 64%
- 39% of people are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
- Rest Bay, Trecco Bay and Porthcawl Marina retained their Blue Flag awards
- 9 parks across Bridgend County Borough achieved a Green Flag or Green Flag Community award from Keep Wales Tidy, including Bryngarw Country Park, Maesteg Welfare Park and Wilderness Lake Porthcawl
- Zones established (including A4061, A4063, A4106, and A473) with reduced grass cutting to allow wild flowers and insect habitats to remain undisturbed
- Bridgend County Borough Council has become the first in Wales to trial solar powered bins-the high tech bins self-compact waste creating 6 times the capacity and sends alerts when full

How we assess our performance

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to act in a manner that seeks to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Based on the sustainable development principle, our well-being objectives are intended to deliver long-term positive outcomes. We review progress annually to ensure planned activities are getting us closer to our goals. Our well-being objectives also discharge our statutory duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement'. We use a combination of quantitative performance measures and targets to assess performance, along with the progress of our commitments to help deliver our key programmes.

Our contribution to the well-being goals

Our well-being objectives are designed to maximize our contribution to achieving the 7 national well-being goals. These are set out below:

Well-being Goal	Well-being Objective: Supporting a successful sustainable economy	Well-being Objective: Helping people be more healthy and resilient	Well-being Objective: Smarter use of resources
A prosperous Wales	✓		✓
A resilient Wales			✓
A healthier Wales	✓	✓	✓
A more equal Wales	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of cohesive communities	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	✓	✓	
A globally responsible Wales	✓		✓

Performance measures

A number of performance measures are identified within the council's Corporate Plan, which help show the progress made in delivering the Well-Being Objectives we have set ourselves. Where applicable, targets are set against these performance measures to show what we want to achieve.

Performance measures are assigned a Red Amber Green (RAG) status:

- **green** where the measure is on or above target
- **amber** where the result is within 10% of the target
- **red** where the result is greater than 10% from the target.

The trend arrow refers to the improvement trend. An improved trend on last year's performance will indicate an upward arrow. A brief explanation of where performance is below target is also given.

Key:	↑ = performance increased	↓ = performance declined	↔ = performance stayed the same or maximum performance
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Commitments

Progress against our key programmes' commitments affects how we assess progress on each well-being objective. We assign a RAG status to each commitment using a balanced appraisal of performance along with the current progress of agreed tasks. The self-assessment categories are below:

A **red** status means that there are delays of more than 10% of the total length of the planned action. And/or budget and/or performance measures for the commitment are mostly red.

An **amber** status means that there are delays of less than 10% of the total length of the planned action. And/or performance measures for the commitment are a mixture of red, amber and green.

A **green** status means that the commitment is being met, and on budget. Also that the performance measures are mostly green.

Well-being Objective 1

Supporting a successful sustainable economy

Why we choose this objective?

We want to build a county borough where people have more opportunities to secure meaningful work, develop a career and improve their family income and circumstances. We know that higher levels of prosperity boost health and well-being and create more resilient communities that need fewer services. We believe that education remains the most important lever for improving the life chances of young people. We believe that a successful sustainable economy can and should be balanced against the needs of the environment.

What do we want to achieve?

Our Aims

1. To support local people develop skills and take advantage of opportunities to succeed.
2. To create conditions for growth and enterprise
3. To create town centres and communities that improve the quality of life for citizens

Our priority areas to support this well-being objective

- **Improve learner outcomes** – To inspire and support children, adults and families to achieve better outcomes; leading to prosperous, healthy, safe and happy communities.
- **Growth and prosperity** - Promote the conditions for growth and prosperity by supporting people and business to take advantage of the opportunities to help them succeed.

How did we do?

Performance Measures

Set out below is our performance for the year 2020-21 against our measures of success we set ourselves for this well-being objective.

Priority Area: Improve learner outcomes

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
Average capped 9 score for pupils in Year 11. (Higher)	362	363	N/A	Not applicable*
Percentage of pupils, at end of foundation phase, achieving Outcome 5 or above in teacher assessments for LLC-E and LLC-W (Language Literacy and Communication in English and Welsh). (Higher)	N/A*	85.1%	N/A	Not applicable*
Percentage of pupils assessed at the end of key stage 2, in schools maintained by the local authority, achieving the expected outcome in English/Welsh first language, as determined by teacher assessment. (Higher)	N/A*	90.2%	N/A	Not applicable*
Percentage of pupils at A level achieving 3 A*-C grades. (Higher)	55.4%	55.6%	N/A	Not applicable*
Percentage of Year 1 learners taught through the medium of Welsh. (Higher)	7.58%	8.7%	Red 7.61%	↑
<p>Given the small numbers involved, any difference year on year needs to be interpreted cautiously because a small change can affect the proportions e.g. one family move in/out of the area (e.g. a new school opens). The figures related to Year 1 pupils in Welsh-medium education show a similar pattern over the years with little variation. As part of our aspiration to meet ambitious targets set by Welsh Government, there has been a significant amount of promotion work designed to encourage more families to consider Welsh-medium education for their children. Given that these are pitched at mothers from the birth of their child/ren, we anticipate that the increase in numbers should begin to feed through to Year 1 in three to four years' time. There have been a number of admission applications for places at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr but the school has reached capacity in some year groups – hence the proposals for a new and larger school in that area. In each case, an alternative Welsh-medium school has been offered except where parents/carers have expressed a clear preference for an English-medium school closer to where they live.</p>				

*Due to COVID-19 there were no teacher assessments

Priority Area: Growth and Prosperity

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
Financial value of externally funded town centre regeneration projects underway/ in development. (Higher)	£15m	£13m	Green £13.5m	Not applicable
Number of participants in the Employability Bridgend programme going into employment. (Higher)	334	200	Green 401	↑
The number of visitors to town centres - footfall for (Higher)* a) Bridgend	6.354 million	No target	3.130 million	↓
b) Porthcawl	2.761 million	No target	1.961 million	↓
The number of vacant premises in town centres (Lower) a) Bridgend	64	No target	74	↓
b) Maesteg	13	No target	16	↓
c) Porthcawl	19	No target	21	↓
d) Pencoed	7	No target	7	↔
The number of business start-ups. (Higher)	475	No target*	540	↑

* Due to COVID-19 and national lockdown this target was revised during the recovery planning

Steps taken to achieve the well-being objective

We made 12 commitments to support the delivery of this well-being objective, focusing on two priority areas

- 1) Improving learner outcomes;
- 2) Growth and prosperity;

For 7 commitments we achieved all that we had planned, therefore we have assessed our performance as **green**. Of the 7 commitments assessed green, 3 are from the priority area improving learner outcomes and 4 are from the priority area growth and prosperity. The remaining 5 commitments we assessed as **amber** as we did not achieve all that we had planned.

1) Commitments to improve learner outcomes	RAG
Sustain the current good pupil performance at key stage 4	Amber
Raise standards of literacy in primary schools	Amber
Improve outcomes for post-16 learners in school sixth forms	Green
Assess the impact of the COVID-19 school closures on outcomes for learners and support schools to mitigate teaching and learning issues as a result of the pandemic	Amber
Support schools to provide safe learning environments for all learners and staff in schools	Green
Identify the impact of blended learning and further its development and implementation	Green
Deliver the priorities in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to promote Welsh medium education and increase the number of Welsh speakers to support Cymraeg 2050.	Amber
2) Commitments for growth and prosperity	RAG
As part of regeneration to support the growth and prosperity of the county borough two key developments are planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall providing improved community facilities to include the town library, performance spaces, offering improved accessibility for visitors and creating jobs. • Complete on the sale of Salt Lake Development for food retail as part of an ambitious regeneration scheme in Porthcawl. 	Green
Create better town centres through improving property and the environment.	Green
Through Employability Bridgend, work with individuals to improve their job opportunities and reduce economic inactivity.	Green
Providing the right infrastructure and support for business to overcome the impact of the COVID-19 situation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting business start ups • Supporting resilience of businesses - (enterprise hubs) • Developing procurement strategies to boost the foundational economy 	Amber
Improving the visitor experience to boost tourism in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis by: Enhancing the natural environment through Valleys Regional Park Deliver the Porthcawl Resort Investment Focus (PRIF) programme	Green

Priority Area: Improve learner outcomes:

To inspire and support children, adults and families to achieve better outcomes; leading to prosperous, healthy, safe and happy communities.

Supporting young people through the COVID-19 pandemic

At the request of Welsh Government, Estyn examined how local authorities and regional consortia have worked with schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) to promote learning and support vulnerable pupils during the COVID-19 period between June and November 2020.

The report by Estyn praised the councils support to schools and PRUs during the pandemic noting that Bridgend's 'early help locality service model' meant multi-disciplinary teams were positioned well to respond effectively to the challenges of COVID-19. In addition, Estyn highlighted the strengths of our business resilience planning to ensure the continuity of learning. All schools and PRUs had to plan for a range of scenarios including the self-isolation of pupils; the self-isolation of staff, the continuity of leadership. Possible solutions included the strategic planning and mapping of blended learning; developing the capability and capacity of staff and pupils in using online platforms; producing pre-prepared emergency learning packs for all groups of pupils; use of Welsh Government's 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme' grant and cover arrangements. A copy of the report can be found here <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/local-authority-and-regional-consortia-support-schools-and-prus-response-COVID-19>

During the pandemic, the pupil development grant was used to offer additional tuition to 33 looked-after children in the county borough. Schools and partners received training on the impact of trauma, and the effect on a child's ability to engage in learning. On-site provision was offered to looked-after children, with priority given to those in foster placements that were at risk of breakdown. Since January 2021, an average of 50 of these learners were accessing on-site provision (primary school age through to Year 8) each week. Digital equipment was also supplied where required.

Learning and teaching continued to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year. However, schools worked hard to address the impact. The approaches taken by schools and settings will continue to evolve. It will take some time to understand how blended learning affects the outcomes of learners both locally and nationally. Because of the pandemic although progression of associated activities continued, relevant measures were not applied in the 2019-2020 academic year, reflecting the national steer. The decision by Cabinet in the summer of 2020 to retain sixth forms in all secondary schools represents a maintenance of the existing position, but importantly provides a clear strategy for the local authority on the model it believes will help to improve learner outcomes for those in post 16 education.

Bridgend Youth Support

Throughout the pandemic Bridgend Youth Support continued to offer help to young people through its WhatsApp service <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/children-and-young-people/bridgend-youth-support/>. When the first lockdown began, the service needed to adapt its delivery model to ensure continued engagement and support for young people, which it did by redesigning its website and promoting the service. A youth chat function was added to Oggie chatbot. This allowed young people to engage digitally and service matched to an appropriate council programme for support or signposted to an organisation for help. This included employment, training, emotional and self-esteem support, and preventing homelessness. As part of the change in service delivery, activities moved online and over the phone, with the teams delivering interview skills training over Skype, as well as other online learning, confidence-building courses, and weekly activities and games. The youth council continues to meet virtually, with a different theme and a guest speaker each week.

Welsh language

As part of our aspiration to meet ambitious targets set by Welsh Government, we continued promotion work within Mudiad Meithrin, Flying Start and primary schools to encourage families to consider Welsh-medium education for their children by highlighting the benefits to pupils of bilingualism.

We secured funding via the Cymraeg 2050 capital programme for four projects. Planning permission is in place for two Welsh-medium childcare facilities, in Bettws and Blackmill. A



further two facilities are planned for Bridgend Town and Porthcawl areas with expected delivery in 2022.

The hub in Blackmill will serve the Ogmore Valley with places for 34 children aged up to five and will operate between 7am-7pm. Once completed, it will feature a new play space, quiet rooms, storage facilities, offices and a car parking area. Outside will be landscaped with soft play facilities as well as a canopy to provide children with shelter and shade. Completion is expected by December 2021. At Bettws, preparations are underway to establish the second childcare hub on the derelict site of the former Bettws Boys and Girls Club, which will be

demolished to make way for the new centre. The completion date for the facility is March 2022.

A new Cylch Meithrin Welsh medium playgroup –‘Cylch Meithrin Gwdihw’ with 16 nursery places opened in Bryntirion and Laleston Community Centre in January 2020.

Following the first lockdown, Welsh Government identified the learning of pupils in Welsh-medium schools from English-speaking homes as a key priority. Several local authorities, including Bridgend, used their immersion facilities to provide additional support for these pupils. Central South Consortium (CSC) Improvement Partners (IPs) worked on a regular basis with all Welsh-medium schools, supporting them to develop their blended and remote learning offer. Some schools chose to work together to employ additional language support assistants for those identified as needing more bespoke support. CSC created “Direct Teaching Resources” used extensively in schools to support teachers with the teaching of key subject areas, which included Welsh-medium resources.

