

Well-being Objective 4

Our Council:

To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council

Overview of Progress

The Council, like all other public services, faces significant financial pressures, increasing demand and workforce challenges over coming years as well as responding to the net-zero agenda, the impact of demographic change and inequality.

Budgetary pressures mean that some services have experienced significant real-terms funding reductions over recent years whilst demand increases, and the complexity of that demand increases as well.

This is having a significant impact on our workforce who are faced with increasing demand at a time of reduced resources. Recruitment pressures in certain areas continue and budgetary pressures mean that any vacancies have to be considered carefully before being filled. Additionally, the Council is experiencing a significant increase in stress-related sickness absence, with an exponential increase of staff being referred to our Well-Being Support Service. The increase in sickness absence compounds the current workforce pressures. Staff commitment and resilience is to be commended but current pressures cannot be sustained long-term and work is on-going to address workforce pressures going forward.

Thinking in a long-term and joined up way is difficult when faced with such challenges and depleting resources, however, we recognise that to continue our important work in service-delivery we must do things differently, fully maximising the opportunities that the sustainable development principle offers.

We are actively modernising and developing as a resilient and efficient organisation to ensure our future sustainability. There is a strong emphasis on planning and supporting the development of a skilled and agile workforce, maximising opportunities within digital transformation to improve service delivery, reduce costs, and enhance customer experience and satisfaction.

Our Transformation Strategy supports the strategic objectives of our new Digital Strategy for 2024-2027 to deliver a better experience for customers. This includes the implementation of electronic signatures, hybrid mail solutions, and the rollout of robotics technology in specific processes, which has led to productivity improvements and cost savings. Work is also on-going to introduce a Commercialisation Strategy, to allow us to capitalise on income generation, to help address the financial challenges ahead of us.

Significant investments have been made to enhance operational efficiency and agility. We have also focused on upgrading on-premises environment to provide enhanced resilience.

The new Digital Strategy for 2024-2027 emphasises leveraging digital, data, and technology to enhance public services, aiming to create a digitally inclusive environment that empowers every resident.

How are we doing?

We place significant emphasis on the importance of the views of our residents. As such the primary way of measuring progress against WBO 4 is through our annual resident's survey. The results for 2023 are provided below with a comparator for the previous year. These statements relate directly to the Council and our performance.

	AIS Scores 2022	AIS Scores 2023
I can access Council services through my preferred language	1.40	1.37
When I access Council services, I find the staff to be approachable and friendly	0.82	0.77
I can easily access up to date information about Council services	0.50	0.46
I find contacting the Council simple and easy	0.31	0.28
The Council Provides good quality services overall	0.27	0.17
The Council lets people know how it's performing	-0.10	-0.12
The Council provides opportunities for me to participate in decision-making	-0.19	-0.19
The Council makes good use of the financial resources available to them	-0.33	-0.46
Investment is focused in the correct areas	-0.41	-0.57

Of the nine statements posed in relation to the Council and its performance, respondents agreed or strongly agreed with 56% of them. This is consistent with trends seen for the previous year.

However, whilst this is the case, eight of the nine AIS scores saw slight decreases on the previous year's result which suggests that on balance disagreement levels were slightly higher for 2023.

Several findings from the evidence received, namely:

- Most respondents believe that the Council provides good quality services overall. However, many residents took the opportunity to share comments to the contrary with the main themes aligning with evidence received last year. These themes include:
 - o Unreliable and infrequent waste collection;
 - o Perceived lack of town centre regeneration;
 - o Poor road conditions i.e. potholes;
 - o Lack of street cleansing;
 - o Long waits for housing repairs;
 - o Increased litter and fly-tipping;
 - o Lack of public transport;
 - o Lack of street lighting;
 - o A perceived underperforming social care service.

