



RECOVER, RESET, RENEW



Corporate Plan Annual Report 2022-2023



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



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Foreword

2022-2023 delivered another year of highs and lows, not only felt throughout our communities in Neath Port Talbot but across the world. We have seen inflation and energy costs rise to unprecedented levels, forcing many of our residents, businesses and support organisations into a cost of living crisis.

This council has again, as we saw during the Covid pandemic, worked to administer / provide over £9 million of financial support to residents via its Hardship Relief Scheme, cost of living support scheme and administration of the fuel support scheme. We have also been able to provide signposting to community hubs, foodbanks and support services.

We have also witnessed the suffering of those fleeing Ukraine following the invasion by Russia and we have worked, like many other local authorities across the UK, to provide a humanitarian response and housed a number of vulnerable families here in our county borough through the hosting of a Welcome Centre on behalf of Welsh Government, hotels and with nominated families.

Whilst it has been difficult to navigate through yet more uncertainty Neath Port Talbot has a significant amount of regeneration projects and investment coming to the area, which in time we hope will provide a wealth of jobs and supply chain opportunities for local people and businesses.

From the approval of planning for the Afan Valley Wildfox development and the announcement of our successful bid for the Celtic Freeport, to the continuing progress being made in the Neath Valley to house the Global Rail Centre of Excellence, it is evident that Neath Port Talbot continues to thrive and together we can achieve remarkable things.

**Councillor Steve Hunt,
Leader of the Council**

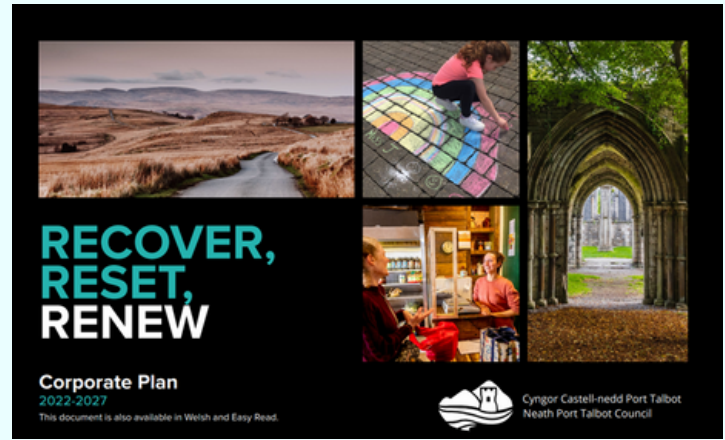




Introduction

The 2022-2023 Annual Report provides a balanced overview of progress made against the four well-being objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 – Recover, Reset, Renew.

This Annual Report is part of our statutory duty to report under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.



The following well-being objectives were introduced and approved by Council in 2022.

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

Under each well-being objective a number of improvement outcomes and priorities were set out. The improvement outcomes provided the overall position we are aiming to achieve by 2027 and the priorities set out the strategic actions we will take to deliver that improvement during the twelve month period.

Whilst reviewing our progress for 2022-2023 we reflected upon our well-being objectives and their relevance at the current time. In preparing this Annual Report for the 2022-2023 financial year, the council is required to consider whether the current well-being objectives remain relevant or whether changes to those objectives should be considered. The well-being objectives will remain the same for the coming year (2023-2024) but we will look to review our Corporate Plan outcomes and priorities for the period 2024 - 2027 following the Let’s Keep Talking campaign.

Our Corporate Plan 2022-2023: Recover, Reset, Renew set out our plans to move on from the turbulent times which unfolded as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Many of our services were, and continue to be stretched and whilst we continue to be ambitious in our plans for the future, we need to be realistic in relation to the achievement of our well-being objectives and the availability of funding and resources to sustain those plans.

In that review, we will also take into account the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act which has now been given Royal assent. As part of the four principles being brought into being we will revisit our well-being objectives to ensure ‘decent work’ is replaced with ‘fair work’ in accordance with the Act. Our current well-being objectives enable us to demonstrate contribution to the seven national wellbeing goals, take into account our ongoing recovery work following the pandemic and enable us to drive forward the following priorities over the short, medium and long term. This is illustrated in the table set out on page 9. All four of our well-being objectives are broad in nature and all four contribute to all seven national well-being goals.

Managing Performance

During 2022-2023 our Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF) was updated to set a clear direction for the council that links/joins up all council business from employee level up to council level, and where everybody is clear how they contribute to achieving the council's vision, purpose and priorities.

It is imperative that our planning (including financial and workforce planning), performance and risk processes are robust and interwoven into our decision making at every level of the organisation. Reliable, timely and accurate information is important for us and to those who hold us to account to know how we are performing and meeting our priorities.

Our revised CPMF:

- Supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan vision, purpose and priorities;
- Helps improve services and outcomes for people;
- Helps embed self-assessment throughout the organisation;
- Helps to ensure the council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively to deliver value for money;
- Further strengthens planning, performance and risk culture across the organisation;
- Helps inform decision making and improve planning;
- Improves performance scrutiny;
- Improves the integration of key planning activities;
- Helps identify poor performance; and
- Joins up all council business from employee/individual level up to council level, where everybody is clear how they contribute to achieving the council's vision, purpose and priorities.



Council Governance

The council has a number of process in place to ensure our governance is robust.

Self-Assessment

To ensure the council meets its statutory duty under the Local Government & Elections Act (2021), an annual self-assessment has been produced to demonstrate our governance arrangements and progress. Our self-assessment sets out our strong relationship with our stakeholders through engagement, participation, scrutiny and feedback.

This important relationship is an integral part of how we operate on an ongoing basis - enabling the delivery of good quality services and supporting improvement. It's also important for those who hold us to account to know how we are performing and if we are meeting our objectives. Our stakeholders include service users, the public, local businesses, employees, elected members, community organisations, partners and trade unions.

The self-assessment covers the following key strategic themes:

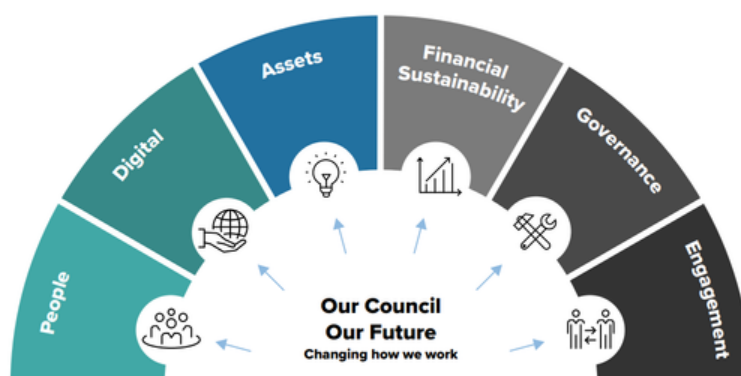
1. Corporate Planning (Role of Council)
2. Workforce Planning (Getting the Best from the Workforce)
3. Leadership (Leadership & Management)
4. Procurement (Procurement & Commissioning)
- 5 Risk Management (Effective Risk Management)
6. Digital, Data & Technology (Data & analytics / Assets & Technology)
7. Financial Planning (Managing Expenditure / Managing Income)
8. Physical Assets & Facilities

View the council's 2022 2023 Self Assessment ([link to be added](#))

The corporate self-assessment asks us to determine:

- ↳ How well we are doing?
- ↳ How do we know?
- ↳ What are we going to do to improve?

The self-assessment for 2022-2023 includes an update on a number of improvements areas identified in 2021-2022 and sets out improvement areas for 2023-2024. A number of performance measures are also included in self-assessment that provide an overview of progress for a selection of services/enables.



Council Governance

Annual Governance Statement

In addition, our governance arrangements are also set out in our Corporate Performance Management Framework and Annual Governance Statement.

The council has adopted the 2016 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA) to develop our Annual Governance Statement. The 2016 framework explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the council to carry out its functions effectively and highlights the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the council is directed and controlled.

The Annual Governance statement for 2022-2023 sets out 13 improvement areas for 2023-2024.

All of the arrangements below feed back into our performance cycle and inform our self-assessment, planning and decision making processes.

Strategic Level


- ↳ 2022-2027 Corporate Plan progress
- ↳ Corporate Plan Annual Report
- ↳ Organisational Development Programme Board
- ↳ Council Annual Self-Assessment report
- ↳ Progress on our cross cutting plans and strategies
- ↳ Chief Officer Objectives
- ↳ Budget monitoring
- ↳ Risk Management
- ↳ Annual Governance Statement
- ↳ Council level compliments and complaints data
- ↳ Key Performance Indicators

Service Level

- ↳ Service Recovery Plan (SRPs)
- ↳ Benchmarking
- ↳ Ad-hoc service reports

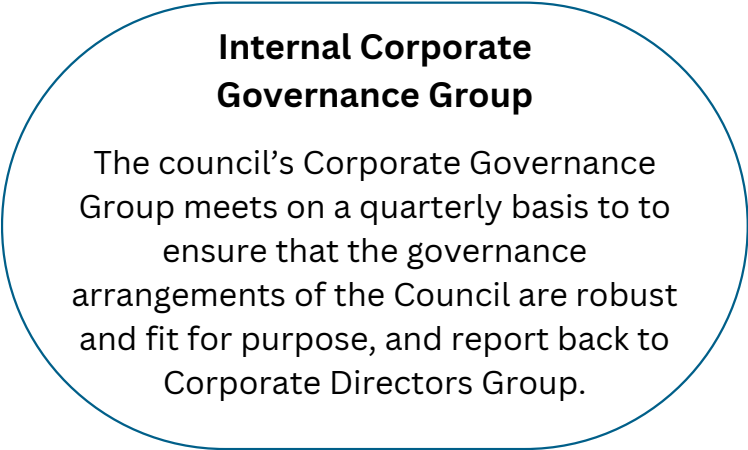
Individual Level

- ↳ Annual performance appraisals



View the council's
2022-2023 Annual
Governance Statement

Internal Corporate Governance Group



The council's Corporate Governance Group meets on a quarterly basis to ensure that the governance arrangements of the Council are robust and fit for purpose, and report back to Corporate Directors Group.



How our Well-being Objectives contribute to the National Well-being Goals



Neath Port Talbot Council's Well-being Objectives / 2022-2023

WBO 1- Best start in life

WBO 2 - All communities are thriving and sustainable

WBO 3 - Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

WBO 4 - Jobs and skills

7 National Well-being Goals

	WBO 1	WBO 2	WBO 3	WBO 4
A Prosperous Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Resilient Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A more equal Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A healthier Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of cohesive communities	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language	✓	✓	✓	✓
A globally responsible Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓



How our Well-being Objectives embed the Sustainable Principle

Neath Port Talbot Council’s Well-being Objectives / 2022-2023

WBO 1- Best start in life

WBO 2 - All communities are thriving and sustainable

WBO 3 - Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

WBO 4 - Jobs and skills

Collaboration



Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

Integration



Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

Involvement



The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Long-term



The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the long-term needs.

Prevention



How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

The general purpose of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, is to ensure that the governance arrangements of public bodies for improving the well-being of Wales, take the needs of future generations into account. The Act is designed to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with sustainable development principles. The work we do to achieve our corporate vision takes into account the Well-being of Future Generations five ways of working and is embedded across the council to contribute to the vision.

Strategic level - We will initiate a strategic change programme to ensure we are embracing a ‘one council’ strategic approach to achieving the vision.

Corporate level - corporate strategies will be realigned to support the achievement of the vision and the delivery of the strategic change programme.

Operational level - Every service and function within the council will align their service recovery plans to maximise their contribution to achieving the vision that we have set.

Individual level - All employees feel valued and motivated and understand how they play a part in our strategic and operational approaches. Training and development for all employees, supporting the delivery of the corporate plan, focusing on the key priorities and making best use of the training resources available.

Partnership Working

Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board (PSB)

During the summer of 2022, the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board published its second local assessment of well-being which was informed by the findings of the council's Let's Talk survey undertaken during 2021.

The findings of 'Let's Talk' along with local and national data and information provided a clear picture of well-being in our area highlighting our assets and our challenges.

NPT and Swansea Public Services Boards jointly commissioned Swansea University to provide a summary analysis of the information gathered. Elements of this have been included in the summary document which draws out the key themes of the assessment. Full details can be seen here nptwellbeing.wales – [Well-Being-Assessment](#)

Due to the joined up approach in developing the Well-being Assessment, the Public Services Board aligned their well-being objectives with those of the council, in order to progress in an efficient way and provide overarching added value as a Public Services Board.

A series of steps have been agreed which will help the Board to meet the well-being objectives. These steps will be driven by a governance structure of existing partnerships where possible, which will work together in an integrated way, building on existing work and relationships to deliver the work on behalf of the Public Services Board. Following the twelve week consultation period, which ran from December 2022 to March 2023, the finished Well-being plan was published on 4th May 2023. It can be viewed here [Well Being Strategy | NPTCBC \(nptpsb.org.uk\)](#).



Corporate Joint Committee

Formally constituted in January 2022, the Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales covers the local authority areas of Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea.

The Committee will improve the regional planning, co-ordination and delivery of transport, land use planning, economic development and energy covering South West Wales. The Committee is made up of representation from Carmarthenshire Council, Neath Port Talbot Council, Pembrokeshire Council and Swansea Council, as well as the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

The Corporate Joint Committee has been created as a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.



Swansea Bay City Deal

The City Deal is expected to give the Swansea Bay City Region a permanent uplift in its Gross Value Added (GVA) of £1.8 billion and will generate almost 10,000 new jobs over the next 15 years. The investment is divided across a portfolio of nine headline projects and programmes delivering a total of 35 individual projects throughout the counties of Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire.

There are a number of City Deal projects based within Neath Port Talbot these include:

Homes as Power Stations

The Swansea Bay City Deal Homes as Power Stations (HAPS) project is a regional 5 year programme led by Neath Port Talbot CBC on behalf of the City Deal local authorities, which aims to deliver smart, low carbon, energy efficient homes through a coordinated approach across the region, ultimately leading to a reduction in fuel poverty and its impact on health and wellbeing and contributing to carbon emission reduction targets and alleviating the housing shortage to address the housing need.

The HAPS programme targets both new build projects and the retrofit of existing buildings. The aim is to provide proof of concept in the public sector at relatively small scale with the intention of scaling up activity across the region and sectors. The ‘pathfinder’ project is currently on site at the former Hafod Care Home in Neath – this is a collaborative project between Neath Talbot CBC, Pobl and Swansea University – SPECIFIC.

Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth

The Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth programme is made up of seven inter-linked projects under four themes:

- The award winning, energy positive Technology Centre building on Baglan Energy Park, providing flexible office space for start-up companies and indigenous businesses, with a focus on the innovation, ICT and R&D sectors. The excess energy from solar and other renewable technologies will be converted into hydrogen at the nearby Hydrogen Centre to be used to fuel hydrogen vehicles
- A specialist facility which will support the steel and metals industry in Port Talbot, Wales and the UK, while reducing its carbon footprint.
- Decarbonisation projects including a low emission vehicle charging network, as well as air quality monitoring and a hydrogen stimulus project
- An Industrial Futures project to address the gap between demand and supply for businesses and available land in the Port Talbot Waterfront Enterprise Zone, with a hybrid building providing production units as well as office space to support start-ups and indigenous businesses in the innovation and manufacturing sectors



Well-being Objective 1

Best Start in Life

Of the 21 key actions we had detailed in the Corporate Plan to deliver during 2022-2023, we were 'on track' with 17 actions and 4 were 'just off' track.



Published our **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan**

2,426 childcare spaces available



34% of 0-4 year olds accessed Flying Start support



Launched the Children and Young People's Engagement and Participation Strategy

1189 Benefited from the funded **FREE CHILD-CARE OFFER**

657



Children and young people engaged in fully funded play activities as a result of the Welsh Government Playworks Holiday Fund.