Priority Area: Growth and Prosperity

Promote the conditions for growth and prosperity by supporting people and business to take advantage of the opportunities to help them succeed. The key focus is on:

- Regeneration
- Skills and employability
- Economy and Enterprise

Regeneration

Redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall

Working in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust, work to repair, restore and extend Maesteg Town Hall continued to make good progress. The latest developments on the £7.9m Grade II listed building include the laying of concrete for the new backstage platform lift, which will ensure better access for bigger sets and stage equipment. On the roof, the cupolas, which form part of a traditional ventilation system, have been restored and weatherproofed.

The iconic clock was dismantled carefully and its mechanism removed to provide unhindered access for the structural works needed to the tower, and to keep it safe during the process. This has been carried out by renowned clockmaker Smith of Derby, which has looked after the clock for many decades.

The restored building which is the biggest investment in arts and cultural in Maesteg in generations will be enhanced with a new glass atrium, studio theatre and cinema space, café and mezzanine bar, heritage centre and modern library. It is scheduled to reopen in spring 2022.

Porthcawl

We progressed with the planned redevelopment of the Salt Lake area of Porthcawl with the disposal of the retail site to Aldi as the highest compliant bidder for the new food store. An artist's impression highlights how the building will feature an environmentally sustainable design using high-quality materials. The roof features a two-storey 'wave' motif to reflect the community's close relationship with the sea and there is a strong focus on using wooden and limestone materials as part of the construction.



The new development will become a gateway into Porthcawl along with creating jobs, providing new facilities, and delivering high quality landscaping and public realm improvements. The development is intended to unlock funds to be reinvested in further improvements, including new infrastructure along the seafront, improved car parking facilities at Hillsboro car park and more. It will be followed by all-new residential, leisure, retail and commercial developments at Salt Lake, along with green open space and new active travel facilities.

Improving town centres

Support for new business

Providing the right conditions and infrastructure to help business thrive is a key strategy to ensure our towns are lively places that people will want to visit and spend time. One of the ways we do this is by providing reliable, relevant and accessible information to help new business make informed choices. The Town Centre page on the council website is curated with helpful data and information including the Town Centre Property index, Footfall data and guidance on Pop up shop opportunities <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/business/town-centres/>

The Town Centre Property index went live in June 2020. This interactive page updated weekly, allows prospective business owners to search for available premises in towns across the county borough, while also providing the Town Centre Manager with real time intelligence to identify and market a vacant property and match business queries with appropriate vacant unit.

We continued to invest in industrial and business infrastructure to help drive business growth, including developing additional starter units for growing businesses in Pyle and Bridgend. Phase 1 of the enterprise hubs development programme at Village Farm Industrial Estate received planning approval and the building of the units will commence later in 2021.

Work was completed on vacant and new business premises in Bridgend and Maesteg town centres. However, the impact of the pandemic has unsurprisingly dampened down interest and reduced the appetite for investment.

Bridgend indoor market

Improvement work for the Bridgend indoor market are now complete. There are public toilets, including accessible and baby-changing facilities, a multi-use central area is available for specialist events, family entertainment, children's play facilities and other activities designed to encourage footfall and support trade. Tables and chairs allow people to enjoy a sit down lunch for food purchased at the market.



Measures are in place to keep customers safe, including a one-way system, two-metre markings on the floor and hand sanitiser stations. The council continues to do all it can to help support local businesses by promoting the 'shop local' message and offering concessionary rates for market traders.

Economy and enterprise

Valleys Regional Park

The Valleys Regional Park (VRP) initiative, set up by the Valleys Taskforce, celebrates the Valleys' vast and beautiful landscape by combining nature with community spirit and economic development. Stretching from Carmarthen to Pontypool, Bridgend to Merthyr the VRP aims to support the development of a high-quality network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves, country parks, rivers, reservoirs and canals, as well as heritage sites, and connect them with towns and villages.

There are ten Discovery Gateway sites across the Valleys Region, including two beautiful locations in Bridgend County Borough - Bryngarw Park and Par Slip Nature Reserve. Working with delivery partners AWEN (Bryngarw Park) and Wildlife Trust (Parc Slip) both schemes aim to maximise the social, economic and environmental potential of the valleys' natural, cultural and heritage assets.



Bryngarw Country Park received £647,000 for a broad range of projects including the development of a new education centre, which will provide a focus for connecting communities to their natural environment through outdoor education. A green-roof bicycle shelter has been constructed which will promote active travel and exploits Brynmawr's strategic situation at the start of National Cycle Route 884 which enables visitors to explore the Garw Valley and close to NCN Route 4 which

stretches from London to Fishguard. The redeveloped visitor centre and the upgraded interpretation throughout the park are helping to make Bryngarw Country Park a regional as well as local visitor destination.

VRP has also funded the development of biodiversity within the park, including planting trees and the creation of a wildlife pond. Bryngarw Country Park will work with Parc Slip to become a joint gateway to the Garw, Ogwr and Llynfi Valley



Parc Slip received £400,000 in funding to restore ponds and deliver improvements to one of the grazed fields to plant a fruit and nut community orchard. The funding will also develop areas around the visitor centre with wildlife gardens, a rain garden, wild kitchen and herb gardens. Planned accessibility improvements will ensure a wide range of visitors can enjoy the facilities.

The experience of the pandemic reaffirmed the importance of green spaces to our communities. Respondents to a Bridgend PSB survey into the use of open and green spaces during lockdown appreciated green space more during lockdown, see page 49 for results.

The developments in Bryngarw Country Park and Parc Slip will help to ensure both sites will grow their position as key locations within the county borough that helps to deliver benefits for the economy, tourism, environment and well-being. More information is available from the new website launched during the summer of 2020. <https://valleysregionalpark.wales/>

Skills

Between April 2020 and March 2021, we supported 1,255 people from across Bridgend County Borough to engage on employability support programme; 408 people achieved qualifications and 401 have gone into work. We also supported in work training providing mentoring to 60 working adults. The pandemic meant we had to adjust how we delivered our community-based model of support. We switched to engaging by phone and internet even for the most vulnerable.

Case study: The Confidence to Interview Well: Georgina Simpson was enrolled onto Employability Bridgend's CFW+ project in January 2021. She was recently made redundant from her job of 11 years with Lloyds Bank.

The experience of being made redundant had adversely impacted her confidence and her lack of interview experience meant a recent job interview with Starling Bank did not go well. After speaking to Georgina during her phone enrolment, we agreed to focus on building confidence and interview preparation. Due to COVID-19, job interviews are taking place online. To help Georgina build her experience of this platform all future meetings were held via Microsoft Teams. We regularly held mock interviews and worked on formulating answers to interview questions particularly focusing on the STAR technique to build her skills to answer competency-based questions.

Georgina's hard work had started to pay off and she secured three job interviews within one week. She was determined to do well and prepared thoroughly. We had Teams meeting before every interview, to help her stay positive and focused.

Georgina received two job offers, and accepted the 'Collections Coach' role with 'MotoNova Finance'. She started work on March 1st 2021 and has just completed three weeks of intense training.

Georgina says, "I'd like to thank Richard at Employability Bridgend for his help and support after I had been made redundant. My confidence was at an all-time low and after two failed interviews I was really struggling. Each time I spoke to Richard he was so understanding and supportive; it wasn't just about finding another job it was about finding my confidence again and believing in my own capabilities... Richard sent over supportive examples that I needed for competency based interviews... this was a massive help as I struggled with this type of interview. I would highly recommend this service and it's great that it's in my local area – Thanks for all the help and support"

COVID-19 support for business

Protecting business from the worst impacts of the lockdown, and providing support to help when restrictions have eased has been a key priority. On behalf of the Welsh Government, the council assessed and distributed 6,500 grants worth £50m to businesses across the borough. Our Kickstart grant scheme for new business was fully subscribed and delivered, showing there is still an appetite for business start-ups even during a pandemic.

We also provided practical support and adapted our town centres to ensure the retail sector could operate in a COVID secure way through initiatives such as the Outdoor Improvement Grants, and interventions in retail environments such as public health social distancing notices, window vinyl's, social distancing floor markers and COVID-19 Public Health Advice booklets. In addition to practical support and interventions, we are developing a COVID-19 recovery strategy for each of our town centres to build back stronger and with greater resilience.

In June 2020, we put in place the strategic governance for the post COVID-19 economic recovery planning, consisting of:

- A Bridgend County Economic Task Force
- An economic engagement programme
- A specific ring-fenced budget – The Economic Futures Fund.

A task force was also created with a clear aspiration to evolve its focus over time to develop an Economic Plan for the future of the county borough which will include action to help businesses adapt to the changing economic landscape and improve resilience, as well as support for residents to develop new skills, training and employment opportunities.

Well-being Objective 2

Helping people to be more healthy and resilient

Why we choose this objective?

Providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time can make a real difference to outcomes and ensure individuals and families can thrive. A people centred approach with a focus on prevention and wellbeing helps ensure we support people to lead independent lives and reduces the likelihood of becoming dependent on council services.

By building on our track record of working with the third sector, the not-for-profit and private sector, we can support communities to develop their own approaches to local issues and meet people's needs within the community.

What do we want to achieve?

Our aims

1. To give people more choice and control over what support they receive by providing early access to advice and information;
2. To reduce demand by investing in targeted early help and intervention programmes;
3. To develop more active, healthy and resilient communities by working in partnership with the third sector, town and community councils and community groups.

Our priority areas to support this well-being objective

- **Developing and enhancing community support and services** – Ensuring there are high quality, seamless opportunities, support and services in place for those who need our help to enable them to remain independent for as long as possible.
- **Building resilient communities** – Working with our partners and communities, we will develop through co-production new and innovative alternatives to improve well-being and to support and sustain delivery. New service models will be sustainable and less reliant on the council and will reflect a positive shift in responsibility by empowering other organisations and local people.
- **Better health and well-being** – Improve the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children and young people and vulnerable citizens, to ensure they can thrive and fulfil their potential.

How did we do?

Performance Measures

Set out below is our performance for the year 2020-21 against our measures of success we set ourselves for this well-being objective.

Priority Area: Developing and enhancing community support and services

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
Number of people aged 65+ referred to Community Resource Team. (Higher)	New 20.21	2200	Red 1,974	New 2020-21
COVID-19 has changed hospital activity this year, therefore comparators with previous years is not relevant. Other factors such as individuals declining service input and more recently reasons of frailty and deconditioning is reducing numbers of referrals.				
Percentage of reablement packages completed that: a) Reduced the need for support (Higher):	New 20.21	Establish baseline	34.32%	New 2020-21
b) Maintained the same level of support (Lower)	New 20.21	Establish baseline	5.05%	New 2020-21
c) Mitigated the need for support (Higher):	New 20.21	Establish baseline	52%	New 2020-21

Priority Area: Building resilient communities

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
Number of Council owned assets transferred to the community for running. (Higher)	4	15	Red 13	↑
The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted upon the engagement with some community groups and the finalisation of leases / management agreements. Issues surrounding specific sites, e.g. covenants, also caused delays. However, the lease for Cae Gof Playing Fields (Cefn Cribwr Athletic Club) was completed in May and Woodlands Park (Pencoed Athletic BGC) and Pencoed Recreation Ground Green Space (Pencoed Town Council) are to be finalised shortly.				
Percentage of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless. (Higher)	66.2%	52%	Green 67.2%	↑
Percentage of people presenting as homeless or potentially homeless, for whom the local authority has a final legal duty to secure suitable accommodation. (Lower)	10.51%	32%	Red 50.4%	↓
The current pandemic has seen a more than anticipated increase in homelessness (65% higher than previous year), for periods longer than expected. The emergency changes to the Housing (Wales) Act has removed priority need status, which means we have a duty to secure accommodation for far more persons/households. There has been slower progress in new tenancies due to COVID-19 restrictions resulting in far more applications reaching final duty. Single person household (75%) were the highest percentage of persons requiring permanent accommodation where stock already outweighed demand. There has also been an increase in the complexity of individuals requiring secure accommodation which				

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
has impacted on the ability to secure accommodation at prevention or relief stage as these individual require multi agency support and planning				
Number of additional dwellings created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use. (Higher)	20	7	Red 2	↓
Due to the guidance on the calculation of this measure, 14 units of accommodation brought back into use in Maesteg and Wildmill, although in a state of disrepair were pre-existing and therefore not included. Two houses were also converted into 4 units of accommodation but only 2 would be considered as additional.				
Percentage of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April that were returned to occupation during the year through direct action by the local authority. (Higher)	3.26%	2%	Green 3.36%	↑
The number of children and young people looked after. (Lower)	394	375	Amber 390	↑

Priority Area: Better health and well-being

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
Percentage of completed TAF (Team Around the Family) support plans that close with a successful outcome. (Higher)	70%	68%	Green 69%	↓
Percentage of individuals in managed care supported in the community. (Higher)	New 20.21	74%	Green 75.34%	New 2020-21
Percentage of individuals in managed care supported in a care home setting. (Lower)	New 20.21	26%	Green 24.66%	New 2020-21
Number of individuals engaged/supported in targeted programmes linked to leisure and cultural facilities and services. (Higher)	New 20.21	Establish baseline	1,137	New 2020-21
Number of people who have improved access to leisure and cultural activities by reducing cost as a barrier to taking part. (Higher)	New 20.21	Establish baseline	No data available	New 2020-21

Steps taken to achieve the well-being objective

We made 9 commitments to support the delivery of this well-being objective, focusing on three priority areas

- 1) Developing and enhancing community support services;
- 2) Building resilient communities;
- 3) Better health and well-being.

