

5 Core Business Enablers

In addition to the identified thematic and service priorities, there are a range of core business enablers that are essential to enable us to make progress against our well-being objectives. These core business enablers are as noted below.

#	Core Business Enablers
5a	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
5b	Marketing & Media including customer services
5c	Legal
5d	Planning
5e	Finance
5f	Procurement
5g	Internal Audit
5h	People Management (Human Resources, Learning & Development, Occupational Health)
5i	Democratic Services
5j	Policy & Performance
5k	Electoral Services & Civil Registration
5l	Estates & Asset Management
5m	Risk Management
5n	Business Support

5a Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

As a service we engage with and understand our customers to help them deliver effective services. We have strengthened our approach to disaster recovery and cyber security to ensure we are in a strong position to mitigate and respond to any threats. The service is closely aligned to deliver the aspirations of the new Transformation Strategy and has worked closely with services on key transformational projects to streamline, automate and drive efficiencies across all our key areas.

Why is this important?

- Technology is becoming increasingly pervasive across all sectors and becoming integrated in many aspects of our lives. Digital technology has the potential to transform the County and the lives of residents while generating long-term savings for the Council.
- There are three key strategies underpinning our ICT delivery. Namely the Digital Transformation Strategy 2021-2024, the Digital Technology 2022-2025 and Digital Schools Strategy 2022-2025. Key areas of work covered by the service are as follows:
 - Core Data and Telephony Network and Infrastructure
 - Facilitate the delivery of the Digital Transformation Steering Group (DTSG) Work Program and Funding along with the newly formed Transformation Workstreams - Digital & Customers.
 - Cyber Security including Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity testing, scenario planning and awareness.
 - Application Development
 - Systems Support for Business-Critical Systems
 - Workforce / Operational Support (Hardware / Software)
 - Schools Operational and Strategic ICT Support
 - I.T. Procurement function
- Our purpose is to engage with and understand our customers to help them deliver effective services.

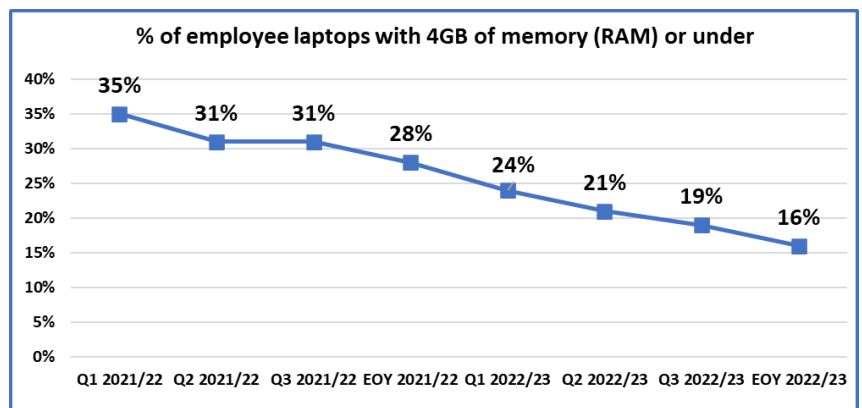
How well are we doing (and how do we know)? [Sources of evidence](#)

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

! Of the 9,790 ICT helpdesk queries received during 2022/23, 65.8% were done through using the Self-Service helpdesk, this is slightly lower than previous year with 68.8%, but there has been in a 3% increase in the number of queries received. *(ICT/002)*

We are continuously upgrading the laptops our employees use in order that they are as efficient as possible by reducing those with a memory of 4GB or under. This has halved in number since April 2021 and at the end of March 2023 this was down to just under 500 laptops out of a total of 3,219. *(ICT/009)*

Out of the 740 Freedom of Information Act request received during 2022/23, 95% were responded to in 20 working days, this continues to be well above the Information Commissioner's Office target of 85%.



Progress in 2022/23

- ⦿ We procured an enterprise RPA (Robotics Process Automation) solution. This will allow the Council to streamline and improve back-office functions and processes (especially those mundane / repetitive tasks) by using specialist software and AI (Artificial Intelligence) capabilities. HR are pro-active and will be the first to automate and target a collection of processes as the initial Proof of Concept. Creating a New Post, Issuing Contracts, Reference Checks as some being evaluated. We are contracted and working with a local specialist company based in Llanelli (CodeBase8 / Davies Internet) to help implement technology, develop the first set of processes for us and give knowledge transfer and training to develop a centre of excellence in-house within the Application Development Team within ICT Services. The vision is to expand further across the authority over the next 3 years. A massive transformation opportunity to drive efficiencies.
- ⦿ We continue to deliver support to schools, supporting the HWB services, delivering and installing the preferred student devices of Chromebooks. We have provided ICT consultancy on all new schools builds in the county.

Cyber Security

- ⦿ We have recently undertaken a Cyber security stocktake.
- ⦿ We act as an enabler and vehicle for transforming the way services across the Council are delivered to customers by increasing opportunities for accessing council services via digital technologies. We have launched the new Citizen Access Portal for Revenues Services. A 2-year project in development which launched at the end of March 2023. 24/7 Self-Service Portal for Council Tax for our residents to manage their eBilling for Council Tax, Apply for Paperless, Manager Direct Debits, Apply for Exemptions and will grow to more services. With over 14,000 current Residents already subscribed to view their Council Tax Balances via our Contact Centre and HWB My Account, we now have the ability to offer far more on-line services, automation and integration functionality into the back-office will massively help transform the revenues services and the range of services we can offer digitally via our HWB's, Contact Centre and On-Line via the Council's Website.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

To ensure delivery of the aspirations of the Transformation Strategy we report directly to the Digital Transformation Steering Group that in turn reports into the Transformation Board.

From an Information Governance perspective, we report directly into the Corporate Information Governance Group that in turn reports into the Corporate Governance Group and then Governance and

5b Marketing and Media including Customer Services

The service has seen increasing demand across all of our functions with the need to provide timely and accurate information

...through a range of channels continuing to be an important element of the Council's work.

The introduction of the Hwb Advisor service has been an essential part of the Council's response to the cost of living crisis and will continue to develop in coming year.

Why is this important?

- Good communication and engagement can create a positive experience for those who interact with the Council. It helps people understand our objectives, values, services, challenges, and achievements. People should be empowered to get involved, have their say, ask questions, and feel that their feedback is valued.
- The Marketing, Media and Customer Service is a diverse team that supports every department across the Council to ensure people have a clear understanding of what we do, what we aim to achieve and the services we provide.
- The team has expertise in public relations, campaign marketing, graphic design and print, media, advertising, social media, internal communications, web, digital, consultation, customer care and translation.
- Our role is to ensure that Council messages do not conflict and that we remain on message and on-time, and that we are giving out to our audiences clear and concise information from a single trusted source.
- We can respond in a crisis, share information, and inform on future developments, explain why certain things must be done in a particular way, work with our community and workforce to share the right message, in the right way, at the right time.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- Over 3.4m user sessions on the Council's website during 2022/23 this is a 11.4% increase on the previous year. (M&M/001)
- Over 1.45m sessions on the internal Staff Intranet, this is a 46% increase on the previous year. (M&M/008)
- During 2022/23 our contact centre received 238,300 calls with an average time taken to answer the call at 6min 32 seconds. This is a slight reduction in the number of calls compared to previous year with 268,000 calls. During 2022/23, we added a message on our telephone line which has resulted in a reduction of the number of customers needing to speak with a member of staff, together with an added 'Options' menu to our telephone lines that directs customers to parts of the organisation that they require based on the options they have selected. We have also introduced a 'Contact Us' form making it easier for customers to communicate with the Council electronically and enhanced web forms making it easier to make applications/reports online which reduces the need for customers to contact by phone. The contact centre will continue to take calls and enquiries through other media whilst improving the customer experience. (M&M/001)
- Carmarthenshire has three main town centre Hwbs at Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford. During 2022/23, **12,800 residents requested a face-to-face appointment**, this is a 32% increase on the previous year. (M&M/004)



Progress in 2022/23

Our Website

- ⦿ We are working to develop a systematic approach to involving service users in the future design and development of our online/channel shifted services.
- ⦿ We are working with the WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association) Digital team on user testing, specifically in regard to the cost of living agenda. The information we have received allows us to look at the website from the customer point of view, and offers recommendations based on the service user experience, allowing us to involve the service user in our content design process and take the service user with us on the development of our website and online services.
- ⦿ The Discover Carmarthenshire site has been modernised and updated to the updated version of Umbraco. The Intranet is currently being updated to follow the layout and features of the corporate website.
- ⦿ The jobs and careers pages are currently being updated with new imagery and content to compliment the introduction of the new Oleoo recruitment platform which will be launched during 2023-24.
- ⦿ During the year, we have been working with services to update their content and to digitise some of their processes, to appeal to more customers as it is our customers preferred way in interacting and learning more about various council services.
 - During the months of January through to March new waste collection arrangements were introduced and the website was key in providing information to the public, so making sure that the information was correct and user friendly was essential.
 - Due to the cost of living crises we added the period dignity information on to our website transferring it from the Carmarthenshire youth council website, creating a directory of locations and adding the locations on the in my area map.
 - Working with the Place and Infrastructure Department web editors the planning enforcement page was updated. Guidance have been added to inform customers of what planning can and cannot be enforced and the backend process streamlined so that all queries are answered within a designated timeframe.
 - Council tax changed platforms from Granicus to Northgate Citizen access to provide the customer with a new self-serve option which allows them to interact with the Council quickly and efficiently. The web pages were amended accordingly. Currently the platform allows the customer to set up a secure account which they can use for electronic billing, set up or amend a direct debit and check their council tax balance. The platform will offer further interaction as the team move forward with the development.

