

# Well-being Objective 4 – Our Council To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council



## Overarching judgement

*In March 2023, the Council formally launched its new approach to transformation via the adoption of its first Transformation Strategy. The Strategy will provide the strategic framework that will underpin the implementation of a significant programme of change and transformation across the organisation over the course of the next 5 years. The main focus of this programme will be to further accelerate the process of modernisation across the Council, and allow us to continue to deliver high quality, cost-effective services within the context of a challenging external environment.*

*Eight Workstreams have been established to progress the key priorities outlined within the Transformation Strategy and good progress is already being made in implementing these work programmes*

## Why this is important

- ⦿ In March 2020, we entered one of the most challenging periods ever faced by local government with the COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging from the crisis, there was a recognition that ‘things would never quite be the same’ and we would not be in the same organisation that we had been.
- ⦿ We therefore wanted to capture the learning from our response to the pandemic; what worked well/did not work so well, and how this could potentially change ‘what we do’ and ‘how we do it’ in the future.
- ⦿ This is now an opportunity to re-set or go back to basics in using some core principles that underpin service delivery.
- ⦿ Findings from a staff consultation in 2022 indicate that the vast majority of respondents feel proud of the way we responded as an organisation to the pandemic. Additionally, the majority feel ready to move forward and work in a post-COVID world. Mostly, staff agree that they were well led during the pandemic, however a lower proportion agreed that they feel valued for the contributions they made during this time.

## The key success measures we set ourselves for this overall objective

Statement	Overall Score 2022
I can access Council services through my preferred language	1.4
When I access Council services, I find the staff to be approachable and friendly	0.82
I can easily access up to date information about Council services	0.5
I find contacting the Council simple and easy	0.31
The Council provides good quality services overall	0.27
The Council lets people know how it is performing	-0.1
The Council provides opportunities for me to participate in decision-making	-0.19
The Council makes good use of the financial resources available to them	-0.33
Investment is focused in the correct areas	-0.41

*Source: CCC Consultation / See Appendix 6 (page 204) on Average Index Score*

Analysis below will be reflective of trend analysis of consultations over time following analysis of 2023 results.

The vast majority of respondents **agree that they can access Council services through their preferred language**, depicted by an AIS score of 1.4. This is the highest score exhibited under this theme. Qualitative comments received were mixed, with some expressing frustration regarding receiving communications or seeing social media posts in Welsh first. In contrast to this, others stated that they are not always able to communicate with the Council through the medium of Welsh. In addition, reference was made to a lack of communications in Polish and communications appropriate for deaf members of the community.

A lower proportion of people agree that they find **contacting the Council simple and easy**, indicated by a score of 0.31. As specified through comments, reported reasons for this are numerous, with notable examples including:

- Difficulty in identifying the right person to speak to,
- Long waiting times on calls,
- Staff coming across as uninterested and unhelpful,
- Staff not returning calls,
- Digital nature of some processes act as a barrier for some,
- Website pages not user friendly and are perceived to be out of date.

Positively, the majority of respondents agree that staff are approachable and friendly when accessing Council services. This is testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff who are seemingly providing residents with good customer service.

A minority expressed that they have not found staff approachable and friendly, comments to this end are mixed between a perceived lack of support and interest from staff in dealing with queries to wider issues in communicating with the Council.

Positively, the majority of respondents feel that they can easily access up to date information about Council services.

Respondents are mainly in agreement that the Council provides good quality services overall, however the relatively low positive score indicates that a reasonable proportion of respondents disagree with this statement. Reasons behind this disagreement are numerous, however the broad themes include:

- Unreliable waste collection,
- Perceived lack of town centre regeneration,
- Poor road conditions i.e. potholes,
- Lack of street cleansing,
- Poor verge/hedgerow maintenance,
- Long waits for housing repairs,
- Increased litter and fly-tipping,
- Lack of public transport,
- Perceived poor quality social care services,
- Lack of street lighting.

Several comments were made in relation to council tax and the perceived wastefulness/misdirection of financial resources. This is corroborated by the negative score indicated for ‘the Council makes good use of the financial resources available to us.’

In addition, a high proportion of respondents indicated ‘neither’ or ‘don’t know.’ This is perhaps indicative of a wider issue whereby the public’s understanding of how the Council utilises its financial resources is limited.

Responses were mixed with regards to the degree that residents feel that the Council lets them know how it is performing. The largest proportion disagree whilst a significant number of respondents indicated ‘neither’ or ‘don’t know’, which perhaps highlights those respondents are not aware of how to access this information or the information needs to be promoted wider. Comments made under this theme would suggest that this is the case. In this regard, it is worth noting earlier comments made in relation to the website and how user-friendly this is considered by some residents.