One commitment, under the priority area better health and well-being, achieved all that we had planned and therefore performance is assessed as green. The remaining 8 commitments were amber, as the progress achieved during the year shows not all planned actions were completed.

1) Commitments to develop and enhance community support and services	RAG
Expand a range of integrated community services – over an extended day.	Amber
Target the use of early intervention services to reduce demand on statutory services.	Amber
2) Commitments to build resilient communities	RAG
Continue the safe reduction of looked after children to ensure young people are supported to live with their families and where this is not possible alternative permanence options are achieved at the earliest opportunity.	Amber
Work with households and partners to prevent people from becoming homeless, and support vulnerable people including rough sleepers, by providing a range of accommodation options reacting to the changing guidance from Welsh Government as part of the COVID-19 response. Aiming to support households to transition into long-term solutions to prevent homelessness and escalation into statutory services.	Amber
Work with landlords to return empty properties back into use helping to increase the availability of affordable housing for sale or rent.	Amber
Work in partnership with town and community councils, third sector and community groups to complete community asset transfers and develop long-term sustainable solutions to manage and maintain facilities / services.	Amber
3) Commitments for better health and well-being	RAG
Improve the quality of care and support provided to individuals at home through a multidisciplinary team around people in our Community Cluster Networks, ensuring timely and responsive assessments that are people centred and meet need. This will also improve our ability to anticipate future need and ensure contingency plans are in place.	Green
Rebuild participation in leisure and cultural activities by improving accessibility, removing barriers to involvement and creating age friendly communities.	Amber
Work with partners to develop a mental health strategy and action plan to support children, young people and all adults particularly with the added and often acute pressures from COVID-19 and lockdown.	Amber

Priority area: Developing and enhancing community support and services

Ensuring there are high quality, seamless opportunities, support and services in place for those who need our help to enable them to remain independent for as long as possible.

Early intervention services

During the initial lockdown, the council's multi-disciplinary early help hubs proved invaluable in ensuring a rapid response in helping to meet the challenges of the pandemic. The three hubs based in the north, east and west of the borough provided integrated effective support to families with vulnerable children and young people. In addition, pro-active support was provided to children looked after. Officers visited care placements weekly, which helped them to identify potential placement breakdowns and be proactive in providing additional support where needed rather than waiting for placements to fail. Estyn highlighted this integrated early help approach as good practice in the recent report *Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19*.

Cameo: Multi-disciplinary working – sharing information and providing solutions A key feature of Bridgend's ability to adapt and respond quickly to the needs of children and young people, particularly those identified as vulnerable, has been the strong connections that exist across and within service areas. For example, the pre-existing 'early help locality service model' across the borough helps to ensure that professionals share relevant information with one another. Multi-disciplinary staff are co-located at three sites across the borough. Discussions and solution-focused work with families involve different specialist services. This integrated approach helps to ensure also that support is prioritised and allocated appropriately. The development of the multi-agency safeguarding hub, in place for the past two years, has also contributed to a sharing of intelligence around safeguarding concerns for individuals. Colleagues from South Wales Police, the local health board and local authority are co-located and provide a single point of contact for agencies to refer. Page 25 of the report <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/local-authority-and-regional-consortia-support-schools->

Therapy through exercise

The impact of lockdown on people's well-being has been well documented during the pandemic, but vulnerable people particularly children and young people in care, have experienced the impact more acutely. Lockdown has added to the trauma experienced by children in care resulting in emotional and behavioural challenges that increase the risk of placement breakdown.

We designed a summer hub programme for children referred by social care including children looked after and those with safeguarding concerns. For a lot of these children hyperactivity and difficulty concentrating makes it harder to engage in therapy. Taking part in play and creative activities helps children in care deal with trauma and can provide children and their support workers with something else to focus on (known as the 'third thing') when a difficult issue is discussed and can help a relationship to develop so that children feel safer.

The programme supported 39 children from 24 households, providing 48 hours of activities over four-weeks. Some of the outcomes reported by foster carers included less challenging behaviour, better eating habits and improved sleeping patterns. The improved well-being of the young people and their carers contributed to the stability of the placement. The group sessions helped build communication and social skills, improved ability to compromise and led to a decrease in the emotional and behavioural outbursts as the programme progressed.

Priority Area: Building resilient communities

Working with our partners and communities, we will develop through co production new and innovative alternatives to improve well-being and to support and sustain delivery. New service models will be sustainable and less reliant on the council and will reflect a positive shift in responsibility by empowering other organisations and local people.

Supporting the homeless during COVID-19

The council worked with its partners to safeguard homeless individuals throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring no one was forced to sleep rough. To support a strategic, joined up and speedy approach a multi-agency weekly Homeless Cell meeting was established to respond to the demand for support. In 2020-21, there were over 1,600 homelessness applications from households either threatened with or imminently homeless.

To safeguard vulnerable individuals, we offered anyone at threat of rough sleeping an accommodation placement. With our partners, we provided temporary accommodation to over 600 households through the year. Additional accommodation resources were required to meet these significant demands. This included working with local hotels, B&B's and holiday lets, as well as repurposing existing projects where necessary. In many instances, homelessness coexists with complex needs such as mental health and substance misuse issues. In partnership with third-sector, providers all individuals accommodated were offered support to address these needs. Where necessary joint working with the Police and Community Safety Partnership has addressed concerns around anti-social behaviour.

As part of efforts to ensure no one accommodated returns to being homelessness a Rapid Rehousing Protocol, in partnership with Registered Social Landlords, was established to support the move on from temporary accommodation. This protocol ensured 130 households secured suitable, long-term accommodation. To continue this work, the council bid for Welsh Government 'Phase 2 Funding'. Funding of over £200,000 was secured, which enabled existing support services to be enhanced, including the development of a new supported housing scheme. Capital funding of £6.8m was secured to deliver in partnership with Registered Social Landlords an additional 28 units of accommodation across the county borough.

Whilst the council has responded to the needs of homeless persons throughout the pandemic, it is important to note that significant demands on temporary accommodation remain. There is also the potential for further pressure on services, with the expected lifting of emergency laws protecting evictions. Once these emergency laws end there is the potential for increased presentations. In addition, the longer-term socio-economic impact of the pandemic has the potential to leave increased households threatened with homelessness.

Empty Properties

Empty properties are a wasted resource and have many negative impacts, which can be categorised under three headings:

- **social**, such as crime including arson, graffiti, squatting, as well as reduced public confidence in the area or the council
- **environmental**, including rodent infestation, fly tipping, dangerous structures, and a poor impression of the area
- **economic**, such as repair costs, increased burdens on councils' resources, property devaluation, deterred investment

Over the last few years, the council has developed many tools and approaches to encourage empty homes back into use. This included the removal of the 50% council tax reduction for properties empty for six months or longer, as well as investing grant monies and loans to support owners of empty properties. During 2020-21, progress has been impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions. 16 properties were renovated, creating 2 additional homes. The remaining 14 properties are not classed as additional home because they are pre-existing homes that had been in a state of disrepair brought back into use.

Support for empty properties has also come via the Valleys Task Force (VTF) empty homes grant. Supported by Welsh Government funding. Phase 1 ran in 2019-20 with over £76,000 awarded to complete work at 8 properties in rural parts of the county borough. The grant comprises of up to £20,000 for renovations and up to £5,000 towards energy efficiency, subject to set criteria. For 2020-21, 23 applications have been accepted and surveys are now underway.

Community Asset Transfer

The Council established a £1million CAT fund to support the community have greater voice and control over services and assets. The fund enables buildings such as pavilions and community centres to be refurbished post transfer and has been extended to support drainage/pitch improvements and equipment grants to enable the self-management of facilities.

All playing fields and park pavilions managed by the Council's Green Spaces section are subject to expressions of interest from Town and Community Councils or sports clubs. During 2020-21, 13 community asset transfers were completed these include the following:

- **Rest Bay Playing Fields (Rest Bay Sports):** The pavilion and pitches transferred to FC Porthcawl and Porthcawl United with the Council awarding £55,220 to assist with the cost of pavilion refurbishment and the purchase of pitch maintenance equipment. Building works commenced in December 2020 and completed in June 2021.
- **Bowls Greens:** The day-to-day maintenance of eleven bowls greens transferred to ten bowling clubs under tenancies at will. In addition green maintenance equipment grants of up to £10,000 and Transitional Bowls grants of £5,000 for each site to assist with the introduction of self-management arrangements.
- **Litchard Park Play Area:** The lease to Coity Higher Community Council was finalised in July 2020 and funding of £14,511 allocated match funding from the Town and Community Council Capital Grant scheme towards the refurbishment of the play area, which cost £29,022.
- **Griffin Parks Veterans Hub:** Renewed the lease of the former Griffin Park Health & Wellbeing Centre in December 2020.

Improving Places and Spaces

In addition to the transfers outlined above, the council also allocated CAT funding as follows:

- **Bryntirion & Laleston Community Centre:** £50,000 awarded under the CAT fund and £20,000 under the Town and Community Council Capital Grant scheme, to assist with the refurbishment of the Community Centre estimated to cost more than £158,987.
- **Cae Gof Playing Fields:** £138,587 awarded to the rugby and bowls clubs to support the transfer and re-development of the bowls pavilion, bowls green, two rugby pitches and tennis courts. The lease was finalised in May 2021 and building works on site commenced in June 2021.

- **John Street Public Toilets:** £50,000 under the CAT fund and a further £20,000 under the Town and Community Council Capital Grant scheme to the Town Council to assist with the cost of refurbishing the Grade II listed building, estimated to cost £107,791. The freehold transfer of the public toilets is due to be finalised in September 2021 with refurbishment works scheduled to be undertaken in autumn 2021.
- **Llynfi Valley Sports Related CATs:** £20,000 funding to enable the Town Council to establish its own £50,000 CAT fund to provide additional support to sports clubs undertaking CATs in the Maesteg, Caerau and Llangynwyd areas.
- **North Cornelly Community Centre:** £5,000 match funding awarded to support the continued upgrade of the Community Centre.

The council also provided further funding under the Town and Community Council Capital Grant scheme to promote partnership working for the following two projects:

- Bettws Life Centre (Garw Valley Community Council): £13,000 for essential external maintenance of the Life Centre which cost more than £26,000 and was funded under a tripartite agreement between the Council, Community Council and Awen Cultural Trust.
- Penyfai Playing Fields (Newcastle Higher Community Council): £7,651 to assist with the cost of path tarmac, lighting and upgrades of outdoor furniture at the playing fields.

Working collaboratively with Welsh Government the Council secured funding under the Play Sufficiency initiative, which enabled the replacement of play equipment at three play areas in partnership with two Community Councils:

- Coychurch Play Area (Coychurch Lower Community Council): £55,251
- Pandy Crescent Play Area (Pyle Community Council): £34,693
- Waun Cimla Park Play Area (Pyle Community Council): £22,999

Priority Area: Better health and well-being

Improve the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people and vulnerable citizens, to ensure they can thrive and fulfil their potential.

Mental health services

For adults in the county borough, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board provides the Assisting Recovery in the Community (ARC) service jointly with the Council. Throughout the pandemic, support was made available via telephone and video calls, alongside limited community contacts conducted in line with restrictions.

ARC offers person-centred support to people experiencing mental health issues or emotional well-being issues. It provides opportunities for individuals to improve their mental health and well-being, enhance their lifestyles and to maximise their independence through existing community resources. Tickety Boo - a perinatal mental health support group – started just before COVID-19 restrictions and was maintained via telephone support. Face-to-face sessions for small groups are planned to restart once COVID-19 restrictions allow.

People can access the advice and guidance service without the need for referral and it acts as a point of contact for community organisations and agencies requiring information in support of individuals. This includes local third sector organisations, employers and colleges. Consistent with previous years, the predominant conditions reported are anxiety (48%), stress (15%) and low mood (30%), with the main contributory causes highlighted as family and relationship issues, followed by health issues, trauma, bereavement and work stress. The

percentage of people citing COVID-19 as a cause of anxiety rose by 70% during the third quarter, the total for the year was 120.