- Most respondents find staff to be approachable and friendly when they access Council services
- The Council's communication process is mainly effective in terms of allowing residents to access up to date information about our services and most agree that they find contacting the Council simple and easy. However, there are some issues with direct contact processes such as on occasions when residents utilise the main switchboard, utilise email to connect with officers or wish to speak directly with officers within individual departments. These findings are consistent with the previous year.
- On the whole respondents believe that the Council does not make good use of the financial resources available to us and that investment is not focussed on the right areas. These were the two lowest scoring statements, a consistent trend with last year.
- Similarly to last year, statements on Council communications in relation to performance and opportunities to participate in decision-making received mixed responses. Overall, more people disagree with these statements, however, a significant number reported 'neither' which may indicate a wider issue with the type of information shared with residents on these themes and how this information is shared.

Outcome: To further modernise and develop the Council's ways of working.

Going Paperless

One of the key aims of the Council's Transformation Strategy is 'to make better use of technology to deliver smarter, efficient service processes and to deliver a better experience for customers'. The Customers and Digital workstream is overseeing the implementation of an on-going programme of work which is seeking to rationalise and/or automate several paper-based processes. The use of electronic signatures and hybrid mail solutions is being rolled out across several services and this is already delivering a more cost-effective and productive way of working with over £100k being saved in the last year.

Robotic Process Automation

Digital Transformation funding is being used to support the roll out of robotics technology in relation to specific processes. Robotics technology is being used to undertake two back-office processes within Human Resources and has recently been deployed within the Free School Meals and School Essential Grant processes. The automation of these processes is already realising benefits to the services in terms of productivity improvements whilst also realising significant benefits to customers as requests are processed immediately. Scoping exercises are currently being undertaken to identify and prioritise the next processes to be automated using robotics technology.

Mobile Agile working

Over the past year, we have worked to ensure that our end-user devices, including laptops, smartphones, and tablets, are not only fit for purpose but also provide a seamless and efficient experience for our users. Our strategy has been to deploy technologies that enable a truly agile approach to work, allowing users to connect, communicate, and access resources from the most appropriate locations.

Systems & Cloud

We are using technology to better serve our residents, drive efficiencies across our services and enable staff to access data, systems and services from any device, any location, at any time. It is our ability to access resources, systems, and data from anywhere at any time that underpins the organisation's service delivery and our approach to mobile and agile working. In the past 12 months, we have undertaken significant cloud migrations and upgrades which have been pivotal in enhancing our operational efficiency and agility, and service delivery. We have also focused on upgrading our on-premises environment, platform, and software to provide enhanced resilience.

These system upgrades and migrations are a testament to our dedication to leveraging technology to improve service delivery, enhance data gathering and analysis, and provide our workforce with the tools they need to excel. Examples include:

- **Schools ICT:** We have migrated 18 schools from legacy telephony platforms onto fully digital and future proofed voice platforms in preparation for the UK's legacy analogue voice switch off. This is not only future proofing the schools, but also providing a range of cost savings. We have replaced several hundred devices across our schools as part of the Welsh Government funded HWB investment, ensuring that all learners across the County have equitable access to digital resources.

Cyber resilience

Over the past year, the Council has taken significant steps to bolster our cyber security posture. We have recognised the increasing challenge of cyber threats and have responded by investing in new technologies and resources to enhance our defences. We have increased our focus on disaster recovery, ensuring robust and resilient infrastructure, and have implemented cyber incident exercises and procedures to prepare for potential threats.

Digital Transformation Strategy 2024 – 2027

Carmarthenshire's new Digital Strategy for 2024-2027 has been developed and launched over the past 6 months. It is a comprehensive plan that emphasises leveraging digital, data, and technology to enhance public services. With the strapline "designed for people, enabled by technology," it aims to create a digitally inclusive environment that empowers every resident. The Strategy builds upon continuous improvement and strategic advancements, setting a clear direction for digital innovation, data-driven decision-making, and technology-led services that are accessible to all. It demonstrates a commitment to harnessing digital data and technology to deliver efficient, transparent, and responsive public services for the citizens of Carmarthenshire over the next 3 years.