Views were mixed with regard to ‘the Council provides opportunities for residents to participate in decision-making.’ Many indicated ‘neither’ which substantiates the importance of consultations in providing residents with opportunities to share their views. A further large proportion disagree which highlights the importance of sharing with residents how their views have been taken on board following a consultation.

## Outcomes we set ourselves

Corporate Strategy Outcomes	Progress during 2022/23	Improved Yes/No?
To further modernise and develop the Council’s ways of working.	One of the key aims of the Transformation Programme is to develop smarter and more efficient ways of working, especially through the use of technology. A programme of work is already underway to automate a number of paper-based processes.	Yes
Support the development of the Council as a modern, diverse, inclusive and responsive organisation and be an ‘Employer of Choice’.	A Workforce Strategy has been developed during the year, and this will provide the strategic framework to support in delivering on a number of workforce related priorities and to become an ‘Employer of Choice’.	Yes
Listen to our staff through regular staff engagement and empower them to improve their own service areas	A Staff Survey was undertaken during 2022/23 and a summary report on findings and actions has also been communicated to staff. These findings have also been used to inform the work of an Employee Engagement Task & Finish Group who have developed a Corporate Communications Plan which outlines a range of staff communication and engagement initiatives.	Yes
Ensure local and regional partnership working is efficient and effective and adds value to the work of the Council	The Carmarthenshire Public Services Board has worked well during the year to develop its new Well-being Plan for the period 2023-28. Collaboration with regional colleagues in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire have also worked well with sharing of resources to progress certain elements. The Safer Communities, Serious Violence & Organised Crime and Contest Boards have also worked well at a Carmarthenshire and Dyfed Powys basis with collaboration with a range of partners on a range of community safety focused activity.	Yes

Corporate Strategy Outcomes	Progress during 2022/23	Improved Yes/No?
Increased public engagement through engagement, participation and consultation.	Increased numbers of respondents to Council consultations is a positive indicator of progress. There is further work to be done to improve our feedback methods post-consultation and to broaden our early engagement and participation methods. This is identified as an action for 2023-24.	Yes
A more commercial approach to the delivery of Council services with a view to increasing the level of income generated.	A dedicated workstream has been established within the Transformation Programme to identify opportunities to generate more income through adopting a more commercial approach to the delivery of Council services. Discussions are being held with services to inform the development of a Commercialisation business case and delivery plan which will be considered by Cabinet in September 2023.	Yes
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 Transformation Workplace workstream has been examining how we can rationalise our accommodation portfolio, whilst modernising and improving the workspaces in our retained core buildings. Since the pandemic, most offices have been less than a third full, with staff increasingly needing different types of space to meet, work and collaborate. In the current financial climate building rationalisation is an effective way to save money while protecting front line services. Reducing the Council's estate will also help save spends on utilities and contribute to us achieving our net zero carbon objectives. A successful rationalisation pilot has already taken place with Housing and Education & Children's Services (E&CS) staff in Llanelli. The number of staff based at Parc Dewi Sant in Carmarthen will be reduced over the next 12 months. Staff will be relocated to Spilman Street and County Hall.	Yes
Deliver organisational change that supports key Net Zero Carbon targets	A Net Zero Carbon Plan will be developed by April 2023 which will set out how the Council intends to meet its carbon reduction targets by 2030. The Transformation Programme will have a key role to play in facilitating the organisational change required to deliver the commitments within the NZC Plan.	Yes
Ensuring the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.	During 2022/23, the Council was one of the first authorities in Wales to produce its 2021/22 statement on accounts and receive an unqualified audit report. Against an extremely challenging economic backdrop of high inflation and unprecedented wage growth not seen for a generation, the council delivered a small underspend against budgets. The council met its target to pay 95% of suppliers within 30 days, but narrowly missed its treasury investment returns goal due to the nature of rising interest rates. Departmental Self Assessments have been introduced which include an evaluation of economy, efficiency and effectiveness	Yes
Embedding the sustainable development principle in all that the Council does	The requirements of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act have underpinned the approach to both the development and implementation of the Transformation Programme. Development work on the Integrated Impact Assessment during the year will be implemented during 2023-24 and will ensure the sustainable development principle is fully embedded.	Yes



### **WBO4a - Thematic Priority: Organisational Transformation**

Following the Local Government elections in 2023, it was agreed that this would be an opportune time to review the Council's approach to transformation and ensure that the programme was fully aligned with the aims and objectives of the new Corporate Strategy.

This would also look to build on the work of the Council's TIC Programme which had been the main vehicle for delivering on organisational support for transformation and change since 2012 and allow the Council to maximise the opportunities presented by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to further transform and modernise our ways of working, especially using technology.