Supporting mental and physical well-being during the pandemic

The pandemic had an immediate impact on how public bodies delivered essential services. This included well-being services such as libraries, gyms, leisure and cultural activities. While providing many challenges, the pandemic also provided opportunities, which we will take forward into the future. The biggest shift in our service delivery has been the accelerated use of digital platforms to engage with service users.

Services go digital

- The National Exercise Referral Scheme, which supports people with a range of chronic conditions, developed an online offer including filmed classes and live streaming activities. Alongside the digital classes, one to one support continued. The digital offer had 7,039 contacts with exercise professionals and 7,643 live views for classes.
- A few months into the pandemic, Halo Leisure, working with Sport Wales developed the Halo@Home online activity offer for gym members. It had 431 users with 3,331 session views. The success of the offer means it is likely to continue in the longer term alongside other options available in Halo centres.
- The Feel Good for Life programme, in partnership with Wales Co-Operative centre and Digital Communities Wales, developed new approaches to bring unpaid carers together and to develop digital skills. The programme supported 100 people, with 525 support calls made in addition to group activities.
- The Family Active Zone programme worked with schools to issue 500 family resource packs and a digital version of the Dame Kelly Holmes Foundation “Get on Track “ programme was trialled with 81% of young people feeling more connected to their community.
- Discovery day’s programme went virtual, 10 keep in touch fun videos and 33 zoom calls.
- Awen worked in partnership with local communities to build content for the online platform Stronger Together Bridgend. A new programme, Creative at Home launched in May 2020, with the aim of supporting the mental well-being of older people during the lockdown restrictions. Content included creative writing, photography, ukulele lessons, an online choir and more. The online content regularly attracted over 2,000 views. A hard copy workbook of all the resources along with DVD versions of the activities were distributed to people without access to the internet.
- Bridgend was the pilot for the Dame Kelly Holmes *Get on Track* virtual programme. Eight young people took part in the eight-week programme, which ran for two days a week between October and December 2020. The programme supports young people to develop confidence, improve well-being, and learn the soft skills to enhance their employability. Upon completion of the programme, a follow up with participants revealed that 4 are in employment and 1 enrolled in an ITEC course.
- To help school staff better support the health and well-being of children and young people during the pandemic, we developed a one-stop resource pack for children, young people and their families, which was made available on the Happy Healthy Features Facebook page.
- A new telephone IVR (Interactive voice response) was introduced to ensure calls to the council were routed through to the correct service area. The IVR included a designated COVID-19 response option to allow vulnerable residents to go through to a dedicated team to help assist them with their needs.

Play support during the pandemic

The councils play team provides much needed support and enjoyment for children and young people with disabilities at the after school club in Heronsbridge. However, the pandemic meant that all services stopped. A new way of working to support better health and well-being meant novel and fun ways to ensure these young people received the support they needed.



Case study-

Our initial response was to maintain contact with the pupils through weekly phone calls. However, the lack of normal contact was having a negative impact on the wellbeing of pupils. The Play Team came up with the idea to make 10 videos of the staff engaging in different activities. This included a special video to celebrate carers week and included photos and clips of their children.

During summer 2020, we were able to facilitate COVID-19 safe family sessions at Bryngarw Park as part of our Discovery Days programme. We had 6 families for each session. The programme ran 3 days a week for 4 weeks- providing the pupils and families with much needed socially distanced games, interaction and of course fun!

In August, we began a weekly zoom session for children and young people every Friday. There have been 33 sessions to date- each with a different activity. So far, 41 families have been invited to join in on quizzes, bingo, karaoke and themed evenings- including an Elvis impersonator!

During February half term, we arranged surprise dinosaur visits to the children and young people. Staff travelled across the borough dressed in inflatable dinosaur costumes to dance and sing and bring a little joy and fun. For those unable to take part, we filmed clips, turned it into a news style bulletin on dinosaurs being spotted across the county borough, and sent it out to families.

Integrated Cluster Networks

As part of our commitment to improve health and well-being, we are working with our partners in health, social care and community services to deliver One Team Around People. The service aims to support people to be independent and safe, while remaining in the community, through effective and timely interventions proportionate to need and risk.

Health and social care professional's work with GPs, community organisations', volunteers and others to co-ordinate care, provide support and where appropriate signpost to the right service. The aim is to have the right conversations, at the right time, with the right people to ensure individuals and their families get the tailored support they need to stay well in their home environment.

During September 2020, we added new therapy staff to the team to help meet the needs of People with complex needs in our growing population. This included Occupational therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech and language therapist, as well as community psychiatric nurses, dietician, pharmacy technicians and generic therapy. In addition to this, we also piloted a new

triage approach for District Nurses within the team. A single point of access has ensured a prudent approach to the management of requests, which has freed up capacity ensuring the workforce, can concentrate on patient care in the community. The move to out of hours' service model has reduced delays in responding to direct and email referrals. Along with improving outcomes for people in the community, the One Team around People approach also provides some cost savings through efficient use of resources and a reduction in medicine waste, for example, the newly recruited pharmacy technicians have provided the team with education sessions on medicine waste reduction.

Case Study: One Team around People in action

SITUATION- What was the situation?

Mrs L is an 86-year-old lady recently diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, mobility issues from recent fall complaining of knee pain, lives with husband who also has mobility issues. Mrs M is presenting with agitation, restlessness, low mood, poor sleeping pattern and appetite. Daughter is trying to manage parent’s physical needs but struggling to manage her mum’s mental health putting immense strain on her as a carer.



TASK-What tasks were involved in the situation?

Social worker intervention and mental health assessment requested by daughter due to significant decline in Mrs L functioning ability. A package of care was implemented and MH assessment undertaken. During assessment additional issues were identified that required other professional involvement.



ACTION -What actions were taken?

The Speech and Language Therapist and dietician engaged to assess swallow and eating issues. Blood sample taken by District Nurses and referred to Multi -disciplinary team for discussion. GP was updated and medication review undertaken. Bloods identified severe anaemia. Physiotherapist assessment undertaken and referred for X ray to identify cause of pain. Mrs L was admitted to hospital and it was identified she had a fracture from previous fall. Mrs L was treated with a blood transfusion to treat the severe anaemia. Referral made to Community Dementia Team to support further. Advice and support given to daughter regarding Carers assessment and networks available.



RESULTS -What were the results of those actions?

The cluster network team provided a holistic assessment of Mrs L and her family’s needs. Providing specialist support, identifying pain and anaemia as the presenting issues for Mrs L’s decline in functional abilities. These issues were not associated with a decline in Mrs L’s mental health from initial diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease. Social worker engaged and continued care and support plan in place to support both Mr and Mrs L

Super Agers

Bridgend has been leading a regional physical activity programme for older adults called “Super-Agers” which has been recognised as a Bevan Exemplar project for reducing pressures on health or care needs and connecting people to their communities. Super-Agers has been supporting people in their own homes during the “stay at home” restrictions with over 200 home support packs issued. Once restrictions began to ease, we started in person activities outdoors, with 132 participants taking part. Support was also provided to people in the field hospital recovering from COVID-19. Feedback has been very positive, with participants confirming they have maintained their physical activity levels and a positive impact on their mental well-being.

Libraries

Prior to the pandemic libraries in Bridgend had the highest opening hours in Wales. Efforts to improve the library offer and create welcoming useful spaces has seen membership grow from 346 per 1000 population in 2018/19 to 377 per 1000 population in 2019/20 (latest available data). Access to books, magazines, learning resources, ICT equipment, Wi-Fi, family events and social and cultural activities all combine to make libraries across the borough important community hubs. The pandemic meant the immediate closure of libraries and a significant shift to online and mobile service delivery. More people became aware of the broad range of digital resources on offer, which saw the number of users of e-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines increase by over 30% across the county borough. There were 89,413 of these digital items issued during 2020-21. To support carers, the vulnerable and the isolated the Awen mobile service Books on Wheels supported 3,036 visits and issued 15,226 resources. As restrictions eased, libraries operated within COVID-19 secure guidelines and moved through different levels of service, commencing with the ‘book and collect’ service to enable readers to place an order and arrange a time for collection, through to browsing and on to the booking of ICT access and study spaces.

Well-being Objective 3

Smarter use of resources

Why we choose this objective?

Over the period 2018-19 to 2022-23, the council is expected to make recurrent budget reductions of some £20.5 million. For 2020-21, our target budget reduction was £2.413 million and as in previous years, we continue to be committed to finding at least 50% of these reductions for the year by making smarter use of resources and minimising any reductions in services. As austerity continues, it becomes harder each year to make further budget reductions, but this year we continued to seek ways of working to save us money, primarily by making smarter use of our resources, including our people and our buildings, and making the most of the assets, we retain.

What do we want to achieve?

Our aims

1. To ensure that the council is financially sustainable over the longer term.
2. To improve the efficiency of, and access to, services by redesigning our systems and processes.
3. To work collaboratively to make the most of natural and physical assets.
4. To develop the culture and skills required to meet the needs of a changing organisation.

Our priority areas to support this well-being objective

- **Transforming the council's estate** - Ensure the council's estate is appropriately developed and utilised to improve service delivery, reduce running costs, minimise our impact on the environment and provide the best possible setting to meet the needs of all users including citizens.
- **Areas of corporate change** - We will adapt our ways of working to ensure the effective delivery of our well-being objectives. Embracing innovation and technology, developing the skills and approaches of staff and adopting alternative ways of working will ensure the council is equipped to respond to future challenges.
- **Environmental sustainability** - Programmes of work that protect and safeguard the environment for future generations by lowering the council's carbon footprint, enhancing reduction, re-use and recycling of materials and promoting environmental awareness and responsibility with our communities.

How did we do?

Performance Measures

Set out below is our performance for the year 2020-21 on the measures of success we set ourselves for this well-being objective.

Priority Area: Transforming the council's estate

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020-21 & RAG	Trend
Percentage surplus capacity in primary schools. (Lower)	9.36%	10%	Red 11.9%	↓
Surplus places have increased due to a slight decline in the primary population and schools changing use of existing accommodation for teaching purposes.				
Percentage surplus capacity in secondary schools. (Lower)	20.65%	18%	Red 20.05%	↑
The reduction in surplus places is as a result of a slight increase in the secondary pupil population.				
Realisation of capital receipts targets. (Higher)	£794k	£600k	Green £3.09 million	Not applicable
Percentage of BCBC operational buildings achieve full statutory compliance. (Higher)	54.6%	100%	Red 62.7%	↑
Compliance continues to improve with the Big 5 reaching 77% at year-end. COVID-19 impacted upon compliance checks and services being undertaken, resulting in additional checks which had a negative impact on year end results. Notable improvements currently being made in relation to Gas and Water servicing that should push overall compliance closer to target in 2021-22.				

Priority Area: Areas of corporate change

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020-21 & RAG	Trend
Percentage of staff participating in the staff survey. (Higher)	38.38%	44.5%	Postponed	Not applicable
Percentage of managers attending the Managers Induction programme who rated it excellent or good. (Higher)	New 2020-21	80%	Green 100%	New for 2020-21
Percentage budget reductions achieved (Overall BCBC budget). (Higher)	89.4%	100%	Red 85.8%	Not applicable
There is a shortfall on the savings target of £342,000 (14.2%). The most significant budget reduction proposals not achieved in full include the phased implementation of Learner Transport Policy (£75,000). Council has approved a one-off budget pressure for 2021-22 whilst a review is undertaken. Further savings from leisure centres and swimming pools (£70,000). This is likely to be an ongoing pressure in 2021-22 as the leisure service budget continues to see the impact of COVID-19. Therefore, underspends will be held across the service area to mitigate any shortfalls in the short term. Increase income from generation from mobile response and telecare charging (£75,000), service area will continue to identify efficiencies to meet the shortfall in 2021-22.				