Roll out of free school meals to Years 1 and 2 (ages 5 to 7). From September 2023 we will provide free school meals to all primary school pupils – **a year ahead of our target.**

1275 Young Carers Awareness sessions delivered

19.7% of Year 1 pupils are receiving education through medium of Welsh and more Year 11 pupils studying Welsh first language (13.1%)



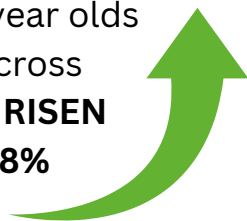
2.2% of Year 11 leavers were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET). **Our second lowest ever figure.**

Continual reduction in the number of children on the Child Protection Register.



658 pupils across primary and secondary schools have accessed School Based Counselling Support.

Number of 16-24 year olds in employments across Neath Port Talbot **RISEN from 50.6% to 65.8%**



Apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds **working in the council** increased **from 19 to 28**



46% of children take part in sport three or more times a week. Highest rate in Wales

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 1

Best Start in Life



Supporting our children and young people is critical to ensure we remove inequalities and provide the best start in life. In our Corporate Plan 2022-2027 we asked:

Why is this important?

Covid-19 has had a significant, adverse impact on children and young people, with disruption to their learning and consequences for their social development and physical and mental wellbeing; 35% of children aged 7-24 live in the 20% most deprived wards in Wales; 84% of children entered nursery without the appropriate literacy, language and communication skills to access the curriculum; 27% of pupils of school age are entitled to free school meals; Flying Start aims to offer support to at least 25% of all children aged 0-4 in the most deprived wards in each local authority. This is not a universal offer, however, needs based referrals, strong links with our multiagency partners and local need targeting within the Flying Start Outreach Programme allows the programme's eligibility to reach much further to those who need it most; A significant percentage of pupils finish statutory education without the expected levels in language, mathematics and science; Over half of the pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not achieve a grade C or above in either language or mathematics; Too many children and young people are being excluded from schools on a fixed term and permanent basis; At least a quarter of children in our schools have a known or identified Additional Learning Need; 2,237 young people aged 16-24 are economically inactive in Neath Port Talbot – some of these consider themselves unfit for work due to mental health issues; and The Welsh Government has set a target that 1 million people will speak Welsh by 2050 and we need to play our part in helping to achieve this.

Summary Progress during 2022-2023

Overall we, are on track in delivering this well-being objective for 2022-2023. Some of our key achievements during the year include the ahead of schedule roll out of free school meals to those in years 3 and 4, the expansion of Flying Start seeing an additional 129 children and their families access the full programme, and at least 225 beneficiaries outside of eligible Flying Start areas benefitting from the programme's "Outreach" engagement, including funded childcare, specialist Midwifery and intensive early years parenting. This has increased Flying Start coverage to 34% of all 0-4 year olds. We have also published our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, which details our plans for growth over the next 10 years and the percentage of 5 year olds receiving education through the medium of Welsh and the percentage of year 11 pupils studying Welsh first language is increasing year on year.

We are adhering to Welsh Government's timeline for the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Education and Tribunal Wales Act 2018 and the conversion of Statements to Individual Development Plans (IDPs). During the academic year 2022-2023 the majority of learners within the mandated cohorts have had their Statements of SEN converted to Individual Development Plans.

Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

We are continuing to work towards completing the Band B projects of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (previously 21st Century Schools and Education Programme). During 2022-2023, the council's Cabinet also considered the next phase (Band C) which will enable funding applications to be submitted to Welsh Government.

Our education services have made massive strides to ensure children and young people were able to return to school and play settings alongside implementing the role out of the new Curriculum for Wales and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act 2018 (ALNET) which is still being rolled out across the borough.

Whilst schools across Neath Port Talbot were reopened to all pupils, attendance rates across primary and secondary age groups are still struggling and whilst provisional academic year 2022-23 attendance rates show a slight increase on the previous year, they are still lower than pre-pandemic attendance rates with 291 (Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) – January 2023) children still being educated at home.

Some learners established a pattern of not attending school during the pandemic that they and their families have found difficult to revert from. Many of these challenges existed before the pandemic, but some have deepened since, and as a result some families have become harder to reach and engage. There is more work to do to increase school attendance rates and reduce school exclusions, which has risen from 525 in 2021-2022 academic year to 760 in 2022-23 academic year.

During the academic year 2022-2023 the School Based Counselling Service has supported 658 pupils over 3894 counselling sessions. Of the 109 primary aged pupils accessing support, 70 were below the statutory Year 6 age. NPT is consistently ranked highly in the top few authorities across Wales in terms of recording positive outcomes as a result of therapeutic intervention. The top presenting issues for counselling support are Anxiety, Family and Anger. In response to this, the service has developed training for school staff to best meet the needs of those pupils presenting with issues around 'anger'. In addition, the service is providing self-care groups and will be picking up one to one counselling work with parents.

The Inclusion Service has developed a multi-disciplinary forum so that guidance can be offered to schools from different professional perspectives. The 'forum team' will ordinarily consist of a school-based counsellor, a wellbeing service practitioner, an educational psychologist and a practitioner from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). During 2022-2023, 140 cases were discussed. Of these cases, 42% empowered school support, 23% resulted in Inclusion Service input and 35% resulted in other referrals including CAMHS, CAMHS School Liaison, SPOC, Team Around the Family.

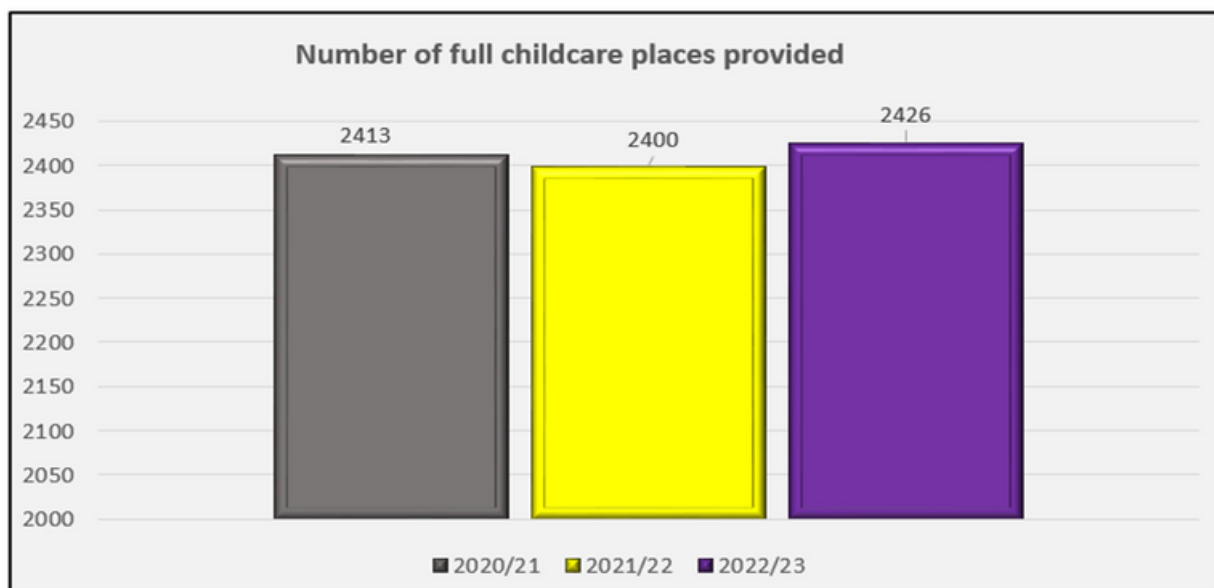


Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

Progress on our 2022- 2023 Corporate Plan Actions and Measures:

Of the 21 key actions we had detailed in the Corporate Plan to deliver during 2022-2023, we were broadly on track with 17 and 4 were 'just off' track. Our Corporate Plan measures have been linked to the relevant actions.

- We have supported our school leaders to ensure all schools re-opened fully following the pandemic and have well established development plans to focus on recovery. In addition, council services have supported schools to help pupils and families recover.
- Significant progress has been made in ensuring a more equitable early year's offer by exceeding its Flying Start expansion goal of engaging an additional 127 children aged 0-4, taking the total amount of children accessing early years support to 502. As a result, our Flying Start programme has exceeded the national target of 25% coverage, increasing to 34% of 0-4year olds accessing Flying Start support. Two small additional areas of Margam and Port Talbot are now within the Flying Start footprint, with Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen now being fully eligible.



Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

The total number of childcare places provided across Neath Port Talbot is 2,426, increasing from 2,400 the previous year.

As per Welsh Government requirements, we have commissioned the services of a software company to develop an online IDP platform. A designated 'IDP Systems and Process Officer' has been appointed to lead this piece of work ensuring the specifications requirements are met. In addition to the consideration of council maintained IDPs, between 1st September 2021 and the 31st of August 2022, ALN Inclusion Panel also considered 197 Statutory Assessments (SA) under the previous SEN Framework. During this period, 168 Statements of SEN were also issued and no appeals to the Special Education Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) were lodged. 100% of Statements of SEN and/ or IDPs were produced within the statutory timescale 'excluding 'exceptions'. Exceptions refer to those cases where advice requested from professionals is submitted outside of timescales, which is outside of the control of the ALNSS, along with those cases where further dialogue is needed with parents/carers following the issue of the proposed plan.

Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

- The Inclusion Service and NPT Schools have a robust quality assurance framework in place to monitor and review the impact of IDPs. Inclusion Service Managers work with Swansea Bay University Health Board to quality assure Health provision. The ALNSS Manager undertakes the quality assurance of all LA maintained IDPs and an Inclusion Service Officer is currently working with school clusters to develop a quality assurance framework for school maintained IDPs.
- We enhanced free and low cost play and leisure opportunities for children and young people and outcomes included:
 - ↳ 657 children and young people engaged in fully funded play activities as a result of Welsh Government Playworks Holiday Fund. The fund has been used to improve the quality of play provision with a focus upon closing identified gaps in provision. Activities have included open access play sessions, family play opportunities, sports camps and summer play schemes for children and young people with additional support needs.
 - ↳ The Physical Activity and Sport Service are based in a school setting for primary and secondary to provide sporting and physical activities opportunities.
 - ↳ Physical Activity and Sports Team, in partnership with Early Years and Flying Start Childcare Team provided Physical Literacy and active play workshops to children and their families within childcare settings across Neath Port Talbot .
 - ↳ Results of the School Sport Survey, a national survey of pupils from years 3 to 11, looking into attitudes, behaviours and opportunities for young people in sport, show Neath Port Talbot scored highest in Wales in the following three key areas:
 - The number of children who take part in sport three or more times per week (46%);
 - Those participating in community club sport outside of school (71.6%);
 - Those participating in community sport at least once a week (62.3%).
- Services across Inclusion and the Think Family Partnership ensure that there is a clearly articulated offer to parents and professionals. The Inclusion Service has also ensured capacity across Early Years to meet the requirement of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Act. The Inclusion Service offer of support has been effectively shared with schools and families through our website and social media in addition to face to face workshops.
- All primary schools have begun working under the Curriculum for Wales. All secondary schools are preparing for a September 2023 start for years 7 & 8. Levels of engagement in curriculum workshops and training are very high. The renewed focus on developing a shared understanding of progress is priority at local and national levels. This process is being supported at local, cluster and national levels.

Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

- Inclusion Service staff regularly attend the community 'Supporting Additional Needs Parent/Carer Forum' on a half termly basis to improve communication and consultation. These sessions are always productive and those who attend are invited to contribute honest views in relation to what the service is doing well and what could be done better. Families are also provided with a number of ways to contact the service should they need to, including a central email address and via the Inclusion Service website. Families are also signposted to SNAP Cymru, a national charity that offers support, guidance and advocacy to children and young people with additional learning needs and their families.
- Free school meals are now available to all pupils from Reception to Year 4 and will be rolled out to all primary school pupils from September 2023.
- We worked to ensure those children in need of protection are safeguarded and they can grow up in a loving and stable family, some of this work included:
 - ↳ Working collaboratively with families to build resilience and prevent problems escalating by providing early offers of help and support. There has been a continual reduction in the number of children on the Child Protection Register with the number stabilising at 43 at the end of March 2023.
 - ↳ Supporting families at an earlier stage through the strengthening of support services and the recruitment of a full time principal officer with responsibility for prevention and family support.
 - ↳ We work in partnership with our colleagues in adult services to ensure that we respond to challenges such as the current cost of living crisis and ensure that families have access to support when they need it.
 - ↳ Our approach is about what matters to children and families and to understand the impact we have and the difference we make we have a dedicated Strategic Lead for Participation and Engagement. Listening to the voice of the child is paramount in all the work we do. In May 2022 we were successful in achieving the Children in Wales National Participation Standards Kitemark. We also promote Children's Rights through the development of Children's Rights Champions across the service by working to the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
 - ↳ Worked with partner agencies: statutory, third and voluntary sector. Effective practice in response to need, threat, risk, harm would not be possible without partnership working and there are many forums in place to bring key partners together to respond to current and emerging trends, patterns and themes, these being: Partnership Interface Meeting, Local Operational Safeguarding Group, Strategic SAFE Partnership Group.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

- To ensure those young people leaving full-time education have a clear pathway to move into further training or education or work NPT Employability, Skills and Training and Youth Service continue to provide a service working alongside DWP, schools, colleges, and other external agencies to encourage engagement. The Youth Support Multi Agency Group continues to meet quarterly bringing together a range of partners to discuss youth unemployment and youth homelessness.

The percentage of 16-24 year olds in employment across Neath Port Talbot has risen from 50.6% in 2021-2022 to 65.8% in 2022-23, a significant positive increase.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

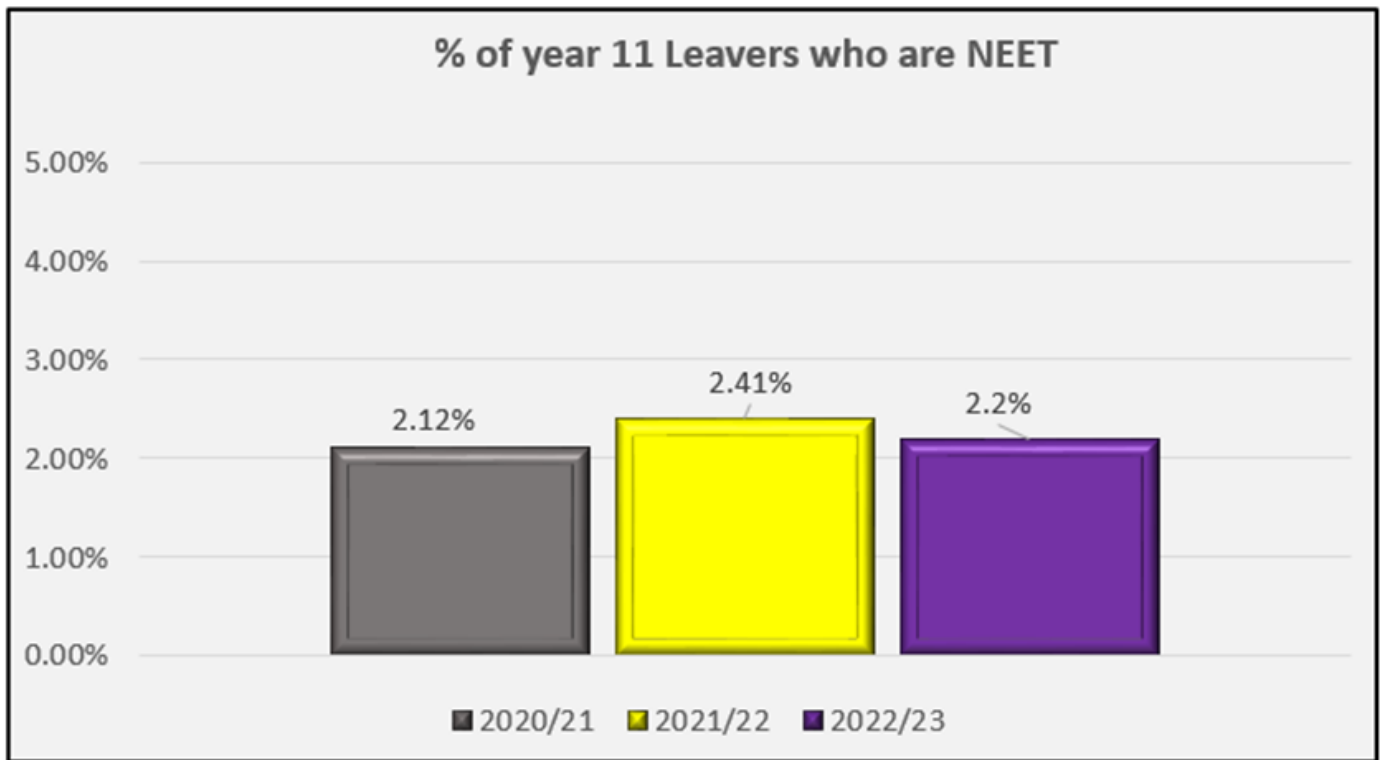
- We make sure it is clear for young people leaving full-time education how they move on to further training or education in a number of ways including:
 - ↳ Schools work with Careers Wales to ensure pupils have opportunities to discuss pathways after school
 - ↳ The Youth Service also provide additional support if required to pupils and after the school journey.
 - ↳ Skills and Training provide summer schools for those who need additional support after school finishes at year 11 and engagement courses for young people. Apprenticeships are also available through this route.
- We continued with our work to support young people leaving fulltime education to help them move on to further training or education or work.
- We are currently implementing ALNET across the post 16 sector and are working collaboratively with Partners to increase the number of young people with ALN who are accessing education, training or employment post 16. Draft post 16 protocol has been developed which includes an enhanced transition framework (MATSM - Multiagency Transition Screening Meetings). This has been successfully piloted in Llangatwg Comprehensive School and will be rolled out to all secondary schools in NPT