Engagement and consultation

- ⦿ We have ensured a planned and co-ordinated approach to engagement and consultation across the Council by improving coordination of requests to undertake consultations. We have communicated this approach across all departments to ensure consistency.

Hwb

- ⦿ A huge amount of work has been done to develop and promote the Claim What's Yours initiative. The service delivered by the Hwb Advisers have now supported more than 1,800 individuals since August 2022.
 - This support provides, advice, opportunities to claim money and well-being support.
 - Over 50 warm spaces were opened within the County with the 3 main warm welcome spaces at our 3 main libraries supporting approximately 350 individuals per week.
 - The cost of living page on the corporate website is highlighted on each page to ensure all visitors to the site know where to get support and advice.
 - A new Hwb model pilot was launched beginning of December where more services were made available face to face to deal with customer enquiries. These included housing matters, employability and trading standards.
 - On 27 January 2023 we held a successful money advice event at all 3 Hwbs. Funding has been secured to recruit 3 money advice officers to help residents with budgeting advice and support during 2023-24.

Communications Strategy

- ⦿ The new communications strategy will be developed in line with the key headlines and actions identified within the cabinet vision.
- ! The updated corporate customer charter is now in draft format. The next stage is to engage with specific services to ensure this meets their service need in respect to how they require to manage their customers.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

Transformation Board Customers & Digital Transformation Workstream.

5c Legal

We have ensured legality and probity in the Council's decision-making
We work within a statutory framework governing such things as the way meetings are run, the way decisions are taken and the legislation behind each decision which needs to be taken.

Why is this important?

- ⦿ On the legal front we aim to handle as much of the legal work needed by the Council in-house as we can, although there will be some occasions when we need to send work to external lawyers. However, these are a small number across the full range of the Council's functions.
- ⦿ Some of the key areas of focus in the next 12 months will be supporting the work of the Regeneration Team in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund, our Housing colleagues in bringing empty properties back into use, playing a key role in the TIC Debt Recovery Project, advising on the Council's submissions to the National COVID-19 inquiry and implementing changes to court procedures in child protection cases.
- ⦿ The range of legal work undertaken includes not just court and tribunal cases, but also advising Council committees, drafting legal documentation and giving legal advice.



How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Progress in 2022/23

- ⦿ We have collaborated with HM Land Registry (HMLR) so as to enable HMLR to become the registering authority for Local Land Charges for the County of Carmarthenshire in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 5 of the Infrastructure Act 2015. The task of identifying any anomalies in data held and making any necessary changes has been completed by both Land Charges and Planning teams. This has taken longer than expected due to staff shortages, delays with software providers and delays on the part of HMLR. The data is in the process of being checked by HMLR for any outstanding issues and this exercise will be repeated until no anomalies are identified. Then the project will move to the next phase with a scheduled end date of June/July 2023.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

The Corporate Governance Group has a responsibility for ensuring Corporate Governance functions.

5d Planning

Significant improvements to the Planning Service

Our performance continues to improve to exceed national benchmark targets. 2022/23 has been our highest performing year for the service for several years.

Why is this important?

- ⊙ A good planning service is essential to deliver the Council's ambitions and will play a significant role in delivering regeneration projects that are contributing to increased employment and bringing incredible benefits to our County in terms of digital infrastructure, smart manufacturing, energy and well-being.
- ⊙ Planning Enforcement mitigate any adverse impact on wider public amenity, the environment and/or the historic environment either by negotiation or by formal enforcement action where necessary, following breaches of planning.
- ⊙ Building Regulations help to ensure that new buildings, conversions, renovations, and extensions, whether domestic or commercial are going to be safe, healthy, and high performing.
- ⊙ Forward Planning deliver innovative approaches, policy guidance and advice (including specialist support) guiding strategies, decision making and facilitating the delivery of new homes, economic growth, environmental protection, and climate resilience.



How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ① Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ⊙ **89% of all planning applications were determined in time** during 2022/23, this is a considerable improvement and is at its highest level for many years. When broken down to the four planning elements, (despite the lower numbers involved), major planning applications determined is where the main delays are. The historical nature of the major applications have a disproportionate effect on the overall result.

All planning applications	Minor	Householder	'Other'	Major
89.0% (1,307/1,468)	85.5% (544/636)	94.7% (411/434)	89.7% (331/369)	72.4% (21/29)


The prioritisation of historic cases is continuing in conjunction with ensuring that new cases are addressed within the desired timeframe. Going forward performance results for this measure should therefore become more representative of the significant improvements achieved by the service. **(PAM/018)**


- ⊙ Furthermore, there has been significant improvement on the determination of planning applications during the year. This is demonstrated by the following End of Year 2022/23 results:

	2020/21	2022/23	Improved by
% of applications determined in time [PAM/018]	60.3%	89%	28.7%
% of major applications determined within time periods required [PLA/010]	41%	72.4%	31.4%
% of planning enforcement cases investigated within 84 days [PLA/021]	49%	68.8%	19.8%

Progress in 2022/23

Deliver planning according to Planning (Wales) Act 2015

	<p style="text-align: center;">Carmarthenshire County Council – Follow-up Review: Planning Services Oct 2022</p> <p><i>“The Council is to be commended for the swift, decisive action it took in response to the findings of our 2021 report, and for the way it has driven improvements in its planning service. The constructive way in which the Council received our report and acted on the recommendations is a particularly positive example of a Council demonstrating its commitment to driving improvement in service delivery. The Council has learnt lessons from the review that it has also applied more widely, particularly in relation to performance management”</i></p>
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<p>Internal Audit</p> 	<p>Planning: Minerals & Waste (February 2023) Objective of the review: The review focused on how the Authority delivers the Regional Minerals and Waste Planning Service. The scope of the review was to identify, test and evaluate the procedures in place for the Regional Minerals and Waste Planning Service</p>	<p>Assurance Rating:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td style="background-color: green; color: white;">High</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #d9ead3; color: white;">Acceptable</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #f2dede; color: white;">Low</td></tr> </table>	High	Acceptable	Low
High					
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🕒 [Annual Monitoring Report](#) [2022/23 will be published Oct 23]

What and how we can do better

See our [delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7](#)

Governance Arrangements

<p>The Governance and Audit Committee is a key component of Corporate Governance, providing a source of assurance about the Council’s arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, and reporting on financial as well as non-financial performance.</p> <p>Delivery plans are developed and reported at Scrutiny Committee. Actions monitored through PIMS by the department and by the Committee.</p> <p>The Council’s constitution sets out where planning applications should be determined Planning Committee part-32-revised-council-9th-feb-2022.pdf (gov.wales) on consideration of a recommendation report by officers</p> <p>The Council’s constitution provides delegated authority to the Head of Place and Sustainability for certain planning functions part-32-revised-council-9th-feb-2022.pdf (gov.wales). Officers are delegated to undertake key activities appropriate to their role by the Head of Place and Sustainability.</p> <p>The Local Development Plan Advisory Panel provides advice and guidance to officers in the development of the Council’s local development plan which is considered by PSCC scrutiny committee, cabinet and full council prior to it being submitted to the Welsh Government for consideration.</p> <p>The Council is required to report on the progress in meeting the LDP to the Welsh Government through the submission of an Annual Monitoring Report. The AMR is subject to consideration by PSCC scrutiny committee, Cabinet and Council before it is submitted to government.</p> <p>The Council is set national planning performance targets by the Welsh Government and is required to report performance to the Welsh Government on an annual basis.</p> <p>The Council has its own set of local planning performance targets which are reported and monitored corporately by the PIMS system and reported to Planning committee on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The Department has its own live performance monitoring HWB, ARCUS which provides real time reporting on planning functions for local management purposes.</p> <p>Performance management reviews are undertaken by line managers using KPIs. TIC reviews are conducted on areas of the function and reported to the Head of service, recommendations resulting from reports are reported and progress monitored through the PIMS system.</p>

5e Finance

The situation here in Carmarthenshire is financially challenging.

