

Annual Wellbeing Report

2023/24



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd /
This document is also available in Welsh



**STRONGER
FAIRER
GREENER**



Leader's Introduction

Our ambition is to make Cardiff a stronger, fairer, and greener capital city. A stronger city, with well-paid jobs, high-quality education, affordable housing and great public services. A fairer city, where the many great opportunities of living in Cardiff can be enjoyed by everyone, whatever their background, where those suffering from disadvantage are supported and where every citizen is valued and feels valued. A greener city, which leads on the response to the climate emergency, promotes biodiversity and offers convenient, accessible, safe and sustainable transport options.

This Annual Wellbeing Report provides an assessment of the Council's performance for the financial year 2023/24, the progress we have made in realising our ambitions for the city, and the challenges and risks we are facing.

The judgements made in this report have been produced following a rigorous self-assessment process involving extensive consideration of the Council's performance. It has also involved a detailed review of the systems and processes we have in place to control the Council and monitor delivery.

Overall, this report demonstrates that, despite the significant and varied challenges we have faced over the past year – not least the ongoing cost-of-living and housing crises, increasing demand across services, and complex financial pressures – we have continued to deliver positive outcomes for the residents of Cardiff.

We have delivered good education for children across the city, demonstrated by our GCSE attainment levels remaining above the Welsh average, and have achieved a significant shift in the balance of care for children and young people through the expansion of our in-house fostering service.

Over the financial year we have massively reduced rough sleeping, although challenges remain, and our house-building programme continues to progress, with over 1,100 new homes delivered despite challenging market conditions.

We have made meaningful strides in reducing the Council's carbon footprint, with direct operational carbon emissions down by 11.7% since 2019/20, and have made progress on public transport and active travel initiatives.

Furthermore, I am proud that we have once again been named a Top 100 employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index – the highest-ranked local authority in Wales – and continue to make good progress in implementing the recommendations of the Race Equality Taskforce.

Nonetheless, this report also acknowledges the significant challenges we are facing, and the areas that require improvement.

The demand for Council services continues to grow, particularly in Adult Services, Children's Services and Housing. In social care, despite effective preventative action, the complexity of cases is increasing, and the cost of services continues to rise. Similarly, schools are facing ongoing challenges in returning pupil attendance to pre-pandemic levels and responding to the increasing number of pupils with Additional Learning Needs represents a significant pressure on the school system.

Having declared a housing emergency, this remains a critical issue. With over 8,000 households currently on the Council's housing waiting list, the rising cost of renting in the private sector and a shortage of affordable housing, this is creating significant pressures across a range of council services.

And whilst our workforce remains one of our greatest assets, recruitment and retention issues in some service areas continue to represent a challenge.

Like local authorities up and down the country, financial resilience remains an area of focus if we are to continue to deliver the services which are vital to the people and communities of Cardiff. Driven by the increased complexity and scale of demand on our services, inflationary pressures and increased costs, the Council is facing significant financial pressures, with a projected budget gap of £49.7 million for 2025/26, and £147.8 million over the medium term.

In summary, this report provides a fair and balanced assessment, which allows us to recognise where progress is being made and identify areas where intervention is needed to address areas of challenge.

As ever, I am grateful for the commitment and dedication of all council staff, to fellow elected members and to the partners we work with to make Cardiff a stronger, fairer, greener city.

I look forward to working with you all over the year ahead.



Cllr Huw Thomas
Leader of Cardiff Council

Contents

2	Leader's Introduction
5	About this Report
10	Overall Assessment
14	Wellbeing Objective 1: Cardiff is a great place to grow up
22	Wellbeing Objective 2: Cardiff is a great place to grow older
28	Wellbeing Objective 3: Supporting people out of poverty
36	Wellbeing Objective 4: Safe, confident and empowered communities
44	Wellbeing Objective 5: A capital city that works for Wales
48	Wellbeing Objective 6: One Planet Cardiff
58	Wellbeing Objective 7: Modernising and integrating our public services

About this Report

■ What is the Annual Wellbeing Report?

The purpose of the Annual Wellbeing Report is to provide an end-of-year self-assessment of Council performance in delivering its Wellbeing Objectives for 2023/24. These Wellbeing Objectives, including the steps the Council will take to achieve them, and how performance will be measured, are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26:

1. **Cardiff is a great place to grow up**
2. **Cardiff is a great place to grow older**
3. **Supporting people out of poverty**
4. **Safe, confident and empowered communities**
5. **A capital city that works for Wales**
6. **One Planet Cardiff**
7. **Modernising and integrating our public services**

This Annual Wellbeing Report is the product of a comprehensive self-assessment process, as set out below, and draws on service performance, governance and risk, resources, and other sources of performance information provided for each Wellbeing Objective. Each chapter of this report provides a strategic assessment by Wellbeing Objective, along with a summary of successes, challenges, and priorities for the future. The analysis contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report (and the Mid-Year Performance Assessment) form a central component of the setting of the Council's priorities and actions for improvement for the year ahead, which are set out in the [Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27](#).

In undertaking the mid-year and end-of-year assessments, the Council fulfils its statutory duties in relation to both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and the publication of the reports ensures that Cabinet receive an update on the delivery of their policy agenda and the performance of statutory services.

■ Statutory Requirements

The Annual Wellbeing Report fulfils the Council's following statutory requirements:

- **The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** requires the Council to set and publish Wellbeing Objectives, take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives and publish a statement about Wellbeing Objectives. These duties are fulfilled through the Council's Corporate Planning process. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act also requires the Council to publish an annual report of progress, which is done through the Annual Wellbeing Report. A Core elements of the Act are the **Sustainable Development Principle** and the **Five Ways of Working**. These are: long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement. This report assesses the extent to which the Sustainable Development Principle and the Five Ways of Working have been applied in the delivery of the Council's Wellbeing Objectives.

- **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021** established a new legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance, and performance. The Act requires each council in Wales to keep under review, through self-assessment, the extent to which it is meeting its “performance requirements” and publish a report setting out the conclusions of its self-assessment once each financial year. Specifically, the Council must ***review its ability to use its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.***

This Annual Wellbeing Report, produced through the self-assessment process outlined below, sets out the Council’s conclusions as to the extent to which it has met the performance requirements (that is, exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and that its governance is effective for securing the above) during the financial year.

Meeting Our Statutory Requirements

A summary of the legislative requirements relating to planning and delivery is set out below.

Act	Planning and Performance Requirement	Compliance Arrangement
Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	Set and publish Wellbeing Objectives	Completed through the publication of the Corporate Plan
	Take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives	Completed through the publication of the Corporate Plan
	Publish a statement about Wellbeing Objectives	Completed through the publication of the Corporate Plan
	Publish an annual report of progress and review Wellbeing Objectives	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2023/24
	Publish its response to any recommendation made by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales	None received, as yet.
Local Government and Elections Act	Keep performance under review: the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively, and; its governance is effective for securing the above.	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2023/24
	Consult on performance: with local people, staff, trade unions and partners	Completed, with reference to key findings included in the Annual Wellbeing Report 2023/24
	Report on performance: produce a self-assessment report every year, containing assessment of performance (service, finance, governance) and improvement actions identified	Completed through the publication of the Annual Wellbeing Report 2023/24
	Arrange a panel performance assessment and respond to a panel performance assessment report	To be completed during the 2022-27 local government cycle

The Council considers that, through the publication of its Corporate Plan and Annual Wellbeing Report, **it has met the relevant statutory duties listed above.**

In response to the change made to the description of the national Wellbeing Goal of 'A Prosperous Wales' and as part of its end-of-year performance assessment, the Council has reviewed its Wellbeing Objectives. The Council remains content with the seven Wellbeing Objectives as they are laid out in this report.

■ How is the Annual Wellbeing Report developed?

The assessment of performance contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report is developed through a thorough process of self-assessment involving the political and managerial leadership of the Council, drawing from a wide range of sources of performance information.

Sources of Performance Information

Sources of performance information which contribute towards the performance assessment contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report include:

- **Performance against the Council's Key Performance Indicators** – The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) contains a suite of performance indicators which measure progress made in delivering the Wellbeing Objectives. Where applicable, targets are set against these performance indicators to demonstrate the desired level of achievement. Performance indicators are assigned a RAG status: **Green** where the indicator is on or above target, **Amber** where the result is within 10% of the target, and **Red** where the result is more than 10% from the target.
- **Progress against the steps in each Wellbeing Objective** – Each Wellbeing Objective within the Corporate Plan also contains a set of 'steps' or actions. Monitoring the progress of these steps provides an understanding of what has been achieved and where further work is required. The Year-End Performance against both the Corporate Plan key performance indicators and steps can be found on the Council's [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).
- **Performance against city wide outcome indicators** – A set of city-wide outcome indicators, for each Wellbeing Objective, has been agreed with the Council's Public Services Board partners. These can be accessed via the [City Dashboard](#), which also includes information about population trends and the city's demography.

- **Consultation and Engagement** – The Council has a number of established consultation and engagement mechanisms such as the Annual Ask Cardiff Citizen Survey, the Budget Consultation, the Child Friendly City Survey as well as other surveys and consultation exercises which take place over the course of the year that provide residents, businesses and other city stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on a wide range of Council services and initiatives. In addition, the Council’s [Annual Compliments and Complaints Report](#) provides valuable insight into where Cardiff’s citizens feel the Council needs to improve. The Corporate Plan contains a number of ‘qualitative’ key performance indicators that relate to citizen satisfaction with services, and the findings of the consultation and engagement work form an important part of the Council’s self-assessment process, policy development and budget setting process. The Council also produces an annual [Consultation Overview Report](#), which synthesises the findings from a range of surveys and citizen engagement exercises undertaken by the Council and its public sector partners.
- **Finance Monitoring** – The Council’s [Outturn Report 2023/24](#) serves to inform of the Council’s financial position in respect of the year ending 31 March 2024 and its findings contribute to the assessment contained within the Annual Wellbeing Report.
- **Governance** – The Council’s Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed, controlled, and the means through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. The Council’s [Annual Governance Statement](#) sets out an assessment of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and internal control.
- **Risk** – Delivering objectives requires frequent management of risks at both operational and strategic levels, particularly in the dynamic external environment in which the Council is operating. The Council’s Year-End [Risk Report](#), and its Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers, provides an overview of the current risks and the actions in place to mitigate them.
- **Scrutiny Committees and Governance & Audit Committee** – The Council responds to the issues raised and recommendations made by the Committees, which help inform policy development and performance improvement.
- **Inspection Reports** – The Council is subject to a number of inspections from regulatory bodies including Audit Wales, Estyn (Education) and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Their findings help the Council to assess areas of strong performance, as well as identifying areas that require improvement.

Self-Assessment Process

The Annual Wellbeing Report is developed through engagement with directors and a self-evaluation, assurance, and challenge process. The process features enhanced roles for both Scrutiny Committees and the Governance & Audit Committee. This process includes:

- A directorate self-evaluation of service performance, resourcing, and governance challenges and priorities, answering the following questions:
 - o What is going well?
 - o What are the key risks and challenges facing your services?
 - o What are the next steps?
- Performance and budget challenge and assurance sessions convened by the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer with each Director considering the findings of their directorate self-assessment.
- A progress and performance session with Cabinet and the Council's Senior Management Team where the Chief Executive provides a strategic assessment of organisational performance.
- Consideration of the draft Annual Wellbeing Report by:
 - o The Performance Panel, convened by the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, and involving the Chairs of each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees
 - o Governance & Audit Committee
 - o Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
 - o Cabinet, having received and responded to the recommendations of each Committee
 - o Council

All correspondence from the Performance Panel and Committees relating to this report can be viewed on the Council's [Decision Register](#).

Performance improvement and evaluation isn't something that only takes place at the end of the financial year. A mid-year self-evaluation report is considered by Cabinet, drawing on performance information at month 6 and performance is monitored quarterly through updates to the steps and performance indicators in the Corporate Plan, and the areas of risk, budget, audits, consultation, and performance are all considered holistically throughout the year to drive improvement.

Overall Assessment

The Council is making good progress across the Stronger, Fairer, Greener programme and, overall, is delivering effective and efficient services for the people of Cardiff, with some excellent practice, many good services and some that require further improvement, supported by a sound performance, governance and wider control framework.

Over the past year the Council has played an effective public service leadership role, working with partners to address a series of crises and on complex, multi-agency issues, and has continued to work with partners in the private and public sector to take forward an ambitious regeneration programme in challenging economic conditions.

It is doing so in the face of rising and increasingly complex demand, alongside cost and workforce pressures, and looking ahead will need to close a budget gap of £140m over the next four years.

To make sure that the Council is still able to deliver vital services for the people of Cardiff, we will need to work across the Council and with partners to reconsider and, in some cases, redesign the services we deliver, while ensuring that robust governance and good management is in place as the basis for delivering improvement across all services.

Areas of Progress and Improvement

The Council continues to evidence a broad pattern of year-on-year improvement across a range of council services, with clear progress being made in the delivery of Corporate Plan commitments in 2023/24:

- Pupil attainment in Cardiff remains above the Welsh average for GCSEs of grades A* to C for WJEC qualifications made available by Welsh Government.
- Cardiff has seen a demonstrable shift in the balance of care for children and young people through work to expand the Council's in-house fostering service and the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy. More children are being placed with local authority foster carers, and in in-house residential provision.
- Within the context of a national shortage of experienced social workers, the Council has managed to reduce the number of vacant permanent social work posts to just 15.8% – the lowest rate achieved in years, from a high of 38.7% in June 2020.
- The Trusted Assessor Model has been successfully rolled out, meaning occupational therapists can prescribe care for those being discharged from hospital, freeing up social worker time and reducing case backlogs.
- There has since been a sustained reduction in the number of people sleeping on the city's streets – from around 50 individuals in November 2023 to 19 in March 2024.
- Cardiff University estimate the value of the Real Living Wage to be £83m for the Cardiff economy since 2012.
- Progress has been maintained with the Council's house building programme despite difficult market conditions with 1,110 new homes delivered.

- £5.4m has been secured in external funding for investment in local communities over the last twelve months.
- In 2023/24, the Council played an active role in the creation and safeguarding of over 2,400 jobs.
- Overall, the Council's 'direct' operational carbon emissions reduced by 11.7% between 2019/20 and 2022/23 (the latest available data). Furthermore, the Council's 'indirect' procurement-related emissions reduced by 25.5% between 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- The 2023 Air Quality Progress Report, which presents monitoring data captured in 2022, shows that there were no exceedances in either the annual or short-term air quality objectives for NO₂ at any automatic and non-automatic monitoring site during the period covered by the report.
- Significant progress has also been made in delivering a transformative programme of investment in public transport and active travel – Phase 1 of Cardiff CrossRail has been successfully tendered, funding obtained for bus priority measures, and funding made available to progress Stage 2 of the Outline Business Case for road user charging options.
- The Council has maintained its place as a Top 100 employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index survey, the highest placed Welsh Local Authority overall.
- Good progress has been made in delivering the recommendations of the Race Equality Taskforce with a progress report shared with the Taskforce in July 2024.

Corporate Improvement Priorities

The Annual Wellbeing Report 2023/24 highlights a range of strategic performance challenges, which need to remain the subject of corporate focus over the year ahead.