The number of young people who present as not in education, employment or training between the ages of 16 and 18 has risen from 3.6% in 2021-2022 to 4.3% in 2022-2023.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:



Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life



- We have increased the number of work experience and apprenticeship opportunities offered by the council to young people (aged 16-24) from 19 in 2021-2022 to 28 in 2022-2023, of which 26 have finished their apprenticeship and achieved a qualification. We are currently working with Wildfox, Freeports and other local businesses as part of the skills mapping exercise to ensure that work experience, volunteering, apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships are explored as a pathway into local industries for our people in NPT.
- We continue our role as corporate parents and help young people leaving care to have appropriate supported transition to enable them to access and sustain appropriate accommodation which includes working with young people, foster carers, our colleagues in Housing and continually reviewing our accommodation needs for young people.

The number of young people who transitioned from year 11 and were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) totalling 35 his equated to 2.2% of Year 11 leavers and is our second lowest ever NEETs figure. This is also the closest we have ever been to the Welsh average which for 2022-23 is 2.1% and ranked 13th in Wales.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

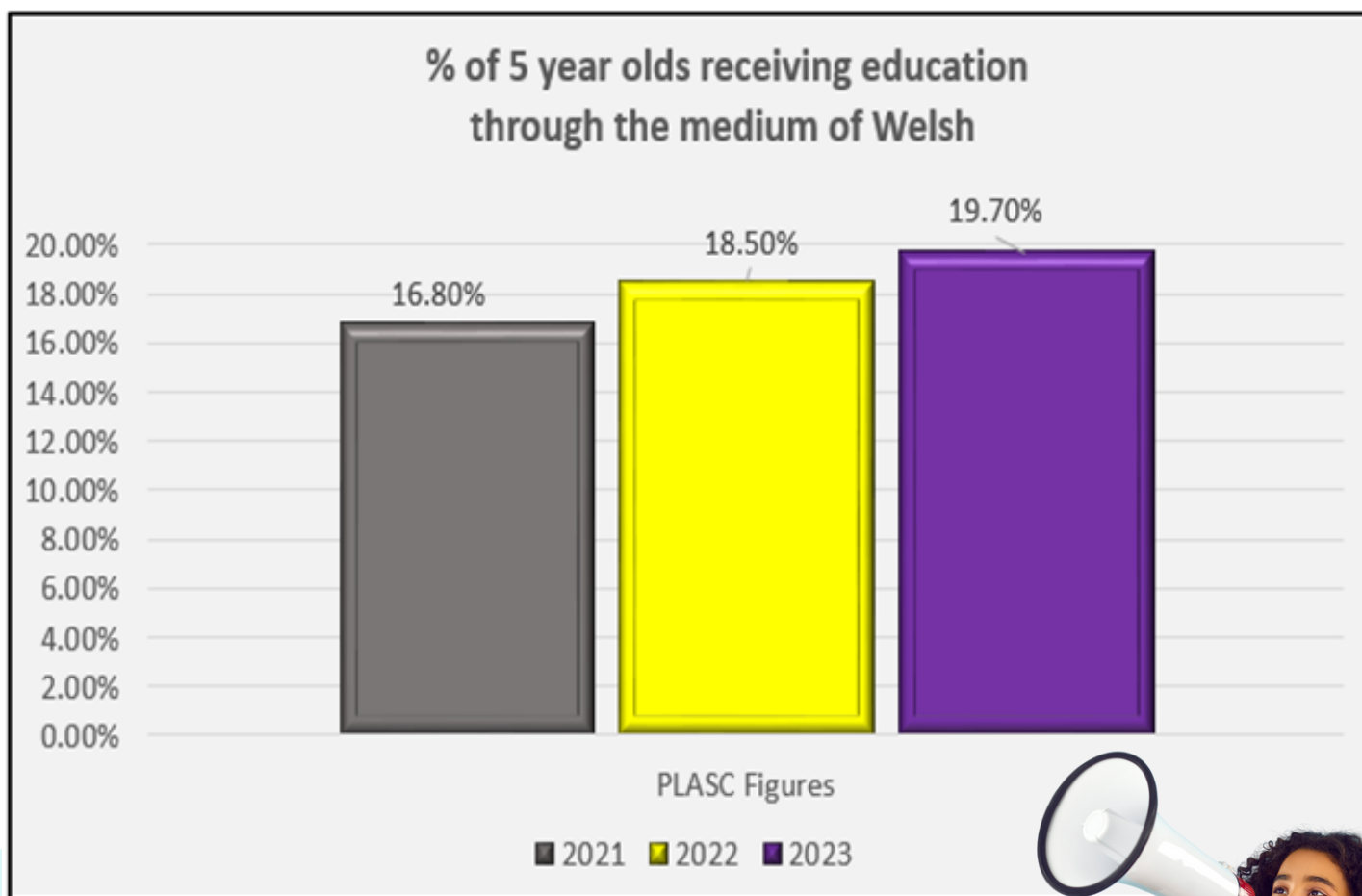


Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

- The Children and Young People’s Leadership Group has been established with work underway to develop a Children and Young People’s Plan and Early Years Strategy so that all services for children and families are easy to identify and use, meet people’s needs and that our communities are child friendly
- We continued to provide opportunities to enable all learners, families and carers to benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh. We implemented the final year of the previous WESP action plan and achieved targets.

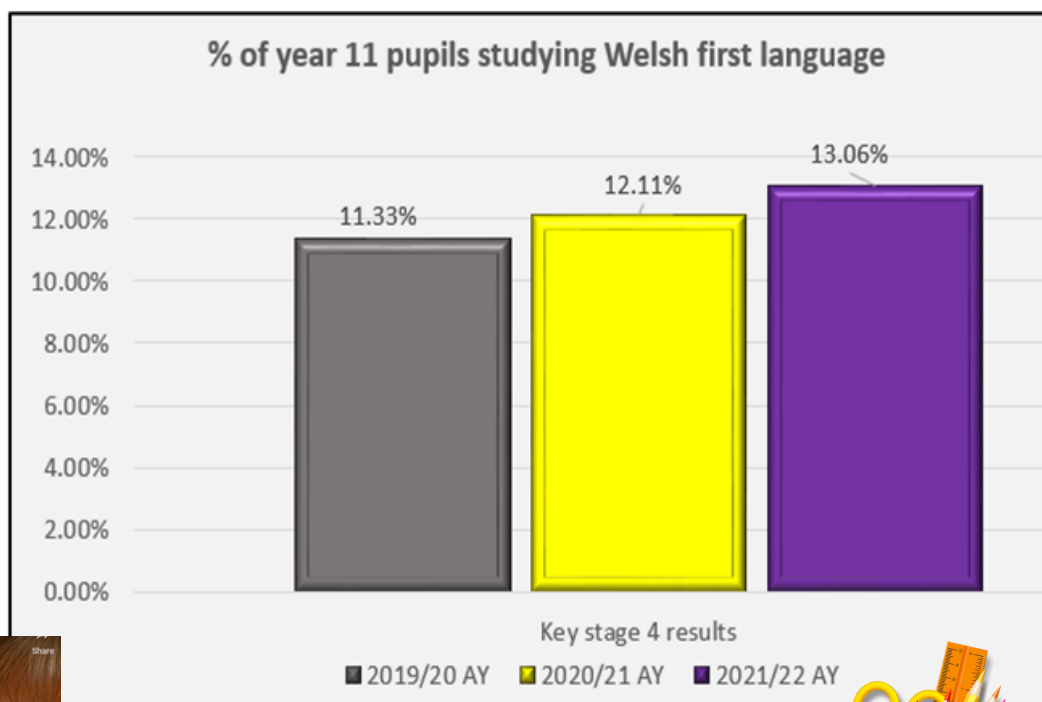
19.7% (287 pupils) of our 5 year olds are receiving education through medium of Welsh, which has increased from 18.5% (279 pupils), with 13.1% (208) of year 11 pupils studying Welsh first language which has also increased from 12.1% (196 pupils).

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measures:



Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

- With the development and implementation of our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan we will further strengthen our commitment to the Welsh Language, our traditions and culture. We have met our first year targets and opened the first Welsh-medium starter school Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tregeles (see link below). The Plan details how we intend to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and how we will plan for future growth over the next 10 years (January 2022 - January 2032).
- We are working collaboratively with colleagues across Swansea Bay University Health Board and the FEI sector and are making good progress in reviewing our joint planning, commissioning and service delivery arrangements for children who have additional needs



Embracing Welsh Language for future generations



The newly refurbished Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tregeles is located in Neath Abbey has been developed as part of Neath Port Talbot Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Providing pupils with an exciting and motivating learning environment embracing the principles of the new curriculum for Wales, with the aim of promoting the Welsh language, wellbeing, equality and inclusion.

The exciting development reflects the council's vision for promoting and ensuring access to Welsh language learning for pupils in Neath Port Talbot. All children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh.

Take a look at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tregeles - Neath Abbey - YouTube

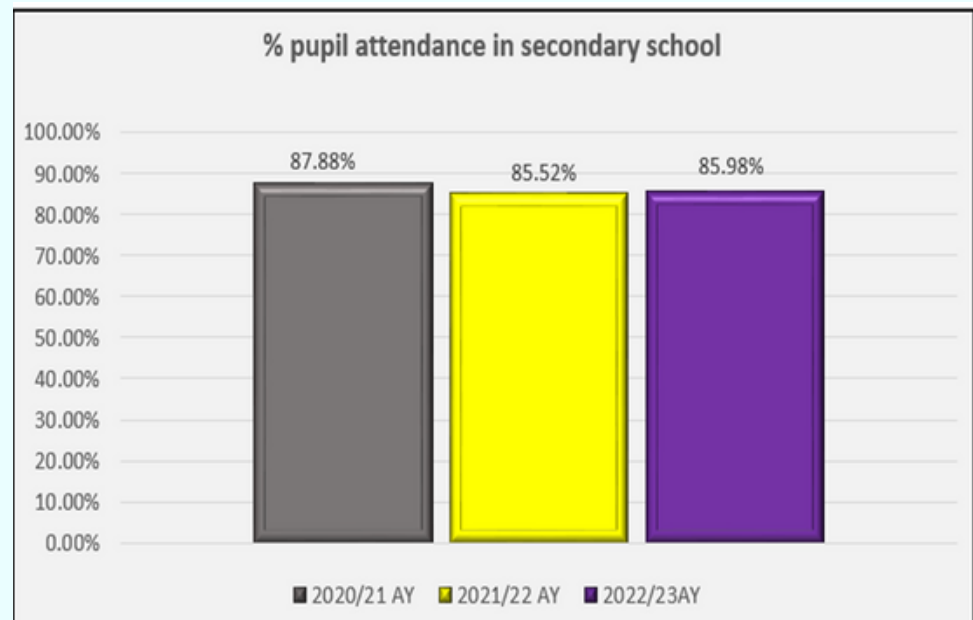
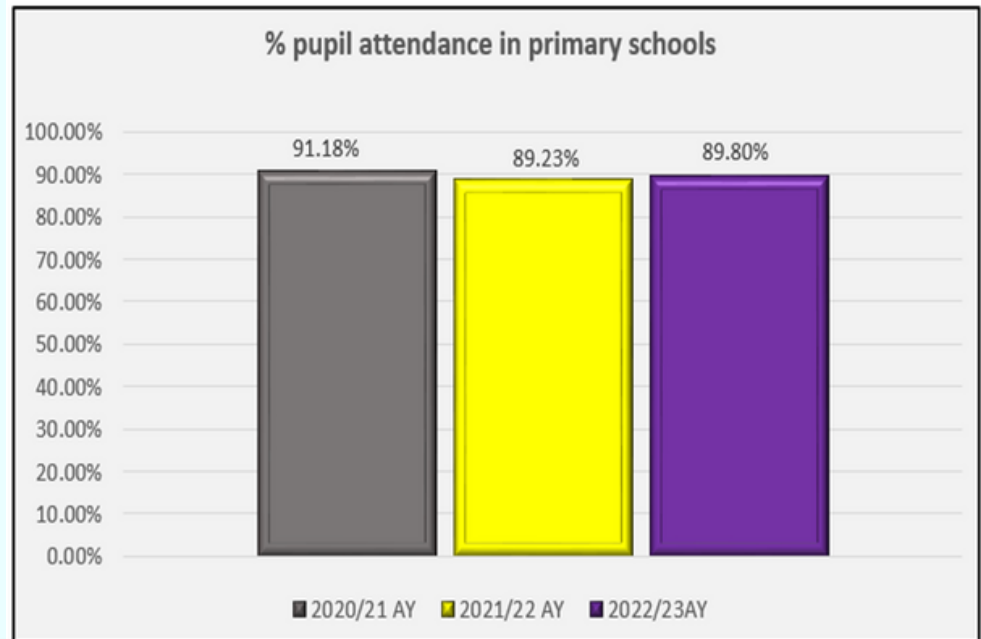
“Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tregeles will provide high quality provision and support that will enable all learners, their families and the wider community to benefit from access to Welsh-medium education and experiences.”

Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

More work to do.