All local authorities across Wales are facing big shortfalls in their budgets due to the global economic climate.

Why is this important?

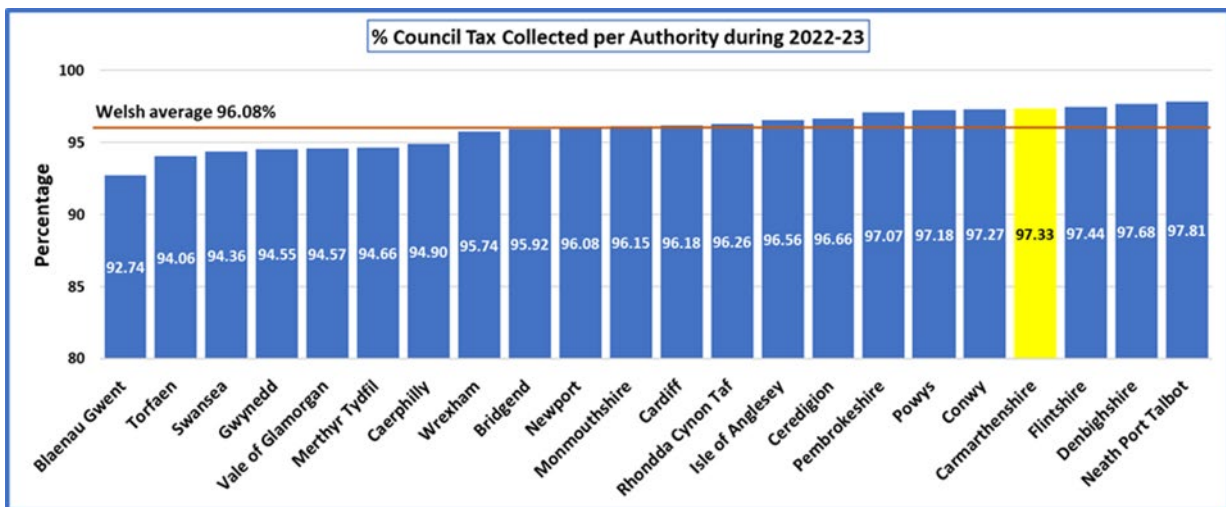
- Carmarthenshire County Council, like all local authorities, is facing unprecedented financial pressures as the rising cost of inflation, food and energy prices along with increased global demands for goods and services, present a significant shortfall in its 2023/24 budget.
- The Cabinet Member for Resources said 'This year's budget choices are every bit as hard as the very worst years of the austerity era. Although the funding from Welsh Government, which accounts for about ¾ of our income, increased by 8.5% we still had to budget for savings of £9.4m for this year, which meant very difficult decisions to be made'.
- We must and will respond to this challenge again, ensuring we do all that we can to support the residents, businesses and communities of Carmarthenshire.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results


- **97.33% of Council Tax was collected** during 2022/23, a slight improvement on 2021/22 of 97.24%. Recovery action continued throughout this financial year but due to the recent pandemic and current cost of living crisis low-income households who are in employment are struggling to pay. We will continue to take a proactive approach to recovery ensuring we provide relevant support and advice to those falling into arrears to ensure the best possible way forward with regard to repayment arrangements. We will provide relevant information and signposting to ensure residents claim the council tax relief and benefits they are entitled to and signpost for relevant debt and benefit advice.

Comparatively we have moved up to 4th highest collection rate compared to 6th for 2021/22.



- ⦿ **97.97% of non-domestic rates was collected** during 2022/23 which is slightly lower than 2021/22 with 97.98%. The recently published comparative data shows us above the Welsh average of 95.51% and in 8th position, down on 7th last year.
- ⦿ With increased access to **online services**, this has created a natural shift for on-line payments with many customers contacting us, submitting forms and documents and paying for our services electronically with a 6.03% increase in the number of online payments from 56,582 in 2021/22 to 59,995 transactions during 2022/23.
- ⦿ **Cost of living** - We have administered the **Winter Fuel Support Scheme** and processed 19,986 cases and have paid out £4 million to support Carmarthenshire residents.
- ⦿ We promote the **Discretionary Housing Payments** and actively encourage take up. An extra £100k has been allocated to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund via the cost of living discretionary scheme.

Progress in 2022/23

- ⦿ **Audit of Financial Statement** - An unqualified Audit report was received from Audit Wales in respect of our 2021-22 Statement of Accounts. These again included a significant number and value of additional COVID-19 related funding from many different grants.  Following late changes to the accounting/audit requirements, Carmarthenshire was able to adapt to these amendments and was one of the earliest Local Authorities in Wales to have its 2021/22 accounts signed off.
- ⦿ Despite inflationary pressures on a truly unprecedented scale, the Council was able to set a **balanced budget** based on total Expenditure / Income of £656m. Council Tax increase was set at 6.8%.
- ⦿ Over 2,000 people responded to the online consultation, and 80 young people from the County's Secondary Schools attended a face-to-face event at County Hall to discuss with Cabinet Members and express their priorities. All comments and views were taken into consideration and changes were made to the Council's budget proposals.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

A Corporate Governance group comprising key officers and 2 cabinet members is in place with the Cabinet member for Resources being a member together with the Director of Corporate Services, Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance and Head of Financial Services. The Group are responsible for updating the Code of Governance and developing the Annual Governance Statement. In addition, the group oversees the work of the Information Management Group. Minutes of the Corporate Governance Group are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee.

A Swansea Bay City Deal Joint Committee has been formally established with supporting governance and advisory boards. As part of the assurance arrangements for the SBCD portfolio, an independent gateway review was undertaken. The review was undertaken by an independent external team in accordance with the Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub Guidelines. The SBCD received an Amber-Green Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA) rating.

5f Procurement

We spend an excess of £311 million per annum on goods, works and services with our suppliers and this has a significant impact on the quality of life for the Carmarthenshire Community.

Why is this important?

- It is more important than ever that we have the best arrangements in place to deliver innovative solutions that help us reduce costs and improve the services that we deliver to our residents. We continue to use procurement to positively impact on Carmarthenshire’s economy and communities in delivering social, economic, and environmental benefits.




The process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- Through our delivery of **Community Benefits** over 1,628 weeks of targeted recruitment and training was delivered in 2022/23 through the Council’s 21st Century School Programme as well as Housing and Economic Development projects across the County.
- 43 jobs were created** through Community Benefits in our Construction projects (21st Century School programme, housing and regeneration projects).
- 2,360 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) pupil engagements through Community Benefits in our Construction Projects ((21st Century School programme, housing and regeneration projects).

 Internal Audit	<p>The following Internal Audit review was undertaken as part of the 2022/23 Audit Plan: Procurement (Final Report issued: 2 March 2023) Assurance Rating: Acceptable <i>Objective of the review:</i> The review sought to provide assurance that the Authority is obtaining best value for money on goods, works, and services procured up to a value of £5k, and that all such procurement is carried out in accordance with the Authority’s Contract Procedure Rules.</p>	Assurance Rating <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">High</td></tr> <tr style="background-color: yellow;"><td style="text-align: center;">Acceptable</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">Low</td></tr> </table>	High	Acceptable	Low
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Progress in 2022/23

- We are continually working with departments to deliver compliant tender exercises through the implementation of a category management approach.
- As part of all tender exercises appropriate lotting mechanisms are applied to ensure that the contracts are attractive to SME’s. A recent regional tender for Civil Engineering Contractors Framework 2023 took a different approach and a key addition to this framework iteration was the inclusion of county-specific lots

for the very small civils work up to £50k in value to encourage SME's to bid for a place on these lots with the intention it might help them grow and be in a position for larger lots in future iterations of the Framework. A new style of supplier engagement event was piloted in partnership with Business Wales for those suppliers that have not tendered before. The 'Getting Tender Ready' session provided support to register on relevant platforms such as Sell2Wales and eTenderWales. Of the successful 67 tenderers:

- 13 are Carmarthenshire Companies (19%)
- 41 are from the South West Wales region (61%)

This was a success and the framework commenced in February 2023.