Outcome: Support the development of the Council as a modern, diverse, inclusive, and responsive organisation and be an ‘Employer of Choice’.

- The Council’s new Workforce Strategy has several key actions and initiatives that are aimed at attracting, recruiting, and retaining diverse talent as well as ensuring we are an employer of choice.
- 85 (0.94%) of Council employees are from minority ethnic communities at the end of March 2024 compared to 71 (0.86%) at the end of March 2023.
- There has been an improvement on the average sickness absence of Council employees during 2023/24, reducing from 11.6 days to 11.1 days, but results remain higher than pre-Covid levels.



Our People Management division provides advice and support for managers, who have the responsibility to manage attendance. The Health and Wellbeing team support with proactive initiatives and bespoke interventions. Occupational Health professionals provide medical opinion for employees who are referred and provide recommendations to managers on reasonable adjustments, prognosis, and fitness for work.

Future-proofing the Workforce

Given the service pressures facing Children’s Services, a review across the service has been undertaken to ensure we have a stable workforce who are qualified, equipped and supported to provide support to children and families. As well as a re-alignment of children and families services management team an experienced practitioner progression framework has been implemented and new social worker trainee posts created. Since October 2023, 48 social workers in children and families have progressed through the framework, and the recruitment of 10 trainees is also underway.

Across the whole Council there are currently 107 apprentices on formal recognized apprenticeship schemes, with 4 more being recruited to meet workforce planning aspirations through the Amdani project. This project offers apprentices the opportunity to learn through the medium of Welsh and use their Welsh language skills to offer a bilingual service to customers. Over 65 work experience placements have been supported, along with 6 Cyfle shared apprenticeships and a shared Technical Apprentice working within the Theatres in partnership with the Wales Millennium Centre. The Care Academi has 12 people on the program, with 4 progressing on the fast-track route to do their Social Work Qualifications starting September 2024. One has gained employment within Social Care services, while another has left to pursue studies at university. A further 6 trainees are being recruited for September 2024. The Leadership Academi has had 30 staff undertake it, with the application process now open for the September intake.

Outcome: Listen to our staff through regular staff engagement and empower them to improve their own service areas.

We received just under 1,500 responses to our staff survey during 2023/24, the scores and year on year comparisons can be seen below. The comments provided by staff were analysed and steps being taken to address any matters raised.

Employee Engagement Survey	Average Index Score (AIS)		Comments
	2022	2023	
The number of people that are proud to work for the Council	1.04	1.08	The result of 1.06 shows that there is an overall strong agreement that our staff feel proud to work for the Council and has improved slightly from 2022/23.
The number of people that would recommend the Council as an employer	1.04	1.1	The result of 1.10 shows a slight improvement on the previous year and continue to be an overall strong agreement that our staff would recommend the Council as an employer.

Outcome: Ensure local and regional partnership working is efficient and effective and adds value to the work of the Council.

Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB)

The PSB brings together several different organisations providing services to the public who are working together for the benefit of Carmarthenshire. They have a longstanding, successful track record of partnership working and continue to build on that.

The PSB promotes a positive culture of working together, concentrating collective energy, effort, and resources on providing efficient and effective services to local communities. They will continue to do this by working collaboratively to add value to each other's services and will look at innovative approaches and new and different ways of working to achieve this.

Following the publication of the Carmarthenshire Well-being Assessment, the PSB built on the evidence base to prepare a Well-being Plan for 2023-28. The plan outlines the PSBs ambition for the County and how they wish to see real improvements in the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of our residents.

We have progressed work on this front by developing a new delivery framework, to ensure progress on the well-being objectives through the establishment of several multi-agency task and finish groups. These groups will drive forward the delivery of the next steps identified in the PSB's Well-being Plan. To date, the following groups have been set up:

- o Under the 'Tackling Poverty and its impacts' well-being objective a focus on identifying and actioning opportunities for PSB organisation staff to Make Every Contact Count (MECC) with improved signposting and referral to support services and build on advice services and support for residents through the Council Hwb, by developing opportunities for collaboration across PSB organisations.
- o Under the 'Ensuring a sustainable economy and fair employment' well-being objective the aim to plan for our future workforce by working collaboratively to promote job and career opportunities in the public sector.
- o Under the 'Responding to the climate and nature emergencies' well-being objective a focus on increasing collaboration on Electric Vehicle EV Charging Infrastructure at public sector venues.