Managing sustained increase in the complexity and scale of demand across council services: Council services continue to face increasing and increasingly complex demand pressures which require a sustained cross-Council and multi-agency response, including:

- Services for children and young people are experiencing pressures and challenges as a result of the continued impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and of the long-term impacts of austerity and of poverty. In Education, a number of inter-connected issues, including concerning patterns of attendance and exclusions, delayed pupil development and early years, rising concerns relating to emotional health and wellbeing, and rising demand for pupils with Additional Learning Needs, will require concerted action from the Council, partners and school leaders over the year ahead. In Children's Services, despite effective preventative action, the number of children entering care and the cost of support services and accommodation is continuing to rise. In response, the Council will continue to prioritise the delivery of the strategy to shift the balance of care, including the delivery of its Accommodation Strategy for children.
- The adult social care sector continues to face ongoing pressures through rising demand and increasingly complex service requirements, including for older people and for cohorts of vulnerable adults such as those with learning disabilities. Over the year ahead, the Council will continue to work in partnership with health and community partners focussed to help as many people as possible to live independently at home.

- The number of people who are becoming homeless and the demand for emergency and temporary accommodation has continued to increase, with high waiting lists across all homeless gateways. Over 8,000 households are now on the Council's housing waiting list and the rental rate in the private rented sector is at unprecedented levels. The shortage of housing of all tenures is creating pressure and contributing to financial pressure across many council services (including Adult and Children's Services, above). The need to rapidly extend access to housing, through building and securing additional affordable housing and housing tailored to support independent living, remains a corporate priority.

Ensuring continued service and financial resilience: The Council faces significant immediate and medium-term budgetary challenges. The Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Update Report, which was considered by Cabinet and Council on 18 July 2024, sets out a revised indicative revenue budget gap of £49.726 million for 2025/26 and a £147.784 million budget gap across the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) from 2025/26 to 2028/29. These pressures are due to a combination of increased complexity and scale of demand on services (see above), inflationary pressures driven by employee-related costs, the costs of goods and commodities purchased by the Council (such as energy, food and fuel) and the cost of construction, materials and commissioned services.

Workforce pressures: The Council continues to face a range of workforce challenges, including recruitment challenges and high levels of sickness in specific service areas. Recruitment and retention issues remain apparent across several services, which is impacting the delivery of certain projects and commitments. This is particularly the case in Adults and Children's Services, where interventions to develop tailored approaches to recruitment and retention are having a positive impact. In response to sickness absence rates being above target for the Council, targeted support continues to be provided for areas with high absence rates, particularly in respect to managing long-term sickness absence, alongside enhanced interventions to the health and wellbeing support for staff. Over the year ahead the Council will continue to focus on the delivery of the Workforce Strategy 2023-27, prioritising proactive workforce planning, the further development of a supportive work environment, a continued emphasis on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and an enhanced programme of staff engagement.

Responding to new risks and issues: In addition to the sustained rise in demand on services, the Council has, alongside its partners, responded to several un-anticipated yet substantial risks and issues during the year. In 2023/24, these have included managing the immediate impacts of the housing emergency, responding to and developing a community response to the civil unrest in Ely, and managing the impact of accelerated asylum dispersal. In each case, the Council convened an effective response, often involving cross service-area working and collaboration with public service partners, the private sector and the third sector. Looking ahead, the Council must continue to anticipate and respond, at speed and in partnership, to new risks and issues as they emerge.

In response to the demand and budgetary pressures facing the Council for the year ahead and over the medium term, a comprehensive programme of service and budget reviews has been initiated by the Council's Cabinet with a focus on identifying opportunities to drive efficiencies over the short term and to identify how services need to change and adapt to be sustainable over the medium term.



Wellbeing Objective 1: Cardiff is a great place to grow up

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Becoming a Child Friendly City
- Supporting education recovery post-pandemic
- Continuing to deliver the Cardiff 2030 vision for education and learning
- Shifting the balance of care: place
- Shifting the balance of care: people
- Shifting the balance of care: practice
- Protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and families

■ Overall Assessment

The Council considers good progress has been made in delivering its commitments to make Cardiff a great place to grow up in a context where children and young people, and the services upon which they rely, are experiencing new and significant challenges because of the continued impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and of the long-term impacts of austerity and of poverty.

The Council continues to demonstrate a sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education in Cardiff, with pupil attainment remaining above or well above the Welsh average, school inspection outcomes are good, especially in the primary sector, and a partnership approach is in place to support pupils and schools access the wider opportunities Cardiff can offer. The Council is also working in close partnership with schools, communities, public service partners and with children and young people to develop responses to a range of complex and interconnected challenges, including high levels of attendance and exclusions, delayed pupil development and early years, rising concerns relating to emotional health and wellbeing, and rising demand for pupils with Additional Learning Needs.

In Children's Services, Cardiff has seen a demonstrable shift in the balance of care for children and young people through work across all aspects of service, including the expansion of its in-house fostering service, improved support for social workers and the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy. More children are being placed with local authority foster carers and in-house residential provision will lead to improved outcomes for children and reduced costs for the Council. Despite effective preventative action, the pressures on Children's Services continue to increase, notably the complexity of the support many children require and the cost of this support and accommodation. This will therefore continue to be a corporate priority for 2025/26.

Areas of Progress

- Cardiff become the first British city to receive Child Friendly City status from UNICEF.
- Pupil attainment in Cardiff remains above the Welsh average for GCSEs of grades A* to C for WJEC qualifications made available by Welsh Government.
- The implementation of the Accommodation Strategy has allowed the Council to care for more children looked after using in-house provision rather than through the use of external providers.
- The Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) acknowledged the high and complex demand challenges being faced by Children's Services, Education, the Health Board, and the Police, and commended the Council's focus on safeguarding and partnership working. The report also noted that the safeguarding of pupils is a high priority in Cardiff's schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), commenting that they are safe places for pupils to learn; schools and the PRU know pupils and their families well and are able to respond to, and meet, their needs.
- Within the context of a national shortage of experienced social workers, the Council has managed to reduce the number of vacant permanent social work posts in Children's Services to just 15.8% – the lowest rate achieved in years, from a high of 38.7% in June 2020.

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- Schools continue to feel the lingering impact of the pandemic, which has affected attendance and exclusion patterns, as well as the number of pupils who are Electively Home Educated.
- Though 121 new specialist school places for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) have been created during the year, and a further 120 places are planned to be delivered by September 2024, this additional capacity has not kept up with demand, resulting in more learners being placed in more costly provision in order to meet their needs. The shortfall in specialist provision is placing significant demand and budgetary pressure on the city's schools and other services.
- Schools face significant immediate and long-term budgetary challenges, driven by demographic changes in the city and record levels of inflation. There has been a significant increase in the number of schools in deficit which is now 46 schools. To respond to the significant savings the Directorate and schools will need to make, service reviews are being commissioned including Schools Catering Services and ALN Transport.
- Even though £39.5m was spent in 2023/24 on school maintenance, up from £25m in 2022/23, a significant risk of building failure remains in some schools due to the poor condition of a number of schools, which are at risk of not meeting health and safety standards, and the limited financial resources available to address the issues.
- Securing ongoing school improvement in the context of budgetary challenges, increased demand from the impact of the pandemic, and delivery of National Reforms in Curriculum and Additional Learning Needs.
- Despite the Accommodation Strategy resulting in reducing spend on external placements Children's Services still faces acute budgetary pressures, driven by high-demand and increased case complexity, resulting in more high-cost children's placements.
- National policy decisions are causing additional strain to be placed on Children's Services including ensuring compliance with Welsh Government's commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after and the impact of the National Autism Strategy is also placing additional demand on already stretched services.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End

Key Performance Indicators



Steps



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Child Friendly City

Cardiff became the first British city to be awarded Child Friendly City status by UNICEF with the final stage of assessment beginning in April 2023, formal recognition being received in September, followed by formal agreement in October. A sustainability plan has been agreed with UNICEF outlining a programme of work for the coming three years. To support Cardiff's ambition to become a Child Friendly City, the Rights Respecting Schools approach has continued to be rolled out, with more schools becoming accredited throughout the year, and Council staff have been required to complete Child Rights training.

Over three quarters of Cardiff's schools (76.6%) are now designated as UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools. Of these 98 schools, 51 (54.1%) have been awarded Silver or Gold status, which is just short of the Council's target (55%) for Silver and Gold schools. At the end of 2023/24, 72% of Council staff have completed the Child Rights training against a target of 85% and to improve compliance further in the coming year the completion of mandatory training has been linked to individual staff performance via their annual personal review. The Council has been unable to measure two performance indicators in 2023/24 relating to the experiences of children and young people in schools, and whether or not they are aware of their rights, as the survey which collects these results did not take place. However, these measures will be drawn from the School Health Research Network (SHRN) questionnaire from 2024/25 onwards.

Education Recovery and the Cardiff 2030 Vision

The Council continues to demonstrate a sustained improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education in Cardiff. Attainment outcomes for pupils were above or well above the Welsh average for GCSE and A-Level results in the Summer of 2023 for A* to A and A* to C results in WJEC qualifications. School inspection outcomes are good, especially in the primary sector. Of the 26 schools inspected in 2023/24, with 22 reports published, one school has gone into Estyn Review and one into Significant Improvement. Eight have been asked to publish Interesting or Innovative Practice Case Studies for dissemination on Estyn's website. Three primary schools are in Estyn follow-up from the previous year 2022/23 (two in Estyn Review, one of which is a Federated school) and one in Special Measures.

The Council has progressed with its delivery of the Cardiff 2030 Vision, though the refresh and relaunch of this strategy has been delayed to address more immediate challenges including budgetary pressures, delivering school places, and increasing ALN capacity. The longer-term vision will be completed in 2024/25. Work continues on the delivery of the School Organisation Programme, including the approval of the Education Investment Strategy 2024-2033. The Council has also delivered the first dual-language school at Groes-wen and agreed to double the number of Welsh-medium places from 192 to 420 to serve Cathays, Gabalfa, and the neighbouring wards. In addition to investments delivered through Sustainable Communities for Learning, and other grants, in 2023/24, the Council spent £39.5m on carrying out maintenance, repair, and improvement work on Cardiff schools. Despite this, there are significant risks associated with the condition of the school estate.

While the Council has provided significant investment into ICT infrastructure in schools, the ICT School Investment Programme is currently under review due to an in-year overspend. Value-for-money and alignment with the delivery of the new curriculum are key considerations in this review, which is being considered with headteachers.

The Cardiff Commitment continues to be delivered effectively, with several workshops, events, training sessions, and work experience opportunities delivered for children and young people across Cardiff. The programme of work has also included a number of activities specifically supporting more vulnerable children, including those looked after or those with a disability. The Cardiff Curriculum Team has strengthened its offer to support schools bring the curriculum to life. The number of children and young people engaging with Passport to the City programme is 1500, 50 of whom were Children Looked After. Enhanced learning opportunities have been offered linked to expressive arts and creative industries, One Planet Cardiff, STEM, the Annual Schools Lego League, which saw participation from 30 schools, the Arts Award with UCAN Productions for visually impaired learners, and the Liquid Trees Project aimed at combatting climate change.

The Youth Service has continued to support learners in their achievement and wellbeing. This includes post-16 engagement and youth mentoring provision to respond to the needs of young people not in education, employment, or training. The restructure of the Youth Service is expected to conclude in December 2024. The model aims to achieve a sustainable, impactful, high-quality youth work offer in the city, with strong locality teams at the core, to respond to the unique needs of the individual communities they serve. These locality teams would be sited in the areas of highest deprivation, building on the existing Cardiff Youth Service offer and would work closely with wider services for young people in their areas. Schools continue to experience pressures and challenges driven by the continued impact of Covid-19 and changes to the city's demographic profile. These include:

- **School Attendance:** Although improving, attendance levels remain an area of concern, having yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. In primary schools, attendance in 2022/23 was 91.7%, compared with 88.87% in 2021/22 and around 95% prior to the pandemic. In secondary schools, attendance was 88.20% in 2022/23, compared with 86.03% in 2022/21 and around 94% prior to the pandemic. The percentage of persistent absence (below a 50% threshold) in secondary schools is also not meeting its target. In response, the engagement programme with pupils, parents, and schools has been accelerated and is positively impacting the position, with the figures for academic year 2023/24 showing provisional improvement, comparing favourably to national averages. Moving forward, it is possible that pupils' attendance will be significantly impacted without the continuing support from Welsh Government on attendance grants and the additional support provided within schools.
- **Fixed-term exclusions:** Exclusions in both primary and secondary schools have risen in the 2022/23 academic year. These rates remain higher in secondary schools than in primary schools, with secondary schools reporting an increase of around 35% in 2022/23. The Education directorate continues to work closely with schools to support those with high rates of exclusions and to support schools with pupil behaviour. There has also been a rise in the number of pupils on Pastoral Support Plans (437 pupils in 2023/24 compared to 400 pupils in 2022/23), some of which will include a reduced timetable. This process will be reviewed in 2023/24 to develop a new pilot to be rolled out at five schools, including consistent standards on recording, with training and guidance to be put in place.
- **Additional Learning Needs:** The Council has made good progress in meeting the requirements of the new ALN reforms, with all specified year groups transferred to the ALN system in accordance with Welsh Government timescales, and all statemented learners due to transition by the end of July 2024. There are almost 4,000 learners in Cardiff with identified additional learning needs, of which around 1,700 require a specialist education setting. Throughout the year, 121 new ALN places were created against a target of

141. An additional 20 places are planned for Eastern High, and 16 places at Herbert Thompson Primary, although these have been delayed due to the specifications still being agreed. In July 2023, Cabinet approved plans to progress with projects to increase the total number of ALN places, covering a range of ages and complex needs, to 1,755. Though the supply of places is close to the annual target, the creation of new places is not keeping up with rising demand; this, in turn, is impacting the number of learners being placed in more costly provision or being out of school and not accessing appropriate education provision. The number of learners in independent (non-Cardiff Local Authority) placements provision has increased from 131 at the end of 2022/23 to 216 at the end of 2023/24, leading to increased budgetary pressure. As the number of pupils in specialist ALN provision increases, this increases the cost of home-to-school transport, particularly in cases where the provision is delivered outside of Cardiff.

- **Pupil Development and Early Years:** There has been an increase in the number of children displaying developmental delays on admission to school. Cardiff's schools have seen a significant increase in the number of reception-aged pupils assessed to have severe receptive language difficulties at a higher rate (15%) than the UK average (12%), and above the pre-pandemic rate (11%).
- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing:** The increase in the number of children with emotional health and wellbeing needs remains an ongoing challenge. There are currently 1,139 learners with an Individual Development Plan for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties who receive Additional Learning Provision in their school. A range of support services are available to support schools to enable them to develop their early intervention and Additional Learning Provision offer, including CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), Mental Health In-Reach, Educational Psychology, and the Specialist Teaching Teams. The Emotional Health and Wellbeing team provided support and advice in relation to 1,418 mainstream learners in 2023/24. The Council continues to offer a range of early interventions along with additional learning provision in schools, including:
 - o The implementation of the Welsh Government 'Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being (WSAEMW)'; 80% of all maintained schools are on track to have an action plan in place by March 2025.
 - o The 'Thrive' approach, which offers a trauma-informed, whole-school/setting approach to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people; 64 (53%) primary schools and 13 (59%) secondary schools are now using this approach.
 - o The use of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) in schools. ELSAs are teaching assistants in schools trained by Educational Psychologists to develop and deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional wellbeing needs of children and young people. There are currently 86 schools using ELSA as an intervention.
 - o Many schools have small class arrangements based on nurturing principles, for learners to access for planned support and intervention on a regular basis.
- **Electively Home Educated:** There has been a significant increase in the number of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) following the pandemic. The cohort in Cardiff has more than doubled in size between 2019 (219 children) and 2024 (543 children), though similar increases have been seen across Wales. Many cases are cited to be due to anxiety. The Council has a statutory responsibility to, at minimum, contact families who are home educating once a year. This is to ensure that suitable and efficient education is being provided relevant to the child's needs and abilities, and that the child is

demonstrating progress. Information is shared with families regarding accessing support for wellbeing and where possible children are encouraged to return to education provided by the local authority.

