**Swansea Council**

**Annual Review of Performance 2024-25**

**Executive Summary**

Swansea Council’s self-assessment for 2024–25 shows that we are performing well overall in delivering our priorities, managing our resources, and maintaining strong governance.

We continued to make real progress across our six Well-being Objectives, with strong leadership, targeted investment, and joined up working driving improvement in key areas such as education, social care, digital access, housing, regeneration and climate action. At the same time, we maintained a balanced budget, upheld robust decision-making standards, and supported a culture of learning and accountability.

Our assessment draws on a wide range of evidence, including performance data, audit findings, resident feedback, inspection outcomes, and service reviews. We have applied a formal grading system to evaluate our performance across three core dimensions:

* **Governance:** Rated *Good*. Governance arrangements remain sound, ethical standards are high, and internal audit and external review confirm a strong foundation. Some areas—such as compliance, integration of digital systems, and assurance reporting—require further development, but our overall systems are working well.
* **Use of Resources:** Rated *Good*. Financial governance was robust, and resources were used effectively to support priorities. However, the use of reserves to balance the budget is not sustainable over the long term, and continued action is needed to address workforce pressures, optimise asset use, and accelerate savings delivery.
* **Performance:** Rated *Good*. All six Well-being Objectives saw meaningful progress, supported by clear action plans and dedicated programmes. Challenges remain around delivery pace, digital maturity, service demand, and red-rated performance measures, but improvement areas have been identified and are being addressed.

These findings are underpinned by a set of cross-cutting insights that reflect shared themes across our Well-being Objectives. We saw clear strengths in collaboration, leadership and transformation delivery, but also identified areas for continued improvement, particularly around data use, programme delivery capacity, workforce sustainability, and stronger alignment between planning, risk and performance systems.

Looking ahead, our focus for 2025-26 will be on accelerating the delivery of benefits from transformation programmes, ensuring the sustainability of our workforce and finances, and continuing to place people at the heart of everything we do.

**About this Report**

**What is the Annual Review of Performance?**

The Annual Review of Performance looks at how well the council delivered on its Well-being Objectives during the financial year 2024-25.

It’s our way of reflecting on what’s working, where we can do better, and how we’re making a difference. These objectives, and the steps we’re taking to achieve them, are all set out in the council’s Corporate Plan, along with the measures we use to track our progress.

Our Well-being Objectives are:

* Safeguarding people from harm
* Improving Education and Skills
* Transforming our Economy and Infrastructure
* Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities
* Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change
* Transformation and Financial Resilience

The report also reviews progress made on the agreed improvement areas for each Well-being Objective during 2024-25 and sets out the key areas we’ll focus on for improvement in 2025-26.

**Meeting our legal duties**

This report meets our legal duty under Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to publish an annual Self-Assessment. It explains how effectively the council is delivering its services, using its resources, and meeting its Well-being Objectives in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Our Corporate Plan fulfils our duty to set Well-being Objectives under the 2015 Act. It sets out our six priorities, the values and principles that guide us, and how we plan to deliver lasting benefits for Swansea.

These objectives show how we contribute to Wales’s seven national well-being goals, aiming to improve the social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being of our city and county. To do this, we follow the sustainable development principles in the Act by:

* Taking a long-term view
* Focusing on prevention
* Working across services and with partners
* Involving people in decisions
* Aligning our work with others to deliver the biggest impact

**How we develop the Annual Review of Performance**

We use a broad range of evidence to understand how well the Council is delivering its Well-being Objectives and improving life in Swansea. Our main sources of information include:

* **Performance indicators:** Each Well-being Objective in our Corporate Plan is supported by key measures. We track these quarterly and report them to senior officers, Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees, Council, and the Governance and Audit Committee. A simple traffic-light (RAG) system shows how we’re doing (Green: on or above target, Amber: within 5% of target, Red: more than 5% below target).
* **Progress on key actions (Steps):** Each objective includes a set of key actions. We monitor delivery throughout the year to track achievements and identify where further focus is needed.
* **Listening to people:** We gather feedback throughout the year from residents, staff, and partners through surveys and consultations. This includes the staff survey, resident satisfaction survey, and annual budget consultation.
* **Financial performance:** Budget and spending are monitored closely and reported quarterly. Our Outturn Report provides a full overview of the Council’s financial position at year-end.
* **Good governance:** Governance arrangements are overseen by the Strategic Governance Group (SGG) and the Governance and Audit Committee. The SSG brings senior officers together to oversee governance, risk, performance, and improvement. Our Annual Governance Statement, published alongside the Statement of Accounts, summarises how these systems are working.
* **Risk management:** Our corporate risk framework ensures risks are identified, assessed, and managed consistently across the Council. Risks are regularly reviewed, clearly owned by senior officers, and linked to service delivery and performance.
* **Internal audit:** The Internal Audit Service provides independent assurance on the effectiveness of our governance, risk management, and internal controls. Findings are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and help highlight strengths and areas for improvement.
* **Oversight by Council committees:**
	+ Scrutiny Committees review services and policies, hold Cabinet to account, and recommend improvements.
	+ The Governance and Audit Committee provides independent oversight of governance, risk, and financial management.
	+ Service Transformation Committees work with Cabinet Members and officers to shape future policies and services.
* **External inspections**: Organisations like Audit Wales, Estyn, and Care Inspectorate Wales inspect Council services and provide independent feedback. We report updates quarterly to the Governance and Audit Committee and use findings to support improvement.
* **Service planning**: Every service completes a review of the previous year’s performance as part of its annual service planning. This analysis helps inform future priorities and feeds directly into our self-assessment process.