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28

During 2023-24, we have worked with partners across Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Powys to involve our residents in the review of the Strategic Equality Plan. All the planning work, survey preparation and liaison with partners was held across the four counties, with key public sector bodies working together to increase the number of voices heard in our work.

Swansea Bay City Deal

The Swansea Bay City Deal is an unprecedented investment of up to £1.3 billion by 2033 creating 9,000 jobs across a portfolio of nine headline projects and programmes throughout the counties of Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, and Pembrokeshire.

Aligned to three themes of economic acceleration, energy and smart manufacturing, and life science and well-being, the portfolio is in full delivery. This will provide opportunities for many existing and new regional businesses, as well as residents across the region.

PARTNERIAETH

PARTNERIAETH was established following the abolition of Education through Regional Working (ERW) service to support schools in partnership with Swansea and Pembrokeshire councils. A new Joint Committee was established, and a Legal Agreement was developed to manage the work of the new entity. Core staff have been restructured to create a team of officers to support and complement school improvement activities in the three counties. Work continues to strengthen governance, monitoring and holding PARTNERIAETH to account for its contribution to school improvement in the region.

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) has been established as a regional corporate body by Welsh Ministers. Membership consists of the executive leaders of Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, and Swansea councils, along with a member of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

The CJC published its Corporate Plan for 2023-2028 which recognises its functions and responsibilities within South West Wales in terms of economic well-being, energy, transport, and strategic planning, conveying the progress made to date as well as set out future ambitions. To this end, the Corporate Plan includes a Vision for South West Wales 2035, as well as 3 well-being objectives and an equality objective.

Outcome: Increased public engagement through engagement, participation and consultation.

The Council has a well-established method of engaging with citizens and other key stakeholders across all key Council functions. There are several network groups which represent a range of interests from the youth forum to the ageing well network. We also strive to ensure that we engage and seek the views of those with specified protected characteristics as recognised by The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

We are progressing with introducing a Corporate Customer Charter which will now be completed during 2024/25. Good customer service is expected from all our service areas, and we should be striving for this, particularly in the current climate of decreasing budgets and increasing workloads. Tempered with high customer expectation, primarily due to the speed and ease of mobile technology. Our aim is that this new customer charter will put our customers at the heart of everything we do.

There has been an increase in participation of online consultations. When evaluating comparable consultations, the Budget consultation in 2020 which consulted on specific proposal received 2,004 responses, whilst in 2023 the consultation received 4,294. The increase in participation is attributed to the closer relationship developed with the Media and Marketing team ensuring that consultations are promoted on social media and the corporate website and are sent to all key stakeholders.

The Council has recently launched a new section on the corporate website which helps promote and display the results of each consultation in a bid to ensure that there is better clarity and transparency. The next Annual report will therefore be able to highlight the changes we have made to highlight the progress of each consultation and the results and actions administered off the back of each survey.

Annual Consultation Activity

In accordance with the statutory obligation placed on us through the Local Government and Elections Act, the Council consulted with residents, businesses, staff, and trade unions on the degree to which we are meeting our performance requirements. An update on the activity for 2023 is provided below:

Survey	Update
Residents Survey: 2023	We received just under 4,000 responses to our Residents Survey during 2023 , this is an increase of 1,748 responses on the previous year. Consultation findings were analysed and summarised into a series of reports and presented to various Council fora. The main findings and the need for development are detailed on our website Carmarthenshire Residents Survey 2023 - Consultation Outcome along with any arising actions and activity we intend to take in response.
Staff Survey (People Management): 2023	In total 1,475 members of staff chose to take part in the survey , which is approximately 18% of our entire workforce, this is a slight reduction compared to the 2022 staff survey, however, it remains a reliable statistical sample. Overall, the results are positive with all indicators attracting a positive rating of <i>Strongly Agree</i> or <i>Agree</i> and showed an improvement on the 2022 results (See Outcome 3 above for some details). The comments received were analysed and results was published on our Intranet and circulated to staff.
Business Survey: 2023	We received 110 responses to our Business Survey during 2023 , this is an increase of 74 responses on the previous year. Analysis and findings deduced were summarised in a report which included an indication of how results compare with those received for the previous year.
Trade Union Survey: 2023	We received a response from 3 of our Trade Unions in our 2023 survey, this is two less than in 2022. This may be indicative of specific unions feeling as though they had already shared their views with the Council through engagement activity related to the Estyn inspection. The evidence gathered has been summarised in a report considered.

Budget Consultation

Residents, businesses, community, and voluntary organisations had their say on a range of new policy saving proposals, that were drawn from across all services of the Council. A total of 11 budget proposals were presented for consideration. These were considered alongside more than 100 detailed managerial proposals, such as procurement arrangements, staffing structures and internal and back-office functions.

Net Promoter Scores

Actif has long adopted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) methodology for capturing customer feedback. Proactively contacting leisure centre customers, almost 1,800 scores/comments were received through 2023-24 to indicate their opinion of their customer experience and any comments to explain or help us improve.

With this insight, our NPS score for 2023-24 averaged 45%, exceeding the international benchmark (40%) and almost matching the national benchmark (47%), Newcastle Emlyn and Llandovery Leisure Centres scoring 76% and 78% respectively.

Outcome: A more commercial approach to the delivery of Council services with a view to increasing the level of income generated.

Estates & Asset Management

We continue to review our various property portfolios to take advantage of opportunities to increase income and reduce liabilities to develop resilience both financially and environmentally. The rural portfolio was the subject of a review in 2023-24.

- One outcome was the disposal of a farmhouse and ancillary land for £725,000 whilst retaining the majority of the land holding which was relet to provide an uplift of approximately 80% in revenue on the asset.
- We also continued our work on the Administrative Estate in relation to making better use from hybrid working arrangements.
- St David's Park, Carmarthen was sold, and greater use made of core accommodation in the Town Centre in Carmarthen and Llanelli with the latter creating additional income from partner organisation by sharing space.
- We also continue to undertake work on behalf of partner organisations with valuation advice provided to Mid and West Wales Fire Authority, generating fee income for our service.

Leisure

Actif is continuously seeking to increase income via programme and product innovation, membership sales, etc. As a result, there was a 16% increase in income from £4.7m in 2022-23 to just under £5.5m in 2023-24. This is largely attributable to major focuses on the two key business areas of fitness and aquatics, responsible for around two thirds of Actif's sales-related income.

Significant efforts to recruit and train additional swim teachers, for example, has grown the ability to meet demand for swim lessons, taking our learn to swim membership from 2,480 (March 2023) to 2,998 (March 2024), or 21% growth/additional £20k per calendar month.

In fitness business terms, efforts have been made to maximise spaces available (e.g. adding fitness equipment to peripheries of studio spaces to allow gyms to expand outside of class times) and run successful marketing campaigns to generate sales and retention. As a result, membership has grown from 3,511 (March 2023) to 3,997 (March 2024), or 14% growth/additional £25k per calendar month.

Outcome: Make better use of digital technology to further transform our services into smarter, efficient service processes and to deliver a better experience for customers.

During 2023/24 an additional 8 transactional Council services were made available to the public online. Over 60 transactional services have been added online in the last 10 years, which is an additional way to access these services. There were over 4.5m user sessions to the Council's website during 2023/24 an increase of 37% compared to last year.