- **Post-School Outcomes:** Attainment and post-school outcomes are a concern for the EOTAS (educated-other-than-at-school) cohort, as the percentage of those successfully transitioning to further education, employment, or training is at only 82%, against a target of 92%; the lowest result for the last five years. While performing better, the proportion of looked after children making a successful transition is still below target at 89%. This is compared to the total cohort of school leavers, of which 97.7% achieve a successful transition, though this too falls short of the target of 98.5%.

Schools are facing significant budgetary challenges, driven by record levels of inflation which has devalued spending power despite the Council providing funding to schools above the Welsh Government settlement level. The budget challenge is also being driven by increasingly complex demand, and an increase in vacant places across the city's school system. At the end of 2023/24, the Education directorate had an overspend of £1.257m. The main pressures include ALN placements, School Transport, the Ed Tech service, and income shortfalls for the Outdoor Pursuits Centre.

Over the medium term, the fall in birth rates projected across the city is expected to result in an increase in the number of vacant places across schools in Cardiff. These demographic trends will bring additional financial pressures to several schools in the short term, and over the medium term it is projected to impact the financial sustainability of the wider school system.

Shifting the balance of care and protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people, and families

Throughout 2023/24 the Council has continued to deliver its Striving for Excellence in Children's Services Strategy, resulting in a demonstrable positive shift in the balance of care for children and young people. Initiatives include preparing for the implementation of the Right Place Model and a renewed programme of promotion encouraging individuals to become foster carers for Foster Wales Cardiff. By year-end, there has been a reduction in the proportion of children looked after outside their families' placements, which are typically more costly and further afield than other placement types, and an increase in the number of children fostered by local authority foster carers, as well as an increase in the number of children safely returned home.

A Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) was carried out by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (Estyn)¹. The inspection highlighted the persistent high demand and complexity of cases faced by Children's Services and commended the positive focus on safeguarding in the face of budget and workforce challenges. The report also found partnership arrangements across the Council and other partners to be effective, and that the Council demonstrated a positive focus on safeguarding, both within frontline services and among the Council's management and leadership. Areas of improvement that were identified have been built into an action plan that will be monitored by the Regional Safeguarding Board and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Board going forward.

^[1] Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) acknowledge strengths in Cardiff ([cardiffnewsroom.co.uk](https://www.cardiffnewsroom.co.uk)).

The Council has made good progress in addressing the rising demand and increasing costs for placements for children looked after through the delivery of its Accommodation Strategy. The Strategy aims to increase in-house residential provision for children looked after by securing additional properties within Cardiff, reducing the Council's reliance on external providers. In addition, operational process improvements have been delivered within the Council's Fostering Team to promote in-house fostering. In Quarter 4, 134 children were placed with in-house foster carers, exceeding the target of 130.

Increasing the Council's in-house capacity for provision for children looked after is critical in responding to the challenging budget position faced by Children's Services. At the end of 2023/24, Children's Services had an overspend of £5.212m. Sustained demand and price pressure on costly residential placements for children looked after by the Council, despite a successful step down of provision, has resulted in overspends against a range of placement settings.

Finding suitable accommodation for children and young people, particularly for those with complex needs, has been challenging, as both the number of active placements, and their average cost, has increased throughout the year. The percentage of children looked after in regulated placements in Cardiff is 58% against a target of 60%, and the percentage of children looked after in regulated placements either in Cardiff or a neighbouring local authority is 76% against a target of 80%.

While the social care sector continues to face a workforce crisis, workforce planning within Children's Services has helped to reduce vacancy rates in social worker posts, both improving the resilience of the Council's workforce and reducing reliance on agency staff, which is more costly. At Quarter 4, only 15.8% of permanent social worker posts were vacant, against a target of 24% and down from around 39% in June 2020.

In addition to local demand pressures, national policy decisions are causing additional pressures on the Children's Services system. The Council is implementing its [Accommodation Strategy](#) to ensure that it is able to meet the needs of children and young people in Cardiff, whilst ensuring compliance with Welsh Government's commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after. Phase 2 of the strategy is based around working with not-for-profit providers to deliver new homes in Cardiff for children looked after. A robust residential practice and workforce strategy is being developed in partnership with staff, Trade Unions, and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to ensure staffing arrangements are in place as required. The widening of the National Autism Strategy to include all neurodiversity is leading to additional demand on already stretched services. Furthermore, with demand rising and budgets constrained across public services, partners are reducing their services, leaving Children's Services increasingly as the service of last resort.

The implementation of the refreshed Youth Justice Strategy, 'Building Safer Futures Together', has continued, with both first-time entrants and re-offending rates well below targets and remaining low throughout the year. Whilst there has been a reduction in entrants to the Youth Justice System, from 49 in 2020/21 to just 30 in 2023/24, there is concern that the impact of diverting children from youth justice has placed significant pressure on other services for young people within Cardiff.

Wellbeing Objective 2: Cardiff is a great place to grow older

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an Age-Friendly City
- Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services
- Working in partnership to deliver high-quality sustainable care and support
- Supporting unpaid carers and valuing their role
- Ensuring our services meet the needs of the those living with dementia

■ Overall Assessment

The Council considers that it has made good progress against its commitments to make Cardiff a great place to grow older with demonstrable progress in delivering a whole system approach to prevention and reablement and supporting people to live independently in their communities. This progress is underpinned by a cross-Council approach, notably with housing development, and strong partnership arrangements with the care sector, voluntary and community partners and the University Health Board. This has resulted in service change across the health and care system, including the Integrated Discharge Hub. Over the medium term, demand and cost pressures in this area are significant and projected to rise and will therefore need continued strategic focus from the Council and its partners.

Areas of Progress

- The Council has gained recognition as an Age-Friendly Employer from the Centre for Ageing Better.
- The Trusted Assessor Model has been successfully rolled out, meaning occupational therapists can prescribe care for those being discharged from hospital, freeing up social worker time and reducing case backlogs.
- Overall, 7,209 wellbeing assessments were completed in 2023/24, compared to 5,797 in 2022/23: an increase of 24% due, in part, to the Trusted Assessor Approach.
- The Integrated Discharge Hub has been implemented, improving pathways for hospital discharge, freeing up beds for those who need them most. On average, 50 discharges with care were achieved each week during 2023/24.
- The Hubs for All approach has been piloted, allowing people with care and support needs to access social activities within their communities.

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- The Council has faced delays in delivering disabled adaptations, with the average time being 198 days against a target of 150 days. This is due to high demand and contractor capacity.
- Adult Services face ongoing challenges regarding social worker recruitment and retention. A Workforce Strategy was developed and published in 2023/24, and its implementation will continue into 2024/25, however the Council has not yet met its target of 12% of permanent social worker posts being filled within the service; the result at the end of 2023/24 was 17.7%.
- Adults Services have seen significant budget growth over the last few years due to demand and cost pressures. The Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, and Substance Misuse budget has increased by 37% over the last four years, and the Independent Living and Community Social Care budget has increased by 44% over the last four years. The increase in costs include the implementation of the real living wage for carers.
- As Cardiff's population ages, over the decade ahead these demand pressures are projected to continue to increase. By 2034:
 - o The number of people (aged 65+) living with dementia is projected to increase by 31% (from 4,156 – 6,103) and by 37% for severe dementia (from 2,598 to 4,112).
 - o The number of people (aged 65+) who will struggle with daily activities is projected to increase by 17%.
- In response, the Council and partners have set out a whole system approach, focussed on prevention and reablement, supporting people to live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Supporting older people to stay active and connected in an age-friendly city

The Annual Age-Friendly Cardiff Report for 2022/23 was published in Quarter 4 and was submitted to, and acknowledged by, the World Health Organisation. This report sets out the Council's eight age-friendly commitments and outlines the progress made against them to date. Some key achievements include the creation of the Age Friendly Cardiff website, gaining recognition for the Council as an Age-Friendly Employer from the Centre for Ageing Better, and working with higher education institutions to assist in various age-related research projects. Areas of notable progress include supporting older people into work with the appointment of employment mentors and the delivery of training in subjects like digital skills, customer service, and first aid.

The Council continues to provide opportunities for older people to stay active and stay connected through a local Hub model, with the 'Hubs for All' pilot successfully rolled out in four hubs across the city. In addition, community volunteers across Cardiff have been engaged with via a survey, by the newly established volunteering service, to help inform the Council of how they can best be supported going forward.

Supporting older people to live independently at home through strengths-based preventative services

Throughout 2023/24, the Council has been rolling out the Trusted Assessor model, upskilling Occupational Therapists (OTs) to enable them to prescribe care for those being discharged from hospital, supporting those individuals to regain their independence. As of October 2023, the Council's OTs became Trusted Assessors for all low-level care and support needs. This prevents duplication and helps free up social work capacity to focus on the most complex cases. These trusted assessors have helped to reduce the backlog of social work cases by around 80% in the first six months of operation.

As OTs bring a wealth of knowledge on equipment that can support independence, the trusted assessor change has also saved an estimated £79k on care hours which were not needed following OT intervention.

An evaluation of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) has been completed which will help to inform the best uses of such technology in the future, such as automated lighting to prevent slips and falls and GPS watches to alert carers to any issues.

The Council continues to deliver older persons housing to support independent living. 2023/24 saw the opening of Addison House Community Living Scheme which has delivered 44 high-quality, sustainable, low-carbon apartments for older residents, promoting independent living. This is the first Community Living scheme of ten that are being delivered through the new build programme. Planning for the remaining schemes has progressed well during the year despite some delays due to technical and financial challenges. The programme includes Community Living Projects on Bute Street and Leckwith Road, the former St. Mellons Community Centre and the Maelfa and the development of a wellbeing village at the former Michaelston College site in Ely.

As well as ensuring that residents can retain their independence in a safe and secure environment, the opening of Addison House has allowed older people to downsize from their existing Council or housing association homes. This in turn has freed up their larger accommodation for families on the Housing Waiting List.

Despite good performance results against a number of measures in this area, including over 98% of clients reporting that they felt they could live independently after support from the Independent Living service for example, the number of days taken to deliver disabled adaptations has not met its targets. At year end, the average time taken in calendar days was 198 against a target of 150. Delays have been due to both an increase in demand and capacity limitations of contractors delivering the adaptation works. A new procurement framework is being developed, expected to go live from Quarter 2 2024/25, which is intended to improve this position. Though this year's result is high, it is still just below the Welsh average of 207 days.

Working in partnership to deliver high-quality sustainable care and support

The Council continues to work closely with its public sector partners, particularly the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB), to ensure care and support processes result in a smooth, safe, and timely transition from hospital in order to free up hospital beds. Improvements to hospital discharge processes have been realised through the development of the Integrated Discharge Hub (IDH) and newly implemented hospital discharge pathways. Through working in collaboration with the UHB, these arrangements have resulted in an average of 50 people per week being discharged from hospital with care arrangements in place. A full evaluation of the IDH and the Discharge to Recover and Assess (D2RA) pathways was undertaken during Quarter 4 2023/24; this is expected to be completed in Quarter 1 2024/25 following engagement with staff and other stakeholders in April 2024.

To ensure that the Council considers the views of its citizens in the provision of their care, a Service User Engagement Action Plan has been developed, with service user questionnaires issued and telephone surveys conducted throughout the year to inform the plan. The methods of engagement used, for example the telephone surveys, were informed by user feedback, with some users expressing the desire to speak directly to an officer who was outside of the service they were receiving about their experience. Feedback from these exercises is now regularly fed back to senior management in Adult Services, and core themes and actions arising are being recorded to inform future interventions.

Sufficient supply of domiciliary and residential care provision was maintained throughout the year, although some concerns remain about the high reliance on overseas workers. Through 2023/24, the Council has provided support to the care sector by monitoring and encouraging care providers to pay the Real Living Wage, improving processes for the Cardiff Cares Academy, and training home care managers to be trusted assessors, enabling them to prescribe care directly, helping to reduce referrals to social workers. This approach is already showing evidence of a reduction in demand on those requiring long-term care.

The Council has also been working to improve the resilience of its own social care workforce through the Adult Services Workforce Strategy. In 2023/24, progress includes the establishment of a dedicated recruitment team for the service, a refresh of the Social Work Cardiff Website, and the creation of a short promotional film about social care in the city. Student and trainee placements, the promotion of posts via social media, and workforce surveys have also been undertaken as part of the strategy to help attract and retain social workers in Cardiff. The feedback received from staff has informed the development of a full programme plan of change, strengthening the support provided to staff to carry out their roles. This has allowed the development of a more agile approach to the completion of authorisation agreements and embedded staff voice in shaping working practices. While still not meeting its target of 12%, the Council has seen a quarter-on-quarter reduction in the percentage of social work vacancies in Adult Services throughout the year, reaching 17.7% by Quarter 4.

Adult social care continues to experience significant financial pressures linked to the level and complexity of demand, and the cost of commissioning care. Inflationary pressure has been acute over recent years; 40-year inflation highs in the UK generally, together with Welsh Government's Real Living Wage commitment for registered carers, have had a significant impact on annual price uplifts across the sector. In recognition of these issues, Adult Services budgets have been increased by over £45 million (around 40%) since 2020/21, with further significant pressures forecast in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. The Local Authority faces significant challenge in continuing to manage pressures of this scale.

Supporting unpaid carers and valuing their role

The Council continues to ensure it listens to unpaid carers and their families. In partnership with Carers Trust Wales, funded by Welsh Government, support groups and short break schemes have been offered to carers across Cardiff.

The Hubs for All approach has been successfully piloted in the year, allowing people with care and support needs to access sessions within their community. In addition, the Carers Team has been aligned with the First Point of Contact, ensuring advice for carers is available at the earliest stages of the assessment process. The Care'diff branding has been used to promote help and support for Carers. While there has been a delay, the launch of the Care'diff distribution platform is now due to take place in Quarter 1 2024/25.

Ensuring our services meet the needs of those living with dementia

The Council aims to support people living with dementia to live safely at home wherever possible. In 2023/24, the Council, with the support of the Institute of Public Care, established a Community of Practice, a forum for disseminating good practice in dementia care. This allows teams who are involved in dementia care to share good practice and gives all a chance to learn and share skills and techniques. Council staff, along with partners, have attended this, which proved a valuable learning and networking experience. A Dementia Learning Network was also established for care homes in February 2024. This network supports care providers to deliver service improvements by learning from peers, other external contacts, and up-to-date research.

To support those living with dementia to remain at home, an extensive programme of training has been rolled out, targeted at both Council staff and external colleagues in the care sector. Feedback on this training has been largely positive, and the programme is being re-shaped and improved over the coming year. The feedback will help to inform the commissioning of further training in 2024/25, in both online and face-to-face formats.

The Dementia Friendly website was visited 7,835 times during the year and 22 new ambassadors were recruited to support local businesses to become Dementia Friendly. 261 organisations pledged to become Dementia Friendly during the year.

Though results have shown improvement throughout the year, at Quarter 4, the Council has yet to hit its target for the percentage of Council staff completing the Dementia Friends training. The year-end result for 2023/24 was 67% against a target of 85%.

Wellbeing Objective 3: Supporting people out of poverty

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Supporting those most impacted by the economic crisis
- Continuing our Living Wage City ambition
- Tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping

■ Overall Assessment

The Council has continued to deliver a range of effective services to support people out of poverty, including those services contained in this Wellbeing Objective and across all the Council's Stronger, Fairer, Greener programme. The Council's Into Work and Advice Services continue to provide impactful support to citizens, evidenced by the scale and effectiveness of engagement, particularly for more vulnerable citizens and communities, while the Living Wage City initiative is continuing to deliver real benefit to workers across Cardiff.