There were 4 actions assessed as 'just off' track for 2022-2023, these were:

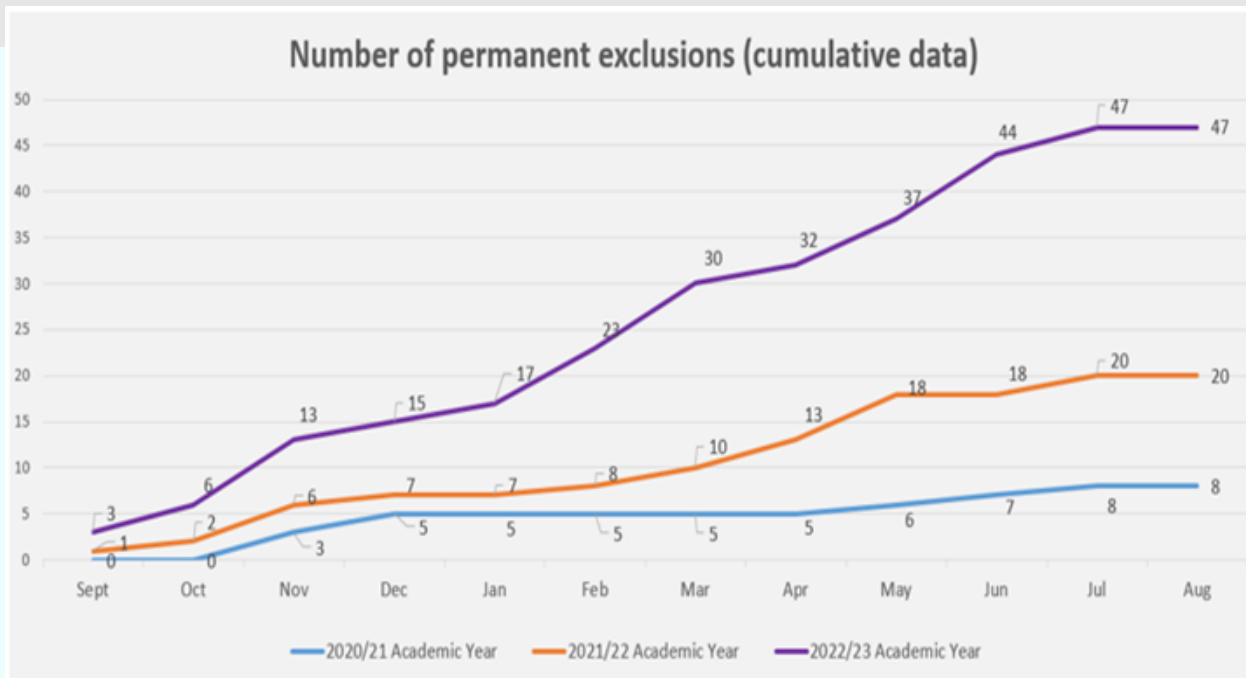
- Provisional attendance data for the 2022-2023 academic year shows attendance figures have risen on the previous year by around half a percent and final figures will be published in the coming months, however, the increase is not at a rate comparable with other local authorities around Wales who have achieved a higher increase. It has also been noted that there is a significant attendance gap between pupils who are categorised as eligible for free school meals and non-free school meals, and again between pupils designated as having Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and those non-SEN/ALN.



2022-2023 Reflection

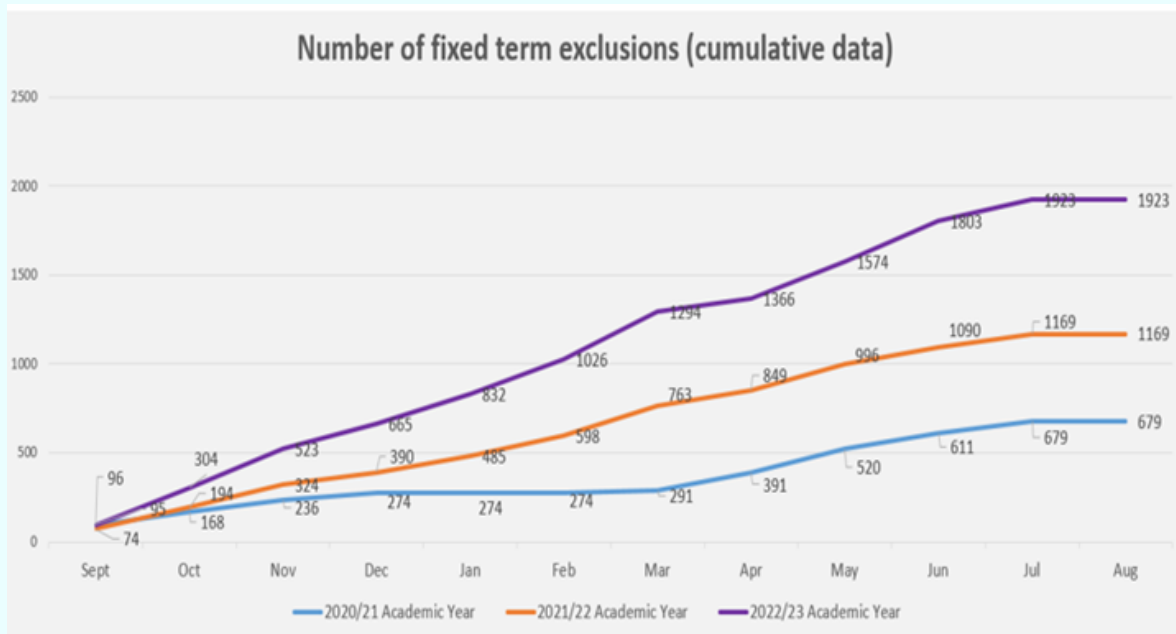
Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

We have seen the number of pupils excluded from school rise by 235 pupils to 760 pupils in the 2022-23 academic year, taking the total exclusion figure to 3.62% from 2.47% in 2021-2022. The number of exclusions has also risen sharply as shown below.



Linking Corporate Plan Measure:

Linking Corporate Plan Measures:



The number of pupils not within the education system data is not available at the moment

% of children, young people and families accessing early intervention support - data is not available at the moment.



Well-being Objective 1 - Best Start in Life

More work to do:

Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) panel has reported an increase in complexity of need in referrals placing additional pressures on early intervention services to meet these needs. In addition, council monitoring information highlights that non-engagement with services by children and families is an area of concern. As a result, the local authority is undertaking a review of the EIP panel process to ensure early intervention and support is delivered effectively. This review will be used to inform and develop the work of the EIP and support services. The continued successful development of the EIP panel support service is a key priority for the service.

To ensure there is effective early intervention in place for our children, young people and families our Adult Community Learning team has worked with schools and provided Family Learning and progression routes in 9 schools. Sessions have been particularly successful where parents have progressed onto a range of courses e.g. Food Safety, Childcare, Child Psychology, Classroom Welsh, and Cooking on a budget, ADHD, Autism Awareness. All parents engaged in current sessions have completed at least one Literacy/Numeracy accredited course last term. In addition, a programme of song and rhyme sessions at all eight council libraries has provided opportunities for young children and their families to develop literacy skills together, as well as providing the children with an opportunity to develop social interaction and communication skills.

There is more work required to develop systems to support Young Carers identified in schools and develop a young carer's forum. The current demand for Young Carers Group has exceeded our venue and staffing capacities resulting in the offer being once a fortnight rather than weekly. In addition, transport to Young Carers Group provision is a barrier and there is currently insufficient funding to meet the demand. However some of our positive progress during 2022-23 included:

- ↳ Awareness raising sessions to enable us to identify potential young carers delivered to 20 primary schools where 629 young people attended and 6 secondary schools where 562 young people attended. Sessions have also been delivered to targeted groups including LGBTQ+, Speech & Language Club and Youth Clubs where 84 young people attended. In total Young Carers Awareness sessions were delivered to 1,275 young people during this period.
- ↳ We currently have a very successful and enjoyable provision which the Young Carers and families really appreciate. 211 young people were referred to the Young Carers provision and 36 weekly group sessions were delivered with an average attendance of 15 young carers a night. 94 of these Young Carers needed support with their transport to access the provision.
- ↳ Young Carers are represented on the Youth Council; Young Carers are allocated 2 designated seats on the Youth Council. We have continued to implement the Young Carers ID card. 22 Young Carers were part of the ID Card Pilot scheme during this period

We were on track in delivering what we had planned to do for 2022-23 for this well-being objective. Of the 15 key actions we had planned to deliver during the year, we were 'on track' with 14 and 1 was 'just off' track.

£139,000 provided to **39 organisations** through the **Food Poverty Grant**



88 businesses registered with **29** NPT Buy Local



Increased Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) from 6 to 14, who supported 1,127 people and helped set up 13 new community groups.

Welsh Government Warm Spaces fund help provide **32 Warm Spaces** within communities which had **5,819 attendances**



efc employers for carers has been implemented across the council

1442 members signed up

98% of households had access to the internet with download speeds of at least 30Mbit

Completion of Rapid Re-housing Plan



Partnership developed with Warm Wales to deliver £2m initiative to support those most impacted by the energy crisis

Reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents



Administered over £9m of UK & Welsh Government funding via Fuel Support Scheme, Unpaid Carers Grant & Self-Isolation scheme

Fly tipping incidents have reduced over last 2 years from 1,566 to 886



1,849 children received community safety; domestic abuse & cyber-crime lessons through our Crucial Crew.



Number of carers needs assessments undertaken increased from 167 in 2021-22 to 225 in 2022-23

JOB

Supported **137** individuals either from jobless households or who have a long term health condition / disability into employment

2,810 micro-enterprises in 2022 compared to 2,750 in 2021

120 high risk domestic abuse victims had **extra support and their homes were made safer/ more secure**

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

Ensuring our communities are thriving and sustainable means people live healthy, long and good lives in communities where people get along together and support one another. During our Corporate Plan 2022-2027, we asked:

Why is this important?

Covid-19 has had an adverse impact on many people with more people becoming lonely and isolated. There has been a disproportionate impact on young people, women and people from BME backgrounds; there were 144,000 people living in NPT in 2021.

This is expected to grow to 147,000 by the mid-2030s; The population is ageing – the number of people retired is growing but the number of young people is declining; People are living for longer and living healthier lives but life expectancy and health life expectancy is below the rest of Wales and the gap between those who are best and worst off is significant; GVA (Gross Value Added) is lower than the Welsh average; 27% of children are eligible for free school meals; There are estimated to be over 20,000 unpaid carers in the county borough; There is a need for more affordable housing of a good quality; and We expect to see a 35% increase in those aged 65+ who will be living alone by 2035.

Summary Progress during 2022-2023

Overall we, are on track in delivering this well-being objective for 2022-2023. Covid-19 has had an immense impact on the social care system, including the increasing demand on domiciliary care to enable individuals to remain in their own homes rather than enter a care home and providers facing recruitment challenges to meet that increasing demand. As at March 2023, the council supported 694 people through the delivery of 9,315 hours of domiciliary care per week, this figure includes both externally commissioned provision and in-house provision (Community Wellbeing Team - CWT).

It is likely that this demand will continue to increase over the coming years to support our ageing population. Some of the achievements during 2022-23 include increasing the number of local area coordinators from 6 to 14. These local area coordinators supported 1,127 people and helped set up 13 new community groups. As a council we administered over £9m of UK and Welsh Government funding via the Fuel Support Scheme, Unpaid Carers Grant and Self-Isolation Scheme; we increased the number of carers needs assessments undertaken from 167 in 2021-22 to 225 in 2022-23.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

To allow us to transform homelessness services and to meet Welsh Government's requirements as highlighted in the "Ending Homelessness – High Level Action Plan 2021-26" our Rapid Rehousing Plan has been developed and published during the year, moving away from the use of temporary accommodation. The Plan takes into account the current position of homelessness across the county borough and sets a whole system transformation, the steps required in line with Welsh Government's expectations and covers a transition period of five years to enable the desired outcomes to be achieved.

Whilst we have strengthened our housing and homelessness arrangements which included leasing 39 units of interim accommodation for homeless households (an increase on the 27 units we made available in 2021-22), the percentage of households prevented from becoming homeless has reduced. Also to note the percentage of people (16+) living in households in material deprivation is showing an increase in the borough and across Wales. (Based on National Survey for Wales results).

Our Cabinet approved extra funding of £4.25m to "clean up and green up" towns, valleys and villages and the cleanliness of our streets has improved with fewer fly tipping incidents; there were fewer anti-social behaviour incidents during the year, 120 high risk domestic abuse victims had extra support and their homes were made safer/ more secure (however, the number of high risk domestic abuse incidents increased further during 2022-23) and the Paws on Patrol scheme continues to go from strength to strength with 1,442 members now signed up.

In addition to the work undertaken to invest in our schools over recent years, during 2022-2023 we have welcomed a variety of capital investment within our communities and exciting opportunities into the county borough as a whole, and have seen a number of visions come into fruition.

We will further progress our work to develop a corporate policy to encourage and support council staff to volunteer.

Progress on our 2022- 2023 Corporate Plan Actions and Measures:

- Of the 15 key actions we had detailed in the Corporate Plan to deliver during 2022-2023, we were on track with 14 and 1 was 'just off' track. Our Corporate Plan measures have been linked to the relevant actions below.
- We developed our work at neighbourhood level, mapping local assets (and mapping community vulnerabilities) and this information will provide a foundation for identifying community needs and developing interventions to address those needs effectively.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

- We continued to work with the community and other partners to identify opportunities for additional informal care and support networks to be developed. Some of this work included:
 - ↳ During 2022-23 the Prevention and Early Intervention Service had 26 approved volunteers with 21 providing support to individuals referred to Adult Social Services.
 - ↳ Implementation of a befriending service as part of Adult Social Care's Prevention and Early Intervention offer. This is the first volunteering provision established within Adult Social Care and follows on from the success of the Safe and Well Scheme during the pandemic.
 - ↳ Unpaid carers are an invaluable asset, and in recognition of this a dedicated team has been established to enable focused work to be undertaken to explore existing service approaches and enhance operational relationships between services, unpaid carers and commissioned providers.
 - ↳ An internal review into unpaid carer processes and procedures has commenced and is planned to be completed by late 2023.
 - ↳ We increased the number of carers needs assessments (unpaid or paid carers) undertaken from 167 in 2021-22 to 225 in 2022-23.
 - ↳ 'Employers for Carers', a Carers' Trust initiative has been implemented across the council, to ensure staff that who provide unpaid care for others are recognised and supported within the workplace.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measures:

National Survey for Wales data shows that 30% of people surveyed in Neath Port Talbot Volunteer. This is the same as the All Wales figure for 2022-23.

National Survey for Wales data shows that 17% of people surveyed in Neath Port Talbot feel lonely. This is one of the highest percentages in Wales and above the All Wales figure of 13%.



We had included five other National Survey for Wales measures in our 2022-27 Corporate Plan to assess our progress, however these were not surveyed during 2022-2023.

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measures:

- We increased the number of Local Area Coordinators (LAC) from 6 to 14 to support the community. Local Area Coordinators work with residents to make links to local support networks to improve well-being and reduce demand on care and health services. This increase means we can provide support across the borough as opposed to just in certain areas and this has brought greater consistency in the way we work. During 2022-23 the LAC service had 1,127 access their service, all would have received support with approximately 500 people receiving one to one support at any one time.
- We mapped and identified that there are 107 groups that are used as community hubs across NPT and we are in the process of creating a digital map of these hubs. During 2022-23, 13 new community groups have been set up with support from our Local Area Coordinators.
- Collaboration with Neath CVS (Council for Voluntary Services) and community and voluntary groups is ongoing, with the establishment of three forums facilitated by NPT CVS across the Primary Care Clusters. This work will help increase opportunities for local people to participate in decisions that affect them and provide greater support for the work of local councillors in their ward.
- Funding to communities was provided through the provision of several grant schemes to help with the cost of living which included:
 - ↳ 39 organisations supported through the Food Poverty Grant which amounted to £139,000;
 - ↳ Welsh Government Warm Spaces fund help provide 32 Warm Spaces within communities which had 5,819 attendances, where people could congregate to take pressure off their own household energy costs. The council made many of its own premises available including libraries, community centres, and theatres.
 - ↳ We administered over £9m of UK and Welsh Government funding via Fuel Support Scheme, Unpaid Carers Grant and Self-Isolation Scheme.
 - ↳ A partnership with Warm Wales was initiated to deliver the council's £2m initiative identified to support those most impacted by the energy crisis.

National Survey for Wales data shows that 48% of people surveyed in Neath Port Talbot had an adult mental well-being score of 48, which is the same as our score for 2021-2022. Local Authority scores range from 46 – 50 with 15 of the 22 local authorities having scores of 48 or 49.

% of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area was not measured as part of the 2022-23 National Survey for Wales.

108 of our buildings or assets (e.g. bowling greens) are leased to Voluntary Sector groups and 17 to Town & Community Councils

National Survey for Wales results report that the percentage of people (16+) living in households in material deprivation is showing an increase in the borough from 14% in 2021- 2022 to 21% in 2022-2023. The all Wales rate is also showing an increase from 11% to 16%.