An 'Options' menu has been added to our telephone lines that directs customers to parts of the organisation that they require. This has reduced double handling with the calls going directly to the required team rather than being passed on through the contact centre, this in turn has reduced the number of calls coming through the contact centre but has also increased the speed of answering calls from an average of 6.32 minutes in 2022/23 down to 1.05 minutes at the end of 2023/24. Also, customers are choosing other means of contact e.g. email, social media, online forms etc. rather than the telephone.

There was a 37% increase in the number of complaints received by the council during 2023/24 with 1,958 compared to 1,430 the previous year, with the highest number of complaints received by Waste services and Housing repairs however, this reflects the public facing nature of services. Just under 61% of all complaints received were dealt with on time.

Outcome: Embrace and promote agile working, hybrid meetings and new ways of working across the organisation, by being more sustainable and creative to improve Council services.

The Council is promoting agile and hybrid working, which improves Council services and supports staff well-being and productivity. The Council has invested in digital tools and platforms including cloud-based computing platforms and other digital infrastructure to support remote work and virtual meetings.

Furthermore, new guidance on agile and hybrid working has been implemented. This initiative reduces travel costs and emissions, improves work-life balance, enhances innovation, increases resilience and adaptability, and results in better service delivery and satisfaction.

The Council is rationalising its accommodation portfolio by reducing and improving the Council's buildings. This initiative is enabled by hybrid working, which reduces the need for office space. The Council has developed a new accommodation strategy and plan, which sets out the vision, objectives, and actions for a more efficient and effective use of the Council's estate. This initiative reduces property costs and expenditure, improves asset performance and utilisation, enhances health and safety standards, optimises space and facilities, and increases income and receipts.

These initiatives are part of the Council's broader efforts to modernise its operations in line with the Transformation Strategy. These initiatives are expected to deliver significant benefits for the Council, its staff, and the public.

We are therefore going to further promote the use of more sustainable staff travel options with a view to delivering financial and environmental savings next year.

Outcome: Deliver organisational change that supports key Net Zero Carbon targets

Asset Management

The Council's Strategic Land Use Group reviews our holdings and intended disposals. Its focus is to balance current requirements and future needs. Opportunities that our assets can potentially provide for energy generation, tree planting, phosphate mitigation, enhancing biodiversity, food production and community needs are considered by the group.

Property Design

We continue to collect data to report on carbon methodology, working collaboratively with the corporate sustainability team and in compliance with Carmarthenshire's Net Zero Carbon Action Plan. Our aim is to develop comprehensive datasets that capture carbon impacts during construction and residual carbon emissions when our buildings are in use. This will enable us to formulate a strategy for sustainable physical regeneration in Carmarthenshire and provide data for Welsh Government funding applications.

Outcome: Ensuring the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

Following the Welsh Government's below-inflation funding settlement of 3.3%, the Council must bridge a shortfall of over £22million in its forthcoming 2024/25 budget.

Welsh Government acknowledged that they faced the "most stark and painful budget choices for Wales in the devolution era" as they prepared their draft budget, which includes the all-important Revenue Support Grant (RSG) allocated to local authorities. The 3.3% rise in the RSG, which makes up around three-quarters of our funding, falls well short of the contribution needed by the Council to maintain services as they are presently provided.

"I'm grateful to the 4,300 residents who responded to the Budget Consultation and the young people who filled the Council Chamber to tell us what's important to them. Based on the responses, the Cabinet discussed at great length the options we'd presented to the public and propose allocating an extra £2m to defer cuts in several services. It pains me to say that the coming couple of years look bleak for all councils as the pressure on public spending looks set to increase. But whatever happens, I can assure the people of Carmarthenshire that we will do our utmost to protect the essential services upon which we all depend."

Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr. Alun Lenny

The huge pressure on local councils due to inadequate funding of public services has increased year on year for over a decade and is now at an unprecedented level. In Carmarthenshire, we are about £120m worse off than we were in 2010.