Is anyone better off?

Maximising Community Benefits arising from the multi million pound Scheme Pentre Awel Scheme at Llanelli



A multi-million-pound project bringing together business, research, education, community healthcare and modern leisure facilities all at one prime location along the Llanelli coastline

Pentre Awel is the first development of its scope and size in Wales. On completion, it will provide world-class medical research and healthcare delivery and will support and encourage people to lead active and healthy lives.

It will create five distinct buildings linked with a “street” space, comprising an aquatics centre, sports hall, multipurpose sports and fitness rooms and gym, education and training facilities, clinical delivery and research and innovation and business space.

As well as improving health and well-being, the project will create over 1,800 jobs and training & apprenticeship opportunities and is expected to boost the local economy by a £467million over the next 15 years.

Our Corporate Procurement team are working with the main contractor, Bouygues UK to design and build Zone One of the Pentre Awel development.

Our Community Benefits officer is working closely with Bouygues UK to maximize the Community Benefits realised in this project. In total, the project target for Targeted Recruitment & Training is 4860 person weeks in a timescale of 89 weeks. Through the Carmarthenshire Employer Support Group (ESG), a large network of employability projects such as Workways+ and Communities for Work, learning providers including Coleg Sir Gâr and University of Wales Trinity Saint David and public bodies such as DWP, Careers Wales, plus representation from within the Council's Economic Development department and the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership support will be on hand to meet these ambitious targets. The ESG meet frequently and provides critical support in placing individuals for work experience,

and jobs on site. Work is on-going on the education and community engagement opportunities, with introductions made to the local Youth Centre and social enterprise projects requiring support in the surrounding project location. School and Community Ambassadors have been appointed as local representatives to provide the link between the local community, schools and the project team. Bouygues UK are also in the process of advertising opportunities for sub-contractor packages.

What and how we can do better

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Governance Arrangements

The Governance and Audit Committee is a key component of Corporate Governance, providing a source of assurance about the Authority's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, and reporting on financial as well as non-financial performance. The Governance and Audit Committee approve the Contract Procedure Rules as updates are required.

5g Internal Audit

The overall opinion is that the Authority as an 'Acceptable' control environment in operation.
(Annual Report for Governance and Audit Committee)

Why is this important?

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires that **a local government body must maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control.** By providing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, internal control and governance processes, Carmarthenshire County Council's Internal Audit function provides a quality, independent and objective audit service that effectively meets the Council's needs, adds value, improves operations, and helps protect public resources.

Carmarthenshire County Council has a **zero-tolerance** stance to all forms of fraud, corruption, and theft, both from within the Council and from external sources. The Internal Audit function promotes an anti-fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption culture within the Council and investigates any allegations of fraud, bribery, corruption, and other irregularities.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ⊙ **87% of draft Internal Audit reports were issued within 10 working days of completing the fieldwork (IA/002)**
- ! **Only 38% of management responses received within 15 working days of the draft Internal Audit report being issued.** Requests are made for management responses to be received within the target of 15 days; however, responses are not always provided within this time. Further liaison with management to try to ensure that management responses are received to reports in a timely manner, and within the 15 working days target. (IA/002)
- ⊙ **All (100%) of final reports were issued within 10 working days of management responses being received. (IA/003)**
- ! **83% of the planned Internal Audits were completed** during 2022/23. Staffing issues during the year has greatly impacted on the ability to complete planned audits. The Governance & Audit Committee approved the deferral of three audit assignments from this year's Audit Plan. Recruitment for new staff has been successful with a full complement of staff from summer 2023. We will continue to make progress against the plan, producing quality audits which add value to the Authority.



Progress in 2022/23

- ⊙ The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require an External Quality Assessment (EQA) of the Internal Audit function to be completed every 5 years. The most recent assessment, undertaken during 2022/23, concluded that Carmarthenshire County Council's Internal Audit service is conforming in 300, out of the 304, requirements. Of the 4 requirements remaining, three were found to be partially compliant, with one identified as non-compliant.
- ⊙ Actions have been put in place to address the conformance issues relating to the 4 areas identified as being partially compliant and non-complaint in the EQA; details are as follows:

- The Head of Financial Services, who is outside of the Internal Audit activity, now has oversight of all Internal Audit assignments which fall under the remit of the Head of Internal Audit (Head of Revenues & Financial Compliance). Whilst an approved escalation protocol was already in existence for such reviews, as the oversight did not involve an officer from outside the Internal Audit activity, the previous arrangements were deemed to be non-compliant. The introduction of this additional control is seen as a positive addition and will strengthen the existing process.
- Client feedback surveys have been introduced, which assist us to know how we are doing. From the results so far, we have received positive affirmations (Excellent or Good) to over 90% of the questions. Results of the surveys are used as a discussion basis to improve our performance.
- The remaining two areas identified as partial compliance relate to strengthening of wording within the Internal Audit Charter; these changes have been implemented, with the revised Charter due to be presented to the Governance & Audit Committee in July 2023.

There is a coordinated approach for drafting the Annual Governance Statement and challenge of the contents, to ensure it reflects the actual governance position and what improvements are required. An action plan is produced annually, and the governance issues are monitored through the quarterly Governance Group Meetings. Internal Audit undertakes a review of the Corporate Governance arrangements in place, including review of the Annual Governance Statement, on an annual basis; the most recent review concluded that the Authority’s Corporate Governance Arrangements are Acceptable.

Table - Internal Audit Report extract:

Findings of Carmarthenshire County Council Internal Audit review of AGS and Corporate Governance	
Post Review Assurance Level	Description for Assurance Level
Acceptable	Moderate controls, some areas of non-compliance to agreed controls Medium/Low risk of not meeting objectives Medium/Low risk of fraud, negligence, loss, damage to reputation
Internal Audit found no fundamental control issues to be addressed as a high priority.	

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

Internal Audit report to the Governance and Audit Committee, which is key component of Corporate Governance, providing a source of assurance about the Authority’s arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment and reporting on financial as well as non-financial.

5h People Management (Human Resources, Learning & Development, Occupational Health)

People say they are proud to work for us and would recommend us as an employer. Over 1,700 staff responded to our staff survey in 2022 and responses were overall positive. An engaged workforce is critical to the delivery of our services.

Why is this important?

Staff are our greatest asset and we have approximately 8,000 employees who contribute every day to the achievement of our services. Our ambitions simply cannot be realised without our dedicated and motivated workforce. We work together, be open, honest, fair and inclusive.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

During 2022/23 the Council was re-awarded the Gold and Platinum Corporate Health Standard from the Welsh Government. The Corporate Health Standard is part of the Welsh Government's Healthy Working Wales programme and is the national mark of quality for health and well-being in the workplace.

Platinum is the beacon for exemplar employers who demonstrate sustainable business practices and take full account of their corporate social responsibilities. The Platinum level recognises responsible employers who demonstrate an organisational commitment to support not only their employees, but also other employers and the local community. The assessor was very impressed with the amount of work that we are doing in each area and the sophisticated and joined up approach with **'significant progress being made since the last Platinum level revalidation in 2019'**.



We were also recognised as Investors in People (IIP) organisation and given Gold Accreditation. This means that **'people and leaders actively drive positive outcomes, taking ownership of the principles and practices [of IIP]'** Our External Advisor, told us she had found:

'... a quantifiably different organisation – as a result of focus on trust, empowerment, caring and support, continuous investment in best practice, improving management and use of data.'

The review also found mutual respect at all levels with an openness to feedback and a desire to improve by investing in people and their well-being. What was clear was that there are talented people at all levels of our organisation. When we are at our best, we are working collaboratively, making improvements using internal and external sources and making decisions.

! The review found that the areas that we need to work on are how we recognise and reward people as well as developing the skills of our leaders. We need to keep thinking about how we communicate to make sure everyone gets the messages they need.



Armed Forces Covenant

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a promise from the nation to those who serve. It says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. This includes offering injured servicemen and women and bereaved families extra support where appropriate.