In addition, each Well-being Objective has been assessed by the lead officer, supported by performance data, real-life case studies, feedback from residents and staff, and consideration by the Strategic Governance Group, Cabinet, the Scrutiny Programme Committee, and the Governance and Audit Committee.

**How we assess performance**

To support transparency and consistency, we are using a common framework to assess performance against each of our Well-being Objectives. This covers three key areas as required by the 2021 Act:

* Governance – how well the council is run and how effectively decisions are made.
* Use of resources – how well we manage our people, money, assets and systems.
* Performance and improvement – how successfully we deliver priorities and drive change.

We have given each area a self-assessment rating based on evidence from performance data, financial reporting, internal and external audit, inspection findings, and service self-assessments. Ratings are agreed by the Strategic Governance Group and reflect a balanced judgement of strengths, progress, and risks.

We use the following grading scale:

* Strong: evidence of high performance, effective governance and improvement, with few significant issues.
* Good: good performance overall with some areas of risk or inconsistency requiring attention.
* Mixed: variable performance, with some strong areas but also notable weaknesses or gaps.
* Priority for improvement: significant or widespread concerns requiring focused action.

These judgements inform the overall assessment for each Well-being Objective and support the identification of cross-cutting and service-specific improvement areas.

**Governance**

Each year, Swansea Council reviews how well it is being run – checking that public money is used properly, decisions are made in the right way, and services are delivered fairly, openly and efficiently. This self-assessment covers how the Council governed itself during 2024-25.

The Council has strong systems in place to make sure councillors and staff act with honesty, fairness and integrity. There are clear rules on behaviour, declarations of interest, and gifts and hospitality, which are regularly reviewed and enforced. The Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee work to ensure that the highest ethical standards are maintained. No significant concerns about conduct were raised this year, and the Committee noted that members’ behaviour continues to meet expected standards.

The Council actively involves the public, staff and partners in shaping decisions. Consultations take place on major proposals, such as the annual budget, and people can contribute to Council and Scrutiny meetings. Dedicated councillor champions help ensure that under-represented groups have a voice, and the Council uses surveys, complaints and engagement tools to help improve services. Work also continued to strengthen public transparency, including ensuring that reports are clear, accessible and available in both English and Welsh.

The Council is focused on long-term planning to meet the needs of the city and its people. The Corporate Plan sets out six well-being objectives, supported by a three-year Medium Term Financial Plan and a Corporate Transformation Plan that aims to modernise services and improve outcomes. Progress is tracked through quarterly and annual performance reporting.

Decision-making is backed by robust analysis, clear impact assessments, and thorough oversight. Officers provide detailed reports to councillors, and all decisions go through legal, financial and equality checks. There are clear systems for managing risk, including a corporate risk register and monthly reviews. Despite pressures, the Council continues to make sound financial decisions. Thanks to strong financial oversight and additional one-off funding from Welsh Government, the Council ended the year with a small surplus, although financial challenges remain for the future.

Staff and councillor development is a priority. The Council offers training, mentoring and appraisals to ensure people have the skills they need. Recruitment and retention remain challenges in some areas, but steps have been taken to improve workforce planning, track recruitment performance, and implement digital solutions. The introduction of the new Oracle Fusion system did cause some operational issues, leading to temporary manual workarounds, but work is ongoing to resolve these and further improve efficiency.