No up to date information is available to measure the people living in household income poverty relative to the Welsh median and no data is available to measure the gap in employment rate between those with a long-term health condition and the overall employment rate. However, during 2022-23 our NPT employability team supported 137 individuals either from jobless households or who had a long term health condition /disability into employment.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

- Prevention and Early Intervention Service had 26 approved volunteers with 21 providing support to individuals referred to Adult Social Services.
- In July 2022, Cabinet approved extra funding of £4.25m to “clean up and green up” towns, valleys and villages. During 2022-23, 12 new operational posts were created to undertake works such as pathway edging, overgrowth clearance, additional cleansing etc. The Neighbourhood Services team delivered significant improvement across the borough. A Keep Wales Tidy survey found that 95.7% (All Wales performance is comparable at 96%) of our streets were clean in 2022-23 compared to 92.85% in 2021-22.



£4.25 million approved to “clean up and green up” Neath Port Talbot.

95.7% of our streets were clean in 2022-23 compared to 92.85% in 2021-22.

In December 2022 a £4.2m programme of additional works to ‘clean-up and green up’ was approved to make improvements to towns, valleys and villages.

The programme included £200,000 to be spent on improvements at public toilets, £445,000 on cleanliness (involving new electric street vacuums and sweepers), £142,000 on improved grass mowing, £800,000 on improved playgrounds and green spaces and £300,000 on improved bus shelters. A further £344,000 for footbridge maintenance, £201,000 on improved waste services (including extra vehicles), just over £1m will go on improved highways (jet patching of rural lanes, extra surfacing in the valleys and pothole machinery) and £150,000 on additional tree management work.

£200,000 was budgeted for improvements at Gnoll Country Park (rebuild/re-design of toilets, electricity hook-up and an adventure park), £50,000 for improved countryside structures and £290,000 for ad-hoc improvements at the Aberavon Seafront (including the sunken gardens), Neath Town Centre (planters and storage), repair/replacement of town and valley street signs, the Talbot Memorial Park and Victoria Gardens bus station.

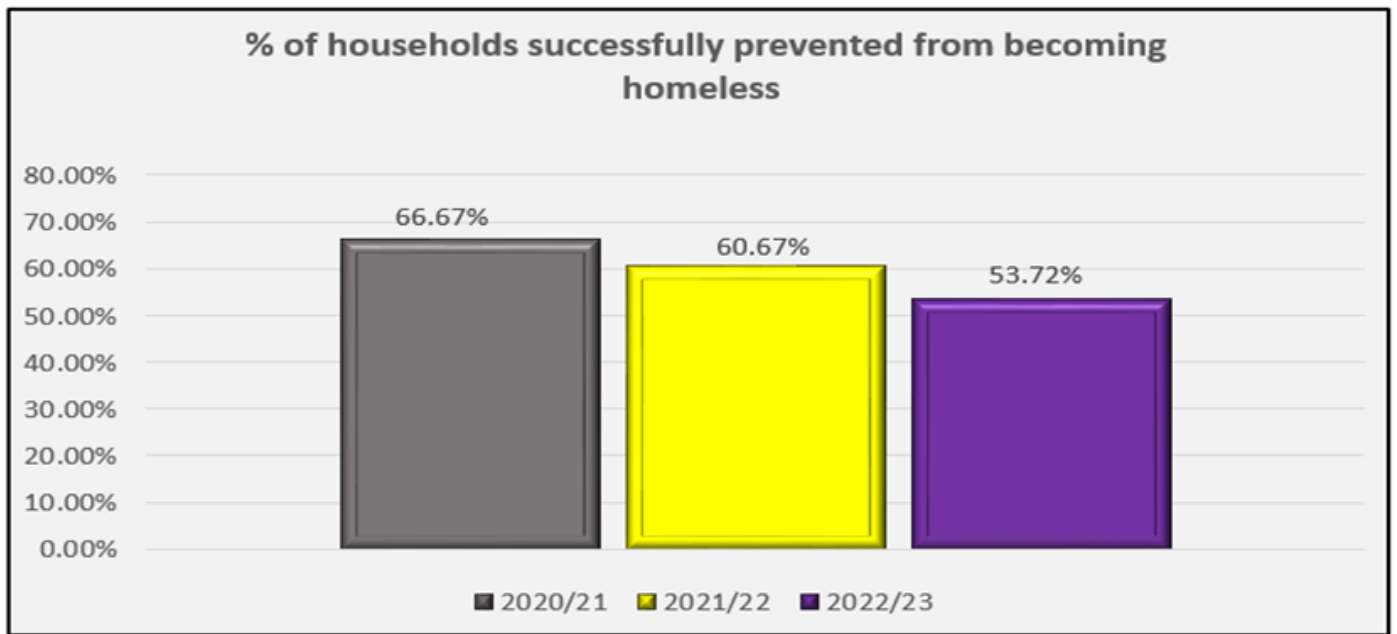
The money, from additional Welsh Government funding and the council’s approved spending programme, allowed this extensive clean up and green up programme to support one of the earliest priorities of council’s Rainbow Coalition - to improve the “public realm”. This is a significant step forward in achieving the aim of improving the environment for communities and neighbourhoods across Neath Port Talbot, with residents telling us they want safe, clean and attractive neighbourhoods.

During 2022-23, 12 new operational posts were created to undertake works such as pathway edging, overgrowth clearance, additional cleansing etc, with the Neighbourhood Services team delivered significant improvement across the borough.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

- We strengthened our Housing Strategy function and capacity and appointed an interim Head of Housing and Communities.
- We have worked to strengthening the council's response to homelessness and housing, completed, approved and began to implement the new Rapid Rehousing Plan. Improvements from these changes are expected to be realised from 2023-24.



Percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless for 2022-23 was 53.72%, which was lower than previous year's performance and below our target (both at 60%).

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measures:



Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

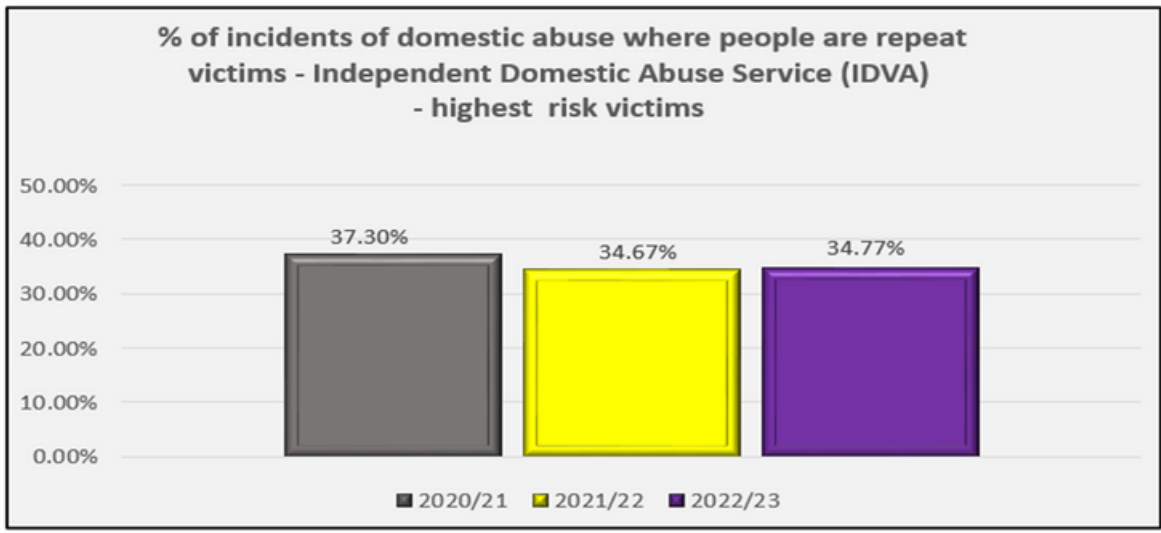
Linking Corporate Plan Measures:

- We continued to work through our Community Safety Partnership to address the problems posed by alcohol, illegal drugs which includes responding to non-fatal overdoses by providing rapid interventions and support, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. This work included :

We saw a reduction in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents reported across the county borough, down from 3,957 (police data) in 2021-22 to 2,278 in 2022-23. The reduction is mainly due to the Covid breaches data reported in 2021-22. People subject to the anti-social behaviour warning process also reduced from 11 in 2021-22 to 6 in 2022-23.

- ↳ Resetting and agreeing new service priorities for 2023-24;
- ↳ 1,849 children received age-appropriate community safety lessons; domestic abuse, cyber-crime through our Crucial Crew work;
- ↳ The Paws on Patrol Scheme continues to go from strength to strength. There are now 1442 members signed up, 163 new members in 2022-23. This scheme provides a number of benefits such as a 'neighbourhood watch' type of initiative and also brings together the community, both partners and residents, in working towards making our communities a safer place to live;

The percentage of incidents of domestic abuse where the people are repeat victims for 2022-23 is broadly as 2021-22 and better than 2020-21, albeit above our target of 31%. The increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents has risen since the pandemic, which has affected the figures. We will continue to support the rising cases of referrals. Despite the increase in cases being referred, engagement rates with positive outcomes stands at 68%. In addition, we were successful in a funding bid which enabled us to support 120 high risk domestic abuse victims to make their properties safer/more secure and offered holistic support.



- We began to take actions that will implement our commitment to the place making charter and commissioned the preparation of a regeneration strategy for the physical regeneration of the primary towns and some of the secondary and tertiary settlements of NPT. The strategy will focus on creating quality and improved public spaces, strengthening the connections between people and their places and improve the places they live, work and play.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 2 - All Communities are Thriving & Sustainable

- The implementation of the Renting Homes Act saw many landlords leave the local market due to increased responsibilities on landlords. Affordability in the current climate has also been an issue. However, we have worked closely with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and private landlords to increase the number of interim and move on accommodation units. During 2022-23 we leased 39 units of interim accommodation for homeless households, this is an increase on the 27 units we made available in 2021-22. In addition, several new developments are at various stages of planning and construction to deliver additional interim and move on units.
- We have commissioned consultants to prepare a report to highlight ways in which the Council can enhance and develop local spend, while considering different procurement approaches such as the "Preston Model", Circular & Foundational Economy concepts to develop a tailored NPT Procurement Strategy to support local procurement and supply chain development. In addition, we secured funding to employ a Social Value Policy Officer to support the development of activities that support local job creation, upskilling of residents and promotion of employment opportunities to achieve a better quality of life and support economic growth. There are 298 businesses registered with NPT Buy Local

Linking Corporate Plan Measures:

98% of households had access to the internet with download speeds of at least 30Mbit per second in 2022-23.

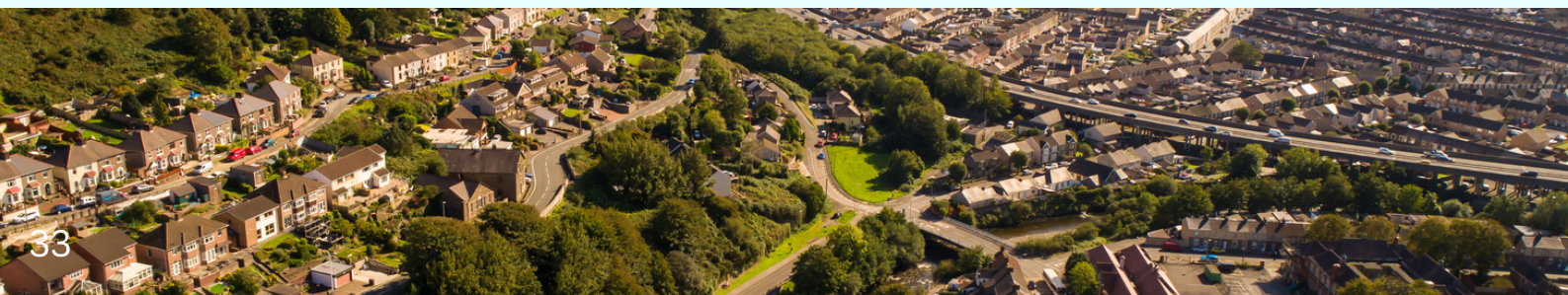


In 2022 the ratio of enterprises to local units in NPT increased from 0.79 in 2021 to 0.80 (i.e. 80% of businesses operated from a single premises and 20% from more than one) in 2022. This means that the number businesses operating from more than one unit has fallen slightly.

There were 2,810 micro enterprises in NPT in 2022 compared to 2,750 in 2021. Whilst an increase, the overall proportion of micro businesses compared to all businesses has reduced slightly, by around a half a percent. At 87.8%, micro enterprises make up the majority of all businesses and are an important contributor to the economy. The slight increase in the number of businesses employing 10 is positive, indicating either business growth, or the attraction of larger start-ups or investors to NPT.

More to do:

- One of our 2022-23 actions hadn't progressed as planned. A working group has been established to develop a corporate policy to encourage and support council staff to volunteer, which is supported by NPT CVS with the aim of achieving a standardised approach to volunteer management across services. However, progress during 2022-23 stalled slightly, and as such the work has been rolled forward to 2023-24.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

Overall, progress has been made in delivering on activities impacting our environment, culture and heritage, with funding for a number of significant projects being approved as part of the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund. From a total of 18 actions, 15 actions are 'on track' with 3 'just off track'.



People who say they can speak Welsh (age 3 and over) has increased from 22.8% to 23.4%

£2 million investment in historic environmental assets including Margam Castle and Neath Abbey Ironworks



Development of the Heritage Strategy, Culture Strategy and Destination Management Plan



287 hectares and 30 km of council owned land managed for biodiversity, an increase of 126 hectares and 7km

94 Volunteers working on a variety of Neath Port Talbot Council owned nature sites.



Less residual waste ('black bag' waste) generated per person.

65% of people across NPT attend or participate in arts, culture or heritage activities 3 or more times a week

% of people aged 16+ participating in sporting activities 3 or more times a week **has risen to 38%** and adults active for at least 150 minutes in the previous week **has risen to 62%**

28 organisations supported via Third Sector Grants totalling **£528,760**

Shared Prosperity funding secured to deliver **£2.5million Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Events**



884 hectares of council owned land used for green space or local nature reserves, an increase of **64** hectares

A '**bee friendly**' approach to managing our verges and grasslands was adopted by the council



£17,755,359

Secured via UK Government's Levelling Up Fund for the Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Visitor Attraction.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

As people actively conserve, improve and enjoy our stunning natural environment, treasure the Welsh language and are actively engaged with the rich sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area, we asked:

Why is this important?

Heritage is integral to our culture, people's sense of identity and sense of belonging which in turn impacts on people's health, wellbeing and social inclusion. Heritage and culture also contributes to the economy, supporting paid employment, helping to attract inward investment and generating value through voluntary action – part of our wider place shaping agenda. The Welsh language is a very important part of our heritage and culture. We support the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 ambition to achieve a million people able to enjoy speaking Welsh by 2050. The importance of protecting our natural environment has, of course, never been so prominent.

The Welsh Government officially declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and a Nature Emergency in 2021, recognising the significance of these two interrelated challenges and the urgency in tackling them. The natural environment is vital to our communities and provides us with all our basic needs. It gives us all a better quality of life and opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and Wales' natural beauty and heritage, giving people the choice to become more physically active. People come from far and wide to experience our environment and it is intrinsically linked with Welsh culture and language. While the area has many strengths, it also experiences relatively high levels of poverty, deprivation, ill-health and disability.

There is a strong focus on encouraging people of all ages and from all backgrounds to adopt active lifestyles to improve physical and emotional wellbeing. There is also a need to grow more quality jobs in the local leisure and tourism industry and to continue the long tradition of fostering local talent to achieve success as elite athletes and to perform on the world stage.

Summary Progress during 2022-23

Overall we, are on track in delivering this well-being objective for 2022-2023. Good progress has been made in delivering on activities impacting our environment, culture and heritage, with funding for a number of significant projects being approved as part of the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund.