Despite the Council's programme of support, the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on the lives of many people and is, in turn, leading to service pressures on the Council and partner organisations. In particular, the rising costs experienced by households, coupled with a shortage of affordable housing across all tenures in the city, is causing exceptional pressures on the homelessness service and across a range of other Council and partner services. In response the Council has declared a Housing Emergency, with a range of immediate actions implemented to manage demand alongside a programme of work, with partners, to rapidly extend access to housing, focused on building and securing additional affordable housing.

Areas of Progress

- A wide-reaching publicity campaign was run in 2023/24 highlighting the support on offer to those affected by the cost-of-living crisis. The Money Advice Team identified additional weekly benefit of over £20m for its clients during 2023/24.
- The Personal Assistant (PA) service for Children Looked After was fully aligned with the Advice Services. This ensures that every young person with a PA has access to Bright Start Work placements, funding for training, employment help and wellbeing support.
- The Into Work Advice Service provided over 105,000 instances of into work support to residents through the Employment Gateway during 2023/24, an increase of 32% from the previous year.
- Cardiff University estimate the value of the Real Living Wage to be £83m for the Cardiff economy since 2012.
- Even though a Housing Emergency was declared in December 2023, the rates of homelessness prevention have remained stable, and there has since been a sustained reduction in the number of people sleeping on the city's streets, from around 50 individuals in November 2023 to 19 in March 2024.

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- Funding for much of the work carried out by the Into Work Advice Service and Money Advice Team is grant-funded and short-term. This creates uncertainty and challenges to provide a continuity of service should this funding be removed or reduced.
- Financial constraints have meant that the Council was not able to create as many new trainee and apprentice roles as planned.
- The challenging economic crisis may lead to a reduction in Real Living Wage accredited businesses as companies choose not to renew or cease trading.
- In December 2023, the Council declared a housing emergency in response to the exceptional pressures and unabating demand for homelessness services. These demands on services are not reducing, resulting in the ongoing use of hotels and other emergency accommodation. This is both expensive and not suitable for extended periods.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End

Key Performance Indicators



Steps



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Responding to the economic crisis

In response to the economic crisis, the Council's support offer continues to be delivered effectively. Between April 2023 and March 2024 just over 6,600 people were helped with Universal Credit financial support; this figure is more than double the number of people anticipated to need help during the year and a 10% increase on 2022/23. Over the same twelve months the Money Advice Team identified additional weekly benefit of over £20m for its clients.

The combined Money Advice and Welfare Liaison Team have provided more drop-in and information sessions throughout the city alongside the specialist Disability Benefit Team. These sessions have been successful in obtaining new referrals in locations that the service does not regularly attend. This has also shaped the future development plans of the service to try and capture more customers in harder-to-engage locations. The impact of inflation and rising costs on households means that, despite the Council's programme of support, the crisis is having an impact on the lives of many people which in turn is leading to service pressures across the Council. Rising housing costs, for instance, have led to an increase in social service referrals for vulnerable people and greater demand for Council support services. Evidence indicates that people who are finding themselves in poverty are at greater risk of being exploited by loan sharks – a total of 25 victims have been identified throughout the year. More organisations are requesting input from Stop Loan Sharks Wales and over 500 people across various sectors have been trained on the signs and dangers of illegal money lenders over the year.

Funding has been secured through a number of Welsh Local Government Association grants to replenish the Together For Cardiff discretionary emergency fund, supporting customers who have exhausted all other funding options. Pending final legal advice, Together for Cardiff will move to Community Foundation Wales in the new financial year, securing the fund's future to enable it to continue to support those most in need. In addition to this, the rent arrears pathway makes best use of all grants to support those struggling to pay their rent with practical interventions. This reduces evictions and results in tenants being able to remain in their homes.

Supporting those most impacted by the economic crisis into work, education or training

Just over 3,000 Council posts have been filled through placements during 2023/24 from Cardiff Works, the Council's in-house recruitment service, and at the end of March 2024, there were 154 apprentices and trainees working in the Council. Financial constraints have meant that the Council was not able to create 100 new trainee and apprentice roles as had been targeted. However, 70 new placements were created during the year. Between April 2023 and March 2024, over 105,000 instances of into work support were provided to people through the Employment Gateway, an increase of 32% from the previous year. 1,342 people were supported into employment, compared to 1,115 people in 2022/23 and over 350 employers received assistance from the Into Work team to fund suitable candidates for their roles.

Significant work has been undertaken during 2023/24 to meet the Cardiff Race Equality Taskforce's recommendation to "Increase participation of ethnic minority groups in the Into Work Advice Service". Almost half (48.29%) of Into Work clients identified as being from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background. 33 different languages are spoken by staff from the Into Work Advice Service, increasing the accessibility of the service. During the year, the Into Work Advice Service also created two specific Employment Mentor roles to support individuals from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds to access employment opportunities and remove barriers to employment as well as increasing the number of job clubs delivered from the Butetown, Riverside and Grangetown area. The increased localised presence of employability support within the community has enabled the service to expand its visibility. Following the conclusion of the Race Equality Taskforce in 2024, the Council's new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-28 includes actions to continue to focus on supporting people from a Minority Ethnic background into work.

The Into Work Advice Service continues to support the progression of local people into work, education or training through innovative programmes. 'Get into...' training programmes have recently been developed to give insight into different employment sectors which are actively recruiting in Cardiff and the surrounding areas. The Adult Learning team has created week-long training packages, including a 'meet the employer' session, where candidates are able to gain an understanding of what it is like to work in the sector and in some cases, are interviewed for roles on the same day. The team have so far developed 'Get into...' packages for social care, administration, teaching assistants, hospitality, construction, personal rail track safety, warehouse work, beauty, barbering, cleaning, and bus driving.

The Into Work Advice Service is also continuing to work with Economic Development and Commissioning & Procurement to assess and influence contractors' social value commitments for all developments related to Atlantic Wharf. A plan will be finalised in early 2024/25 to capitalise on the opportunities afforded by the developments through both construction and operational phases, focusing particularly on benefits for the immediate surrounding communities. The Service is also partnering with a number of major contractors including ISG (Fairwater Campus), Wates (Llanrumney High residential development) and Encon (Riverside Community Living) via the Onsite Construction Academy to provide pathways to employment in the sector for youth and adult job seekers. Targeted social value requirements are being included within Invitations To Tender, obliging contractors to work in partnership with the Into Work Service on a contractual basis to deliver maximum impact for local communities. Skills academies will remain a key part of employment delivery in Cardiff, targeting growth sectors. The Service is working closely with the regional skills partnership to develop joint services to meet the need of sectors such as fin-tech and green technology.

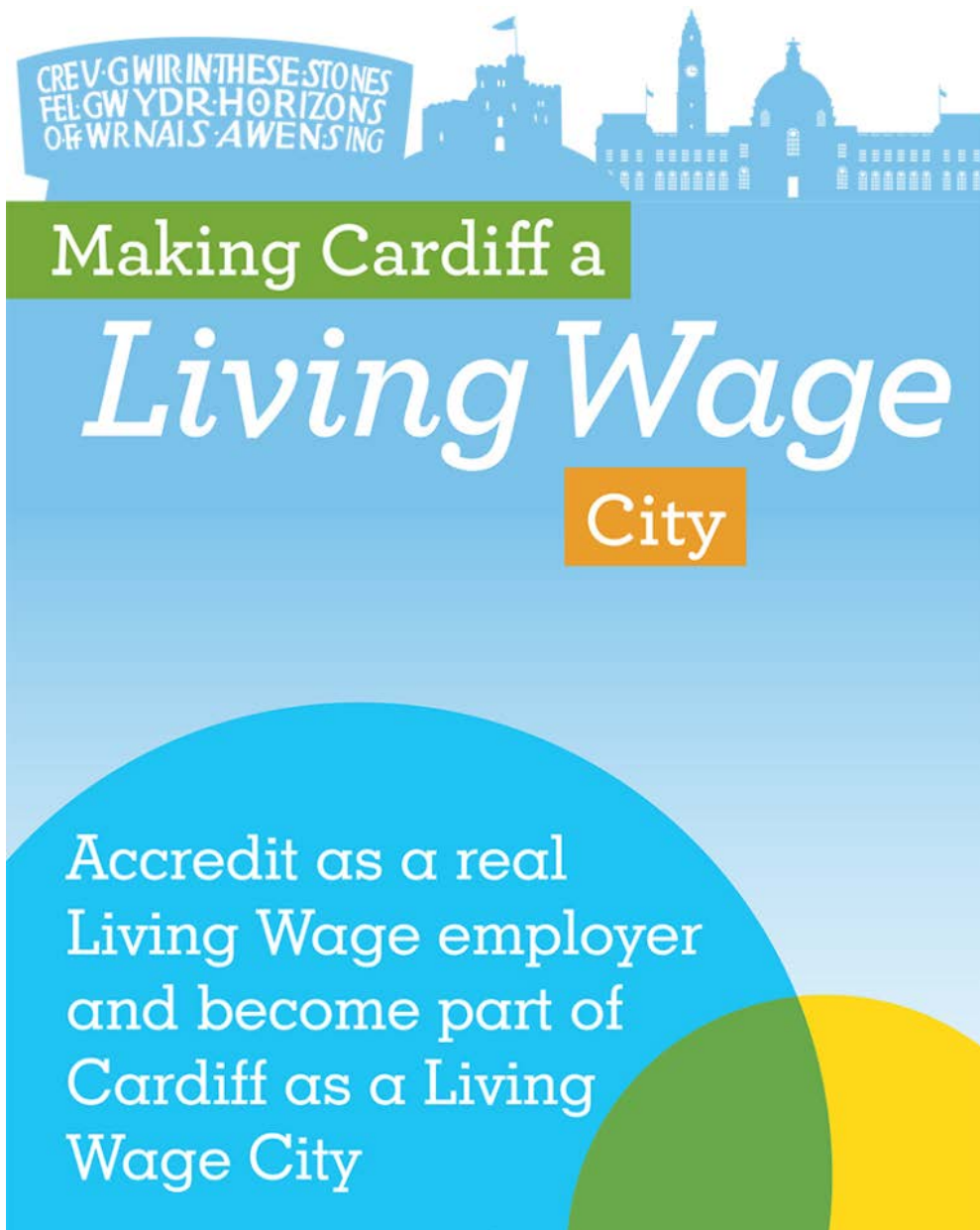
As part of the Council's initiative to support all people looking for work, in October 2023 the Into Work Advice Service delivered the Cardiff Jobs Fair in partnership with Scope, the disability equality charity, and in February 2024, its first jobs fair for refugees in partnership with Cardiff University. Jobseekers at both events had the opportunity to meet inclusive employers and engage with support providers who can help them to explore pathways into work. The Bright Start project offers six-month paid work experience placements to care-experienced young people who are matched to employment sectors they are interested in and assigned their own mentor to support them. Thirty-one additional Bright Start placements have been secured this financial year to bring the total number available to 86. Thirty-seven businesses are now offering placement opportunities alongside 24 Council teams.

The Into Work Advice Service has seen a dramatic change in the demographic of people accessing support, with the most notable difference being people in employment requiring support to access higher-paid or more secure employment; this change can be attributed to Brexit, Covid and the cost-of-living impact on the local economy landscape. The Into Work Advice Service employs three In-Work Mentors to support individuals in employment to upskill or to secure higher paid or more sustainable employment; however, support is available for those suffering from in-work poverty from the wider Into Work Service through access to barriers fund and training fund. There has been an increase in the number of individuals in employment accessing services including the Cardiff Cares Academy, Teaching Assistant Academy and Onsite Construction Academy. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 1,147 individuals in employment have been supported with mentoring provision; 263 individuals have gained a different job following support; and 154 individuals have successfully achieved a qualification.

Given the levels of demand on the service and the challenging financial climate, the Into Work Advice Service has reviewed and planned the service offer going forward. The team has been successful in securing external funding, including the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the Department for Work and Pensions' Local Supported Employment Project, and the Children and Communities Grant, over the past 12 months. A decrease in Welsh Government's Communities for Work Plus funding has led the service to fund more services and posts through the SPF. Welsh Government have specified key client groups to support through their programmes and SPF will support individuals who fall outside of that client group. The external funding, however, is temporary – SPF, which makes up a significant amount, is currently anticipated to cease at the end of March 2025. To date, SPF funding has supported 7,062 residents on their employment journey and over 8,500 with money advice; the loss of SPF funding has been escalated as a risk to the Corporate Risk Register.

Continuing our Living Wage City ambition

Research undertaken by Cardiff University during the year compared Cardiff's Real Living Wage with other Welsh Councils and UK Core Cities. The findings show that Cardiff remains amongst the best performing areas in the UK. In 2017, 20.7% of the workforce in Cardiff – around 42,000 people – were not earning the Real Living Wage; the latest Office for National Statistics survey results show that this has now decreased to 8.2%, or 20,000 people. Cardiff has also achieved one of the highest uplifts in the number of employees being paid the Real Living Wage, with over 13,300 workers in the city now benefitting. In May 2024, the University calculated that since 2012, the uplift to the real Living Wage has injected an additional £82.7 million into the local economy. There are now 219 accredited employers in Cardiff with Admiral, the only Welsh FTSE-listed company, amongst the 20 organisations to be accredited in the past year. However, it is likely that the target of 260 by November 2024 will not be achieved due to the challenging economic conditions. This year, 15 accredited employers in the city ceased trading, whilst other organisations chose not to renew their accreditation when the current rate of £12 per hour came into effect. This situation is being reflected across the UK.



Embedding our new approach to tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping

Cardiff Council remains committed to ensuring that any instance of rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not repeated. Although there was an initial increase in the number of people recorded as sleeping on the city's streets during spring and summer 2023, there has since been a sustained reduction from around 50 individuals in November 2023 to 19 in March 2024. Where those who present to the services have no local connection to Cardiff, they are being referred back to their originating local authority for help and support where possible.

In December 2023 the Council declared a housing emergency in response to the exceptional pressures and unabating demand for homelessness services. At that time all 1,699 units of temporary accommodation in Cardiff were full, with 707 families, 806 single people, and 186 young people housed across the city. There were over 8,000 households on the Cardiff Common Housing Waiting List and data showed that 28 more families were entering temporary accommodation than exiting into permanent accommodation each month. Waiting lists to enter temporary accommodation had increased by 150% since 2021, even though the amount of temporary accommodation has increased significantly over the same period. The lack of affordable housing remains the underlying cause of the housing emergency, resulting in high costs throughout the sector.

The average monthly private rent in Cardiff is £200 higher than the Welsh average and only a small minority of those are advertised at or below the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate, the maximum amount of housing-related benefits that can be claimed for those who are renting from a private landlord. Pressure on single person accommodation has been further impacted by the early release of prisoners, which is taking place to address capacity issues in prisons. This is adding to the number of single people coming forward for help from a system that is already over-stretched. Other causes of the housing emergency include reducing levels of home ownership; high and increasing numbers of students in the city; legislative changes introduced during the pandemic; and more recently, demands resulting from war and conflict across the globe. Immediate responses to the housing emergency have included strengthening the Homelessness Prevention services to meet the increasing need for assistance and focusing on early intervention. Homelessness prevention support is now available locally in Community Hubs and from other locations across the city.