- All parts of the county council were kept up to date on the requirements of the Armed Forces Act so that our processes and policies reduce the risk disadvantage to our Armed Forces Community throughout, especially in the areas of housing and education.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS)-Silver award

- We worked to ensure our employment policies and practices within the council support the armed forces community and we were awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS)-Silver award.
- We have also put in place the measures to offer a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for members of the Armed Forces Community (certain criteria apply), which will be launched when the new recruitment platform goes live.

We have established strong links and referral pathways between our recruiting team, workways and armed forces employment charities, so that veterans who need that extra support in gaining employment are provided for.

Employee Survey

During 2022/23, we also undertook our first Employee Engagement Survey aimed at assessing how engaged our staff.

Working for Us - Most people that responded said that they were proud to work for Carmarthenshire County Council and would recommend us as an employer. Many also said that they felt their well-being was important to the Council, and that equality in the workplace was supported, allowing them to be themselves and speak openly. Many also told us that they are encouraged to make suggestions and challenge the way things are done; and that their opinions are listened to and used to improve things.

Communication - Most people that responded to the survey agreed that they were up to speed on what was happening in their team or work location.

! Fewer people felt they knew what was happening across the organisation.

Learning and Development - Most people that responded to the survey felt that they have the right skills to do their job and many stated that they were able to perform to the best of your ability. The majority of respondents also stated that they can access learning opportunities in their preferred language. In terms developing new skills, many stated that they are encouraged to learn and grow and that they had been given the opportunity to do so during the last year.

! However, it is clear from some of the responses received, that not everyone has this experience, and we will address this during 2023/24.

Expectations and Recognition - Most of the people that responded to the survey felt that their job makes an important contribution to the Council. They were also clear about what is expected of them, and what they could expect from their manager. However, our Investors In People (IIP) review identified that not everyone had the same experience, and that appraisals were not being undertaken in a consistent manner. Many said that someone had talked to them about their progress during the previous year and that they regularly receive recognition from others for doing a good job.

Turnover

Voluntary turnover is currently running at 9.11%, which is below the UK average, an indicator that we are a good employer, which is borne out by the results of the staff survey – staff being “proud to work for us” and staff willing to “recommend us as an employer”. Where we have higher than average turnover, retention strategies have been put in place to support services e.g. market supplement payments, real living wage supplement, re-evaluation of job roles.

Providing Bilingual Services

We understand that the Welsh language is key to the identity of many of our residents and that people are often able to better express their opinions and needs in their first language. It is therefore our duty to ensure our residents and customers can access our services through their language of choice and to make sure our employees have the required skills. We have a range of learning and development opportunities in place to ensure new and existing staff have the opportunity to develop their Welsh Language skills. This year we will strengthen the process of developing Welsh Language Agreements, which is being considered alongside the implementation of the new Oleo recruitment system. Recruitment pages are also being updated to provide opportunities for all candidates to achieve level 1 prior to starting employment.

We are also looking to increase the proportion of Welsh-medium apprenticeships within the Council.

Well-being of our Current Workforce

Supporting the well-being of our workforce is a key priority for the Division and our engagement survey told us that the majority of people who participated agreed that their well-being was important to us as an employer and that they felt valued for the contributions they make.

Workforce Development Opportunities

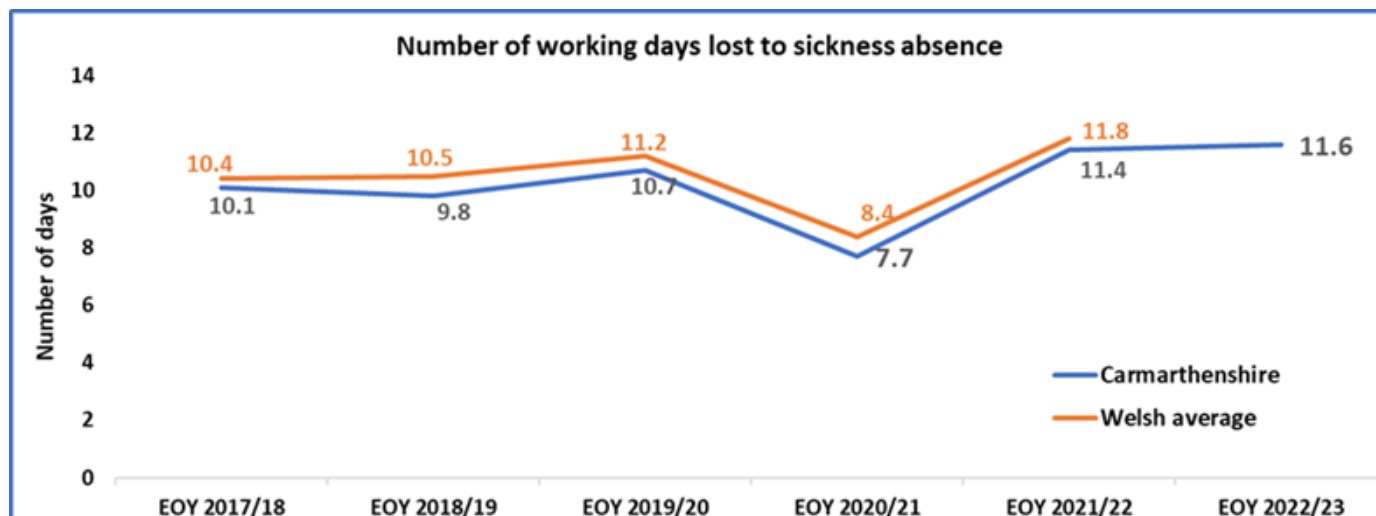
During the last year, we have developed a range of initiatives and solutions in a bid to support the Council’s corporate priorities. These include:

- Supporting our people to develop their Welsh language skills
- Supporting 12 future leaders
- Sponsoring 21 individuals to become Social Workers
- Recruiting 10 graduates – to meet our workforce planning aspirations
- Recruiting 5 apprentices - to meet our workforce planning aspirations.


! We also have a statutory obligation to ensure all our people undertake level 1 training in relation violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. At the end of March 2023, 69% of our staff had completed the relevant training. We need to improve this take up rate, and the successful procurement of a new Learning Management System, as part of Consortium of Welsh Local Authorities, this year will support us to improve and monitor completion rates.

Attendance

- ! We have a robust attendance management framework in place with a range of employee well-being solutions to support the organisation, however sickness absence per employee continued to increase during 2022/23 to 11.6 days (PAM/001)



It should be noted that it is not only Carmarthenshire sickness figures that have increased after the pandemic, but the Welsh average also increased by 3.4 days (8.4 days – 11.8 days).

	Audit Wales report: Springing Forward Workforce Management- Carmarthenshire County Council (Sept 2022)
<p>Purpose: This report reviews the Council’s arrangements for managing its workforce. It looks at how the Council strategically plans for its workforce, how it monitors the use of its workforce and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements.</p> <p>Finding: <i>The Council is improving the strategic planning for its workforce and is taking action to address staff capacity issues in key service areas but recognises that performance monitoring of workforce management needs strengthening</i></p>	

Progress in 2022/23

- ⦿ During 2022 the Council agreed a new Transformation Strategy.
- ⦿ A new Workforce Strategy has been developed and will be approved during 2023-24.
- ⦿ During 2023-24 we will also agree a new Learning & Development policy that ensures fair access to learning for all our staff.

Employment Policies

- ⦿ All our employment policies are regularly updated to reflect changes in legislation. We also respond to manager feedback and align our policies to good practice.
- ⦿ We have undertaken a complete review of our Employment Safeguarding policies and procedures and have developed an action plan to address areas that require improvement. We now have a new updated policy and procedure which are in the process of being signed off (Corporate Safeguarding Board sign off agreed).
- ⦿ We have developed a new Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence policy that has introduced special leave for people in an abusive relationship, this is seen as sector leading.

- ⦿ Our Premature and Hospitalised Baby Pay and Leave Scheme supports parents with premature or sick babies where we are able to offer additional paid leave after the birth of a child who requires an extended stay in hospital.

Recruitment and retention

- ⦿ We continue to manage high levels of recruitment (approximately 130 vacancies at any one time @ 1 June 23) and supported departments to recruit overseas workers to help bridge the skills gaps in some services (via the UK immigration sponsorship scheme).
- ! Recruitment and retention in some areas is problematic and, in many service areas, is a national issue (e.g. social care roles). However, we have put strategies in place to support services including regrading payment of a market supplement, schemes to upskill our social care workforce such as the Care Academi, a range of well-being initiatives.
- ⦿ To support our lower paid staff, we have reviewed our pay model, paid Real Living Wage supplement when applicable and are currently looking at different flexible working solutions in some service areas.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

The Transformation Board manages the work of the Transformation Workstreams
The Corporate Governance Group ensures we adhere to the Code of Governance and the Annual Governance Statement.