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020-21 & RAG	Trend
Percentage of indoor learning space in primary schools benefitting from high speed Wi-Fi connectivity for 30+ simultaneous devices. (Higher)	New 2020-21	80%	Red 57%	New for 2020-21
The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented the contractor from attending schools to complete the installations. The project end date will now be later than expected.				
Percentage of indoor learning space in secondary schools benefitting from high speed Wi-Fi connectivity for 30+ simultaneous devices. (Higher)	New 2020-21	80%	Red 55%	New for 2020-21
The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented the contractor from attending schools to complete the installations. The project end date will now be later than expected.				
Percentage of staff working from home.	New 2020-21	Establish baseline	41.5%	New for 2020-21
Number of apprentices, excluding teachers, on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes within the authority during the year per 1,000 employees (Higher)	7.75 (N=35)	7.75 (N=35)	Amber 7.49 (N=34)	↓

Priority Area: Environmental sustainability

Measure and preferred outcome (higher or lower)	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020- 21 & RAG	Trend
Annual gas consumption across the local authority – kWh (Lower)	New 2020-21	Establish baseline	22,409,433 kWh	New 2020-21
Annual electricity consumption across the local authority – kWh (Lower)	New 2020-21	Establish baseline	8,166,632 kWh	New 2020-21
Annual CO2 emissions related to gas consumption across the local authority – kWh (Lower)	New 2020-21	Establish baseline	4,120 kWh	New 2020-21
Annual CO2 emissions related to electricity consumption across the local authority – kWh (Lower)	New 2020-21	Establish baseline	1,903 kWh	New 2020-21
Kilograms of residual waste generated per person. (Lower)	123.83kg	No target	131.45 Kg	↓
Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted (Higher)	67.66%	No target	69.15%	↑
Percentage of waste (Higher) a) reuse	New 2020-21	No target	a) 0.77%	New 2020-21
b) recycled	New 2020-21	No target	b) 48.43%	New 2020-21
c) composted	New 2020-21	No target	c) 19.94%	New 2020-21
Percentage of street cleansing waste prepared for recycling. (Higher)	New 2020-21	20%	Postponed	New 2020-21
Undertake schemes to increase the county borough's tree cover (Higher)	New 2020-21	1.5 schemes	Green 2	Not applicable
Deliver community biodiversity schemes (Higher)	New 2020-21	1.5 schemes	Green 2	New 2020-21
Undertake Local Nature Reserve Enhancement projects (Higher)	New 2020-21	2 projects	Green 2	New 2020-21

Steps taken to achieve the well-being objective

We made 11 commitments to support the delivery of this well-being objective, focusing on three priority areas

- 1) Transforming the council's estate
- 2) Areas of corporate change;
- 3) Environmental sustainability

Overall, 5 commitments are assessed **green**, as performance shows we achieved all that we had planned. The remaining 6 commitments were **amber**, as the performance shows not all planned actions were completed.

1) Commitments to transform the council's estate	RAG
Fewer better buildings by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposing of or releasing surplus land and buildings to generate capital receipts and reduce our financial liabilities and improve those buildings, which are retained. • Using digital transformation of services during COVID-19 to identify service re-modelling to reduce demand on office accommodation across the councils estate. 	Green
Provide sufficient school places in the right areas by delivering 21st Century Schools' under the council's schools' modernisation programme	Amber
2) Commitments to deliver corporate change	RAG
Work with the regional delivery group to identify and agree regional procurement frameworks fit for purpose to deliver economies of scale on common and repetitive spend.	Green
Provide support to facilitate organisational and cultural change, including workforce engagement and the development of new and existing employees to ensure skills and capacity to meet current and future challenges, in particular through investment in a new corporate apprenticeship programme.	Amber
Implement the planned budget reductions identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, in particular for the 2020-21 financial year, set annual balanced budgets and establish long-term financially sustainable solutions.	Amber
Embrace and invest in innovation and technology including improvements in connectivity and new and replacement classroom-based, end-user devices in our schools.	Amber
Identify opportunities for new ways of working and for service delivery	Amber
3) Commitments to environmental sustainability	RAG
Invest £1.3 million to install energy and cost saving technologies to reduce our energy consumption and CO2 emissions	Green
Implement a sustainable local area energy plan with a programme of work throughout the county borough to improve the carbon footprint for all residents, including schemes such as the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caerau Minewater Heat Scheme, • Bridgend Heat Network 	Green
Continue to exceed the national recycling targets and increase opportunities for reuse of materials by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building a new community recycling centre with a reuse centre, • recycling street scene waste, • raising public awareness of how to reduce, reuse and recycle by using public campaigns and publicity 	Amber

1) Commitments to transform the council's estate	RAG
Maintain and enhance the natural resources and biodiversity of Bridgend County Borough.	Green

Priority Area: Transforming the council's estate

Ensure the council's estate is appropriately developed and utilised to improve service delivery, reduce running costs, minimise our impact on the environment and provide the best possible setting to meet the needs of all users including citizens.

Fewer better buildings

A key part of the council's "Bridgend 2030" Decarbonisation Strategy is to reach a net zero carbon position within the next 9 years. The council's estate and energy consumption is an important part of this so ensuring our buildings and schools, are as efficient as possible will be a key driver here.

We therefore continued to dispose of those assets that will bring us to our goal of having fewer, but better buildings. A number of properties were disposed during the financial year 2020-21, including sites for redevelopment and transfer to other users. This resulted in a number of high value capital receipts totalling almost £3.1m being generated, enabling focussed works on buildings retained for future service operations. Reduction in financial liabilities was also achieved through the successful return of Sunnyside House to the Landlord. Following digital transformation as part of the COVID-19 response, a project board was set up during the summer of 2020 to investigate further opportunities to redesign service delivery and needs. This is expected to lead to further reductions and changes in accommodation needs going forward.

Corporate Landlord targeted savings, became difficult to realise with social distancing affecting work activities and staff re-deployment onto COVID-19 response plans both negatively affecting productivity. COVID-19 impacted upon a number of compliance checks and services being undertaken and created additional compliance servicing tasks that had a negative effect on the compliance percentages reported, being 62.7% against a target of 100%, this was however an improvement on 2019-20 where compliance was reported at 54.6%. Improvements are being made in relation to Gas and Water servicing that should push overall compliance closer to target for the coming year.

School modernisation programme

Our flagship school modernisation programme continued to work towards delivering new educational facilities for Bridgend County Borough, which are designed to support 21st century teaching and learning. With more than £49.5 million of capital funding plus revenue funding to support the Mutual Investment Model schemes (MIM), set to be committed towards the next phase of the school modernisation programme, it remains our largest investment. We plan to build four efficient and sustainable primary schools and one special school over the next five years as part of Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme, ensuring there is a sufficient supply of pupil places across Bridgend County Borough.

In November 2019, the Mynydd Cynffig Primary School's infant site suffered a catastrophic failure of its heating system. The school building closed to pupils in March 2020 and

alternative teaching accommodation was provided. As a result of this, Cabinet reprioritised Band B bringing forward a replacement Mynydd Cynffig Primary School for delivery within Band B and delayed the delivery of a dual stream school for Bridgend South East (Parc Afon Ewenni) until Band C of the programme (subject to the development of that site being taken forward in the new Local Development Plan).

Options appraisal work for the replacement Mynydd Cynffig Primary School scheme has concluded and a feasibility study is being progressed which will continue into 2021-22. The proposal to discontinue Afon Y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools and establish a replacement new school (which would be located at Plas Morlais on the Marlas estate in Cornelly) was progressed, in addition to the proposed enlargement of Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr. The statutory process for both proposals commenced in January 2021 and the outcome to proceed with the proposal has since been agreed. The new English-medium primary will open in September 2023, and the replacement Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr in 2024, subject to planning approval. Both schools would be funded via MIM.

As part of the Bridgend North East proposals, a feasibility study was progressed for a replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr. This work will continue into 2021-2022. The proposed replacement would increase the size of school to 2.5 form entry plus nursery, and would result in the school relocating to a new site within the area. In addition, work has continued on exploring options for creating a new English-medium school by utilising the existing Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr building. Options appraisal and feasibility work has continued in respect of the special school scheme and the outcome will be reported in 2021-22.

Work will continue into 2021-22 on the local authority's school catchment boundaries with the prioritisation of the identification of the new catchment area for the new English-medium school that will use the former Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr once the new replacement Welsh-medium school is open.

A process for the ongoing monitoring of the number of pupils on roll compared to the total capacity, for every school, is in place and is dynamically updated with support from schools, including up-to-date class structures. A prototype admissions dashboard was developed and published in autumn 2019 for monitoring the number of pupils on roll compared to the total capacity. However, further development has not been progressed during 2020-21 and has been impacted by the need to resource activities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a significant and sustained reduction in capacity. It has been necessary to focus any available capacity on statutory activity.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions being in place, the council continued to work with contractors in order to maximise community benefits, ensuring that schemes delivered targeted recruitment and training, apprenticeships and where possible pupil engagement. The contractor for the East Hub scheme at Brynteg School, which was handed over to the council in January, held virtual careers fairs and engagement sessions with Careers Wales.

Priority Area: Areas of corporate change

We will adapt our ways of working to ensure the effective delivery of our well-being objectives. Embracing innovation and technology, developing the skills and approaches of staff and adopting alternative ways of working will ensure the council is equipped to respond to future challenges.

Procurement

We spend around £186 million annually through procurement on bought-in goods, services and works and influencing the ways in which this is done can make a key contribution to 'sustainability and resilience'.

We are working towards the circular economy principles to ensure sustainable procurement, which ultimately underpins the seven well-being goals under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA). We are a member of the South East Wales Delivery Group that focuses on regional collaborative working by the setting up of regional frameworks that we can utilise.

During 2020-21, we continued to engage with businesses within our communities, to support new and innovative ideas. We also considered how to integrate the five ways of working into our new socially responsible procurement strategy to ensure that the strategy enables procurement to maximise contribution to the well-being goals. There was a small delay in developing the new strategy, but this is now expected to be approved in the latter part of 2021. The new strategy will support-

- The implementation of the council's 2030 Decarbonisation Strategy and the circular economy
- Maximise opportunities for local businesses, particularly those who demonstrate fair work practices
- Support the foundational economy
- Maximise the delivery of social value / community benefits
- Act as a key driver to achieving our wellbeing ambitions and as a driver of organisational change
- Deliver value for money whilst considering the whole life cost.

The delivery plan, supporting the strategy includes working toward the adoption and implementation of the Welsh Government Fair Work Guidance including the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains and including social public works clauses in major construction.

In March 2020, we were one of nine public sector bodies that participated in the 'Spotlight on Procurement' - Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' Section 20 Procurement Review. The Report 'Procuring well-being in Wales' was published on 25 February 2021, explaining key findings, highlighting good practice and outlining recommendations based on the Section 20 Review. Some areas of strength were identified, as well as further opportunities for development. A key strength at the council is the long-term approach to working collaboratively with the commissioning team, considering the outcomes procurement can deliver. As a response to the Commissioner's findings, an action plan has been developed to implement the three main recommendations set out in the report.

Developing culture and skills

The council experienced significant organisational and cultural change, as services refocussed and adapted to respond to the priorities faced because of the global pandemic.

This affected the whole organisation, albeit the extent of the change varied across service areas. Whilst some services were suspended and their employees deployed to critical front line services, there was a change in focus for others, where employees undertook alternative duties or needed to adapt to new ways of working. The mobilisation of a large proportion of

office-based workers to homeworking demonstrated the capacity to respond positively to change. With a vast amount of new regulations and guidance directly affecting the workforce, working in social partnership with trade union colleagues and regular staff communications and engagement were essential.

It is inevitable, however, that in a pandemic year with capacity and focus diverted, and workforce pressures across the council, significant in some areas, that there was an impact on performance. At the start of the year all face-to-face training was postponed, as was the recruitment to our corporately funded apprenticeships; the delay in the staff survey until June 2021; and staff appraisals were not conducted as normally expected. Whilst sickness absence levels improved, there were other absences as a direct impact of COVID-19, which affected capacity. Therefore, operating in this environment meant a change in service delivery to meet the changing needs of the organisation, with many employees working at home in line with government guidance.

ICT equipment enabled the rapid move to homeworking and through the risk assessment arrangements equipment was enhanced where needed to enable staff to work safely at home. A need for a greater focus on employee wellbeing meant increasing the resources available for employees via the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), online resources to support physical and mental well-being; the introduction of remote training programmes; as well as employee risk assessment encouraged.

Widely promoted on a weekly basis, the enhanced EAP's services included daily webinars on well-being matters especially linked to the pandemic and other wellbeing tools to include a new wellbeing assessment and improved functions to allow employees to connect with others. In addition, many other on-line, e-learning and audio resources were promoted, including mindfulness and stress control and wellness action plans.

Training workshops were converted to accommodate remote access; new workshops were introduced with a view to improving mental wellbeing, and in some cases especially to deal with the challenges presented by the pandemic and homeworking. Working with trade union colleagues, secured funding for this priority training via the Wales Union Learning Funding (WULF). Examples include:

- Confidence in the Workplace – 38 attendees
- Resilience – 45 attendees
- Loss and Bereavement – 18 attendees
- Communication in the online workplace – 50 attendees
- Managing Remotely – 58 attendees

Recruiting managers were supported to enable remote recruitment activity become the norm. Support mechanisms were in place to progress apprenticeship recruitment and ensure that new starters were able to access sufficient support arrangements. Of the 34 apprentices employed throughout the year, this included 13 new starters and 9 apprentices gained permanent employment with the council. This corporate investment has been further enhanced by the introduction of graduate roles, which were agreed as part of the council's commitment to developing skills and capacity.