The roll out of this new approach would be underpinned by the development and implementation of a Transformation Strategy. This is the first time that the Council that has produced a Transformation Strategy, and it is intended that this will provide the strategic framework to drive a programme of significant change and transformation across the organisation over the next 5 years.

The Transformation Strategy was reported to Cabinet in February 2023 and launched in March 2023 and now provides the strategic framework to support the delivery of eight thematic priorities:

- ⦿ Efficiencies and Value for Money
- ⦿ Income & Commercialisation
- ⦿ Workplace
- ⦿ Workforce
- ⦿ Service Design & Improvement
- ⦿ Customers & Digital Transformation
- ⦿ Decarbonisation and biodiversity
- ⦿ Schools.

Workstream Delivery Groups have now been established to support the implementation of each of the transformation priorities and these will be led by a Director/Head of Service.

A Communications Plan has been developed. Regular news articles will be used to raise awareness of the projects, share 'good practice' and provide opportunities for staff to provide feedback or contribute ideas and suggestions.

The Transformation Programme has been aligned with the Council's Future Leaders development programme and 12 Future Leaders (Council officers on the programme) are all undertaking transformation related projects as part of their development programme. However, there is an opportunity for any member of staff to participate in, or lead on, a transformation project and this has the potential to develop into a corporate talent management programme.

## **WBO4b - Efficiencies and Value for Money**

To continue to deliver financial savings through efficiencies or cost reductions and smarter ways of working.

### **Progress to date**

- ⦿ Budget sessions are being held with individual Heads of Service between February and the end of July 2023, which aim to support the identification of future efficiency savings for 2024/2025 budget setting process. A summary of outcomes from the sessions are due to be reported to Transformation Board in September 2023.
- ⦿ Work is also being undertaken at an individual service level to review opportunities to make best use of staffing resource with a view to reducing spend on agency workers and overtime.
- ⦿ The Workstream is also reviewing the Council's approach to contract management in recognition that this a more robust approach in this area could support improvements in respect of quality and value for money of the services received from external providers.

## **WBO4c - Income & Commercialisation**

To develop a more commercial approach to the delivery of Council services with a view to increasing the level of income generated.

### **Progress to date**

- ⦿ A business case to support an increased level of commercialisation within Council services is currently being developed, and this is due to be reported to Cabinet in September 2023. This report will look to identify a range of opportunities to generate additional income which will help mitigate the impact of the ongoing budget challenges that the Council is likely to face in the coming years.
- ⦿ A cost recovery approach to the setting of fees and charges is currently being rolled out on a phased basis across Council services. This will look to ensure that, where appropriate, the service is recovering the full cost of providing a service when setting their fees and charges or is able to generate a profit, if the relevant legislation permits.
- ⦿ A scheme to allow advertising on designated roundabouts throughout the County has been approved and is due to be rolled out shortly. Plans are also being developed to identify wider advertising and sponsorship opportunities across the Council which could also generate additional income.
- ⦿ An 'Invest to Save' initiative has resulted in additional staffing resources being deployed within the Council's debt recovery functions to support an increased recovery work. This will look to build on a previous TIC 'Invest to Save' project which generated recovered debt of over £1.8m between 2016-2018, and a more recent pilot initiative which recovered £800k through the adoption of an early intervention approach.

## WBO4d - Workplace

To exploit the opportunities presented by a move to hybrid working and to further rationalise the Council's accommodation portfolio and modernise and improve the working environment within the remaining core buildings.

### Progress to date

- ⦿ The Workplace workstream has been examining how we can rationalise our accommodation portfolio whilst modernising and improving the workspaces in our retained core buildings.
- ⦿ Since the pandemic, most offices have been less than a third full, with staff increasingly needing different types of space to meet, work and collaborate. In the current financial climate building rationalisation is good a way to save money while protecting front line services. Reducing the Council's estate will also help save spends on utilities and contribute to us achieving our net zero carbon objectives.
- ⦿ The number of staff based at Parc Dewi Sant in Carmarthen will be reduced over the next 12 months. Staff will be relocated to Spilman Street and County Hall, however, staff in Building 7 will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Those groups of staff affected have been made aware of the changes and the Head of Service responsible will be discussing directly on any changes which may affect them.
- ⦿ A successful rationalisation pilot has already taken place with Housing and Education & Children's Services (E&CS) staff in Llanelli. E&CS staff based in Llanelli are now working together on a single floor of Tŷ Elwyn with Housing staff from Eastgate based on another floor alongside Health staff in Tŷ Elwyn, Llanelli.
- ⦿ A service led re-design of the workspace accommodated the teams across two floors with 315 staff comfortably working from 120 desks, with better meeting facilities and flexible working spaces created. This model can now be applied across the Council but will be adjusted to reflect the way that each service works as we recognise that not all teams work in the same way.