During 2022-2023 we saw the initial development stages and consultations for our key culture and heritage strategies and destination management plan. These documents will provide a blue-print for the future on how we want to develop and nurture our county to celebrate our culture and heritage and will allow us to apply for funding, attract investment and resources.

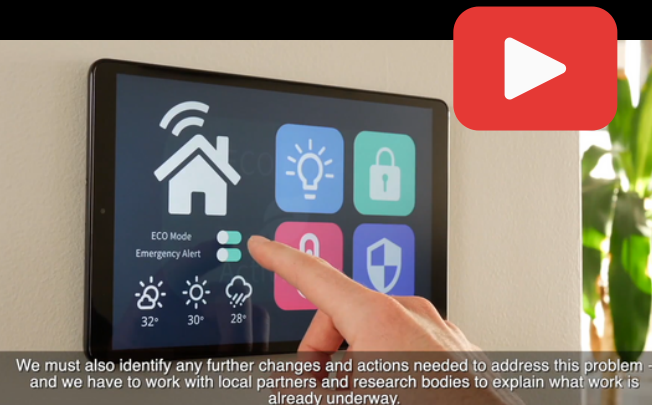
Other key achievements during the year included the approval of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) to initiate the Heritage, Culture and Tourism Fund, which can be accessed by public, private and voluntary sector partners, to deliver the priority heritage, culture and tourism projects and initiatives across the county. We have also seen an increase in visitor numbers to the borough in the last two years and numbers are now just below pre-pandemic levels with a 1.9% increase on pre-pandemic levels of staying visitors.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

In September 2022, the council declared a climate emergency and called upon the UK Government to do the same. In doing so, we acknowledged the effects of climate change that can already be seen throughout the world. With more intense and frequent hurricanes and wildfires, severe flash flooding and sobering droughts. Record breaking heatwaves in July 2022 added additional pressure on local residents and devastating storms which have resulted in an enhanced regional focus on sea defence works.

In declaring the climate change emergency we will look to articulate further the wider actions we need to take to ensure Neath Port Talbot becomes carbon neutral by 2030. These actions will be included within the review of our Corporate Plan for 2024 onwards.



The council acknowledged the effects of climate change can already be seen throughout the world. The doorstep effect of climate change are detrimental to the residents of Neath Port Talbot and its time we demand change. Not just for our generation but for our children and grandchildren and all those who follow. The clock is ticking on the time for fossil fuels so let us not be those fools who rest on the inactions of others but rather chart and enhance a renewable course for Neath Port Talbot.

At the start of 2023 the new leisure complex opened in the heart of Neath Town Centre. Featuring a six-lane 25m swimming pool with associated learner pool, two group exercise studios, a 100-station gym, a health suite, retail floor space, child care facilities a café and a modern library. The library hosts 16 public computers, Wi-Fi throughout including Wi-Fi printing, a dedicated children's library, a family history research area and local studies collection, two meeting rooms and self-service kiosks. The build is designed to have a major beneficial impact on the town centre, increasing sustainability, vitality and footfall and providing a significant boost for health and wellbeing.

Physical activity related measures are showing positive results comparing to the rest of Wales and in relation to Welsh language, more people say they can speak Welsh. Further work will take place this year on the actions where we are 'just off track'. In the main these actions are to promote the work done by local groups, making it easier for others to appreciate, understand and enjoy our local environment, heritage and culture and around climate change awareness and our action planning for decarbonisation.

Whilst the 64% target for waste reused, recycled or composted has been achieved for 2022-23, performance of 64.73% is lower than the previous year. A Waste Strategy action plan was adopted in April 2023 with the aim of achieving the 70% recycling target by 2024/25.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

Progress on our 2022- 2023 Corporate Plan Actions and Measures:

Of the 18 key actions we had detailed in the Corporate Plan to deliver during 2022-2023, we were 'on track' with 15 and 3 were 'just off' track. Our Corporate Plan measures have been linked to the relevant actions below:

- The council's Third Sector Grant fund supported 28 organisations during 2022-2023 totalling £528,760. Many of the activities being run by voluntary organisations and community groups carried on with activities that were implemented during the pandemic. During the year the window for 2023-2024 funding opened with an unprecedented amount of applications being received, the total amount approved for funding was £692,610, which will support 43 organisations during the forthcoming financial year (2023-2024).
- We were proud to host the Mayor's Citizens Awards in Margam Orangerie, celebrating the success of the work of volunteers and community groups, and the achievements of those making a difference across NPT. Some of the winners of those awards included:
 - The South Wales Miners Museum – winner of the Environment & Heritage Award
 - Carl Bradley's 'Boot Room' – winner of the Community Champion's award
 - Denise Francis & Afan Arts – winners of the Performing Arts Award
 - Jeremy Dummer, Cwrt Herbert Colts u15 Football Team – winner of the Volunteer of the Year award
- Over the course of the year, volunteer numbers increased to 94 working on a variety of council owned nature sites across Neath Port Talbot through the Connecting GI and Lost Peatlands project and projects at Craig Gwaldys Country Park. The Lost Peatlands project has been running outdoor learning sessions enabling local children to learn about and experience their local environment, learn about peatlands and the important wildlife in the area. In addition, family outdoor health and wellbeing sessions have been provided encouraging local families to get out into their environment and to encourage confidence in natural play. Projects at Craig Gwaldys have also supported the local schools to use the Park for outdoor learning.
- The council's large workforce plays a huge part in being ambassadors for the county borough contributing to the conservation and enjoyment of our local environment, heritage and culture. As part of workforce development and staff induction our training and development team have produced a training booklet and eLearning package.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

- A Welsh Language Promotion Strategy was developed (approved July 2023). Through the strategy, our work in schools and other key areas of work this figure should positively increase year on year. The strategy, which has been prepared following a county wide consultation and close working with partner organisations, will further develop three key strategic themes of increasing the number of Welsh speakers, increasing the use of Welsh and creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context.

The number of people who say they can speak Welsh (age 3 and over) in Neath Port Talbot has increased from 22.8% (31,400 people) to 23.4% (32,300) with 12% of people saying they speak Welsh daily increasing from 10.1%.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

- To ensure our work and development of the county borough takes into account our future generations we have a duty to carry out impact assessments when undertaking policy and service change. During 2022-2023, 164 officers and 46 Cabinet and Scrutiny members undertook training.
- We provided opportunities for children, young people and citizens to learn about their local environment, heritage and culture which included:
 - ↳ 31 school sessions and 31 community outreach sessions have been delivered providing opportunities to learn more about the history and heritage of the borough including object handling sessions and site visits / tours for adults and children (including talks, workshops, library & club sessions). The school sessions have been informed by the NPT conceptual model for the curriculum which has the ‘four purposes’ at the centre and which will require teachers to teach differently; it gives greater flexibility to schools in designing their curriculum.
 - ↳ 4 meetings of NPT Heritage Network have been held in addition to local history society’s forums. We have been proud to launch NPT’s Young Archaeologists’ Club (children aged 8-16) which began in February with 13 sessions taking place to date, including organised trips and an archaeological excavation with the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust.
- We continue to drive forward the implementation of the council’s Biodiversity Plan - Nature-Wise training has been provided for Margam Park staff and engineers, along with members training on biodiversity. A ‘bee friendly’ approach to managing our verges and grasslands was adopted by the council and has allowed for an increase in wildflower species and insects such as bees which pollinate them in support of the council’s Biodiversity Duty Plan and the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan. The bee-friendly scheme continues to deliver key outcomes for the Plan, with additional sites being added on an ongoing basis.

We increased the area of council owned land (or within council control) used as green space, local nature reserves from 820 hectares in 2021-22 to 884 hectares in 2022-23.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

- The NPT State of Nature report has been published and is available [online](#). The NPT Nature Partnership continues to meet every 2 months with the NPT4Nature sub-group, which was established early 2022, meeting quarterly to engage community groups with opportunities to access expertise and discuss ideas.

Linking Corporate Plan Measure:

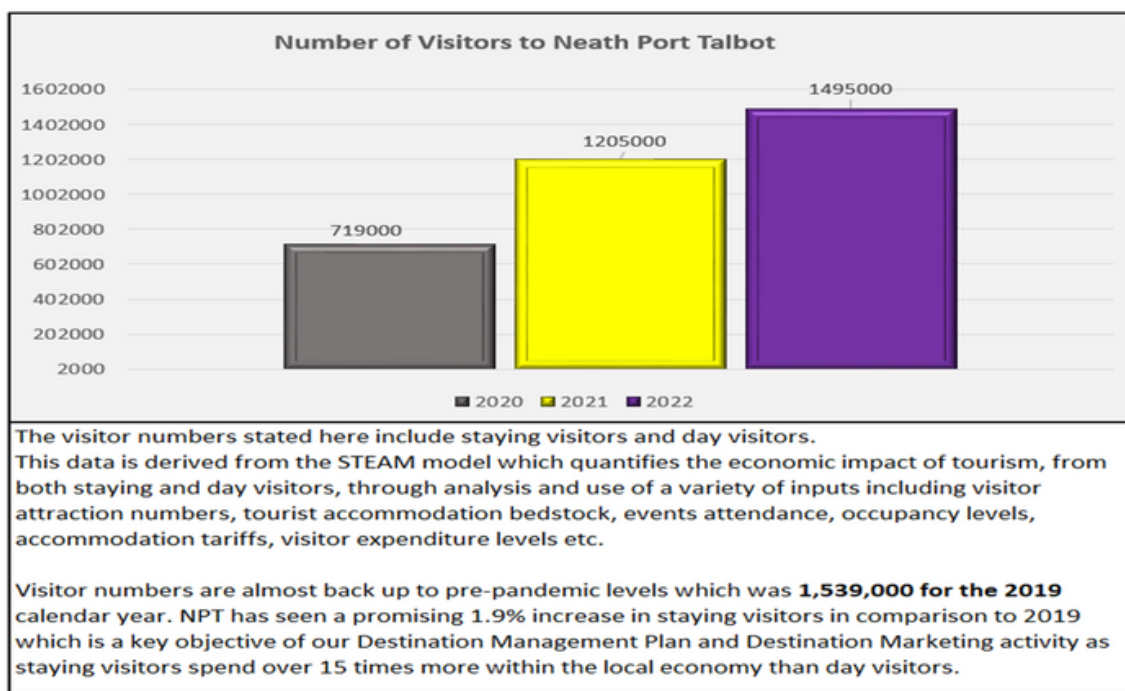
We increased the extent of council owned land (or within council control) that is protected through designation and/or is subject to appropriate management for biodiversity conservation as set out in an approved management plan from 160.8hectares and 23.12Km in 2021-22 to 287 hectares and 30Km in 2022-23.

- Strategic development has progressed well to prepare the culture strategy, heritage strategy and destination management plan – which was approved by Cabinet in September 2023. The strategies are structured around a set of strategic themes and supported by a prioritised action plan of projects and initiatives which support the overall aims. The strategic direction is to create a Neath Port Talbot where everyone has an equal chance to participate in the rich culture of the borough; be healthier, happier, safer and prosperous with a sense of belonging, citizenship and place. In addition, we are working in partnership with Natural Resources Wales to devise the Afan Forest Park masterplan which will guide investment in visitor infrastructure across the destination over the coming years.

2022-23 National Survey for Wales data shows that 65% of people surveyed in Neath Port Talbot attended or participated in arts, culture or heritage activities 3 or more times a week. This places NPT joint 9th of 22 councils across Wales.

Linking Corporate Plan Measure:

Visitor numbers have increased significantly over the last two years and are now only slightly below pre-pandemic levels.



- We were on track in delivering our planned programme of projects and service changes to improve access to local sport, leisure, culture and heritage; deliver planned projects to conserve our local environment,
- Preparatory work continued following the decision to bring leisure services back under the direct management of the council, including the set-up of the project board.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

- We continued to seek external funding opportunities to conserve and enhance the local environment, culture and heritage which included:

- ↳ Grant funded projects delivered include Lost Peatlands Project – National Lottery Heritage Fund, Connecting Green Infrastructure Project – Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing Fund (WG/EU), various nature projects including Stepping Stones – Welsh Government’s Local Places 4 Nature, Craig Gwladus – National Lottery Heritage Fund; National Nature Service case study, Coastal Communities Capacity funded by Welsh Government. Further funding has been secured from WG/NLHF for green infrastructure.
- ↳ £17.7 million secured via the UK Levelling Up Fund (LUF) to deliver the Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor Visitor Attractor Project.
- ↳ Shared Prosperity funding secured to deliver £2.5million Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Events Fund between 2023 and 2025. Eligible for public, private and voluntary sectors to apply.
- ↳ £2 million has been invested in historic environmental assets including Margam Castle, Neath Abbey Iron Works, our Registered Parks and Gardens namely Jersey Park and Talbot Park.

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

Total value of funding secured to enhance the quality of the visitor experience



Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measures:

2022-23 National Survey for Wales data shows that 62% of adults surveyed in Neath Port Talbot were active for at least 150 minutes in the previous week. This is an increase on the previous year and places NPT 6th across Wales.

2022-23 National Survey for Wales data shows that 38% of people (16+) surveyed in Neath Port Talbot participated in sporting activities 3 or more times a week. This is an increase on the previous year of 34% and places NPT joint 12th across Wales.

School Sport Survey, a national survey of pupils from years 3 to 11, found that 46% (2021-22 data) of pupils were participating in sport three or more times a week (hooked on sport) This is above the Welsh average of 39.5% and the highest rate of the 22 Welsh councils.

Up to date information relating to % students (aged 16-19) participating in at least three occasions of sport per week is not available.

The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is designated or meets the criteria for designation as a Site of Importance for Conservation (SINCs) has increased to 785ha from 782ha in 2021-2022.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations



- We started work to set a new strategic direction for leisure and recreation as part of the culture strategy.
- We continued to strengthen planning and partnership arrangements and new partnerships are being developed so that greater weight is given to conserving and improving the local environment, heritage and culture. Also, the NPT Destination Management Plan process has provided additional consultation to inform the Afan Forest Park Masterplan which is being produced in partnership with NRW (Natural Resources Wales).

£2m invested in protecting historic environment assets in 2022-23

Linking
Corporate
Plan
Measure:

The percentage of designated historic environment assets that are in stable or improved conditions has improved from 64% in 2021-22 to 65% (259 of 399) in 2022-23.