Budget reductions and our medium-term financial strategy (MTFS)

When developing our MTFS, we consider a number of different funding scenarios and aim to balance investment in preventative measures against the costs of reacting to unanticipated situations in statutory services. We aim to ensure the majority of savings are generated from

smarter use of resources, with front line service reductions kept to a minimum. Each budget reduction proposal is weighted in terms of the impact on other areas of the council, on the public and on our well-being duty as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Where a budget cut in one area of non-statutory prevention would lead to increased costs in another, this is not considered to be good financial management. Similarly, budget reductions are preferably achieved through remodelling of existing service provision and through making services self-sufficient rather than removing them in their entirety, to make them more sustainable going forward.

Alongside this is a capital strategy aligned to a 10-year capital programme, and a treasury management strategy, both of which demonstrate how the council ensures that all of its capital and investment plans and borrowing are prudent and sustainable. The capital strategy is approved by council and monitored on a quarterly basis through reports to Cabinet and Council. The capital programme is updated in line with the strategy and approved by Council quarterly.

Of the £2.413 million budget reductions required for 2020-21, we achieved £2.071 million. £1.799 million (86%) of achieved savings were through smarter use of resources, avoiding cutting the quality or level of services.

These included:

- An increase in non-residential charging limits in line with WG policy which resulted in £200,000 of savings,
- A further review of care packages resulted in savings of £150,000,
- Rationalisation of software budgets and removal of vacancies in ICT, saving £200,000,
- Council wide staff restructures, leading to savings in excess of £419,000,
- Savings as a result of ongoing implementation of the Corporate Landlord model £325,000

The most significant budget reduction proposals not achieved in full were in respect of the phased implementation of the learner transport policy (£75,000), additional proposed savings from leisure centres and swimming pools (£70,000), and we did not achieve the increase in income generation from mobile response and telecare charging (£75,000). The council consults widely with citizens on all budget proposals as an integral part of its MTFS and strives annually to increase participation and involvement.

Digital Transformation

The Digital Transformation programme has a citizen centred focus. We listened to the initial feedback from the 2015 budget consultation that 87% of our citizens wanted more council services online. In the 2019 budget consultation 70% of respondents stated they would support a move to digitalise services.

In March 2020, our digital platform provider notified us that they would be ceasing to support the platform in March 2021. The council procured a new platform in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain our online services, where 42,169 residents had already created an account with an average 1,000 online transactions being completed each week. This was exceptionally challenging, as there was ongoing increased demand to also support residents during the pandemic.

During the past year and as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many services had to review the way they worked, which included developing online presence by creating dedicated

webpages, online forms and a social media presence. We continued to develop our chatbot, Oggie to include additional services such as Youth Services, in an attempt for people to find answers to their questions easier and signpost customers to the right place. We also spent time during the year to develop the council's corporate website to meet new accessibility legislation ensuring our online documents are accessible.

In June 2020, as part of the new digital platform, we launched a new digital communication platform to send weekly bulletins to residents, in the language of their choice, to keep them up to date with progress around various issues surrounding the pandemic. We have over 36,800 subscribers to the English bulletin and 231 subscribers to the Welsh bulletin. Since launching this new communication platform, we have sent out 219 bulletins with an average engagement rate of 73.5%.

A new Digital Transformation Programme Board was also established to focus on delivering the key corporate digital priorities going forward. These include projects such as automation, single point of contact, staff engagement and assistive technology.

A recent Citizen Panel survey was undertaken around digitalisation and customer services to understand the impact the pandemic had on residents. The survey results showed that during the pandemic, 55% of respondents accessed services online, with 87% of them saying that they will continue to access services this way.

At the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, it was evident that digital has enabled citizens to continue accessing our services as we have seen a transition to the digital channel. The intention is to learn from this period, assessing the possibilities and opportunities by further promoting digital services and introducing more innovative ways of working and serving our communities.

Welsh Government provided £50 million to expand the Welsh Government Hwb programme to improve the use of digital technology for teaching and learning in schools. Bridgend CBC Hwb grant allocation for 2019/20 was £3,367,600 and 2020/21 was £1,475,070. The funding has been used to equip schools with the new EdTech equipment, ensuring all schools are able to work towards the Education Digital Standards. The investment is laying the foundations for a sustainable digital education infrastructure. Additionally, the programme means less bureaucracy for schools, freeing up time for teachers and head teachers, and will give learners access to an enhanced and more consistent learning experience. Bridgend CBC are serving as the strategic delivery partner for the programme, using the funding appropriately ensuring all schools are upgraded to the national standard.

Priority Area: Environmental sustainability

Programmes of work that protect and safeguard the environment for future generations by lowering the council's carbon footprint, enhancing reduction, re-use and recycling of materials and promoting environmental awareness and responsibility with our communities.

Sustainable energy

In line with the ambitious Welsh public sector commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2030, we are aiming to make Bridgend a decarbonised, digitally connected, smart county borough with a series of projects, which form the 'Bridgend 2030' decarbonisation strategy. Over the past four years, we have been progressing our Smart Energy Plan, developing three major projects namely the Bridgend District Heat Network (DHN), the Caerau Heat Project and the Re-FIT Project, to drive forward and capture the economic and social benefits of decarbonisation.

The Bridgend DHN will deliver heat by taking excess heat from a combined heat and power plant and thermal storage facility based at Bridgend Life Centre. It been designed to enable future expansion to additional properties in the local area, including businesses and residential homes. The first phase would serve the Bowls Hall, Civic Centre offices and the Bridgend Life Centre. The project made significant progress in the early part of 2021. The £1.2m capital grant provided from the UK government was drawn down in March 2021. This included the creation of a new financial model, preparation of a planning application for the thermal store, development of an environmental permit for the energy centre. Three companies have been shortlisted to submit tenders for the project. The project will progress to the procurement of a design, build, operate and maintain contractor and should this be successful then the construction of the heat network could commence in 2022. Key objectives for the scheme are to continue to provide reduced energy costs for customers, provide carbon emissions savings compared to alternative strategies and, over time, further decarbonise heat supplies.

The Caerau Heat Scheme was established as a highly innovative demonstrator project and proposed to extract heat from water contained within flooded former coal mine workings, to provide heat for properties within Caerau, via a network of pipes and through ground source heat pumps. As a result of work undertaken during 2020 showing that water in the existing borehole was unlikely to be minewater and that the costs to undertake further exploratory work where prohibitive, alternative technologies were explored. The project has now been redefined, to include a blend of energy projects, from Minewater, ground source heat to a private wire from a local Wind Farm. This change in development direction has had approval from the funder, Wales European Funding Office, (WEFO) so detailed designs will now be progressed during 2021 to take the project to its next stage.

The Re-Fit Project, forms part of £1.3m spend on energy efficient measures within the corporate estate, the majority of which are in education use. This includes new heating & ventilation systems, insulation and PV panels. The aim is to support schools to reduce energy costs and emissions, as well as optimise the energy performance of the council's buildings. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused some delays to the plans, our contractor began the process of carrying out building surveys to identify energy saving measures. As well as consuming less energy, which will lead to a significant reduction in annual energy and maintenance costs, these upgrades will result in a more comfortable learning and working environment for pupils and staff. The buildings chosen are among those where energy-efficiency changes can make the most difference. The first phase of the scheme is due to take around seven months to complete and is due to commence in the latter part of 2021. The second phase will then look to include more buildings. The first schools to undergo the energy saving measures include Pyle Primary School, Llangynwyd Primary School, Porthcawl Primary School and Brackla Primary School.

To meet the carbon-neutral/ net-zero carbon objective by 2030, the progress of and projects within the Smart Energy Plan will need to be expanded and accelerated. These projects are a key contributor to the Welsh Government's decarbonisation strategy (published March 2019) "Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales".

Recycling

The impact of COVID-19 was felt in many of our key services including our recycling services. We were forced to stop our garden waste service at the end of March after the contractor who converted the garden waste into high-quality compost ceased to trade because of the impact of COVID-19 on its business. A new alternative contractor was sourced and the service was initially restricted to those households who had already enrolled to the scheme with no charges levied in acknowledgement of the inconvenience. The scheme was later re-opened for new registrations.

From the end of March 2020 to the end of July 2020, there was a 17 percent increase in recycling collected from the home when compared to the same period last year. This includes over 700 extra tonnes of glass, 450 tonnes of food, 284 extra tonnes of cardboard and nearly 200 tonnes of plastic and cans.

Recycling centres also closed and then re-opened as soon as WG allowed us to do so. The closure of these sites certainly had an impact with lockdown contributing to hundreds of tonnes more waste and recycling being put out on our doorsteps. Despite the impact of the pandemic, we surpassed the 64% current Welsh government targets in recycling performance at 69.15% for the year 2020-21. This was also an improvement on what we achieved in 2019-20 at 67.66%. Wales may be a small country, but when it comes to recycling, we punch way above our weight. We are already the third best recyclers in the world, and now Bridgend County Borough Council is backing the Wales-wide movement to make us first.

Fresh investment of £238,000 from Welsh Government was spent on collection vehicles, containers and depot facilities to safeguard the collection of nappies and other absorbent hygiene products (AHP). This investment has enabled the service to be more efficient and continue to divert AHP away from landfill. All recyclable elements are removed and refashioned to create new products such as fibreboards, acoustic panelling and more. The tender process for recycling of street litter was delayed, but was awarded in early 2021 and will be operational from 1st August.

Work began in September 2020 on building a new modern community recycling centre on the Village Farm Industrial Estate in Pyle, the west of Bridgend County Borough. Contract implementation was delayed in 2020, but the new centre was completed in June 2021. As part of the plans, a re-use shop similar to the one at the Maesteg community centre is being established; where household items that are in good condition can be sold on. The centre, which is expected to open in October 2021, will have more vehicle capacity and bypass lanes to allow easier access for residents using the facility. A split-level system will be in place in the yard with ramps up to the higher-sided skips and a canopy to protect from the elements. As part of this scheme, development works are also taking place to improve the estate's junction with the A48.

Deputy Leader Hywel Williams

"This new community recycling centre will enable thousands of households to recycle even more of their waste. The modern facility will have better access and feature more bays than the site in Tŷtheaston"



Seven-year-old Mazie-May with her winning poster design earlier this year.

Bridgend County Borough Council joined forces with Keep Wales Tidy to support Caru Cymru (Love Wales), as part of our 'Love it, don't trash it!' as part of the biggest ever initiative to eradicate litter and waste. This campaign first began in Porthcawl in 2019 and has since then been expanded. The project involves community councils and schools in Porthcawl, Cornelly, Pyle, Kenfig Hill, Cefn Cribwr and Brackla, encouraging residents to care for the environment by making good habits second nature from taking litter home and cleaning up after dogs, to recycling 'on the go', reusing

and repairing. New signs designed by a primary school pupil as part of the 'Love it, Don't Trash it!' campaign urging people to not drop litter and highlighting the consequences of it have been placed onto bins and lamp-posts throughout Cornelly, Pyle, Kenfig Hill and Cefn Cribwr. As part of the project, children took part in a survey around nearby streets and parks, recording all the different types of litter they found, and doing their own litter pick. Meanwhile around 250 children took part in one of SeaQuest's beach days. They then used their experiences as inspiration to create posters urging people to not drop litter and highlighting the consequences of it.

We will soon launch a digital version for schools in the Ogmore Valley and will continue to work with Keep Wales Tidy to set up new litter hubs when COVID-19 restrictions allow so volunteers can have access to equipment for litter picks. We are also planning to introduce more dog waste bag stations for pet owners if they have forgotten them on a walk and colourful bins to discourage people from dropping gum on the floor.

Tree planting

Following the declaration of a climate emergency by Welsh Government in April 2019 and the commitment to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030, we started to develop a climate emergency response programme, which will work to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The council recognise that increasing the coverage of native tree species will help safeguard biodiversity and add to environmental resilience. In addition, tree planting has the added benefits of ecological enhancement, community cohesion and well-being benefits.

Effective tree planting follows the best advice and science in order to ensure 'right tree right place'. To this end, the council commissioned Environment Systems to develop a protocol based on identifying the sites with the best ecosystem services, e.g. flood attenuation, biodiversity gain and carbon capture that could be applied to council owned assets. The protocol identified five sites with the potential to accommodate circa 15,000 trees. The strategy to take this forward is currently being developed.

Case study: Brynteg Comprehensive School

A great example of increasing tree cover and providing community benefits is Brynteg Comprehensive School. The school is seeking to maximise their green spaces to enhance outdoor learning, improve the ecology, and to develop the school as a community hub. The natural resources team in the council provided support and technical input. The scheme involved a number of elements including an overall masterplan to ensure the project was a success. A local landscape architect was approached to prepare a master plan. The team also involved the woodland charity Llais y Goedwig to work with the school to identify tree planting areas that staff and the pupils could have access to. We planted a thousand trees. Bridgend Town Council and Bridgend County Borough Council jointly funded the project.