5i Democratic Services

Positive feedback from Elected Members on the service provided by Democratic Services Unit.

Why is this important?


- ⦿ Democratic Services manages the Council's decision-making process. The Council constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.
- ⦿ As part of that process, the service will:
 - Maintain and develop the Council's decision-making processes to include the preparation of agendas, reports and minutes, facilitating the broadcasting and hosting of multi-location meetings and ensure decision made are accountable and transparent.
 - Manage and provide Scrutiny and Committee Services support to the Council and its various Committees.
 - Support services to Elected Members, including maintaining and managing local councillor information on our website (includes information on declarations of interests; gifts and hospitality; Committee membership; remuneration etc) and providing a support service for enquiries and advice on the Council's Constitution and Members' Code of Conduct.
 - Administer appeals relating to school admissions and school permanent exclusions.
 - Service and host joint working arrangements – i.e. Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel, Wales Pension Partnership Joint Governance Committee and Y Partneriaeth
 - Service Council's arm's length companies namely Llesiant Delta Well-being Governance Group and CWM Environmental Ltd Shareholders Board.
 - Manage internal meetings between Group Leaders, Constitutional Review Group and also Cabinet member meetings with Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs.
 - Manage members' constituency casework via a Councillor Enquiry system, processing Councillor expenses and making arrangements for attending conferences and seminars. A new updated Councillor Enquiry process with the facility for members to view logged cases was released earlier in the year.
 - Support to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council in their civic duties.
 - Develop and update the Democracy web pages and managing democratic room bookings.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ⦿ Over 4,300 Member enquiries were received by the unit during 2022/23. 73.4% of the departmental responses were replied to within the target timescale of 7 days.
- ⦿ Over 1,235 service requests logged on behalf of Members during the period 18 August 2022 to 30 April 2023.
- ⦿ 323 appeal files opened between 09/05/22 and 08/05/23. Plus 2 exclusion appeals.
- ⦿ Over 300 meetings serviced during the year.

Progress in 2022/23

	<p><u>Audit Wales Follow-up Review: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? – Carmarthenshire County Council – July 2022</u></p> <p>Findings</p> <p><i>Overall, the Council has made some progress in addressing previous proposals for improvement but still needs to strengthen arrangements to assess the effectiveness and impact of its scrutiny function.</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. An action plan was returned to Audit Wales and Audit Wales have met with the Cabinet and the Chairs and Vice of Scrutiny forum at separate meetings to discuss the findings.2. The report and Action Plan will go to CMT, Corporate and Performance scrutiny and then Governance and Audit Cttee.3. Recommendations will be addressed in Business Plans and tracked on PIMS.	

- ⦿ The Service successfully put in place the arrangements for the New Council following the Local Government Elections in May 2022. This included negotiating with Group Leaders and unaffiliated members on establishing the politically balanced composition of committees and representatives on external bodies.
- ⦿ We put in place and updated the Council’s records and website in respect of arrangements to increase in Carmarthenshire elected members from 74 to 75 and the changes to the ward structure following a review of the electoral wards by the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- ⦿ The service worked with Learning and Development on the Member Induction Programme for both new and returning members.
- ⦿ We have successfully moved the Council to multi-location meetings (hybrid) which is a legal requirement of the 2021 Act.
- ⦿ We introduced a Petition Scheme and Public Participation Strategy also a requirement of the 2021 Act.
- ⦿ In accordance with the legal requirement to allow members to attend either physically or remotely, the service made arrangements to hold multi-location meetings from the Annual Meeting on the 25 May 2022. We also now broadcast all formal meetings which has increased the number of meetings webcast since lockdown from 50 to over 200 per annum.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

Democratic and Legal Services however have a leading role in support the governance of the Democratic process. Taking a lead role in the Constitutional Review Working Group, Group Leader meetings & Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum and administering the democratic process as a whole.

5j Policy & Performance

We reset the Council's Corporate Strategy and Well-being Objectives and Carmarthenshire PSB's Well-being Plan

The reset of the above Council and PSB's Well-being Objectives sets the scene for the next 5 years and was a major piece of work to progress. The Council Service Delivery Plans have aligned to deliver the Well-being Objectives. We also undertook significant consultation with residents, staff, businesses and Trade Unions.

Why is this important?

- ⦿ This service leads on a range of corporate statutory duties and strategic requirements on behalf of the whole Council. This is done by liaising with and advising Council departments and Cabinet on a range of corporate matters. The key areas of work covered by the unit are as follows:
 - **Corporate Policy** requirements relating to Equalities, Welsh language, Well-being of Future Generations, Armed Forces, Tackling Poverty and Complaints.
 - **Performance Management** making sure we achieve what we set out to do in our Corporate Strategy and Well-being Objectives and through monitoring ensuring outcomes are better than they would otherwise be.
 - **Data Insight** leading in the management, collection and analysis of key data to aid evidence-based decision making and supporting key policy areas.
 - **Partnership working** between public sector organisations in the County, through the Public Services Board (PSB) including community safety.



How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ! Only **52.7% of complaints received were completed within the statutory deadline** during 2022/23 (*Comp/001*), this is a decline on the previous year of 57.8%. The number of complaints received have increased by 54% (an additional 500 complaints). There are several issues which are believed to continue to have an impact upon the ability of Investigating Officers to meet the statutory timescales. The significant increase in the number of complaints received, the complex nature of some complaints, service pressures, capacity due to competing priorities and leave periods also affect the time taken to complete investigations. The Corporate Complaints Team continue to work closely with teams who are unable to meet the statutory timescales due to significant service pressures to provide advice and guidance to support the resolution of complaints. ⓘ **See Appendix 5b.**

Progress in 2022/23

Corporate Policy


Tackling Poverty – See Well-being Objective 2a

Community Safety – See Well-being Objective 3d

Welsh Language -See Well-being Objective 3c

Equality and Diversity

- ⦿ The Welsh Government has published an Anti-Racist Action Plan for Wales. The Policy & Involvement Team are supporting the revision of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Action Plan and relevant actions will be added to the SEP. Relevant actions will also need to be monitored by departments.
- ⦿ The Equalities & Diversity (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) Task & Finish Group has prepared a report and recommendations will be implemented during 2023-24.

	<u>Equality Impact Assessments – National Report: More than a Tick Box Exercise (September 2022)</u>
<p>Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is an important part of the approach to tackling inequality in Wales. EIAs help public services meet their legal duties to avoid discrimination in the decisions they make and to promote equality of opportunity and cohesion.</p> <p>The report shows that within individual public bodies there are good examples of aspects of the process of conducting an EIA. The report will help all public bodies learn from those that are doing well and trying new approaches.</p> <p><u>Our response</u></p> <p>In response we prepared an Action Plan to address the recommendations.</p>	

Complaints

- ⦿ Monthly reports continued to be provided throughout the year to Directors on Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, with numbers given for those which have been closed, upheld and completed within the timescale and also the numbers which are currently still open, and which are beyond the expected response timescale. Additional scrutiny of the information provided by departments has resulted in queries and requests to the Corporate Complaints Team for additional information by some divisions and the team have been pleased to assist.

Involvement, Participation and Consultation

- ⦿ We worked with other Council services to further develop the Council's involvement and use of data as part of a Council wide approach to involvement, participation and consultation.
- ⦿ Our involvement work and use of data will now be embedded as part of the new Council Corporate Strategy in terms of how we ensure continuous engagement and involvement in all that the Council does and how we perform. There are wider discussions through the Regional Partnership Board's Continuous Engagement Framework group. The Democratic Participation Strategy has been published on 1 May 2022


Performance Management

Our 2021/22 Annual Report was the first time we had to report under the terms of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and we published it as part of our Annual Report on our Well-being Objectives.

- ⦿ We outlined the requirement of the new Act and our Performance Management Framework to members in November 2022 as part of the induction programme.
- ⦿ Following local government elections in May 2022 the new administration published its vision statement and we reset the Corporate Strategy to focus on 4 rather than 13 Well-being Objectives. We also held a workshop with members to contribute towards the development of the new Strategy.
- ⦿ We developed a new approach to business planning which is now focused on divisional delivery plans which aligns to the new Well-being Objectives, thematic and services priorities and core business enablers. The

first phase focused on actions and measures for the 2023-24 period and the second phased with focus in self-assessment of performance during 2022-23 in order to inform future business planning. Engagement and Assurance sessions with each of the Council’s Departments will be held during June and July 2023.