There is also more joined-up working across services to resolve issues and prevent homelessness. As a result, waiting times for a homeless prevention appointment have reduced from 30 working days in September 2022 to an average of eight working days during 2023/24. This is above the target of less than seven working days due to the increase in the complexity of cases being seen by staff, including short-notice evictions. More resources will be allocated during 2024/25 to resolve this.

To address the issue in the immediate term, hotels are being utilised and comprise an essential part of temporary accommodation provision, critical in housing both single people and homeless families. This approach is, however, expensive and does not offer the best long-term solution for those affected. Medium-term solutions to the housing emergency include a continuation of the approach to utilise vacant sites for “meanwhile use”. The rapid installation of modular homes for homeless families has been delivered on the Gasworks site in Grangetown. The development is currently the largest Council-led modular development scheme in Wales. It enables the Council to boost its supply of accommodation more quickly than traditional methods. The different types of modular units have been developed in full compliance with Welsh Development Quality Requirements. Proposals for the construction of approximately 350 additional modular units delivered via the Cardiff Living Programme have been agreed in principle.

To increase the amount of affordable housing in the city in the longer term, a total of 90 former social properties were bought back by the Council during 2023/24, increasing the variety of housing stock. In addition, 31 additional properties were signed up to the Leasing Scheme Wales during 2023/24, bringing the total to 67. Whilst this does fall below the target of 40 additional properties, an additional nine cases are pending which are anticipated to be signed up during Quarter 1 of 2024/25. The Council is also actively pursuing opportunities to purchase large properties in the city centre which are capable of delivering a significant number of family homes. The housing development programme to deliver 4,000 new homes for the city is ongoing, with full details of progress included in Wellbeing Objective 4.

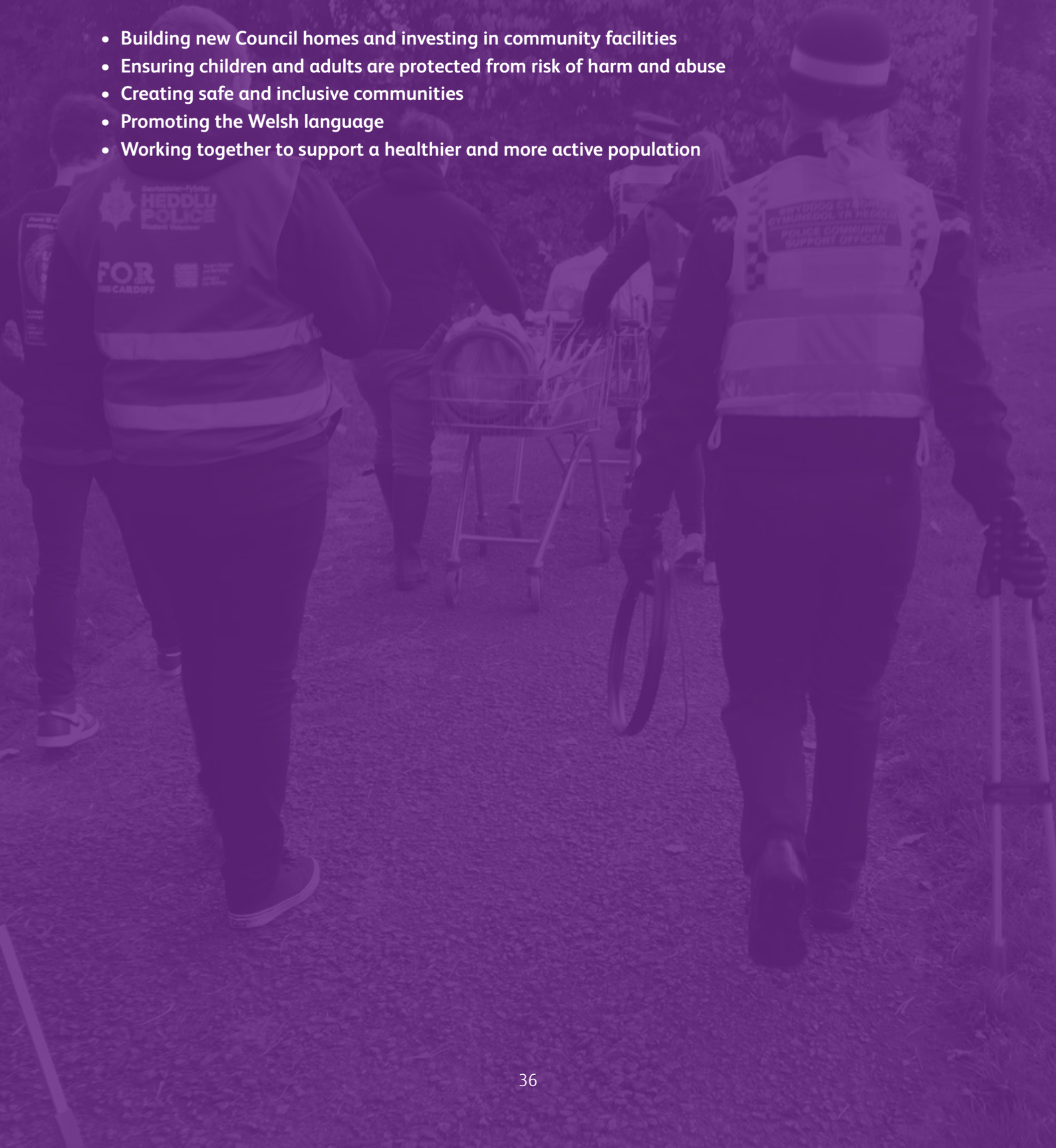
The Council will continue to keep its response to the housing emergency under ongoing review. The work of the Communities and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee in supporting the Council to assess its approach to rapidly increasing provision to meet growing demand undertaken this year is illustrative of this.



Wellbeing Objective 4: Safe, confident and empowered communities

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Building new Council homes and investing in community facilities
- Ensuring children and adults are protected from risk of harm and abuse
- Creating safe and inclusive communities
- Promoting the Welsh language
- Working together to support a healthier and more active population



■ Overall Assessment

The Council has made good progress delivering community housing schemes and maintaining existing housing stock, with its programme of investment into hubs and local regeneration projects continuing to deliver valued services for communities. Partnership working with Police and communities responding to anti-social behaviour (ASB) has continued to be strengthened and is delivering better outcomes in hot-spot areas, with enhanced work implemented within communities to tackle exploitation. Given the importance of this work to communities, continuing to deliver in partnership with public, voluntary and community partners to improve community safety, respond quickly and effectively to ASB, tackle exploitation and build community cohesion will remain a priority for the Council and for the city's Public Services Board.

Areas of Progress

- 1,110 new homes have been delivered through the Council's housing development programme.
- £5.4m has been secured in external funding for investment in local communities over the last twelve months.
- Over 2.2 million in-person visits were made to libraries and Hubs during 2023/24.
- The Council agreed to work towards becoming a neurodivergent-friendly city in September 2023.
- In May 2023 a new Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for 2023-28 was approved.
- Over 1,200 Ukrainian nationals have been welcomed into the city for long-term settlement.
- Cardiff saw a 1.1 percentage point increase in those able to speak Welsh between the 2011 and 2021 Census; the largest increase of any local authority in Wales.
- Parc Tredelerch and Western Cemetery were awarded Green Flag status, bringing the total number of Council-run Green Flag parks in Cardiff to 18.
- The Llanishen & Lisvane Reservoirs opened to the public in July,

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- The pressure on the housing market, especially the rising cost and lack of availability of homes in the private rented sector, remains a strategic challenge for the Council, causing significant demand and cost pressures in housing and homelessness services and across numerous other Council services.
- Plans for the City Centre Youth Hub have been delayed.
- The new Advocacy Service has not been launched as it was not possible to appoint any of the providers who tendered for the contract.
- The sustained high cost of energy remains a major challenge for GLL, the delivery partner for eight of the city's leisure centres.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End

Key Performance Indicators



Steps



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Delivering affordable homes

The Council continues to do everything in its power to increase the amount of affordable, energy-efficient and low-carbon housing in the city. The target of delivering 1,000 new homes by December 2023 has been exceeded with 1,032 homes completed and 1,110 completed by the end of March 2024. An additional 368 units are under construction on site and a total of 67 sites have been identified to enable the Council to meet the target of 4,000 new homes by 2035.

The Council has also delivered innovative practice in progressing large-scale property purchases for conversion to residential, which has helped deliver new housing units in the city. Given that this is a new approach within a fast-moving property market, the Council will keep its approach under review.

Progress continues to be made in delivering the Local Development Plan (LDP), with a total of 3,295 new homes being completed across five strategic housing sites in Cardiff. Over the last five years of the plan, an average of 1,242 homes have been completed per annum. Despite this, the plan faces site assembly, legal, and logistical challenges, meaning delivery is still slower than initially anticipated. Empty homes have also been brought back into use, enhancing the available housing stock. 21 additional dwellings have been created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use across the city. This is below the target of 30, however when viewed in conjunction with the empty private sector properties brought back into use (6.9%/92), the Empty Homes Team have exceeded their combined target of adding 100 homes to the city.

Good progress has been made in driving up housing standards in the private rented sector with the Rent Smart Wales scheme tackling rogue agents and landlords. The Council has also continued to intervene where enforcement action is needed against landlords or where safety hazards in homes need to be addressed.

Maintaining our existing Council housing stock

The Council's Responsive Repairs Unit carries out approximately 4,000 repairs to our council homes each month. Between 93% and 97% of emergency repairs were completed on time. Despite considerable work to address the outstanding repairs however, the number outstanding increased during the first three months of 2024. A full review of the Responsive Repairs Team is underway to understand and implement the changes

and resources required to address these outstanding works. A new online repairs system 'My Repairs' will be launched and tenants who choose to use it will be able to easily report and monitor repairs they need carried out in their properties.

The Council has always had a strong focus on addressing damp and mould issues in its housing stock, with regular monitoring in place. To take this work further, a new dedicated Dry Homes Team has been created which works exclusively on addressing damp and mould issues in tenants' homes as quickly as possible. However, demand on this team is high, and while cases are prioritised and any urgent repairs dealt with, there is still much to do to meet this increasing demand. The review of the Responsive Repair Unit will encompass reviewing how the Dry Homes Team respond to these cases creating a quicker response to the issues.

Work to ensure that the Council's high-rise housing blocks meet stringent fire safety standards and that tenants receive regular updates and reassurance is progressing well. The Council has continued to work closely with South Wales Fire & Rescue Service in regard to training and high-rise familiarisation events throughout 2023/24. Re-cladding work is proceeding at the Lydstep high-rise blocks; however, the work has been delayed by the poor weather and is now anticipated to be completed by the end of May 2024. The re-cladding of Loudoun House and Nelson House was approved in March 2024 using the same solution as that used at Lydstep flats. Sprinkler installation has been completed at the Lydstep flats, Loudoun House and Nelson House, with sprinkler designs approved for Beech House and Sycamore House. Plans have also been developed to meet the new Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 from April 2024.

Investing in communities

The target of securing £1m in external funding for investment in local communities has been vastly exceeded with £5.4m secured from 16 bids. The adoption of a new Regeneration Strategy has been delayed due to capacity issues and the need to align work with other priorities such as transport. However, a first draft of the regeneration framework document has been developed.

Progress continues to be made with the ongoing development of Community Hubs. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board are working towards the submission of a full planning application for the Wellbeing Hub at Ely and Caerau Parkview and detailed design work is taking place in partnership with the Council. Plans for the City Centre Youth Hub have progressed with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 3 design work commencing in early 2024. Collaborative work with partners and developers is ongoing and working well for new hubs on strategic planning sites including the combined Health & Wellbeing Hubs at the strategic planning sites of Lisvane and Plasdŵr.

A range of performance indicators demonstrate that the existing network of libraries and Hubs are highly valued community assets, being both well attended – with over 2.2 million in-person visitors recorded in 2023/24, far in excess of the 1.5 million target, and almost 3 million virtual visits – and achieving good customer satisfaction ratings. The recruitment of several volunteer mentors during summer 2023 has had a significant impact on volunteering hours committed within Housing & Communities – from being below target at the end of September 2023 to exceeding it by almost 2,000 hours in March 2024.

Ensuring children and adults are protected from risk of harm and abuse

The wellbeing of vulnerable children and adults remains the Council's highest priority, working closely with partners across the region to co-ordinate safeguarding activity. Corporate awareness of safeguarding is high, following a concerted programme of management action, and the percentage of staff who have completed Safeguarding Awareness Training is now above 90%. Over 2,500 adult protection enquiries were received during 2023/24 – a 57% increase on 2022/23. Despite this increase in demand, the Council has still maintained its performance standards in completing 99% of enquires within seven days throughout the year.

The governance arrangements supporting the Regional Safeguarding Board have been strengthened with an increased focus on data-driven decision-making. The report published following the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in January 2024² focused on the improved governance arrangements of the Regional Safeguarding Board as a key strength in supporting the monitoring, accountability and improved co-ordination across the partnership. The JICPA report also highlighted that the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy 2022–25 includes clear objectives and guidance which promote the message that safeguarding is everybody's business and a collective responsibility. (See Wellbeing Objective 1 for further details.)

The Safeguarding Adolescents From Exploitation (SAFE) model continues to be implemented effectively. As part of this implementation, the Council has focussed on raising awareness of the various forms of exploitation, strengthening partnership working, embedding contextual safeguarding approaches, and ensuring clear guidance, procedures, pathways, and services are in place to respond to exploitation.

The Council continues to employ a strengths-based approach to support vulnerable people, ensuring that they retain a choice in how their care is provided. A formal review of the approach will take place during 2024/25, however some initial feedback from staff refers to enhanced job satisfaction and improved opportunities to build stronger relationships with service users as well as the feeling that this has brought the person back into the centre of practice. Over 20 strength-based mentors have been nominated across Adult Social Services to promote and embed this approach, and existing provision has been enhanced, with particular emphasis on overcoming language and cultural barriers to care.

The Direct Payments Service to adults has been reviewed to identify the strengths and challenges. Eight local micro-enterprises have been registered with a further two providers working across the region or nationally. Micro-enterprises can provide a range of services, principally focused on providing support for people to remain independent at home, companionship, support to access social groups and activities, and support with personal care needs. Unfortunately, the new Advocacy Service has not been launched as it was not possible to appoint any of the providers who tendered for the contract. The current contracts have therefore been extended on an interim basis pending completion of a new tender process.

Despite the continuing pressure on mental health services, in line with the ongoing pressures on health and social care services generally, improvements have been made to the support available to people with mental health issues. The Council has formed a partnership with PAPYRUS, a charity for the prevention of young suicide (under 35) in the UK, to work towards the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy for Wales. Referrals to the Wellbeing Support Service within Hubs have increased month on month due to extensive

^[2] [240507-Cardiff-JICPA-Report-en.pdf \(careinspectorate.wales\)](https://careinspectorate.wales.gov.uk/240507-Cardiff-JICPA-Report-en.pdf)

promotion of the service. An initial design for the new building to deliver day services for mental health has been approved and the project has now moved onto the detailed design stage and costings analysis.

Cardiff & Vale Mental Health Sanctuary Retreat had a soft launch at the start of 2024, operating with small numbers via telephone appointments initially. Face-to-face appointments are expected to be offered from mid-April 2024 from a new building in Penylan for a two-year trial.

The Council agreed to work towards becoming a neurodivergent-friendly city in September 2023 and a new Neurodiversity Service has been launched with demand higher than anticipated. Resources are already being increased, including the recruitment of a dedicated social worker. The Council has engaged with stakeholders and partners to explore what a neurodivergent-friendly city looks like and how Cardiff can become more supportive to neurodivergent people and their families.