MORE TO DO:

There were three actions assessed as 'just off' track for 2022-23, these were:

- Work is well underway in delivering a Strategic Framework for Communications and Marketing which will promote the work done by local groups, making it easier for others to appreciate, understand and enjoy our local environment, heritage.
- More work to do to increase the engagement of the workforce and citizens in the climate change agenda, however a variety of awareness events relating to the lost Peatlands project and the GI project include climate change messages.
- Work is ongoing to develop the council's Net zero 2030 Strategy & Action Plan (Costed Plan) which will support the refreshed DARE (Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy) Strategy. The DARE strategy is scheduled to be updated within the second quarter of 2023 with the following improvement programmes currently being developed and or updated:

- ↳ Solar PV Programme
- ↳ 21st Century Schools programme – net zero new build programme
- ↳ Energy and Carbon Management Engagement Exercise – operational buildings
- ↳ Fleet – Electric transition programme

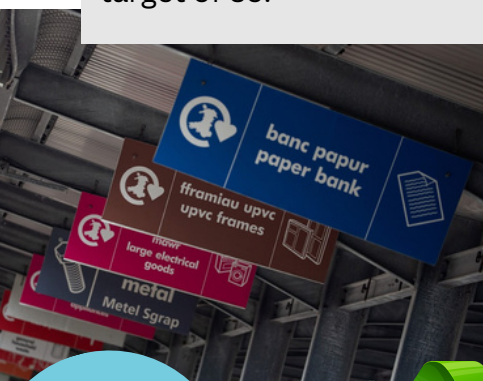
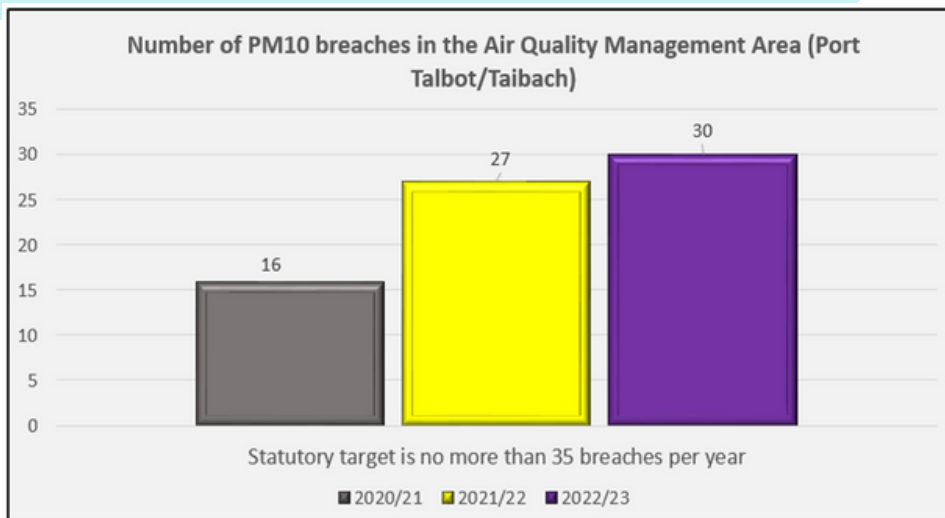
2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 3 - Our Local Environment, Culture & Heritage Can Be Enjoyed By Future Generations

Linking Corporate Plan Measure:



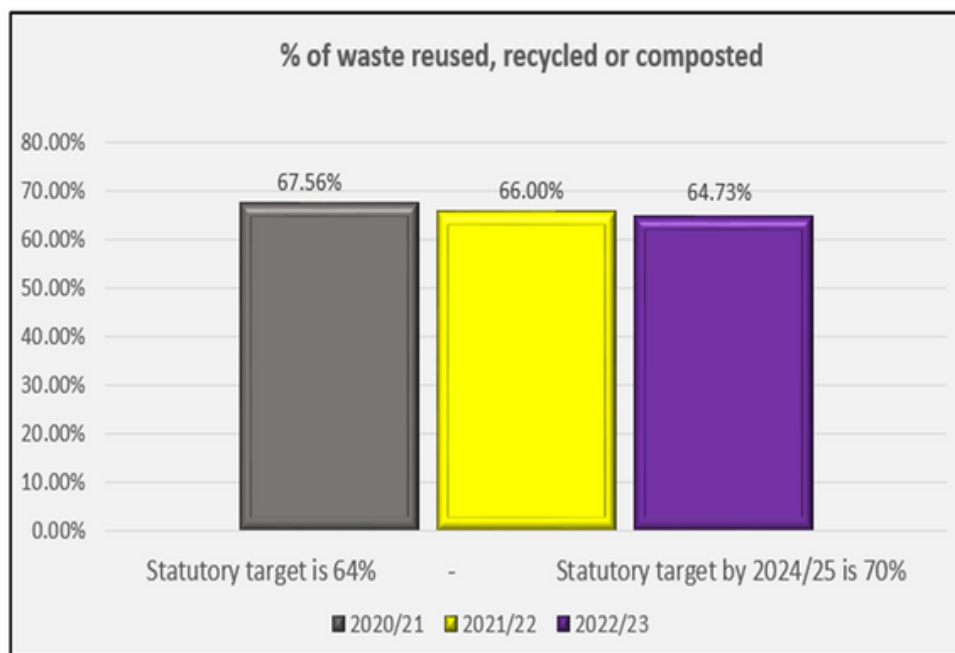
Number of PM10 breaches in the Air Quality Management Area (Port Talbot / Taibach) has slightly increased from 27 to 30 over the last 12 months, however this remains within the statutory target of 35.



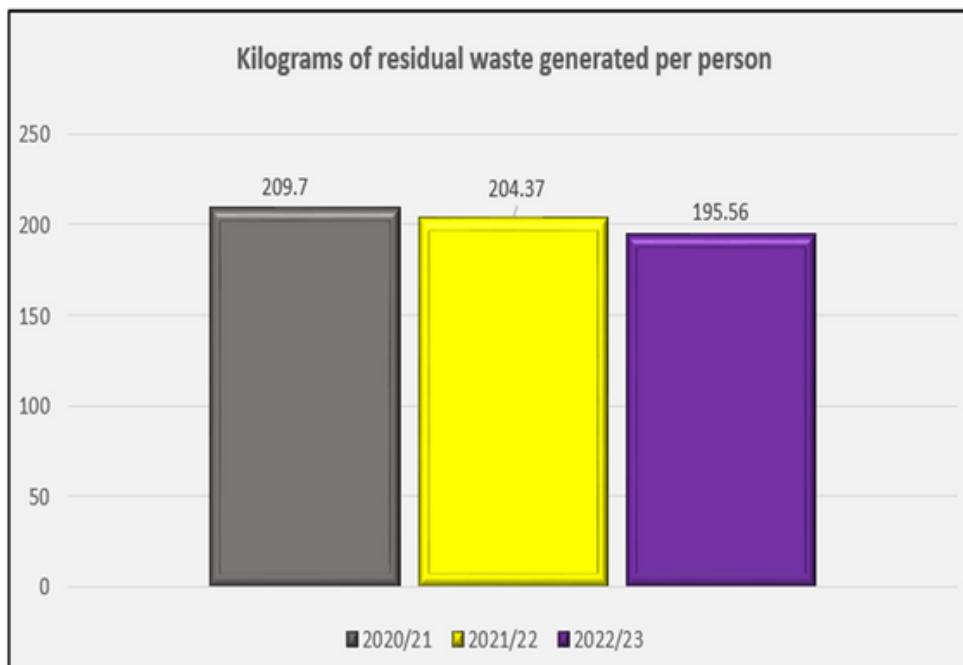
Linking Corporate Plan Measure:



Whilst the 64% target for waste reused, recycled or composted has been achieved for 2022-23, performance of 64.73% is lower than the previous year. A Waste Strategy action plan was adopted in April 2023 with the aim of achieving the 70% recycling target by 2024-25.



The amount of residual waste generated per person continues to decrease, for 2022-2023 the amount is currently weighted at 195.56 kilograms.



2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

We were on track in delivering what we had planned to do for 2022-23 for this well-being objective. Significant progress has been achieved to deliver on the jobs and skills agenda over the last 12 months. Of the 22 key actions we had planned to deliver during the year, we were on track with 21 of the actions with one 'off track'.

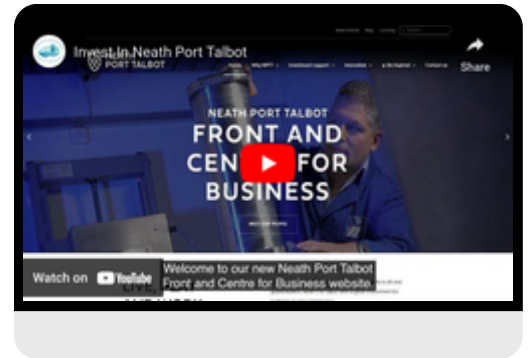
£32,660,854

Secured via UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Multiply programme.



309 jobs were created or safeguarded as a result of financial support by the local authority

Assisted **233** business start-up enquiries



Launched the 'Invest in NPT' website to place business opportunities in NPT front and centre in Wales

Supported over **800** individuals into training, work experience or employment



Increased council apprenticeships from **78 to 110**



Brought **97** long term problematic properties back into use

515 Business enquires resulting in advice, information or financial support being given to existing companies

Worked with local employers to deliver **1,867** training weeks for **apprenticeship, traineeships & work experience** with companies



Opened in Aberafan Shopping centre providing employment support, advice and training

Identified **£576,000** worth of council staff accommodation savings

We have accessed £47.7m from the UK Government City Deal grant for the Supporting Innovation & Low Carbon Growth Programme & £15m for the Homes as Power Stations Programme.



Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

Within our Corporate Plan for 2022-2027 we set out how we plan to work with our partners to create the conditions for more secure, well paid and green work in the area and support local people into those jobs, we asked:

Why is this important?

The world of work is changing rapidly, disrupted by the explosion in digital technology advances and now by the response to the climate emergency; Covid-19 has caused an economic shock across the economy.

Businesses have been affected in very different ways; NPT has a distinctive industrial base, which includes the UK's largest steel producer and a wide range of SME manufacturers; NPT has a number of strategic employment sites and there are many opportunities for economic growth including new green jobs as industry and society decarbonises; the area is well served by rail, road and the deep water harbour is a strategic asset; The local economy is reliant to a large extent on the activities of a small number of key industries; 88% of local businesses employ less than ten employees; Start-up rates and business survival rates are on a par with the Welsh average; There are significant numbers of people commuting into the county borough – possibly for the high quality of jobs; there are also significant number of people community out of the county borough for jobs of more modest value;

Summary of Progress during 2022-23

Significant progress has been achieved to deliver on the jobs and skills agenda over the last 12 months. Overall we, are on track in delivering this well-being objective for 2022-2023.

As part of our continued commitment to the regeneration of our valley communities work on the £250m Welsh and UK Government funded Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) continued to progress during the year.

The 550 hectare facility, situated on the former Nant Helen opencast site and Onllwyn Washery in Neath Port Talbot, stretches into neighbouring Powys and will include two test loops, one being a 6.9km electrified high speed rolling stock track with a maximum speed of 177km/h and the other a 4km 65km/h test track. Other facilities at the site will include a dual-platform test environment, rolling stock storage and maintenance facilities, operations and control offices, staff accommodation and connections to the nearby main line.

This transformational project will create more quality jobs and is likely to be a catalyst for further new opportunities and investment into our communities. It will put this part of Wales on the map as the go-to country for UK and international train manufacturers, network operators, the wider industry and academics to research, test and develop the latest technologies in green transport for the global rail industry.

On the opposite side of the county borough, again placed in one of our valley communities already famous for its mountain bike trails, the Afan Valley will become home to the Wildfox Adventure Resort. The incredible investment plans for a £250m resort will include a 50-bed hotel, spa, restaurant, viewing area, 570 lodges and biking and walking trails.

It will be the first of a series of new Wildfox resorts across the UK and when completed, the resort could create up to 1,000 jobs in addition to the large number of jobs proposed during the construction phase.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

The 132 acres of land at Pen y Bryn, close to Croeserw and Cymmer will offer significant economic benefits to the area and would have no unacceptable impact on visual amenity and the character of the area as a whole, highway and pedestrian safety, residential amenity, pollution and biodiversity.

In addition to the above, our successes continued during 2022-23 some of which include continued progress with our City Deal projects; our employability programmes came together and supported 2,839 and opened The Opportunity Hub in Aberafan Shopping centre providing employment support, advice and training.

309 jobs were created and or safeguarded as a result of financial support by the local authority; we increased council apprenticeships from 78 to 110; we continued to support local businesses and business start-ups; brought 97 long term problematic properties back into use and we also secured funding of £1.25 Million from Welsh Government to further progress work to provide an Integrated Transport Hub at Neath Railway Station.

The one action which was 'off track' for 2022-23 related to working in partnership with Transport for Wales to explore the feasibility of introducing a pilot of the Fflecsi bus service in the upper Afan valley. This is currently on hold due to funding.

Progress on our 2022- 2023 Corporate Plan Actions and Measures:

Of the 22 key actions we had detailed in the Corporate Plan to deliver during 2022-2023, we were on track with 21 and 1 was 'off track'.

Our Corporate Plan measures have been linked to the relevant actions below.

- We continued to support and work with developers to deliver the Global Centre of Rail Excellence and Wildfox Resort.
- We reviewed our training offer to help people adjust to the changing labour market and delivered a significant range of training support and opportunities. Individuals were also supported to develop CV's and prepare for job interviews. Some of the training opportunities included:

↳ Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus supported 132 people onto training;

↳ Workways+ arranged 143 training places on courses;

↳ Our Economic Development team worked with employers to support individuals to complete 1,867 training weeks for apprenticeship, traineeships and work experience;

↳ Worked closely with Ukrainian people that have been housed in NPT and we have provided training sessions to make links and build relationships.

↳ Skills and Training Unit was awarded Jobs Growth Wales+ contract. 124 learners commenced on programme (including 34 learners transferring from Traineeships). 79% (90) of these learners progressed into employment/further learning by 31st March 23;

↳ Adult Learning are working in partnership with support services to upskill individuals in preparation for employment and deliver our employability programme, currently working with 8 primary schools, engaging 58 parents /families.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

- The Learning and Training Development Team delivered and/or supported a range of training courses and 20,644 attendees' completed courses during 2022-23. Some outcomes are listed below.

↳ We continued to develop clear pathways for local people interested in working in the council and during 2022-23 there were 110 council employees on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes - an increase on the previous year figure of 78 with 22 employees achieving their apprenticeships in the year. We also supported 17 work experience council placements for pupils across a range of services and 77 employees achieved leadership and management qualifications. Further opportunities, skills and training were also provided through the employability schemes.

↳ Developed a new programme to encourage secondary and tertiary education leavers to work in the Health & Social Care Sector (H&SC) and encourage greater knowledge and understanding of the roles in social care. The initial phase was a pilot of H&SC cohorts in 4 secondary schools in NPT and 2 tertiary colleges (Gower / NPTC Group). The programme includes offering experiential opportunities for students to understand what it is like to have dementia, poor eyesight or severe hearing problems. Also included, a tour of the Dementia Bus, sight and hearing inhibitors and materials to support lessons. A total of 223 staff and pupils completed the experience. During 2022-23, 86 Health and Social Care qualifications were completed across the council. We also supported 47 social work degree student places and 31 social work qualifications were completed.

- Our NPT Employability programmes came together and created an inclusive triage referral process where external agencies could refer into a single point of contact. We ensured we provided a personalised employment support service that meets the needs of both the work ready participant and those with complex barriers preventing them from entering the job market.
- NPT Employability supported 2,839 referrals during 2022-23 and supported 848 people, aged 16+ to gain training, volunteering, work experience, sustainable employment or support those who are experiencing 'in-work poverty'. The referrals included Workways+, CFW, CFW+, Salvation Army, Prime Cymru, Careers/Working Wales, Swansea Working, Employability Bridgend, our Youth Service, Cyfle Cymru to name but a few.
- Also, as part of NPT Employability programme, a Hub opened in December 2022 at Aberafan Shopping Centre funded by Communities for Work Plus. This Hub offers residents support with employment, volunteering and training. Known as the "Opportunity Hub" where we also provide a Warm Hub Space, we are able to bring the teams together to organise mini recruitments fayres in Construction, Health and Social Care and Security.
- We worked with local employers, schools and colleges to increase the number of quality apprenticeship opportunities and ensure these opportunities are seen as attractive to those seeking work. Our Economic Development team worked with local employers to support individuals to complete 1,867 training weeks for apprenticeship, traineeships and work experience. A number of apprenticeships schemes were supported through the employability schemes the Skills and Training Unit within the Education Directorate and our Corporate Learning, Training and Development Team.

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

In supporting our commitment to decarbonisation, in March 2023, we received confirmation that our **Celtic Freeport bid was successful**. This opportunity will be a catalyst to put us at the forefront of the world's green energy revolution. Our residents will soon be working in the industry of the future, learning the skills for securing green, well paid jobs. The Celtic Freeport consortium comprises of Associated British Ports (ABP), Neath Port Talbot Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and the Port of Milford Haven.

**Accelerating Wales'
Green Economy**



The bid's strategically located tax and customs sites span almost 250 hectares in Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot and **will deliver an accelerated pathway for Wales' net zero economy generating over 16,000 new, green jobs and skill opportunities for future generations**. From welders to data scientists, these will be well paid, long-term roles underpinned by fair working practices and inclusive workplaces.

“This great news is the first step towards a much brighter future here in our county borough.

I look forward to working with our partners to make sure local people and businesses have the best possible benefit from what's now in front of us.”