A review of the Council’s governance practices through Senior Management Assurance Statements showed that most systems are working well. In total, 47% of the assessed areas were assessed as being embedded while a further 47% demonstrated strong application of governance practices. The corporate average score improved from 4.1 (on a 5-point scale) in 2023-24 to 4.4 in 2024-25, showing good progress. The remaining 7% of areas were rated as showing mixed application. These included compliance with internal policies and rules, the consistency of performance reviews, and aspects of data security. These areas have been recognised as priorities for improvement in 2025-26, and action is already under way to address them.

During 2024-25, Audit Wales issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Council’s 2023-24 Statement of Accounts, confirming that the financial statements were prepared to a good standard and presented fairly. The accounts were submitted later than the statutory deadline, but the timing marked a notable improvement on previous years. Audit Wales also confirmed that the Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report were consistent with the financial statements and relevant guidance.

No significant issues were identified in the certification of grants or returns.

In relation to value for money, Audit Wales found the Council had reasonable arrangements in place to support its financial sustainability, although some weaknesses remain in the delivery and monitoring of savings plans. These issues are being addressed as part of the Council’s ongoing financial planning processes.

Audit Wales is continuing work in several key areas, including commissioning, risk management, cybersecurity, and unscheduled care. The Council is actively engaging with these reviews and responding to emerging findings.

The Council is also considering relevant national reports published by Audit Wales during 2024, using the insights to strengthen local arrangements in areas such as affordable housing, digital strategy, and performance management.

The Council’s internal control environmentremained sound and well-managed throughout 2024-25. Internal audit results for the year demonstrate a high level of assurance across the Council’s systems and processes. Of the 69 audits completed during the year, 96% received a positive rating - 45% were awarded High assurance and 51% Substantial. Only three audits received a Moderate assurance rating, and none were rated Limited, reflecting the overall strength and reliability of internal controls across the organisation.

The Council’s key financial systems, referred to as Fundamental audits, are subject to annual or biennial review due to their critical importance in supporting our corporate objectives. Fourteen of these audits were completed in 2024-25. Ten received a high assurance rating, and three were rated Substantial, providing further assurance of sound financial management.

One area that has required focused improvement in 2024-25 is Accounts Receivable. This audit was rated Limited in 2023-24, following five years of Moderate assurance. In response, the Council initiated the Aged Debt Project, led by the Director of Corporate Services, to strengthen processes and address long-standing issues. Strong progress throughout 2024-25 has been reported regularly to the Governance and Audit Committee, with further audit planned in 2025-26 to ensure that improvements are fully embedded and sustained.

These outcomes demonstrate the Council’s commitment to using internal audit not only as a mechanism for assurance but also as a driver of continuous improvement and good governance. The positive assurance levels achieved in 2024-25 provide confidence in the effectiveness of key controls and the Council’s commitment to sound financial and operational governance.

Although challenges remain, particularly around workforce capacity, digital integration, and consistent compliance, the Council has effective governance arrangements in place. It has maintained high standards, responded constructively to scrutiny, and strengthened its ability to manage change and deliver services in a difficult environment. With continued focus on improvement in key areas, the Council is well positioned to sustain good governance and deliver for the people of Swansea.

For full details, see the published Annual Governance Statement 2024-25, available at:
link to be inserted.

**Based on the evidence presented, the Council’s overall governance in 2024-25 is assessed as *Good*.**

**Use of resources**

**Financial management**

Managing the council’s finances continues to be one of our biggest challenges. Rising demand for services, the continued impact of inflation, and long-standing cost pressures have placed real strain on our revenue budget over the past year. Despite this, we expect to end 2024-25 with a relatively small service overspend of £3 million, more than fully offset and supported by one-off helpful additional Welsh Government funding of nearly £8 million, issued in recognition of all authorities facing excess cost pressures. Close in-year financial control has been sustained including clear direction from Cabinet and close working between all officers and members over tolerated overspending in two targeted areas (adult social care and homelessness), and careful, existing planned use of reserves. Continued outperformance on treasury management returns (£10+ million), significant inroads to debt collection and council tax collection (£5 million released back to revenue as a result), have enabled the overall position to be significantly underspent against budget, with consequential reduced draws from some reserves, significant adds to Contingency and Capital Equalisation Reserve and an increase in Schools Reserves (already the highest in Wales).We’ve continued to maintain strong financial governance, with regular budget monitoring through Cabinet, Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee, and our most recent Statement of Accounts received an unqualified audit opinion from Audit Wales.