Targeted work to reduce health inequalities across the city has been ongoing. A new Health Improvement Officer post has been established to focus on health inequalities and work has also continued to improve access to health services. The ongoing integration of health and social care has continued with a co-commissioned, co-located service model for clearly defined groups who have the poorest health outcomes. Following the work undertaken this year, an options appraisal will be developed to identify suitable buildings for the co-location of the Homeless Multi-Disciplinary Team, the Cardiff and Vale Health Inclusion Service and Substance Use Treatment Services before summer 2024.



Creating safe and inclusive communities

The Council is working with partners to deliver its multi-agency problem-solving approach to localised, complex anti-social behaviour (ASB) hotspots. In the city centre, the Council utilised the UK Government Safer Streets Fund to commission murals in three pedestrian underpasses which were inspired by Cardiff's history³, along with installing CCTV in targeted areas in the city centre and Cathays. Using an evidence-based approach, the Council has successfully secured further funding for the fifth round of the Safer Streets Fund, which will help to deliver interventions in Adamsdown and Riverside, including CCTV, youth intervention and education initiatives on bike safety, violence, and park security.

Following the tragic events in Ely in May 2023 which sparked serious disorder, an in-depth community listening exercise was led by Action for Caerau & Ely (ACE) and a newly formed Ely & Caerau Community Steering Group to understand the community's priorities for the future. Over 1,200 people responded across 47 events between August and December 2023. Engagement work identified the key issues which were then grouped into six broad themes – children and young people; community safety and safeguarding; spaces and the environment; health and wellbeing; employment, living standards and cost of living; and communications and community buildings. Extensive engagement work informed a new Community Plan developed by the community working with the Cardiff Public Services Board. The plan will see around £2m of grant funding invested in the local community, secured from a range of different sources.

The Council remains committed to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls. In May 2023 the Council's Cabinet agreed a new Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for 2023-28 and the associated Implementation Plan. Corporate awareness is also demonstrably high, with 84% of staff having completed Level 1 of the national training framework on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The Council has continued to play a leading role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those arriving from Ukraine and Afghanistan. In addition to responding to the immediate needs of those arriving in Cardiff, the Council is focussed on transitioning individuals and families into sustainable long-term provision where possible. Over 1,200 Ukrainian nationals have been welcomed into the city for long-term settlement. The Council has also supported 800 people from Afghanistan into local temporary bridging accommodation as part of a national process where they are matched into long-term homes across the UK. The decision by the Home Office to significantly accelerate the approval decision-making process also led to significant demand pressures between October and December 2023 when 497 asylum seekers received a notice to vacate their accommodation following a decision on their claim.

^[3] [New murals inspired by Cardiff's history and musical heritage \(cardiffnewsroom.co.uk\)](https://www.cardiffnewsroom.co.uk)

Promoting the Welsh language

Progress continues to be made with promoting the Welsh language, both within the Council and across the city. Just under 18% of the Council workforce (excluding school staff) now have Welsh language skills, an increase of 35% since 2022/23. Over 1,700 staff attended Welsh language training courses during the year, more than double the number who have attending training in the last four years. Fifty-one percent of staff have therefore received training, which means that the target of 50% of the Council workforce to have received training by March 2027 has been achieved three years early.

The Ein Dinas, Ein Hiaith / Our City, Our Language website⁴ was launched on St David's Day 2024. The website presents information about Welsh language education and culture across the city and aims to deliver a one stop shop to access all Welsh language activities and opportunities offered in Cardiff. Cardiff saw a 1.1 percentage point increase in those able to speak Welsh between the 2011 and 2021 Census; this is the largest increase of any local authority in Wales by a significant margin.

Working together to support a healthier and more active population

The Central South Regional Sport Partnership made significant progress during 2023. A new legal entity will be established in 2024 to shape the future direction of the Central South region. Work has been undertaken to ensure Cardiff is well-represented in the development of the new governance structure and to protect resources and grant aid for the city. The Council has led the collaboration group and will use the framework of the Cardiff Physical Activity & Sport Strategy 2022-27⁵ in shaping the priorities for the Central South Region. Public engagement was undertaken on the future of Pentwyn Leisure Centre and following feedback, the scheme was re-designed. GLL are expected to re-open parts of the centre in mid-June with work on the pool beginning at around the same time which is expected to be completed by next year. The Council continues to closely monitor its contract for leisure services with the provider GLL with the sustained high cost of energy remaining a major challenge for both GLL and Parkwood, the operators of the International Swimming Pool. Discussions are ongoing between the Council and GLL regarding the implementation of solar panels and energy recovery at leisure centre sites.

The Council has made good progress in improving public and green spaces in Cardiff. Two more green spaces, Parc Tredelerch and Western Cemetery, have been awarded Green Flag status, bringing the total number of Council-run Green Flag parks in Cardiff to 18. Work to increase Cardiff's tree canopy has been very successful with 30,000 trees planted between November 2023 and April 2024 with help from 2,500 community volunteers. Since its establishment in 2021, the Coed Caerdydd project has resulted in 80,000 new trees being planted at 280 different sites across the city, including more than 100 parks and open spaces, 17 different schools and 11 community sites as well as on privately-owned land. This year the project has increased its focus on street trees, with more than 200 large new street trees planted on streets with low or no tree canopy cover. Work on the development of a National Park City for Cardiff, however, has been paused in 2023/24 subject to establishing appropriate governance and delivery arrangements.

The Llanishen & Lisvane Reservoirs opened to the public in July, delivering 5km of circular paths around the reservoirs and opportunities for a range of water sports as well as providing a haven for wildlife. The attraction welcomed more than 100,000 visitors in its first nine weeks alone.

^[4] [Ein Dinas Ein Hiaith - Our City Our Language](#)

^[5] [Physical Activity and Sport Strategy](#)

Wellbeing Objective 5: A capital city that works for Wales

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Leading the economic recovery in Wales
- Leading a recovery programme in Cardiff
- Supporting the recovery of the cultural sector and major events programme

■ Overall Assessment

Over the past year the Council has continued to work closely with public and private sector partners to attract, create and safeguard jobs, rebuild the visitor economy and take forward a range of regeneration projects. Though overall economic performance in Cardiff is the strongest in Wales – competing well with UK Core Cities – the wider economic conditions remain challenging. High inflation and interest rate increases represent key risks to the Council’s regeneration programme and are impacting wider business confidence and investment in the city.

Areas of Progress

- The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal has successfully transferred to the new South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), strengthening the regional ability to coordinate and implement strategic responses to key challenges.
- Over 2023/24, the Council played an active role in the creation and safeguarding of over 2,400 jobs.
- A range of projects are being progressed as part of Cardiff’s regeneration; for instance, funding has been secured for the restoration of Cardiff Market, enabling works have been completed for the Indoor Arena and the Options Agreement for the International Sports Village has concluded.
- Significant work is underway to deliver the Cardiff Music City Festival in Autumn 2024, whilst it has also been confirmed that Cardiff will host the European Professional Club Rugby (EPRC) finals in 2025, as well as be one of the host cities for the 2028 UEFA European Championships.

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- As with all projects within the Council’s capital programme, cost inflation, particularly construction cost inflation, has represented a key delivery and affordability risk to projects over the course of the year. Economic factors have also meant that interest rates have increased significantly over the past year.
- Whilst the Council has engaged constructively with developers to advocate high-quality office units within redevelopment proposals, no new ‘Grade A’ office space was committed to in the city in 2023/24. Whilst demand for office space remains high, building costs and high interest rates are impacting on developers’ ability to bring new, high-quality spaces to the market.
- Following changes to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in public buildings, intrusive surveys were undertaken on the roof of St. David’s Hall. Appointed engineers classified the building as a RED risk, leading to its closure in the summer of 2023, pending roof replacement and refurbishment.
- City recovery has been impacted by the cost-of-living and energy crises, reducing the amount of disposable income many have to spend on events, culture and leisure; at year end, city centre footfall was 4.16% below target, whilst attendance at Council venues was 14.25% below target. The reduction in attendance at Council venues can also be attributed, however, to the closure of St David’s Hall in the summer of 2023.
- Alongside the closure of St David’s Hall, the Council has also been impacted by the closure of City Hall for essential maintenance, largely due to not being able to offer functions hire and catering services. The closure of these buildings has ultimately resulted in significant income shortfalls within Culture, Venues and Events.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End

Key Performance Indicators



Steps



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Leading the economic recovery in Wales

In order to respond to the global economic challenges, the Council is committed to work with partners to deliver a stronger, fairer and greener economy, through an ambitious urban regeneration agenda, the provision of business support and ongoing programme of major projects.

Over the past year, the Council has continued to support the transition of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal to the new South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), with the transfer finalised on 1 April 2024. Cardiff played an active role in the development of the CCR City Deal, which has seen significant investment into the region, including approved projects to the value of c£420m, which have delivered 3,474 jobs and c£300m+ in additional leveraged funds. The new CJC builds on the City Deal arrangements, with the potential to strengthen the regional ability to coordinate and implement strategic responses to key challenges. Moving forward, the Council will continue to work closely with the new CJC to support both Cardiff and the wider region in realising its economic ambitions.

Leading a recovery programme in Cardiff

A range of projects are being progressed to support Cardiff's economy, with the Council playing an active role in the creation and safeguarding of over 2,400 jobs. Several projects have also supported investment in visitor infrastructure. This includes a successful submission to Welsh Government for funding for the restoration of Cardiff Market, which is currently progressing through the procurement process, as well as establishing a vision for the Cardiff Capital Region Investment Zone. Local economic regeneration schemes include development at Tudor Street, with the opening of Sustainable Studios, and initial engagement work for Cowbridge Road East regeneration.

The city centre, in particular, continues to attract a range of interest from investors and occupiers, particularly for innovative uses, with demand for office space high. However, whilst the Council has engaged constructively with developers to advocate high-quality office units within redevelopment proposals, no new 'Grade A' office space was committed to in the city in 2023/24. Though demand for office space remains high, building costs and high interest rates are impacting on developers' ability to bring new, high-quality spaces to the market. Options are currently being explored, however, and it is anticipated that new schemes will provide new opportunities.

As part of the Industrial Strategy for the East of the city, an Economic Impact Analysis has been completed for Cardiff Parkway, which will inform the Full Business Case for the scheme. The project is currently awaiting planning permission, following 'call in' from Welsh Government, with a decision anticipated in Quarter 1 2024/25. Subsequent delays in progressing the scheme are being managed. The Council has also continued to progress projects related to the regeneration of Cardiff Bay. The Outline Business Case for the redevelopment of the Red Dragon Centre has been approved and enabling works have been completed for the Indoor Arena; the agreement to lease the Graving Docks has been finalised; and the Options Agreement for the International Sports Village has concluded. In addition, there continues to be interest from property owners and developers regarding the regeneration of historic buildings within Cardiff Bay, with funding approved for the regeneration of the Grade 2 listed Custom House building in Bute Street, which will be converted into new apartments.

As with all projects within the Council's capital programme, however, cost inflation, particularly construction cost inflation resulting from increased tender activity, material availability and labour shortages, has represented a key delivery and affordability risk to projects over the course of the year. Economic factors have also meant that interest rates have increased significantly over the past year. Despite these challenges, the Council is working to ensure that sufficient resource is allocated to projects, to ensure that they progress in the timescales intended. Option appraisals, robust business cases and due diligence continue to be essential, with a focus on delivery of approved schemes within the existing capital investment programme.

Supporting the recovery of the cultural sector and major events programme

Following the pandemic, the city has worked hard to rebuild its event and cultural offer, maximising the impact of its creative and cultural assets. Significant work is currently underway to deliver the Cardiff Music City Festival in Autumn 2024. In addition, it has been confirmed that Cardiff will host the European Professional Club Rugby (EPRC) finals in 2025 and will be one of the host cities for the 2028 UEFA European Championships. Taken together, this programme of events serves to reaffirms Cardiff's position as a front ranking destination for major events. Economic recovery continues to be impacted by the cost-of-living and energy crises, reducing the amount of disposable income many have to spend on events, culture and leisure. At year end, city centre footfall has increased from last year's result, though was 4.16% below target, whilst attendance at Council venues was 14.25% below target. The reduction in attendance at Council venues can also be attributed, however, to the closure of St David's Hall in the summer of 2023. Following changes to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in public buildings, intrusive surveys were undertaken on the roof of St. David's Hall, with appointed engineers categorising the building as a RED risk, resulting in the building's closure until the roof is replaced and the building refurbished. St David's Hall has since been leased to the Academy Music Group (AMG) as part of a strategic approach to secure long-term investment into the venue. As part of this approach, AMG are currently developing a programme for refurbishment of the building, including a design proposal for the replacement roof.

Alongside the closure of St David's Hall, the Council has also been impacted by the closure of City Hall for essential maintenance. Revenue had been impacted by an inability to offer functions hire and catering services due to the renovation works currently underway. The closure of these buildings has ultimately resulted in significant income shortfalls within Culture, Venues and Events, with, as noted in the Council's 2023/24 financial outturn report, the Economic Development directorate consequently incurring a £2.393m annual overspend. Looking ahead, despite delay, the Council is developing a new Tourism & Events Strategy, as well as a new Cultural Strategy, to champion and reinvigorate the Cardiff's events and cultural offer.

Wellbeing Objective 6: One Planet Cardiff

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Decarbonising the city and leading a green recovery
- Transforming Cardiff's public transport and active travel systems
- Putting sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the city's growth
- Enhancing Cardiff's flood defences
- Building resilience into our highway network
- Making Cardiff a world-leading recycling city

Overall Assessment

The Council has continued to deliver the One Planet Strategy, with good progress evident in reducing the Council's carbon footprint and the delivery of sustainable transport, housing, recycling and energy projects. Though good progress is being made, it is becoming clear to the Council and partners that reaching a net-zero carbon position by 2030 will prove to be very challenging for both the Council and the city and will almost certainly not happen without a step-change in government investment. Following the publication of its new Recycling Strategy 2022-25, the Council has been working to implement a major programme of reform to waste and collection services to improve efficiency and resilience. The year-end recycling performance has been provisionally reported as 60.07%, which is below the 64% target. As the largest local authority in Wales, Cardiff has very specific characteristics which make meeting statutory recycling targets challenging, and further work is needed to meet the 70% target by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

Areas of Progress

- Overall, the Council's 'direct' operational carbon emissions reduced by 11.7% between 2019/20 and 2022/23. Furthermore, the Council's 'indirect' procurement-related emissions reduced by 25.5% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 (the latest available data).
- Projects and programmes to decarbonise the city are progressing well; for instance, Phase 1 of the heat network is on target for completion in 2024 and the number of energy efficiency measures installed in Council-owned domestic properties was 10.13% above target at year end, at 826.
- Significant progress has also been made in delivering a transformative programme of investment in public transport and active travel; for example, Phase 1 of the CrossRail has been successfully tendered, funding obtained for bus priority measures, and funding made available to progress Stage 2 of the Outline Business Case for road user charging options.
- The 2023 Air Quality Progress Report, which presents monitoring data captured in 2022, shows that there were no exceedances in either the annual or short-term air quality objectives for NO₂ at any automatic and non-automatic monitoring site during the period covered by the report.
- Work continues on a full review of the Local Development Plan (LDP); following public consultation on the Preferred Strategy, which received over 1,000 responses, the Strategy has been completed, with positive feedback received.