## WBO4e – Workforce

To oversee the development of a Workforce Strategy and delivery of key workforce priorities to enable the Council to become a more modern and responsive organisation and an 'Employer of Choice'.

### Progress to date

- ⦿ A Workforce Strategy has been developed and this will provide the strategic framework to help us address our key workforce priorities over the course of the next 5 years. This will also be supported by the development of a workforce data framework to help us evaluate the impact of this work.
- ⦿ One of key workforce priorities is to strengthen our approach to the recruitment and retention of staff which is one of the key challenges facing a number of Council services. A new recruitment system is due to be implemented by September 2023 and this will provide for a quicker, more user-friendly process for both applicants and managers. A specific project is also looking at how we can adopt a more innovative and creative approach to the way that we attract and then retain our staff.
- ⦿ Our 'Future Workforce' initiative is also looking to promote a sustainable approach when responding to future workforce needs, by seeking to increase the number of apprenticeship, graduate and work experience opportunities.
- ⦿ A feasibility study is reviewing the potential to establish in-house agency as a way of reducing agency costs and providing greater resilience within the staffing resource. It is likely that this study will recommend that this approach is subject to an initial pilot in social care before being potentially rolled out across other services.
- ⦿ We had just under 100 apprentices on formal recognised apprenticeship schemes within the Council during 2022/23 this equates to 15.2 per 1,000 employees (*PAM/044*)

## WBO4f – Service Design & Improvement

To provide for a more sustainable and creative approach to the review, remodelling and improvement of Council services.

### Progress to date

- ⦿ The main priority for the workstream currently is to review the status of those previous TIC Reviews that are still on the work programme – this will aim to check whether there is sufficient evidence of improvement (i.e. use of data) and ability to sustain this improvement before any sign off from the group. The group has considered four TIC Review delivery plan updates to date: Pensions, Planning Enforcement, Property Design and Debtors. Further updates will be considered in the coming months, and each will be required to use data as evidence of the impact of any changes/improvements being made within the service.

## WBO4g – Customers & Digital Transformation

To continue to make better use of technology to deliver smarter, efficient service processes and to deliver a better experience for customers.

### Progress to date

- ⦿ The workstream is overseeing the implementation of an on-going programme of work which is seeking to rationalise and/or automate a number of paper-based processes, such as the processing of outgoing mail, timesheets, invoices and the printing of documents for signing. The use of electronic signatures and hybrid mail solutions is being rolled out across a number of services and this is already delivering a more cost-effective and productive way of working and also supports staff to work in a more hybrid way.
- ⦿ The use of robotics technology is also being deployed to automate two back-office processes within the HR services. This project which is being funded via the Council's Digital Transformation fund will be used as proof of concept in advance of the further potential use of AI/robotics within other services.
- ⦿ We continued to increase the number of Transactional Council Services available to the public online (*ICT/003*) with the following added during 2022/23:
  1. Contact Us Pages and Process Enhancements
  2. Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP) and Nappy Collection Service
  3. Pupil Development Grant
  4. Community Learning Bookings
  5. Claim What's Yours enhancements
  6. Email and SMS Alerting for Recycling and Waste Services
  7. Citizen Access Portal for Revenues Services.

This makes a total of 53 transactional services made available online to the public since 2014/15.

## WBO5h - Decarbonisation and Biodiversity

To support the Council in delivering transformational change in support of key decarbonisation objectives and targets.

### Progress to date

- ⦿ The main focus of current programme is the development of a strategic/policy framework which will then provide the basis for the development of a Strategy and Delivery plan. Workshops have been held to engage directorates in the development of a new strategy.
- ⦿ Work has also progressed on the development of a carbon costing model for the Council.
- ⦿ A series of carbon literacy sessions were held for elected members during 2022 and the team have worked with colleagues in Media & Marketing as part of an on-going Communications Programme.



## WBO5i - Schools

To assist schools in identifying cost reductions and better ways of working and support the development of more sustainable school budgets and help protect front line academic provision.

### Progress to date

- ⦿ The Schools Workstream aims to support schools in their financial decision making to create efficiencies and develop more sustainable budgets. This includes providing them with savings opportunities through access to a range of corporate procurement contracts such as printing, telephony, stationery, and waste services.
- ⦿ Undertaken reviews of operational support services leading to improved and more financially efficient service provision to schools such as the Primary School Property 'Handyvan' Service and improvements to the Schools' Cleaning Service.
- ⦿ Developed financial and curriculum benchmarking tools which aim to enable and support the sharing of good practice between schools in their financial management.

### What and how we can do better

See our delivery plan to achieve this objective in Appendix 7