- ⦿ For monitoring we introduced a more integrated way of looking at quarterly performance reporting and the Corporate Management Team held quarterly meetings entirely dedicated to performance management that have proved very worthwhile.
- ! We need to improve how we communicate how the Council is performing to residents, businesses, staff and Trade Unions.
- ! We will need to consolidate governance arrangements for the new Corporate Strategy.

	<p><u>Examination on the setting of Well-being Objectives</u></p>
<p>The examination is to assess the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives.</p> <p>The review found that:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Council has applied the sustainable development principle in the setting of its new well-being objectives but could strengthen its arrangements for citizen involvement and monitoring its progress.</i></p>	

Partnership working

- ⦿ The PSB Support Team in the Council led the development of the PSB’s Well-being Plan for 2023-2028. Work was undertaken with PSB partners to agree its Well-being Objectives based on the findings of the Well-being Assessment which had also been led by the team. The Well-being Objectives were identified as:
 - Ensuring a sustainable economy and fair employment
 - Improving well-being and reducing health inequalities
 - Responding to the climate and nature emergencies
 - Tackling poverty and its impacts
 - Helping to create bilingual, safe and diverse communities and places.
- ⦿ Discussions were held with PSB partners to consider the collective action the PSB could take forward to contribute towards these objectives. The Council’s PSB Support Team completed a draft Well-being Plan with suggested actions, informed by feedback from meetings with Board members, Welsh Government seminars on Tackling Poverty, Climate & Nature Emergencies, Health Inequalities and Improving Community Well-being and documentation including the Future Generations Report 2020 from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner. The team have also directly engaged with officers from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner as part of the statutory requirements of developing the Well-being Plan.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

<p>The Corporate Governance Group ensures that the above ambitions and processes are maintained. A series of cross-party Advisory Panels are important engagement fora to support the Cabinet Member for the respective service areas. The Corporate Policy Team support the following Advisory Panels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling Poverty • Welsh Language • Rural Affairs.

5k Electoral Services & Civil Registration

Increases in both the number of births and deaths registered during the year and a significant increase in the number of weddings and civil partnerships supported due to delays caused by the pandemic.
Local election in May 2022 successfully delivered

Why is this important?

- ⦿ **Electoral Services** - our electoral system is underpinned by a legal framework which establishes how elections are delivered. It sets out who is allowed to vote and the various ways they can cast their vote and have their say.
- ⦿ **Registration Service** – the Council’s Registration Service has the statutory function of providing a responsive service to the public for the registration of births, stillbirths, deaths; notices of marriage and civil partnership and consequent ceremonies; production of legal documentation and the approval of premises for marriages and partnerships; it is also responsible for citizenship ceremonies. The Service offers a range of non-statutory ceremonies and also delivers on request, the ‘Tell Us Once’ service on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ⦿ **90% of births were registered in Carmarthenshire within the statutory timeframe of 42 days** during 2022/23, this is in line with the Welsh average of 91% and an improvement on 84% in 2021/22. The number of births registered in Carmarthenshire increased by 2.3% in 2022/23 to 2,392 compared to 2,338 the previous year, this consists of all births which took place in the County and includes parents who are resident in neighbouring counties but attended Glangwili for their child’s birth. Actions are being implemented to work with the maternity services to raise awareness among parents of the need to make arrangements to register the birth within the first few weeks, as many are leaving it too late to ask for an appointment. *(CivilReg/001)*
- ! **55% of non-coronial deaths were registered within the statutory timeframe of 5 days during 2022/23.** Since COVID, there’s a requirement for deaths to be signed off by doctors and the Medical Examiner Service, with pressure on the NHS and the need for medical professionals to complete paperwork and discuss it with the Medical Examiner Service, before forwarding it to the registrars. This increases the length of time it takes for all necessary documentation to be received by the registrars. The number of death registrations in Carmarthenshire increased significantly in 2022/23, including an increase of 34% in cases requiring coronial involvement or investigation before the registrars were able to register the death. The impact of these matters was a decrease in deaths registered within 5 days from 60% in 21/22 to 55% in 22/23 in Carmarthenshire. The Welsh average also dropped from 69% last year to 50% this year. This is mostly beyond our control, we attend local and national stakeholder groups for the Medical Examiner Service and have established good links, we intend to provide better information for families while they wait and to work with the health board and the Medical Examiner Service to make all processes more efficient. *(CivilReg/002)*
- ⦿ The **May 2022 Local Elections** were successfully delivered, with a 41.76% turnout which placed us in the top five for highest turnout of Welsh Local Elections. We conducted an effective campaign to ensure that all 16-



and 17-year-olds and foreign nationals newly enfranchised living within Carmarthenshire were registered and were encouraged to participate in getting them to vote. We did this by carrying out a comprehensive campaign with relevant videos that were shared with our stakeholders.

Progress in 2022/23

- ⦿ As a consequence of the pandemic, a new cohort of 10 casual deputy registrars was recruited in April-May 2022 to enable the service to successfully meet the extremely high demand for ceremonies last summer. Most of these staff have been retained and have been trained during the winter months to register births and deaths and to take notices. This additional staff resource will allow us to be more flexible in the number of weddings we are able to deliver as well as keeping adequate availability for birth and death appointments. This new cohort has also added resilience to the team of Registrars in the event of such a pandemic happening in the near future.
- ⦿ We pride ourselves on the development and strengthening of our stakeholder meetings. We meet on a regular basis to ensure that improvements are continuously being made to the death registration journey, ensuring that the bereaved families are at the heart of any decision making. A valued member of the stakeholder group is the Coroner for Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire jurisdiction. The Coroner and his team engage with the Registration Service regularly, again ensuring that inquests and their subsequent registration of the death can be carried out in a timely fashion.
- ⦿ 2022 was a very busy year with weddings and civil partnerships, Registrars worked with the couples to ensure we delivered a unique, personal service. The numerous complimentary cards of gratefulness received by the Registrars for making their day extra special is a sign that we delivered. Each wedding we see as a marketing opportunity so that guests and families will take away that a Registry wedding can be special and where possible we will tailor the service to what the couples want.
- ⦿ The Elections team delivered successful Local Government Elections in May 2022, with many internal staff contributing by either being part of the Election Project Board, working at polling stations or on the count. We particularly pride ourselves on the campaign that we put out leading up to and including election day. This could not have been delivered without close collaboration with our Marketing and Media team and its success will be built upon for future elections.
- ⦿ We have also delivered a number of by-elections and have taken the decision to engage the Modern Democracy app. This has enabled us to “modernise” the way that elections at the polling station is delivered by providing electronic registers that in turn provide live turnout via an election management portal and instant documents required at close of polls. We see this step as a positive move to us contributing to paper saving and efficiency.
- ⦿ We work with our internal partners to carry out data matching of our records against Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Payroll and Education records to ensure the Electoral Register is accurate and up to date. Our electorate is currently 147,792 of which 35,072 vote by post this equates to 23% of our electorate. We continue to promote alternative ways of voting if electors find it inconvenient to vote at polling stations.
- ⦿ We commenced an electoral review of our Town and Community Councils which will ensure we have the right governance on those councils. This review is due to end in October 2023 with any recommendations adopted coming in with the Local Elections in 2027.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

Departmental Management Team and Council democratic processes.

51 Estates & Asset Management

Reviewed our Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2028

to ensure that our property related aims and uses align with our Corporate Strategy and Well-Being objectives. The plan identifies the challenges and key priorities over the next 5 years for the Council's Services from a property perspective.

Why is this important?

The service is responsible for implementation of a strategic approach to the Council's management of its property resources to meet the Council's regeneration aims.

Key Service Areas include:

- Service and Strategic Property Reviews.
- Identifying opportunities for major land-based project development in order to attract significant investment to the County, with a focus on the reshaping our town centres.
- Providing comprehensive advice to the Council and its partners on all matters related to capital investment/disposal in property/land related activities.
- Statutory asset valuations & advice for Local Authority and partners for financial accounting requirements.
- Managing the Council's diverse portfolios covering Office, Depot, Commercial, Industrial & Rural estates together with Livestock & Provisions Markets.
- Providing a facilities management service across the administrative portfolio and associated premises.
- Undertaking and advising on Community Asset Transfers.
- Managing the Council's property records.