Local Nature Reserve Enhancement projects

There are currently five Local National Reserves (LNRs) across Bridgend County Borough

- Craig y Parcau LNR
- Frog Pond Wood LNR
- Kenfig Dunes LNR
- Locks Common LNR
- Tremains Wood LNR

These sites comprise a number of important wildlife and landscape features of regional importance, which has resulted in their LNR status. Thousands of visitors attend these sites every year, making their accessibility, health, and safety paramount concerns. LNRs also offer

opportunities for increased partnership working and volunteer involvement in their management.

Due to lockdown restrictions, it has not been feasible to undertake the usual improvement activities; however, the focus has been to extend the Frog Pond Wood LNR and to declare Bedford Park a LNR. Both proposals will provide additional opportunities for management works involving the local community.

We commissioned the Wildlife Trusts of South and West Wales to prepare a management plan in support of the declaration of Bedford Park as a LNR. The extension of Frog Pond Wood LNR to include Village Farm Meadow has been included in the Magnificent Meadows project. Both sites were approved for LNR designation in April 2021.

Community biodiversity schemes

During the COVID-19 lockdown, we worked with the Bridgend Public Service Board to determine how residents utilised green spaces and if they used and valued these spaces more as a result of limited outdoor activity. We designed a survey and promoted it via the Council's media and social media platforms. The volunteer network group, comprising of the Wildlife Trust, Bryngarw Country Park among others, also helped to raise awareness of the survey through their social media channels. There were 586 respondents and findings were:



Are Open and Green Spaces Being Used Differently During Lockdown?

The **586** respondents to the Bridgend Open and Green Spaces survey told us that:

97% appreciated green space more following lock down, many had found new places to enjoy



81% were more aware of wildlife seeing birds and insects out and about and in the garden



93% felt that using local green spaces helped their personal and family health and mental health



56% used green space to take up new exercise regimes.



95% will use green space more in future.



476 Respondents said they wanted to use green spaces more for walking, **252** for cycling and **144** for running. **363** wanted to visit more nature reserves.



244 people said they wanted to volunteer for conservation activity such as litter picking and tree planting.



63 respondents said that green space was important to their business



Next steps

These survey results will help Bridgend Public Services Board to:

- Engage with more volunteers
- Improve green spaces
- Encourage more people to use open and green spaces to improve their health



Consultations and engaging through social media

Throughout the year, we carried out a range of consultations to help inform our decision making. We have a dedicated webpage providing the details on our consultation activities <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-Council/equalities-and-engagement/consultations/>.

Progress continued in making available easy read versions of consultations for example 'Fit for the Future' budget and Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan consultations. We also created young person versions to encourage young people to get involved.

During the 'Fit for the Future' budget consultation; we used promotional materials such as posters, radio advertising, videos and online FAQs to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage as many people as possible to engage. We posted bilingual budget information to the Council's corporate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn channels throughout the consultation period to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage citizens to share their views on the proposals.

We developed an explainer video to emphasise the importance of being involved along with four videos featuring the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Executive and Youth Mayor. We engaged with Town and Community Councils as well as Bridgend Youth Council, elected Members and Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum.

During the consultation period, the 'Fit for the Future' social media content reached 512,768 people with 79 comments, 141 shares, 165 reactions, 122 poll votes, 5,257 video views and 2,248 link clicks through to the budget consultation page on the local authority website.

Social media

Due to the impact of COVID-19, we relied heavily on social media and online channels to engage with the public. Bridgend County Borough Council's social media channels content output tripled throughout 2020 and the number of followers has increased across our platforms.

Number of followers	
Twitter (English)	13,790
Twitter (Welsh)	290
Facebook (English)	16,869
Facebook (Welsh)	183
Instagram (bilingual)	2,870
LinkedIn (bilingual)	4,816

The pandemic had a significant impact on social media interactions. As the country went into lockdown and communication shifted online there was a 53% increase in social media traffic across the Councils various online platforms.

Financial quarter	2019 - 2020	2020- 2021
Q1	18,038	56,241
Q2	18,619	23,683
Q3	16,186	25,637
Q4	29,579	20,470
Total	82,422	126,031

Digital communications

In June 2020, the Council implemented a new digital communications platform called govDelivery- an email marketing system that sends messages directly to residents' email inboxes in the language of their choice. There are currently 36,987 English subscribers and 228 Welsh subscribers who receive weekly COVID-19 update emails.

Since the launch, we have issued 112 weekly bulletins providing timely information, advice and guidance on the COVID-19 pandemic and Council services. We also sent standalone bulletins for community testing and local lockdown information. There have been 130,529 links clicked within the bulletins- the table below gives a breakdown of the govDelivery activity since its launch in June.

Language	Subscribers	Number of bulletins	Average total email opens	Total bulletin link clicks	Average clicks per bulletin
English	36,987	56	30,199	129,883	2,319
Welsh	228	56	140	643	12

Website

At the start of the pandemic, we created a dedicated COVID-19 information hub on the homepage of the Council's website <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-Council/performance-plans-and-reports/coronavirus-COVID-19-latest-information-and-advice/> providing easy access to information, advice and guidance for residents and business.

This includes:

- Latest news
- Contact tracing scheme
- COVID-19 business support
- Children, young people and COVID-19
- Help your community in the pandemic
- Support for people in the pandemic
- COVID-19 testing facilities
- Ordering home tests

We supported partners such as Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board, South Wales Police, town and community Councils to disseminate information, by using our communication channels to share information they produced. We also developed our chatbot 'Oggie' and launched Facebook messenger to incorporate key blocks to also assist with routing residents to the relevant information quickly and easily.

We created a bespoke webpage 'Support for people in the pandemic' which included making people aware that support is available in a variety of different languages with links to multilingual Welsh Government resources. <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-Council/performance-plans-and-reports/coronavirus-COVID-19-latest-information-and-advice/support-for-people-in-the-pandemic/>

To reach and engage with residents without access to digital platforms, we distributed leaflets to all households in the borough highlighting support available from the Council during the pandemic. We worked closely with umbrella organisations, e.g. the Bridgend Community

Cohesion and Equality Forum and the Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations, to distribute information to specific groups.

Communication during COVID-19

1,095 media releases	3 editions of staff newsletter Bridgend
90 daily COVID-19 updates	502 internal staff messages- including 52 emails on resources for staff well-being
73 bi-weekly news updates	Video communications for VE Day, Unsung Heroes campaign, Keep Wales Safe campaign
39 Seaside News columns	

The Welsh Local Government Association has acknowledged the communication effort by the Council during the pandemic as an example of best practice.

<http://www.wlga.wales/communicating-with-bridgend-residents-during-COVID-19-bridgend-cbc>

Financial Performance

Our financial environment is becoming increasingly challenging. We need to make unprecedented savings in the future that can only be achieved by changing the way we work and changing the way services are delivered. Last year the gross amount we spent on delivering services to our citizens and investing in our landscape and infrastructure totalled around **£470.91 million**. The total amount that we had available to spend was made up from three main sources listed below.

Revenue Expenditure

Our revenue expenditure represents day-to-day costs such as salaries, equipment, supplies and services. Our **net** revenue expenditure in 2020-21 after allowing for accrued council tax income and appropriation to earmarked reserves was **£286.453 million**. The table below shows the expenditure and proportion of spend per well-being objective in 2020-21 and spend on other core services and statutory functions:

Well-being objective for 2020-21	Revised Budget 2020-21 (£'Million)	Actual Outturn 2020-21 (£'Million)	Actual Over/(Under Spend) 2020-21 (£'Million)
1. Supporting a successful economy	54.345	53.674	(0.672)
2. Helping people to be more self-reliant	56.879	55.195	(1.683)
3. Smarter use of resources	4.781	4.576	(0.205)
4. Core services and statutory functions	170.881	173.008	2.128
TOTAL	286.885	286.453	-0.432

Capital Expenditure

This represents our spending on schools and infrastructure such as roads, bridges and buildings. These assets will benefit the community over long periods of time and the expenditure is largely financed by borrowing and capital grants. Our capital expenditure in 2020-21 was **£23.461 million**, where the main projects carried out during the year included:

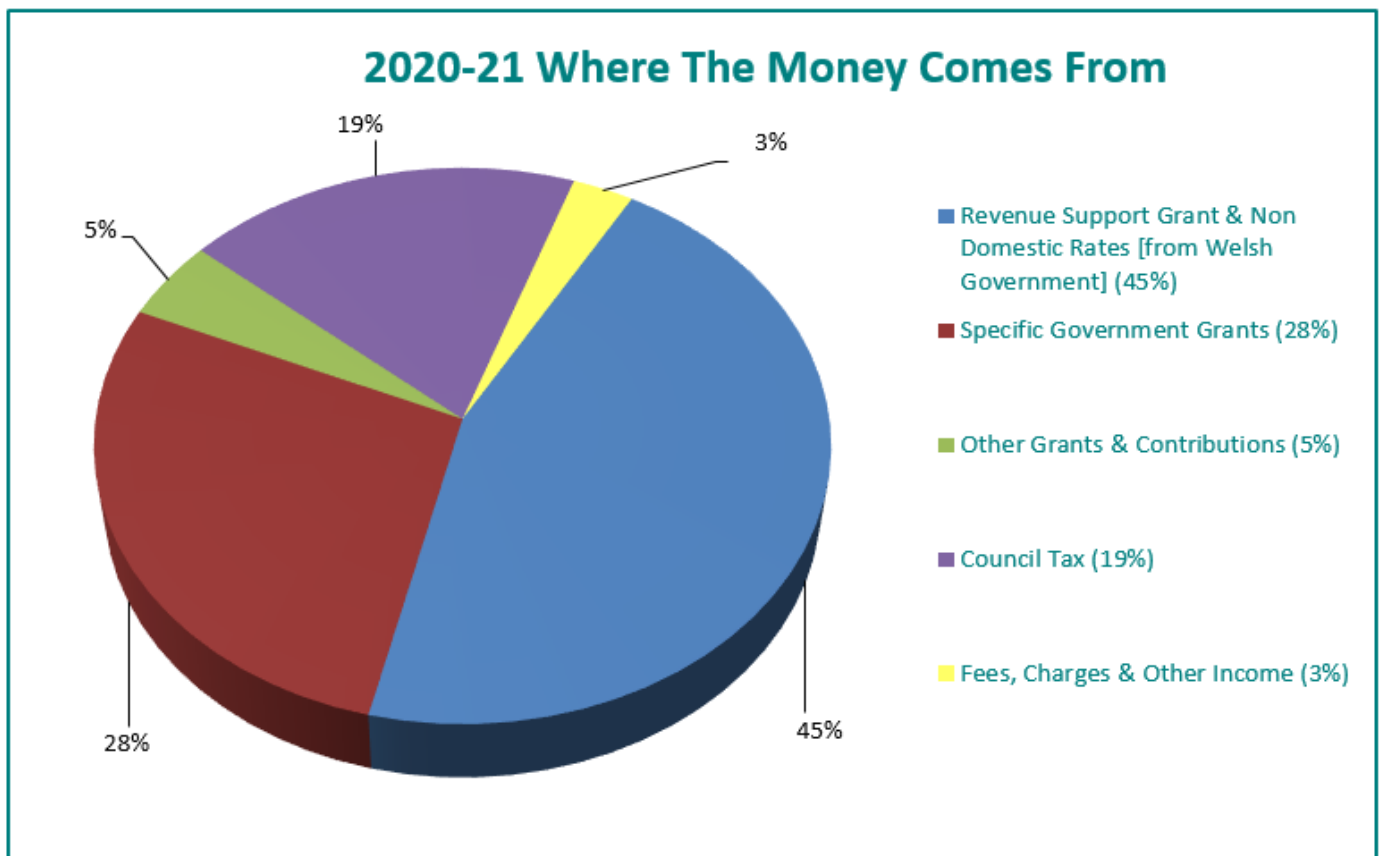
- £1.762 million Maesteg Town Hall Cultural Hub
- £1.643 million Carriageway and Footpath Renewal
- £1.518 million Fleet Vehicles
- £1.414 million Active Travel – Pencoed Technology Park
- £1.406 million Relocation of Recycling Centre
- £1.367 million Schools' Capital Maintenance Grant
- £1.358 million Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)
- £1.184 million Brynteg Comp - East Hub
- £1.102 million Mynydd Cynffig Primary School Mobiles