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- City-wide, carbon emissions decreased by only 0.9% between 2019 and 2021, the latest data available. It is becoming clear that reaching a net-zero carbon position by 2030 looks to be challenging and will almost certainly not happen without significant additional government investment.
- Further reductions in funding for bus services, announced by Welsh Government, have resulted in services being reduced, combined and, in some instances, cut. Funding has been secured for bus priority measures; it is hoped that the measures will protect core services, improve journey quality and work as a catalyst to attract passengers to buses.
- Continued resourcing pressures have resulted in further delays in reviewing the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (BRED) Forward Plan, as well as developing the new Sustainable Water, Flood and Drainage Strategy for Cardiff.
- The year-end recycling performance has been provisionally reported as 60.07%, which is below the 64% target.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End

Key Performance Indicators



Steps



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Decarbonising the city and leading a green recovery

Since declaring a climate emergency in 2018, significant progress has been made by the Council and key partner organisations in identifying priorities for action, developing a robust programme for change, and starting to make tangible steps towards carbon reduction. In March 2024, the Council published its second annual Operational Carbon Analysis, which made clear the reduction in carbon emissions across all of the Council's operations. Overall, the Council's 'direct' operational emissions reduced from 42,211 tonnes CO₂e to 37,284 tonnes between 2019/20 and 2022/23, representing a 11.7% reduction⁶. This can largely be attributed to reduced electricity consumption. In terms of 'indirect' emissions, procurement remains the Council's biggest and most challenging source of emissions. Whilst the methodology used for assessing procurement emissions continues to have significant limitations, it is estimated that the Council's procurement-related emissions reduced by 25.5% between 2021/22 and 2022/23, largely reflecting national grid decarbonisation and other modernising delivery practices. Whilst this progress is positive, procurement continues to remain a challenging area, requiring change throughout the supply chain.

Progress has been made against a number of priority projects, including:

- Heat Network:** Work to install the heat network is progressing well, with Phase 1 of the programme still on target for completion in 2024. A new delay has emerged in securing an easement through third-party land to the backup energy centre, which could have an impact on commencement dates if not resolved. However, the issue has been escalated with the third-party landowner and a fall-back alternative route and a temporary solution are being explored.
- Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generation:** Due to changes to Welsh Government Planning policy on development in areas with ecological protection status, the Wentloog solar farm proposal has not been further progressed. Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government to establish options for progress, including assessing other potential Council sites and land opportunities. One promising alternative site is undergoing a feasibility assessment.

^[6] The Council utilises Welsh Government's carbon reporting framework methodology to record its emissions, with 2019/20 utilised as a baseline year. Following methodological and scope adjustments/ improvements to the framework, 2019/20 baseline data has been recalculated for the most recent Operational Carbon Analysis.

- **Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofit:** The programme is progressing well, with the number of energy efficiency measures installed in Council-owned domestic properties 10.13 % above target at year end, at 826. Work has continued at pace, despite cost increases due to a limited number of improved installers and designers. In addition, work undertaken within private rented sector properties – to improve energy efficiency – has led to an estimated carbon dioxide improvement of 90.7 tonnes.
- **Electric Vehicles:** A review of the Council’s fleet has taken place, resulting in the development of an action plan to deliver a Fleet Replacement Programme. Progress on the additional purchase/hire of electric fleet vehicles remains slower than anticipated due to a global semiconductor shortage and very high demand for electric vehicles. The situation does, however, appear to be easing. Furthermore, the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Road Map is in the final stages of completion; the strategy will be published in Quarter 1 of 2024/25.
- **Healthy, Local and Low-Carbon Food:** A £2m Cardiff Capital Region funded innovation programme is in progress, sponsoring new and innovative ways to grow, distribute and decarbonise the local food sector. The first round of the programme began in July 2023, with funding granted to FareShare Cymru, in partnership with Cardiff and the Vale College, to progress a surplus food redistribution project. The initiative has provided meals, made from food that would otherwise go to waste, to community organisations and charities supporting some of the most vulnerable members of society. Working closely with Zero2Five, detailed nutritional information has also been able to be provided with the meals. The final phase of this programme is due to begin in Autumn 2024, with FareShare aiming to increase their production from a trial to a full-time operation.
- **Renewable Energy in the Severn Estuary:** The Independent Commission on the future of Tidal Energy in the Severn was launched in Cardiff in Quarter 4; the Independent Commission will report its findings to the Western Gateway and to Welsh and UK Governments in 2025.

Progress in terms of the wider city’s decarbonisation has been more modest, with carbon emissions decreasing by only 0.9 % between 2019 and 2021, according to the latest data available⁷. Transport remains the highest emitting sector for the city, contributing 617,400 tonnes, or 35 % of city emissions in 2021.

Even with the impressive progress and action across the Council’s portfolios and amongst partners, it is becoming clear that reaching a net-zero carbon position by 2030 looks to be challenging and will almost certainly not happen without significant additional government investment. Work has therefore commenced on developing a Climate Change Response ‘Green Paper’, that enables a better understanding of the latest financial situation with regards to meeting carbon-neutral targets and how this aligns to associated government targets. The Green Paper will also provide a clearer understanding of the investment opportunities for the city and region of a green energy transition.

^[7] It must be acknowledged that this data highlights the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown and subsequent return to business-as usual. The publication of data for 2022 will provide a clearer picture of post-Covid trends.

Transforming Cardiff's public transport and active travel systems

The Council's transport vision sets out a transformative programme of investment in public transport and active travel. Good progress has been made to deliver the programme over the past year, however, looking ahead, the progression of several projects is subject to achieving reliable and sustainable sources of funding. Project updates include:

- Cardiff and Regional Metro:** Working in partnership with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and the Burns Delivery Unit, significant progress has been made to secure improvements to the Metro/Tram network. Following a successful tender process, construction consultancy firm, WSP will provide programme and cost management services for Cardiff CrossRail Phase 1, a scheme which will improve connectivity to and from the Cardiff Bay area. A co-located office space has been established to aid delivery and confirmation has been received that business case development work can begin for Cardiff CrossRail Phase 2.
- Bus Services:** Further reductions in funding for bus services, announced by Welsh Government, have resulted in services being reduced, combined and, in some instances, cut. A draft of the Bus Priority Infrastructure Plan was presented to, and approved by, Cabinet in March 2024, with the Council subsequently successful in obtaining £2.2m through Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund for bus priority measures. It is hoped that improved bus priority on a core network will protect core services, improve journey quality and work as a catalyst to attract passengers to buses. A public consultation on the Plan will take place during Quarters 1 to 2 of 2024/25.
- Wales 20mph Default Speed Limit:** Work is ongoing to manage the transition to a default 20mph city; implementation of both Phase 1 and 2 is complete, with all necessary signage and carriageway amendments installed.
- Llanrumney Bridge Crossing Scheme:** The planning application for the scheme was approved in January 2024, subject to the completion of a section 106 legal agreement and additional conditions, including a licence from Natural Resource Wales regarding European Protected Species (EPS).
- Active Travel:** Work continues to develop a segregated cycle network across the city, whilst Cycleway 4.2 is currently being reviewed to mitigate the impact on trees, early option selection work has been complete for Cycleway 5; the Roath Park cycleway is on site and progressing well; and early stakeholder engagement has begun on Newport Road. Work has also progressed to develop the next edition of Cardiff's Active Travel Network Map (ATNM). A study to identify future cycling routes in North Cardiff has been completed, the results of which will inform the ATNM. Furthermore, schools continue to be supported with the implementation of Active Travel Plans; 84 schools had been supported by the end of 2023.24.
- Road User Charging Options:** To develop a new source of long-term infrastructure funding, the Council resolved, in April 2023, to consider a range of road payment schemes. The Stage 1 Strategic Business Case has been completed and independently peer reviewed, with Welsh Government funding made available to progress the Stage 2 Outline Business Case. The funding is, however, significantly lower than expected and only available for 2024/25. The programme for progressing the business case study work will therefore take longer than originally anticipated, and the Council is seeking a way forward that secures ongoing funding to progress to a Full Business Case.

- **Intelligent Transport System (ITS):** Preparation of the ITS strategy is on hold. The opportunity to comprehensively progress the strategy – and define the scope of what can be achieved – is dependent on reliable sources of funding, which may not be determined until 2025 subject to a robust business case and alignment with the potential road payment scheme.

Air quality

Poor air quality is now considered the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK with clear scientific evidence that air pollution exposure reduces life expectancy. Improving air quality is therefore a key priority for the city, with air quality targets committed to in the Council's 10-year transport and One Planet Cardiff strategies.

The annual update on air quality monitoring was presented to Cabinet in December 2023, with the report indicating that there were no exceedances in either the annual or short-term Air Quality Objectives for NO₂⁸ at any automatic and non-automatic monitoring site during 2022. Results from most monitoring sites in 2022 showed slightly increased NO₂ concentrations compared to 2021, but still maintained a reduction compared to 2019, pre-Covid. One non-automatic monitoring site located within the Llandaff Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was, however, close to the annual air quality objective limit of 40µg/m³ with a result of 39.3µg/m³. Looking ahead, the city-wide Clean Air Strategy and Action Plan (CASAP) for Cardiff will therefore be reviewed in order to prioritise strategic measures that will generate a positive impact on air quality levels, to ensure air quality levels are continuously improved in Cardiff, with a specific focus afforded to improving NO₂ concentrations in the Llandaff AQMA.

As noted within the annual update on air quality monitoring, improvements have been sustained on Castle Street, with the 2023 annual result recorded as 33µg/m³, and work is ongoing to identify a permanent transport scheme that ensures long-term compliance is maintained. Following the completion of detailed transport and air quality modelling, in August 2023, Welsh Government provided initial approval of the Council's preferred option, subject to the submission of an updated Final Plan (Full Business Case). The Final Plan was submitted to Welsh Government in Quarter 3 2023/24, with feedback received requiring further review and redrafting of the Plan. The updated Final Plan has subsequently been resubmitted to Welsh Government for review, and the Council is awaiting a response in order to progress works.

Furthermore, substantial progress has been made with regards to implementing other clean air improvement projects in the city centre; Boulevard De Nantes has received funding to progress design and consultation in 2024/25, whilst the City Centre East Phase 1 scheme is nearing completion.

^[8] The air quality objectives applicable to local air quality management LAQM in Wales are set out in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000, No. 1940 (Wales 138) and Air Quality (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002, No 3182 (Wales 298). The annual average objective set for NO₂ is 40 µg/m³.

Putting sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the city's growth

A key ambition of the city is the delivery of new, high-quality, well-designed and well-connected communities. Work therefore continues on a full review of the Local Development Plan (LDP); following public consultation on the Preferred Strategy, which received over 1,000 responses, the Strategy has been completed, with positive feedback received. Officers are currently preparing detailed policies, assessments and the evidence base to support the next stage of LDP consultation. The formal public consultation on the "Deposit" or Draft Plan will be in early 2025. It is anticipated that the reporting of the Deposit LDP to Cabinet and Council will be in December 2024.

Between Quarters 1 and 3 of 2023/24, there was a continued drop in the percentage of householder planning applications determined within agreed time periods. This can be attributed to an increase in the complexity of applications submitted, along with an increase in objections and correspondence regarding applications. New technology was subsequently deployed to assist officers with the timely completion of applications, which saw a significant improvement at Quarter 4, with a result of 88% against a target of >85%. It is anticipated that this improvement will continue to be reflected in performance throughout 2024/25.

At year end, the Council fell short of its targets for affordable housing completion on both greenfield and brownfield sites. Only 16.94% of affordable housing was completed on greenfield sites, compared to a target of 30%, and 17.09% on brownfield sites, against a target of 20%. This shortfall is attributed to current housing market conditions. The development of new family housing, which typically includes a significant portion of affordable units, has slowed due to high interest rates and decreased market sales. Overall, 16.99% of all housing units completed in 2023/24 were affordable, missing the target of 20%. Despite these challenges, the Council remains committed to its goal of delivering 2,800 affordable homes by 2030. It is anticipated that improved economic conditions will boost the number of affordable housing completions in the coming years. The Council will continue to monitor the situation closely.

The review of the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (BRED) Forward Plan, which the Council is required to produce under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, has been further delayed – until later in 2024 – due to continued resourcing difficulties.

Enhancing Cardiff's flood defences

The Council is aware of the very real flood risk that climate change presents and is in the process of developing various flood prevention schemes – utilising a risk-based approach and prioritisation process – in partnership with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

In terms of coastal defence improvements in Cardiff East, the construction contract has been formally awarded and the contractor is now on site. Issues over land ownership that emerged in Quarter 3, due to the sale of the land directly behind the western most section of the flood defence, have largely been resolved, although issues remain regarding the location of the site office compound which could result in delays. With regards to the new Canal Quarter scheme, Phase 1 has been delivered, however, Phase 2 of the scheme is currently on hold due to a lack of funding. Furthermore, the Council is working to mitigate flood risk relating to Roath Park Dam; a planning application is currently being prepared for the proposed works, as well as ongoing work on the design. Prior to submitting the application, consultation will take place in order to give the community and stakeholders an opportunity to feedback on the proposals.

The Council's flood risk responsibilities and policies are set out in the Cardiff Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – as required by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and the Flood Risk Regulations (2009) respectively – which is due to be updated. Resourcing pressures in the Council's Flood Risk Management Team have, however, resulted in delays in developing the new Sustainable Water, Flood and Drainage Strategy for Cardiff. A draft of the Strategy is nearing completion and undergoing final checks. Once translated, another period of consultation will be required before publication in 2025. Discussions are continuing with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) regarding the revised deadline dates, with Welsh Government aware of the Council's position. The updated Strategy will outline how the Council assesses flood risks across the city, as well as the policy for investment, including more localised risks and opportunities for advancing sustainable drainage solutions.

Building resilience into our highway network

Good progress has been made to deliver improvements to Cardiff's roads and footways, with localised road and footway surfacing taking place across the city. Looking ahead, a risk-based approach will be utilised to identify further work programmes, governed by asset deterioration and related conditions, with the volume of work delivered directly proportional to available budgets. In addition, the programme to replace all 24,000 residential lighting to low-energy LED lighting has reached completion, with new LED unit installed throughout all residential areas of the city.

In terms of civil parking enforcement, the 'Report a Parking Problem' section of the Cardiff Gov App and website has been amended to capture further details of the problems being reported. This has enabled Civil Enforcement Officers to target areas of concern whilst undertaking their patrols and understand whether further deployment improvements are required. In addition, officers have undertaken targeted engagement with citizens regarding safe parking options. Looking ahead, the Council will implement a new City Parking framework, which introduces Parking Zones, to further manage urban parking, alleviate congestion and improve the overall quality of life for residents and businesses.

Due to the poor weather experienced during July 2023-November 2023, the annual machine-based laser SCANNER survey, which is used to assess the surface condition of 'A', 'B' and 'C' roads, was unable to take place. As a result, the associated road condition values have not been able to be reported.

Making Cardiff a world-leading recycling city

Following the publication of its new Recycling Strategy 2022-25, the Council has been working to implement a major programme of reform to waste and collection services to improve efficiency and resilience. This includes a city-wide roll-out of segregated recycling collections, which has been successfully expanded to 46,000 properties across Cardiff, as well as enhancing kerbside collection services. Work is currently ongoing to review Cardiff's general waste collections, following a public consultation on proposed changes, with consideration given to different bin sizes, frequency of collection and their suitability.

Recycling performance fluctuated throughout 2023/24 – largely due to the tonnage of waste collected varying monthly, as well as the service being impacted by industrial action – with the year-end position provisionally reported as 60.07%, which is below the 64% target. As the largest local authority in Wales, Cardiff has very specific characteristics which make meeting statutory recycling targets challenging, and further work is needed to meet the 70% target by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. The Council is currently working to prepare an Initial Strategic Project Assessment (ISPA) for submission to Welsh Government, which will identify funding required to make improvements to Cardiff's recycling performance.