Karen Jones, Chief Executive of Neath Port Talbot Council



Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

- Our Economic Development and Education officers across the employability teams completed an audit to identify the future work requirement of local employers and any shortfalls in the local learning provision. The findings will inform the Employability and Skills Strategy for NPT which is being developed with key partners, both internal and external, to set out a long-term Employment and Skills Plan for NPT.
- We strengthened the council's Business Support team to help local businesses recruit skilled people and to help local learning providers. Through the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Anchor project the team has created 7 new posts and 4 existing posts have been enhanced to take on additional responsibilities.
- The Neath Port Talbot Local Investment Plan was developed and consulted on with internal and external stakeholders and informed the Regional Investment Plan for the Shared Prosperity Fund. Cabinet agreed the Regional Investment Plan on the 28th July 2022, which was subsequently approved by UK Government in December 2022:
 - ↳ Five strategic anchor projects were approved to deliver key priorities of the Investment Plan addressing the challenges and opportunities of the county borough: 1.Place, 2.Valleys & Villages, 3.Sustainable Communities, 4.Enhanced Business Support for Growth & 5. Innovation, Employability
 - ↳ Five UKSPG grant schemes were developed to address the challenge and opportunities identified in the Investment Plan, not duplicating the anchor projects:1.Heritage, Culture, Tourism and Events Fund, 2. Sustainable Communities Growth Fund, 3. Valleys & Villages Prosperity Fund, 4. Business Investment Grants & 5. Third Sector Growth Fund
- We established the mechanisms to implement the actions set out in the Local Economic Development Plan.
- We launched the 'Invest in NPT' website to place business opportunities in NPT front and centre in Wales in February 2023 which has seen an increase in users.
- We are on track in our work to develop new green jobs locally and regionally via NPT led City Deal projects such as Homes as Power Stations and Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth. We are also looking at opportunities from the emerging "green economy" and key projects such as Freeports and Celtic Sea (FLOW). Regionally, we have secured £56,250, alongside match of £75,000, to deliver a regional skills project with Microgeneration Certificate Scheme (MCS) certifiable green skills provision.
- We are on track with our work to target businesses seeking to grow or expand within the decarbonisation and renewable energy sectors and encourage them to focus their growth plans within the county borough. This work included:
 - A brief for the NPT Clean Growth Hub Phase 2 (part of the SPF Business Anchor project) planned to be completed by the end of June 23.
 - The Neath Port Talbot led City Deal funded Homes as Power Stations Project Manager has commissioned a supply chain mapping exercise to map out the gaps in the renewable technology for housing supply chain.

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

- The Homes as Power Stations Project Manager will launch the regional Supply Chain Fund to support businesses to diversify to form part of the renewable technology in housing supply chain.
- A number of projects have been delivered throughout our main town centres to aid recovery. Some of this work includes bringing back empty premises to use for both commercial and private accommodation (97 long term problematic private properties were brought back into use during 2022-23) and larger town regeneration projects such as the Plaza Cinema and the new leisure centre, library and retail development in Neath. As part of the Shared Prosperity Fund, we have launched the Valleys and Villages Prosperity Grant initiative, which will allow us to fund projects previously covered by the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme, enabling us to target and prioritise our outlying valley communities.
- Our Procurement team commissioned consultants to help develop a tailored NPT Procurement Strategy which will help enhance and develop local spend and further supporting employment of local people and development of local businesses.

Linking Corporate Plan Measure:

During 2022-23, 22 tenders were awarded to SME (small medium enterprise) and local operators. 131 were issued during 2021- 22 which is not comparable as it included numbers from the passenger transport/home to school figures and 14 were issued during 2020-21. Figures though are increased compared to previous years and work continues to further promote arrangements in this area.

- We strengthened engagement with local businesses and as part of the delivery for the Shared Prosperity Fund Business Anchor project, a series of community events are being planned for valley and town centre locations to promote business support services and provide hands-on advice to new and existing businesses across NPT. Engagement work continued with Associated British Ports; the offshore company RWE (Rheienisch Westfalische Elektrizitatzwerk); Wildfox and GCRE (Global Centre of Rail Excellence) to discuss ways in which we can support local sourcing; supply chain development and encourage local employment and training, i.e. a series of Meet the Buyer events will be delivered in 2023.
- We continued to support local businesses and supported them in their recovery. During 2022-23, the UK Government announced the Shared Prosperity Fund support for local authorities. Work started on developing a new project to support businesses. Alongside this development work, business services team continued to deliver its internal funding provision which supported 65 businesses investment projects with the potential to create/safeguard over 300 jobs and generate more than £1.1m of private sector investment to support the local economy.
- The Economic Development team recorded 515 business enquires resulting in advice, information or financial support being given to existing companies (this included supporting both social enterprises and micro businesses), assisted 233 business start-up enquiries and 309 jobs were created and or safeguarded as a result of financial support by the local authority.

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

- We completed our work to plan to target business support for areas where there is the greatest economic inactivity. A series of events are now planned for our rural and town centre communities. Branded 'Let's Talk Business' events will provide hands-on advice to new and existing businesses throughout the county borough.
- Building on the success of the previous Community Renewal Fund (CRF) project which established a Manufacturing/ Engineering Business Forum, further work is now planned as part of the delivery of the SPF Business Anchor project. This involves the continuation of the Business Forum as a mechanism for businesses to collaborate and share information, to setting up sub-groups to discuss key issues around ICT; Decarbonisation; Skills & Training and Funding. This will provide essential business intelligence to help inform the development of future economic development strategies and policies and shape further funding bids.
- We continued to develop plans to provide an Integrated Transport Hub at Neath Railway
- We continued to support community transport car schemes to expand electric vehicle (EV) community cars with schemes in Cymmer, Glynneath and the Amman Valley. The community transport scheme is continuing to grow. The community transport service provides an enormous social and economic benefit to our communities. Some of this work includes:
 - ↳ An Electric Vehicle charge point is now installed and working at Cymmer Swimming pool and a zero emission electric vehicle is now in service;
 - ↳ A charge point was purchased for location at Glynneath Training Centre and installed in June;
 - ↳ Amman Valley schemes - have taken delivery of an electric car which will be used for the Community Car Club i.e. volunteer drivers can use a car to collect vulnerable passengers or if someone does not have a car they can use the car from the car club.

We have made 16,000 square foot of high quality and light industrial space available at our technology centre of which 26.5% has been occupied.

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2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

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No data is currently available for the percentage of people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), however the percentage of year 11 leavers not in education, training or employment (NEET) improved from 2.4% to 2.2% (2022 data), our 2nd lowest figure ever, the percentage of 16-18 year old who were NEET increased slightly from 3.6% to 4.3% and the percentage of young people in employment (16-24) significantly improved from 50.6% in 2021 to 65.8% in 2022.

% of working age adults qualified to level 3 or higher for 2022 is 62.9% which is lower than the All Wales figure of 66.8%. Our NPT figure is higher than the previous years figure of 56.5%, however, the data is not comparable to previous years due to the changes to the qualification questions in the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey.

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% of working adults with no qualifications for 2022 is 8.6%, which is just above All Wales figure of 8.3%. For the same reason above, previous years data is non comparable, however the 2021 figure for NPT was 10.8%.

Data for 2022-23 for the number of work based learning programmes in Neath Port Talbot is not available yet. However the 2021-22 academic year data reports 2,685 programmes.

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Across the county borough the percentage of people who are economically inactive has risen from 25.1% (21,600) people in 2020/21 to 26.63% (22,900 people) in 2022/23, which has been impacted by the pandemic and the economic climate. The council has worked hard during 2022-23 through its employability programmes to positively impact these figures. All Wales levels have also seen an increase from 23.5% to 24.5%.

Across the county borough the percentage and number of workless households has risen from 19.8% (8,800) in 2020/21 to 22.7% (10,000) in 2022, which has been impacted by the pandemic and the economic climate. All Wales levels have reduced slightly from 17% to 16.6%.

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Latest Gross Value Added data published by Stats Wales is for 2021 which shows that the GVA per head in £ in Neath Port Talbot has risen from 16,082 in 2020 to 17,713 (provisional data) in 2021.

County wide data for 2022 relating to new business start-ups, businesses ceasing trading and business survival rates is not available yet. We currently don't hold data on the percentage of businesses that are social businesses.

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Measures:

2022-2023 Reflection

Well-being Objective 4 - Jobs & Skills

- As part of the City Deal, we launched the Waterfront Property Development Fund, which will provide the funding necessary to bridge that gap between value and cost to address the shortage of new quality business space within the borough, particularly for our SME's and start-up businesses. In addition, we have launched our 'Place' Anchor Project as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), whereby the council has taken the initiative to construct new starter units ourselves for our valleys communities. We plan to construct units at Glyncorrwg, Cwmwgors and Nant y Cafn by 2025. We are also in the preliminary stages of a proposal to deliver several new workshops at our Sandfields Business Centre site.

In addition to the above, and linked to the corporate measure related to total operational costs of assets of the council, we have identified £576,000 worth of council staff accommodation savings that will be taken out of the budget over 3 years 2023-24 to 2025-26.

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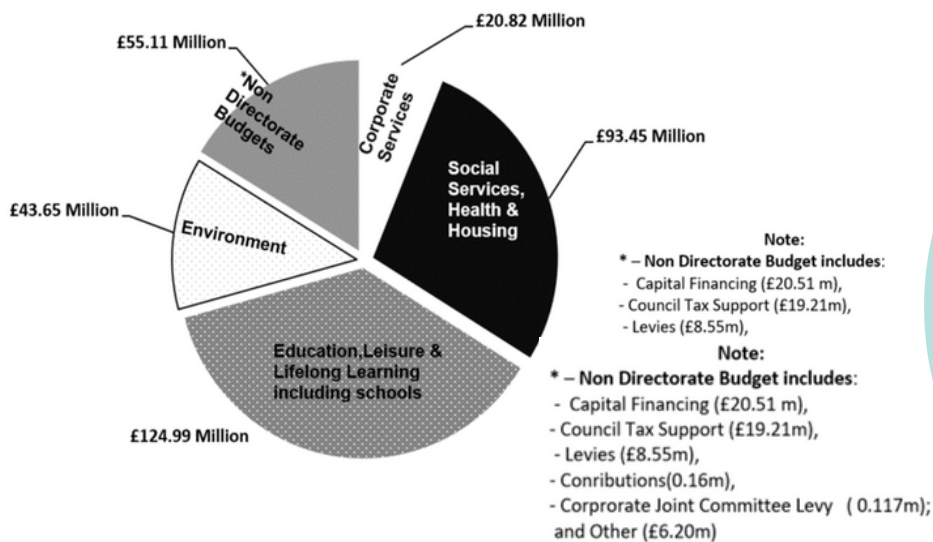


Finance & Spending

The council's net budget for 2022-23 was £338.020m. The actual net expenditure, or outturn position for the council, showed a net underspend of £1.607m which was then utilised to create a strategic regeneration capacity building reserve (£1.5m) with the balance going into a contingency reserve (£107k).

Throughout 2022-23 we were successful in reclaiming £7m from the COVID hardship fund for a variety of schemes such as free school meals, self-isolation scheme, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) enhancement scheme and winter fuel payments.

NPTCBC Total Net Budget 2022-23



On 2nd March 2023, the council approved the 2023-24 budget of £360.977m following stakeholder consultation. In order to set a balanced budget a number of savings were identified (£14.352m) alongside a one-off use of reserves to the value of £3.5m and a council tax increase of 4.5%

Our Capital Programme also delivered c£44m of capital investment to improve facilities across the county borough. This includes:

- ↳ Completion of the council's Band B 21st Century Schools programme;
- ↳ Progress the regeneration programme including completion of Harbourside, Neath Town Centre redevelopment, Plaza, and the Technology Centre.
- ↳ Further investment of £3.977m into Disabled Facility Grants to assist people to live at home;
- ↳ Investment of over £3m in Schools Capital Maintenance and Highways and Engineering Maintenance improvements.
- ↳ City Deal – progression of the Homes as Power Stations and the Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth projects.
- ↳ Progression of the remodelling of the council's Waste Facility at Crymlyn Burrows as a Transfer Station with enhanced recycling capacity and facilities to accommodate the Council's expanding recycling operation.

Equalities & Diversity

Helping meet the challenges faced by residents over recent years has been at the forefront of our work - not least in addressing the inequalities faced by many - notably as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, education, accessibility and by society itself.

We aim for a society where everyone can take their rightful place, on an equal footing where barriers to leading full and rich lives are a thing of the past and opportunities abound for everyone to fully participate in the social, economic and environmental aspects of their communities.

Our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2020-2024 was just one contributory factor in our work to help achieve this. The Plan, developed during the pandemic, at the time of the international condemnation of the killing of George Floyd and the greater awareness of Black Lives Matter

required us to re-evaluate our equality objectives and identify more immediate actions to address some of the inequalities experienced at that time.

Since this last iteration of the SEP our world has changed once again. These changes have brought with them different and/or greater challenges and inequalities for our communities and ourselves.

In order to help address the position we have begun a review of our equality objectives the outcome of which will help focus our work to reduce, and where possible, eliminate inequalities and better align the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 with our other statutory plans and in particular the Corporate Plan 2024-2027.

In light of recommendations from three Integrated Impact Assessment audits, undertaken during 2021-2022, an action plan has been developed to improve the approach, quality and effectiveness of our assessment process.

The action plan, which encompasses both specific and more general aspects of the assessment process is in the early stages of implementation.



Welsh Language

Our commitment to the principle of the Welsh language standards continues and we strive to comply with them, as applied to us, in what remains a difficult financial and resource limiting environment.

Our Welsh Language Standards Annual Report highlights our work in implementing the standards as well as identifying areas where more work is required. Performance monitored by the Welsh Language Commissioner, and reported in the latest report for 2022-2023, identified improvements in compliance across a range of services.

Confidence in meeting the standards as applied to the council received a further boost with no complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner during 2022-2023.

In recent weeks, the Welsh Language Tribunal has upheld the decision of the Commissioner in relation to a complaint received originally in 2021.

The basis of the referral to the Welsh Language Tribunal was more than just a challenge to the Commissioner's decision; it was to address the concerns of the impact the interpretation of the Welsh Language Standards could have on any consultations that the council embarks on in any subject matter thus seeking further legal and practical guidance.

We recognise that Welsh is more than a language, it is part of our very being - whether born here or not. It is woven into the fabric of our lives - even if not instantly recognisable; our place names, forenames, colloquialisms, are all rooted in the Welsh language.

The second iteration of our [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028](#) goes beyond just the use of Welsh: it aims to permeate the fabric of our society, from helping ensure language courses are available for all who wish to learn and providing an environment in which it can be used, to celebrating and raising awareness of its place in our heritage and culture, our daily lives and as part of our visitor offer.



Have your say on what matters to you

Your feedback on this Annual Report is valued and at a local government level this means a commitment to listen to all voices. It is key for those voices to be heard and to work together with our communities to explore and resolve issues of concern, promote and recognise achievements and face new challenges together.

Our council is strongly committed to fostering a culture of partnership with local people and communities, encouraging and supporting them to participate in our decision making, and keeping them informed about how their participation has influenced decisions. This commitment can be viewed in our [Public Participation Strategy](#).

Contact us via email: policy@npt.gov.uk or post:

Chief Executive,
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Port Talbot,
SA13 1PJ

We want to hear from you!

You may also want to become part of our Citizens Panel. The Panel enables residents to take part in research relating to the council. This means you will be able to tell us what you think about council policies, priorities and/or services.

All feedback helps us to understand residents' perspectives and is used to help make decisions. You do not need any knowledge of council services to become a member of the panel. We are looking for a variety of views from a range of different people. You may be asked to take part in online questionnaires, informal discussions, workshops, telephone interviews and other forms of consultation.

If you would like to join up please complete the recruitment questionnaire.

We also have a number of consultation/engagement events about various services which we promote in the press and on the website which you can access via the following link: <http://www.npt.gov.uk/haveyoursay>