Grants

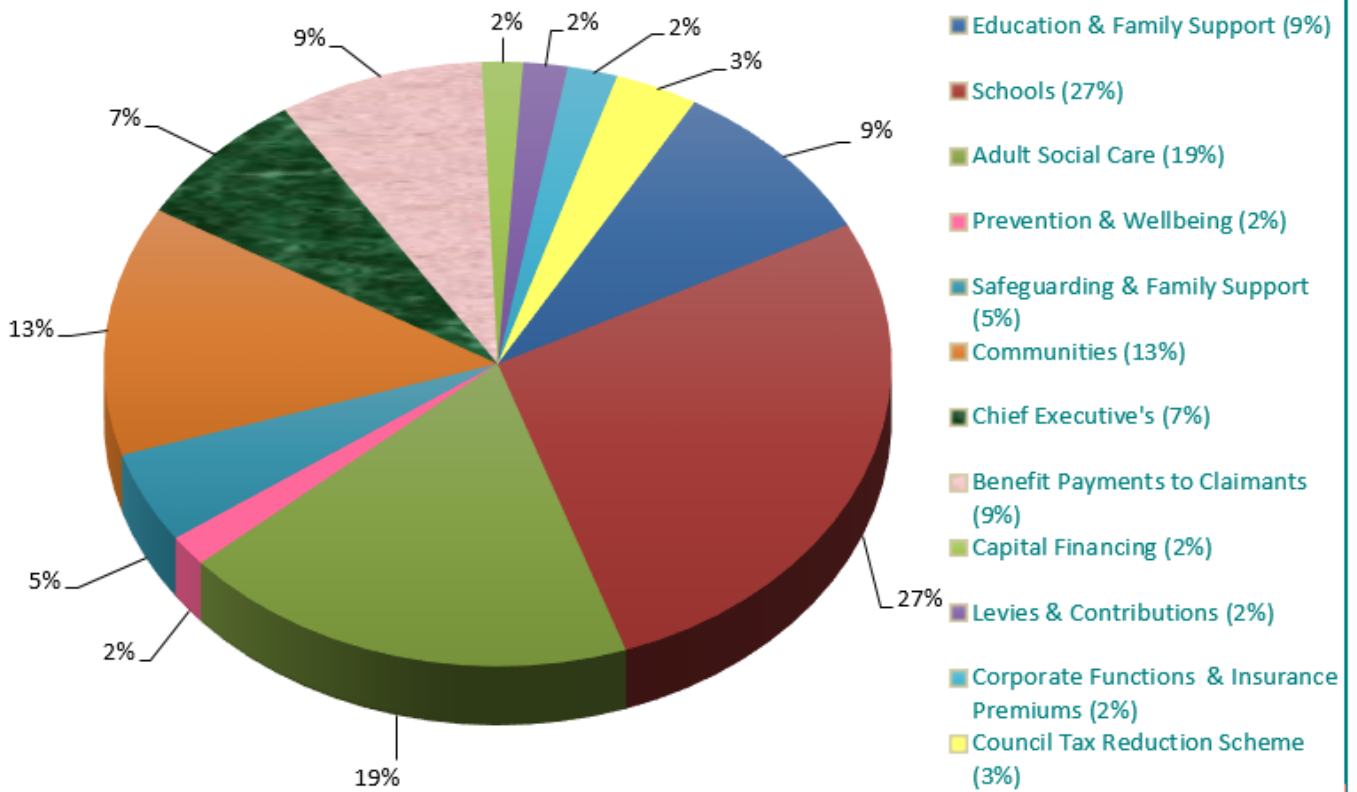
We also received specific government revenue grants in addition to the core Revenue Support Grant and Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) allocations and Housing Benefit Subsidy, totalling **£124.770 million** during 2020-21, which we are able to use in addition to our own revenue budgets. The main grants received during 2020-21 included:

- £6.307 million – Post-16 Grant
- £38.189 million - DWP Grant Income
- £8.179 million – COVID-19 Grant
- £5.955 million – Supporting People Grant
- £4.953 million – Education Improvement Grant
- £4.980 million – Pupil Development Grant
- £2.922 million – Flying Start Grant
- £1.787 million – Families First Grant

The following charts summarise where the money came from and where the money is spent:



2020-21 Where the Money Is Spent



What our regulators said about us

Audit Wales

The work of all councils in Wales is scrutinised by external regulators to ensure that we use public money efficiently and effectively to deliver benefits for our communities. Audit Wales has an annual programme of audit and assessment work that it undertakes in the Council, and the conclusions from all this work are brought together in an Annual Audit Summary (formerly known as the Annual Improvement Report). The latest report available was published in March 2021 <https://archwilio.cymru/publication/bridgend-county-borough-Council-annual-audit-summary-2020>

The Auditor General certified that the Council has met its legal duties for improvement planning and reporting, and believes that it is likely to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Auditor General issued the certificate confirming that the audit of accounts for 2019-20 has been completed, and key facts and figures from the 2019-20 financial statements can be accessed here <https://audit.wales/infographics/local-Council/bridgend-county-borough-Council>

During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendation. There were some proposals for improvements on financial sustainability, which can be viewed via the link in the table below. The impact of the pandemic meant that the breadth of local audit reviews was scaled back. A normal programme of audit reviews is expected to resume in 2021-22.

The Auditor General also researches topics at a national level in order to share best practice and make recommendations for how public bodies can improve. The topics covered during the year included Tackling fraud, Rough sleeping, Better law making, and Commercialisation in local government. These reports can be accessed via the links below.

Performance and Audit Reviews (local)	Link
Financial sustainability	https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/pdf_6_11.pdf
Performance and Audit Reviews (national)	Link
Raising our game: Tackling Fraud in Wales (July 2020)	https://www.audit.wales/publication/raising-our-game-tackling-fraud-wales#:~:text=The%20sums%20lost%20annually%20in,prevalent%20crimes%20in%20society%20today.
Rough sleeping in Wales- Everyone's problem; No one's responsibility (July 2020)	https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/2020-11/Rough-sleeping-Eng_0.pdf
Better Law Making (September 2020)	https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/Think%20piece%20better%20law%20making_10.pdf
Commercialisation in Local Government (October 2020)	https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/2020-11/Commercialisation-english.pdf

Estyn

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. The purpose of Estyn is to provide an independent inspection and advice service on quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic there were no core inspections of schools, however Bridgend schools did contribute and take part in a number of thematic reviews including the Curriculum for Wales, how schools use RRRS and catch up grants, Post-16 partnerships. These reports and others are here <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources-search>.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW evaluate the performance of social services (children and adult services) annually and publish their findings and recommendations in a letter to the Director of Social Services. At the time of writing the report, the performance letter from CIW has not yet been published.

Future Generations Commissioner

On March 9th 2020, Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales triggered a Section 20 Review into the procurement practices of nine public bodies in Wales. Information on the review is covered on page 40 of this report

Important themes that underpin our work

Performance Management Framework

Performance management is about taking action in response to actual performance to make outcomes for users and the public better than they would otherwise be. You can see our Performance Management Framework here

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/2281/bcbc-performance-management-framework-2017-version.pdf>

Scrutinising our performance

Overview and scrutiny committees are a valuable part of the transparent and democratic process. They support the work of the Council as a whole in the improvement of public services. You can see more information on the role of scrutiny here:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-Council/democracy-and-elections/overview-and-scrutiny-committees/>

Equality and diversity

We are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity through all of our services and dedicated to treating our residents, customers, employees and visitors with respect, while providing services to respond to people's individual needs. The most recent annual report published in April 2021, is available here <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-Council/equalities-and-engagement/equality-and-diversity/> along with further information on our efforts to support and promote equality and diversity.

Welsh language

We are committed to treating Welsh and English on an equal basis when carrying out our public business. Our five-year strategy details how we will comply with the Welsh language standards, and how we intend to promote the language and culture among employees and residents. The most recent Welsh language annual report, published in June 2021 is available to read here <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-Council/equalities-and-engagement/welsh-language/>

Bridgend Public Services Board

Bridgend Public Services Board (PSB) is a group of public sector and not for profit organisations who work together to create a better Bridgend County Borough. In July 2021, the PSB published its third annual report highlighting the activity it has undertaken in 2020-21. You can read the report here <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/11185/bridgend-public-service-board-annual-report-2020-to-2021.pdf>

Risk management

With growing demands on services at a time of increasing pressure on finances, effective risk management remains an essential part of the framework for ensuring good corporate governance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continuously reviewed the corporate risk assessment to take into account COVID-19 related risks. The latest risk register can be viewed here,

<https://democratic.bridgend.gov.uk/documents/s25102/CRA%20June%202021.pdf?LLL=0>

End of year position summary statement

At year-end, there were 15 corporate risks (CR) on the risk register, which included the recent addition of CR14 *Schools closure/partial schools closure* and CR15 *Schools are not able to maintain educational standards*. The table below provides the end of year position

Risk status	Number
High	6
Medium	6
Low	3

Direction of Travel

Additional corporate governance measures were introduced to ensure appropriate risks were escalated to the Corporate Management Board (CMB). We established a 'Silver' group, predominantly comprising of heads of service, to provide operational support for the strategic 'Gold' group - made up of CMB - and make recommendations to Cabinet. During the initial stages of lockdown both the Silver and Gold groups would meet weekly to assess COVID-19 issues and risks. When necessary, decisions would be escalated to Cabinet/CMB for final approval.

The majority of risks on the risk register have remained static with the exception of CR2 *The Council is unable to deliver transformation including agreed financial savings*, which increased from 4 to 8 (remaining a low risk) and CR13 *Invigorating the economy and economic recovery*, which remains a medium risk but its score increases from 8 to 10. Two risks have moved from medium to high-risk status. CR11 *Recovery & Restoration of Services* and CR12 *Public Health and Protecting the Public* had their risk score increase from 10 to 15 on the register.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in implementing alternative ways of working, both for back office services and front line services, including adult social care and schools. This has led to, additional costs and increased operational burdens to meet relevant health and safety guidance. The new ways of working have generated new types of risk for the council to consider, particularly in relation to fraud and cybercrime. There are also risks for vulnerable people in the community including the digital exclusion of pupils from schooling, increased levels of poverty and homelessness, increases in children at risk and older people becoming isolated. The pandemic has affected a range of council services and activities. It is likely the impacts will continue for some time, the after-effects will need to be carefully managed, and measures put into place to mitigate the risks.

Forecast Direction of Travel

At year-end, the forecast direction of travel for risk has predominately remained the same, with CMB closely monitoring key corporate risks and progress of associated mitigating actions. It is forecast that risk CR11 *The restoration of some council services will require new ways of working* will remain a high risk as the council considers its future operating model as the pandemic restrictions continue to ease.

The risk CR1 *The council is unable to make robust medium to long term decisions requiring service change* will also remain moderate to high as the impact of COVID-19 has been significant in terms of forward planning, financial uncertainty and the focus on achieving savings. Although work to deliver a balanced budget for 2021/22 and beyond is underway, many aspects remain uncertain.

Emerging risks areas

The Auditor General for Wales has identified some key long-term issues that Welsh public bodies need to take into account as they shift their planning horizons to the longer term. The council will need to consider the risk that these changes may have on its services:

- Demographic changes – a decline in the working age population and an estimated 11% increase in the proportion of the population aged over 80 by the year 2048.
- Austerity - public bodies are currently making difficult decisions in a period of unprecedented financial austerity.
- Poverty - estimated that there will be approximately a 3% increase in the relative poverty rate in Wales from 2013-2015 to 2019-2021, and approximately a 10% increase in the relative child poverty rate from 2013-2015 to 2019-2021.
- Brexit - the impact is still widely unknown, but public bodies will need to be alert and adapt swiftly to the risks and opportunities.
- Technological developments - there is a need to balance the opportunities that technological changes provide with a need to ensure that they do not exclude those who are less comfortable and able to use digital technologies.
- Climate change - the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to ensure that in 2050 net emissions are at least 80% lower than the baseline set in legislation.

The council is conscious of the above emerging risks, some of which are included in the existing risk register along with mitigating actions to ensure they do not escalate.

Our well-being objectives for 2021-22

In our Corporate Plan 2018-23, we set out our well-being objectives. These are:

- Supporting a successful and sustainable economy
- Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient
- Smarter use of resources

As part of our corporate planning the well-being objectives are assessed against the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to identify opportunities to maximise our contribution to the 7 well-being goals. Full details on the actions to achieve our objectives can be viewed in our Corporate Plan 2018-2023, reviewed for 2021-22 <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/8924/psb-bridgend-ann-report-eng-0620.pdf>

Say hello to our newest member
of the customer services team!

#AskOggie

Find Oggie on our website
www.bridgend.gov.uk



Feedback

We welcome your comments on this annual report and your suggestions for improvement. You can give your feedback through



our website: www.bridgend.gov.uk



on Instagram www.instagram.com/BridgendCBC/



via Facebook www.facebook.com/BridgendCBC



on Twitter: @BridgendCBC



email to talktous@bridgend.gov.uk



in writing to Corporate Performance Team, Bridgend County Borough Council,
Raven's Court, Brewery Lane, Bridgend CF31 4WB

This report is available in both Welsh and English. It is also available in another language or format on request.