Working as one team to keep our streets clean

Work is ongoing to deliver a comprehensive programme of reform to the Council's Street Scene cleansing and enforcement services; a Litter and Fly-tipping Plan is currently being developed, which will outline how the Council intends to deliver improvements across the city, and a restructure of the service will commence in Quarter 1 2024/25.

Year-end results show that 94.53% of highways land inspected by the Local Authority was of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness in 2023/24, above the target of 90%. Nonetheless, the Council was below target in 2023/24 in terms of the number of wards in Cardiff where 90% of the highways land inspected is of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness. At year end, 23 out of 28 wards passed the 90% threshold, although the target was for all wards to be above 90%. In addition, the number of Environmental Street Scene investigation actions was also below target at year end, with 19,261 actions against a target of 25,000. Through the restructure of the service and introduction of digital infrastructure which will support evidence collection, it is envisaged that efficiency and performance will increase moving forward.



Wellbeing Objective 7: Modernising & integrating our public services

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings, and protecting the Council's historic buildings
- Improving the Council's digital offer and enhancing the use of data
- Supporting a highly-skilled and productive workforce with the wellbeing of staff at its core
- Using the power of the public purse to support the city's recovery
- Ensuring the Council represents and responds to the diversity of Cardiff's communities

■ Overall Assessment

The Council continues to make progress in improving key corporate services, including effectively managing its assets and property, delivering its digital strategy, supporting its workforce and managing its finances. An enhanced programme of work has also been delivered to ensure the Council and its services reflect and respond to the diversity of the city. The Council, however, continues to face significant immediate and medium-term budgetary challenges due to a combination of increased complexity and scale of demand on services, pay and cost pressures and looking ahead, will need to close a budget gap of £140m over the next four years. In response the Council will need to work across departmental boundaries and with partners to reconsider, and in some cases redesign priority services, while ensuring that robust governance and good management is in place as the basis for delivering improvement across all services.

Areas of Progress

- Good progress continues to be made in digitalising Council services with an ongoing programme of engagement work informing citizen requirements.
- The Property Plan 2021-26 continues to be delivered, with ongoing carbon reduction across the operational estate.
- The Workforce strategy continues to be implemented, including the delivery of the pilot leadership programme to support the diversification of future leaders within the Authority.
- A comprehensive package of support is available to support staff with an emphasis on staff wellbeing.
- Good progress has been made in delivering the recommendations of the Race Equality taskforce with a progress report shared with the Taskforce in July 2024.
- The Council has maintained its place as a Top 100 employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index survey, the highest placed Welsh Local Authority overall.
- The new Participation strategy was approved by Cabinet with response rates from identified groups increasing in key consultations.

Areas of Challenge and Risk

- The Council faces significant immediate and medium-term budgetary challenges due to a combination of increased complexity and scale of demand on services, energy pricing, pay pressures and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- Recruiting and retaining staff in key areas of the organisation, this is particularly acute in Adults and Children's Services but also having an impact across all directorates and impacting the delivery of Wellbeing Objectives.
- There has been a marginal improvement in relation to the sickness absence position, however the overall performance is above target and the position is variable across Council service areas.
- The delivery of capital receipts received is below target, with a number of transactions rolling over into the 2024/25 financial year.
- The Council has had to temporarily close both City Hall and St David's Hall to undertake necessary maintenance works.
- Despite progress in reducing the carbon impact of the Council's estate, the scale of reduction required and the time taken for larger scale proposals to be implemented is very challenging.

Summary of Corporate Plan Performance Position at Year-End

Key Performance Indicators



Steps



Steps and KPIs rated Red as Quarter 4 are addressed in the narrative below, and the full comment and results against each step and KPI can be found in the [Corporate Performance Dashboard](#).

Financial resilience

The Council continues to experience significant financial pressures following year on year reductions to its budget. A budget gap of £30.490 million was identified for the 2024/25 financial year, with an indicative budget gap of £49.7 million budget gap for 2025/26 and £147.8 million across the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

There continues to be financial pressures across a number of areas within the Council, primarily in Children’s Services, Adult Social Care and Homelessness. The pressures in Children’s Services are significant and attributed to sustained demand pressures and price increases relating to residential placements for the authority’s children looked after cohort. More broadly inflationary pressures are placing upward pressure on pay awards, the costs of goods and commodities purchased by the Council (such as energy, food and fuel) as well as the cost of construction, materials and commissioned services.

To support the budget development process for 2025/26 and 2026/27, a comprehensive programme of service and budget reviews has been initiated in Quarter 1 2024/25 by the Council’s Cabinet with a focus on identifying opportunities to drive efficiencies over the short term and to identify how services need to change and adapt to be sustainable over the medium term.

Improving the Council’s digital offer and enhancing the use of data

The Council has continued to expand its range of online services to citizens over the year, improving access for residents, helping manage demand and reducing cost. Each service is aligned to digital platforms including the CardiffGov App, Chatbot and website. The number of people downloading the Cardiff App has continued; 93,000 people now have the App with 20,000 downloading it over the last 12 months. The number of digital contacts has also seen a significant increase over 2023/24, largely due to more services being available online such as digital parking permit applications, the ability to report faulty street lights and through improved reporting.

The Council has focussed on moving high-volume processes, including updating of Council Tax details, reporting pothole and street light issues, away from the Council’s customer service team towards lower-cost

digital channels. Over 2023/24 there has been a 23.4% reduction in calls offered and a reduction of 16.5% in calls handled. More efficient processes have reduced failure demand and by utilising webchat, chatbot and online forms customers have been able to choose to contact C2C in a method other than phone. This has allowed the contact centre to improve overall performance and focus on the more complex enquiries.

This digital shift has helped the Council more effectively manage demand on services. Since going live in August 2023, 3,707 change of address have been completed digitally and only 42 cases have been handled by the Contact Centre telephony. This is a reduction of 97% when compared to 3 months prior to going live.

Over the course of the year the Council has engaged with citizens in a variety of ways to understand citizen requirements and experience of the Council's digital services, this has included engagement through customer feedback via BOBi and the App. There has been a small decrease in the percentage of satisfaction in relation to the ChatBot falling from 84% in 2022/23 to 79% in 2023/24. Alongside the customer surveys that take place on a regular basis, the Council has conducted a digital survey through the Cardiff Research Centre and engaged with Child Friendly Cardiff, Youth Services and Post-16 support to encourage wider take-up amongst the younger demographic regarding digital services. The analysis of this work will be used to shape digital services going forwards and help shape the formulation of the new Digital Strategy being developed in 2024/25.

The Council continues to use social media channels to engage citizens with the number engaging via Instagram increasing to over 17,000 followers. For the first year since Cardiff Council introduced its Facebook account, however, there was a fall in the number of followers with the outturn figure of 59,407 below the target of 60,170. This reduction may be attributable to changes in algorithms by Meta but there is a recognition, however, that there may be a ceiling on the number of followers that can be achieved within a city the size of Cardiff.

Delivering leaner and greener Council buildings

The Council's land and property estate is considerable, with over 750 properties owned and managed. The cost of managing, operating and maintaining the Council's operational estate is approximately £38 million, the second largest call on the Council's budget after staff costs. The overall quality of the Council's estate means that a large number of properties require repair works, with a value of £45 million Priority 1 works programmed through the course of the Corporate Property Strategy 2021-26.

The Property Strategy sets out four key areas of focus to reduce the built environment carbon footprint: modernisation of the estate, behaviour change, passive decarbonisation and rationalisation of property. Modernisation of the estate is challenging due to the resource, time, scale and complexity associated with the programme of work. A four-year refit programme has also been developed for the Council's Corporate and Education property portfolio.

City Hall, a Grade 1 listed building, closed temporarily in October 2023 to address long-term maintenance issues, make it fit for purpose and available for future use. Work is progressing however with the heritage requirements highlighting the need for an extended timescale to undertake the maintenance work in a way that is sympathetic to the fabric of the building and protect its Grade 1 listed status. Whilst phase 1 works will enable the building to re-open and operate as an event venue, further work will be needed before office accommodation in the building can be re-occupied.

The temporary closure of City Hall and St David's Hall for necessary maintenance works and the relinquishment of Willcox House have had an impact on decarbonisation targets with a 5% reduction in Carbon across the Council's built environment. It is anticipated the carbon footprint of the built environment will continue to fall in future years. However, the scale of reduction required and the time taken for larger scale proposals to be implemented is very challenging.

In June 2023 Cabinet approved the Core Office Strategy to progress to Full Business Case for the preferred option. The Strategy aims to deliver a new long-term solution to substantially reduce the financial pressures associated with the growing maintenance backlog and seek to contribute towards reducing the carbon impact of the Council's property estate.

The delivery of capital receipts remains a critical objective to the Council and the 2023/24 Annual Property Plan set a target of £3 million, to date £1.6 million of capital receipts have been received, with a number of transactions rolling over into the 2024/25 financial year.

Supporting a highly-skilled and productive workforce with the wellbeing of staff at its core

The Council continues to face workforce challenges, including recruitment challenges and high levels of sickness in specific service areas. The Workforce Strategy 2023-27 sets out a series of measures to respond to these challenges and considerable progress has been made over the last seven months. The strategy has delivered a new Employee Benefits system to support staff with cost-of-living pressures and the Council's employment offer remains attractive in a competitive recruitment environment. There are a number of recruitment projects due to launch in the next year, including piloting diverse recruitment panels for certain roles, redefining application approaches to make applying for roles more straightforward for applicants as well as other measures designed to attract a more diverse range of applicants.

Recruitment and retention issues remain apparent across several services, which is impacting the delivery of certain projects and commitments. This is particularly the case in Adults and Children's Services, which is why considerable work has been undertaken to develop tailored approaches to recruitment and retention. Work continues to support managers in recruiting and retaining talented individuals in a competitive market, as well as supporting directorates to create pathways into their harder to fill roles.

The Race Equality Taskforce identified the Council's need to increase representation at senior grades and feeder grades for ethnic minority staff. In the last 12 months the Council has completed a pilot of its first leadership programme, with participants from under-represented groups and networks taking part, and senior level engagement in delivering the programme, through delivering sessions, mentoring participants and receiving reverse mentoring from participants. A review is being undertaken to consider a further roll-out across the wider workforce. A review has been carried out for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and additional training modules implemented for staff, with work being undertaken to roll out further mandatory equality training for all staff over 2024/25.

Sickness absence remains a challenge for the Council with an outturn figure of 11.73 FTE days lost per person to sickness absence against a target of 9.5 days lost per FTE. This is a decrease on the 2022/23 outturn of 12.0 FTE days lost and a very small improvement on the forecasted figure of 11.80 at the end of Quarter 3. Covid-19 sickness has significantly reduced over the last 12 months, with it only accounting for

3.14% of sickness compared to 12.35% in 2022/23. Targeted support continues to be provided for areas with high sickness absence particularly in respect to managing long-term sickness absence. Stress (non-work related) and stress (work related) remain the two highest reasons for long-term sickness absence and Human Resources People Services are continuing to provide support through Occupational Health, the Employee Counselling Service and other support services such as VIVUP (our Employee Assistance Programme) and wellbeing support group sessions.

The Council achieved the highest ranking for any local authority in Wales in the 2024 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, retaining its Gold Award status.

Using the power of the public purse to support the city's recovery

The Council spends over £600 million a year procuring a range of goods, services and works from over 8,000 suppliers and contractors. The size and scale of the Council's spend affords opportunities to leverage wider social and environmental gain. During the first half of the year the Council established Ardal Procurement Services, a collaborative procurement partnership with Monmouthshire, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils which aims to champion socially responsible procurement and maximise the positive economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing impact across the partnership and frameworks.

Throughout 2023/24 approximately 50% of the Council's spend was with Cardiff based organisations, 65% within the Cardiff Capital Region and 71.5% with Welsh based organisations. The spend figures were below the targets set out in the Corporate Plan. In response, the Council is continuing to review its local spend data and identify further opportunities with local companies, including undertaking a 'gap analysis' to understand where spend is low with local suppliers and develop strategies to address this.

Whilst the Council continues to make good progress in embedding Social Value (Community Benefits) requirements into contracts and tenders, the value achieved fell short of the £6 million annual target, with an estimated outturn figure of £3.7 million for 2023/24. A review of the social value portal has been undertaken to procure an enhanced system for both suppliers and Directorates to capture and monitor the delivery of social value. This has become a priority in order to meet the requirements of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 which provides a legal requirement on the Council to report on all community benefits on construction contracts over £2 million from late 2024.

Making sure that the Council better talks to and listens to the city that it serves

In June 2023, the Council launched a new pilot Cohesion Fund to support community groups seeking to create more inclusive communities and to build bridges between the city's diverse communities. The fund received a large number of high-quality applications, with 11 projects successful in receiving funding, including Tennis Wales, Chapter Arts Centre, ACE, Diversity Unplugged and the Indian Women's Association of Wales. All 11 organisations delivered their events reaching over 2,000 people through their combined impact, the success of the pilot in 2023/24 has enabled an expanded round of funding through 2024/25.

The Council values the views and contributions of its citizens and high response rates continue to be seen for the Council's regular, city-wide consultation surveys. The Council's 2024/25 Budget consultation received 9,001 responses for the main survey and a total of 103 responses to the youth survey, whilst the 2023 Ask Cardiff Survey received over 3,000 responses. Over 70% of respondents were satisfied with Cardiff as a place to live and an increase in levels of satisfaction were seen for a number of areas including libraries/ Hubs (69.2%), street lighting (67.95%), dealing with anti-social behaviour (44.2%) and care of the elderly (37.3%). The number of people satisfied with the services the council provided fell to 39% against a target of 70% with satisfaction with public transport, road maintenance and recycling and waste collections also declining compared with previous years.

The Council's Public Participation Strategy was approved by Cabinet and sets out actions to increase engagement with under-represented groups and further encourage local people to participate in the decision-making process. This followed a period of public consultation between July and September 2023. The Council recognising the need to improve engagement with seldom heard and under-represented groups made the consultation available in Welsh, Polish, Arabic and Bengali, with hard copies printed and made publicly available across the city. A particular focus was placed on engagement with under-represented groups, including direct engagement with children and young people, Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, older people and people who identify as disabled. Engagement with the Strategy was positive with over 1,300 responses received and over a fifth (19.4%) of respondents had never previously shared their views with the Council previously.

Following receipt of the final report of the Cardiff Race Equality Taskforce, progress has been made against the recommendations across the five thematic areas.

The Taskforce will be reconvened in the summer of 2024 to provide an oversight of progress to the Leader of the Council, and recommendations for continued areas of focus alongside an annual report of progress produced by PSB partners. The recommendations for the Council that remain open and ongoing relating to the Race Equality Taskforce Action plan will be incorporated into the Council's Equality and Inclusion Strategy. The draft Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-28 has been developed and public consultation will be undertaken in May 2024.

In 2023/24 a total of 3,724 complaints were recorded, this is a 21.3% increase on the 2022/23 figure where 3,071 complaints were recorded. The highest number of complaints was received by Street Scene, with 1,760 complaints for 2023/24, this is a increase of 32.93% when compared to 2022/23. During 2023/24, the number of complaints escalated to the Ombudsman remained relatively consistent with 144 cases involving Cardiff Council being closed; of those 144 cases just 28 were identified as requiring further action by the Council as an Early Resolution Settlement. This consistency suggests that the Council has been effectively managing public concerns and maintaining steady performance in handling complaints. This number of complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is considered a key indicator of how well the Council handles complaints. The complaints handling procedure helps the Council address customer dissatisfaction, offer an opportunity to learn from experience, make improvements and prevent similar problems arising again.



Main front cover image copyright Visit Wales