How well are we doing (and how do we know)? Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ! We only generated **36%** (£565,200) of the capital receipts we set out to achieve in our capital program £1,567,000 (2.1.2.12). Delays in planning submissions for residential development has resulted in significant capital receipts targeted for this financial year not being realised as well as demand for problematic sites having slowed down. Our 2023/24 Capital receipts program has been set at £2,588,000 which also reflects this year's slippage.

Progress in 2022/23

- ⊙ During the year we considered options for ensuring the most effective use of the Council farm estate to support affordable farming initiatives and maximising development/diversification opportunities, particularly in relation to regeneration of renewal energy. The review concluded that the County Farm Estate be retained and managed under the current policy whilst rationalising and considering development opportunities as they arise. A new Rural Estate Plan will be drafted over the next 12 months to highlight the extent and performance of the current portfolio, together with the key issues and future strategy of the Estate to enable the Council to maximise the opportunities available to support its well-being objectives. We will also continue to engage with the Climate Change & Nature Emergency Advisory Panel and the Rural Affairs Advisory Panel to consider their views in finalising the Rural Estate Plan.

This is a review of the Council's arrangements for managing its assets with a focus on office accommodation and buildings from which the Council delivers services to its residents. It looks at how the Council strategically plans the use of its assets, how it monitors the use of its assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements.

Findings

Overall, it found that: The Council is strengthening its arrangements for asset management and recognises that there are opportunities to use the sustainable development principle more to improve this work.

Recommendations

1. The Council needs to apply and embed the sustainable development principle in the way it plans, delivers and monitors the management of its assets.
2. The Council needs to improve the performance management of its assets by:
 - a. developing a set of performance and outcome measures that reflect the Council's ambitions for its assets and monitor these measures at a corporate level, including reporting to overview and scrutiny committee(s);
 - b. benchmarking performance on asset management with other organisations.

Our Response

1 Sustainable Development

- To balance the Council's short-term requirements and its ability to meet longer term needs, a cross departmental Strategic Land use group is undertaking a phased review of the Council's land assets to highlight potential opportunities in relation to its key aims of carbon sequestration, phosphate mitigation, tree planting, community use and enhancement of biodiversity.
- In addition, the Maintenance Section continues in its programme to undertake detailed condition surveys of our various portfolios in order that we have a clear picture of future liabilities as part of any key decisions with property implications. Services have prioritised assets for survey purposes.
- Following service consultations on hybrid working space requirements, a timetable and programme of works and moves is in place.
- These actions will ensure alignment with our objectives of ensuring that we become more resilient, support regeneration in our communities in light of global responsibilities and acting to prevent or reduce worsening land associated issues. They will also assist in delivering a sustainable future for our estate.

2 Performance Management

Sustainability of our Estate

- Our Energy team working on acquiring display Energy Certificates for all relevant CCC portfolios.
- In addition, baseline data from current Display Energy Certificates (DECS) to be supplied by the Energy Team.
- Ongoing Performance monitoring will cover delivery of the programme for necessary DECS together with movements in grades and consumption data.

Condition of our Estate

- Baseline data set for portfolios subject to recent condition reports. In addition, programme of remaining Condition Surveys agreed by 1st April 2023. Performance monitoring will cover delivery of programme noted above and resulting movement in grades and backlog maintenance figure once baseline is set

Utilisation / Efficiency of our Estate

- Occupye Desk monitoring system to be installed across various sites by December 2023.
- In relation to benchmarking performance on asset management with other organisations, via our participation in the Property & Estates Group of the Association of Chief Estates Officers (ACES) and the Consortium of Local Authorities in Wales (CLAW), we will be undertaking a review of benchmarking performance as part of the group's ongoing discussions with Data Cymru on delivering suitable indicators

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

Corporate Property Strategic Management Group considers key issues facing corporate estate . Transformation Board Workplace workstream considers hybrid working arrangements and opportunities across office and depot sites. Cross Departmental Strategic Land Use Group reviews land holdings to highlight and develop opportunities on sustainability, community and Net Zero Carbon commitments.

5m Risk Management

Risk Management contributes to achieving our vision, protecting our front-line services and supporting a socially sustainable economic environment. *(Director of Corporate Services)*

Why is this important?

Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives - Audit Commission

- ⦿ We recognize the benefit of being proactive with the management of risk and have invested funds to identify and minimize risks in both financial and non-financial terms.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

- ⦿ Only **49%** of **motor vehicle incidents** were reported to Risk Management within **5 working days** *(RM/001)* this is the first year of collating this measure.
- ⦿ **66%** of **departmental reports** were returned to Risk Management within **15 days** from request *(RM/002)* this is the first year of collating this measure.
- ⦿ All **91 (100%)** of **motor claims reports** were provided by risk management within **7 working days** *(RM/003)* this is the first year of collating this measure.
- ⦿ **95%** of **liability claims reports** were provided by risk management to insurers within **10 working days** *(RM/004)* this is the first year of collating this measure.

Progress in 2022/23


Carmarthenshire Transformation Strategy



The Risk Management Steering Group examines how Risk Management can be developed and ensures that risk management is embed in decision making throughout the organization. A review undertaken by the Transformation team concluded that *'The Terms of Reference of the Risk Management Steering Groups and its various sub-groups have recently been reviewed. This will allow the strategic group to adopt more of a strategic approach to its consideration of risk management issues, such as undertaking regular reviews of the Corporate Risk Register'*

- ⦿ We are embedding **good risk management** into all our processes. Corporate and project Risks are captured within Risk Registers. We use 'Web based risk register software' which allows departments to input, access, maintain and manage all risk.
- ⦿ **The Corporate Risk Register** is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on a six-monthly basis following bi-monthly review and critical assessment of the risks by Corporate Management Team.

- ⦿ **Risk workshops** held for staff and Governance and Audit Committee throughout the year.
- ⦿ Workshops have been held for our Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service to develop a **Risk Appetite Statement**.

	<p>Following the Audit Wales Review of Risk Management Arrangements in July 2019 the recommendations and actions have been progressed.</p>
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- ⦿ Increased emphasis on **risk-based auditing** rather than re-active in our internal audits. Our Internal Audit plan was devised mostly from risks cited within the Corporate Risk register and Departmental risk registers.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

<p>The Council has a Risk Management Steering Group which reports its activity to the Governance and Audit Committee by presenting for information the minutes of the group.</p> <p>The Risk Management Steering Group comprises Cabinet Member Risk Champion (Cabinet Member for Resources), Departmental Risk Champions and is chaired by a Head of Service.</p>

5n Business and Cabinet Support Unit

A significant year of change following Local Government Elections

The May 2022 Local Government Elections saw a new Cabinet being formed and there was a significant period of change as portfolios were determined.

Why is this important?

- ⦿ The **Business and Cabinet Support Service** is responsible for providing a range of corporate, departmental and service specific support within the Chief Executive's Department:
 - business support to the Chief Executive, the Leader and members of the Cabinet
 - forward work programme support to Corporate Management Team
 - departmental Management Team support
 - administrative support in connection with the functions of the Lieutenancy
 - support for Royal Visits, ceremonial duties, honours and presentations made by the Lord-Lieutenant on behalf of His Majesty the King
 - creditors and debtors' processes for department
 - mail handling at County Hall, Carmarthen
 - staff ID system
 - support to Electoral Services team in relation to postal votes.

How well are we doing (and how do we know)? ⓘ Sources of evidence

Success Measures / Explaining the Results

No specific service measures, as the work of the team is responsive to organisational business.

Progress in 2022/23

- ⦿ Following the Local Government Elections in May 2022, the Cabinet has agreed to publish a vision statement. The Vision Statement was approved at Cabinet on 18.07.22.
- ⦿ The vision includes priorities, projects, and plans the Cabinet wants to achieve over the course of the administration. This vision statement is delivered through the Council's Corporate Strategy and detailed reports and recommendations on specific projects and programs will be presented through the democratic process over the next five years.
- ⦿ We have produced, maintain and publish a Forward Work Plan for the Cabinet.
- ⦿ We supported the new administration to develop the new Cabinet portfolios.
- ⦿ We provided the support to Heads of Service / Service managers within the department to ensure any recommendations from internal audits, or new ways of working are implemented accordingly and in a timely manner. An example of this is the P2P - No Purchase Order, No Payment initiative - where we have worked with our budget managers and creditors to ensure the necessary paperwork is in place prior to invoices being submitted for payment. This has been seen as a positive step in ensuring our creditors are paid in a timely manner.

What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7

Governance Arrangements

The service manages the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet forward work programmes.