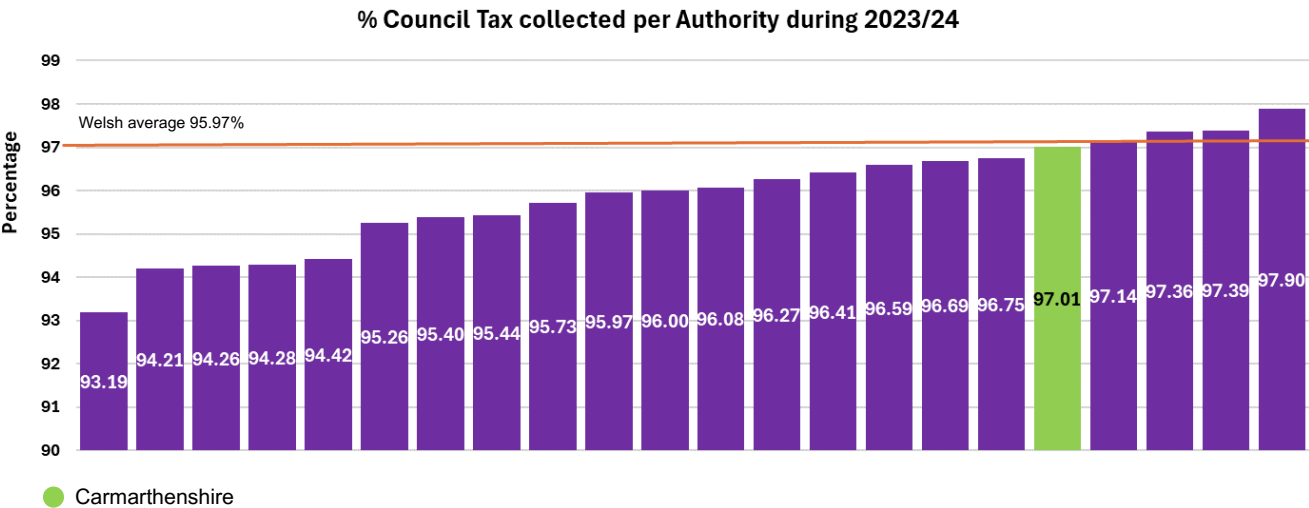
Carmarthenshire County Council’s 5-year Capital Programme, which will see £193m of investment within the County over the next 5 years was approved by County Council in February 2024. The new programme will see £61m directed towards the Council’s continued commitment for improving school buildings, £12m toward Disability Facilities Grant to help transform the quality of life for many people in their own homes, £34m for regeneration projects to boost economic activity and £16m to complete the City Deal backed Pentre Awel project - which includes a new leisure centre for Llanelli. £43m has been allocated towards improving Carmarthenshire’s local economic highways infrastructure and recycling infrastructure, whilst £21m has been earmarked for critical digital IT hardware and infrastructure.



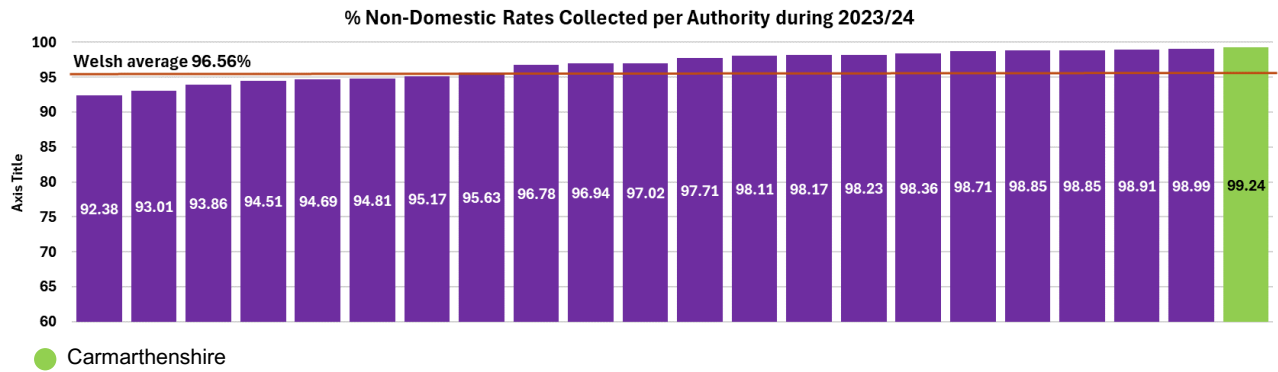
“In recent years we have delivered a huge programme of capital investments for the people of Carmarthenshire. Investments in our schools, in our transport links and infrastructure, and our cultural and leisure facilities; across the board we have delivered despite facing unprecedented challenges from the rising costs and reductions in government funding.

Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr. Alun Lenny

- 97.01% of Council Tax was collected during 2023/24, slightly declined on last year (97.33%) although we have the 5th highest collection rate in Wales and above the Welsh average of 95.97%. We take a proactive approach to recovery and have provided relevant support and advice to those falling into arrears to ensure the best possible way forward regarding repayment arrangements.



- 99.24% of non-domestic rates due for the financial year was collected by the Council, this is an improvement on 97.97% the previous year and the highest collection rate in Wales.



- 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 5.72% increase in the number of online payments from 59,995 transactions in 2022/23 to 63,427 during 2023/24.
- Whilst supporting the Council's commitment to 'consider the greater use of the additional powers afforded by Welsh Government to tackle the second home crisis', the Council has determined that it will use its discretionary powers to charge a premium on second homes and long term empty properties; a premium of 50% will be charged in 2024/25 on second homes and on long term empty properties 50% premium will be charged for properties' empty for more than 1 year and less than 2 years, 100% for 2 to 5 years and 200% for properties empty over 5 years.
- Just under 95% of invoices were paid within 30 days during 2023/24, this is off target and a decline on 2022/23, but there has been a 5% increase in the number of invoices paid compared to the previous year.

Outcome: Embedding the sustainable development principle in all that the Council does.

The principles and requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act underpins everything that we do as an organisation. This ensures that the sustainable development principle is at the heart of strategy development and implementation.

The sustainable development principle forms the basis of our approach to annual self-assessment and the requirements of the Act underpinned the approach to both the development and subsequent implementation of the Transformation Programme.

Carmarthenshire County Council Annual Audit Summary 2023
(published April 2024)



This report shows the work completed by Audit Wales since the last Annual Audit Summary (March 2023). The audit summary forms part of the Auditor General for Wales' duties.

The Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Authority's financial statements for the 2022-23 period. This means that the Auditor General found the financial statements to be accurate, complete, and in accordance with the relevant accounting standards. Overall, the Auditor General's opinion indicates that the Authority's financial statements were deemed to be reliable and trustworthy.

The audit also found that the Council has applied the sustainable development principle in the setting of its new well-being objectives. However, it also identified that the Council could strengthen its arrangements for citizen involvement and monitoring the progress of these objectives. This suggests that while the Council has taken steps to establish well-being objectives in line with the sustainable development principle, there is room for improvement in terms of engaging citizens and effectively monitoring the progress of these objectives.

Sêr Ni Nursery and Llwyhendy Children Centre welcome Care Academi Students

Sêr Ni Llwynhendy and Sêr Ni Bynea Nursery are in the first group of Social Care settings to host Care Academi Students in Carmarthenshire Local Authority. Dean Watkins was the fourth student to be welcomed at Sêr Ni settings in the first year of the delivery of Care Academi 2022/23. The Care Academi students were able to directly experience life in a Nursery setting within the vocation of the Socail Care. The teams at the Nursery settings have supported and encouraged learning and participation in all aspects of service delivery. The children at Nursery have all embraced the students and grown connections with the students through the world of play and learning. Dean Watkins' placement ended just before the Summer holidays after a successful eight weeks where he become a valid member of the team. Carmarthenshire Care Academi offers an exciting opportunity to grow a career in social care.