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The 2025–26 budget was set in this context. Our revenue funding from Welsh Government increased by 4.8%, slightly above the Welsh average, but still fell short of the cost pressures facing local services. To deliver a balanced budget of £643.1 million, we agreed £18.5 million in savings across services, raised Council Tax by 5.95% (one of the lowest increases in Wales), and used £2.4 million from reserves. We also prioritised investment in schools and social care. The schools budget increased by £11.8 million, and over £226 million is being spent on education overall – the highest level to date. Social services funding also rose to meet growing demand in adult care and housing. Additional support was provided for households on low incomes, with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme increasing by £2 million to £27.4 million.

Our capital programme delivered over £96 million of investment in 2024–25, supporting major projects including new schools, council housing, city centre regeneration, depot consolidation, and digital infrastructure. These investments help to modernise services, improve outcomes for residents, and contribute to long-term financial and environmental goals. The use of capital funding is regularly reviewed to ensure projects deliver value for money and are aligned with the council’s priorities.

As part of the budget-setting process, we carried out a public consultation from January to February 2025. Residents, staff, trade unions, schools and community groups were invited to give feedback on our proposals. The consultation informed final decisions, including changes to investment priorities and the protection of key services. Feedback from the national residents’ survey also provided an important external perspective. In that survey, 49% of respondents said they believe the council generally provides services that represent value for money - the highest score among the nine councils that took part in 2024. This helps to validate the emphasis we place on financial stewardship and delivering the best return for local people.

Our Medium-Term Financial Plan projects a funding gap of £47 million between 2026 and 2029. We have now used reserves to support the budget for five years in a row. While this has been necessary and proportionate, it is not a sustainable approach over the long term. Rising demand in high-cost areas such as social care, education and homelessness means we must continue to make difficult choices about how we use limited resources.

The Successful and Sustainable Swansea transformation programme remains central to our financial strategy. The programme aims to deliver savings and service improvements across thirteen major programmes, including workforce, digital, and waste. While progress has been made in many areas, the pace of change has been slower than planned in some areas due to procurement delays, delivery capacity and external market conditions. We are now focused on accelerating the delivery of benefits and improving how we track and report savings and service outcomes.

Audit Wales carried out a Financial Sustainability Review of the council in 2024. Their report recognised that we have reasonable arrangements in place and a clear transformation strategy to support long-term sustainability. However, it also raised concerns about the pace of savings delivery and the need for more detailed reporting on the progress and impact of individual savings. It highlighted that the continued use of reserves and the risks associated with capital financing need to be carefully managed. We have accepted these findings and are working to strengthen our savings plans, improve our financial reporting, and ensure transformation programmes deliver both financial and service benefits.

We assess our financial management as resilient, but under sustained pressure. We have delivered a balanced budget, maintained investment in key services, and upheld strong financial governance. But rising costs, growing demand and the need to deliver significant savings mean we must remain focused on long-term planning, making every pound count, and ensuring that our transformation work delivers for the people of Swansea.

**Asset management**

This year marked the final phase of the council’s Asset Management Plan (AMP) for 2021-2025. As part of our self-assessment, we have reviewed how well we’ve used land and property assets to support service delivery, achieve value for money, and contribute to broader goals around regeneration and decarbonisation.

The AMP introduced a more corporate and coordinated approach to managing the council’s estate. This has led to improvements in how we plan, use, and maintain property across the organisation. Key progress includes:

* Corporate Landlord: The implementation of a centralised model has improved consistency, oversight, and alignment between assets and service needs.
* Disposals: Surplus and underused sites have been released, helping to reduce liabilities and generate capital receipts.
* Investment and regeneration: Major projects have been supported through property activity, including contractual commitment to a new super depot in the Enterprise Park. This will modernise operational services, improve staff conditions, and enable disposal of outdated sites.
* Partnership working: Joint asset initiatives with other public sector bodies have supported co-location and town centre regeneration schemes.
* Climate response: We have taken steps to reduce emissions from the estate but recognise that decarbonisation must accelerate to meet our 2030 Net Zero target.

We assess our performance in asset management as positive, with a clear shift towards more strategic, collaborative, and purposeful use of the council’s estate. However, we have not fully met all of our ambitions. Some disposals have taken longer than expected due to market conditions, and the alignment of asset decisions with service transformation is still developing. Balancing short-term financial pressures with long-term estate rationalisation also remains a challenge.

In March 2024, Audit Wales published its “Springing Forward – Assets” review of the council’s strategic approach. The report recognised good use of assets to support wider goals but identified areas for improvement, including understanding of asset condition, benchmarking, and monitoring. In response, we have initiated a five-year programme of asset condition surveys starting in September 2024 and are working to strengthen data quality and internal reporting. These actions will directly inform our future capital investment decisions and performance management.

A new Asset Management Plan for 2025-2029 is being developed and will be submitted to Cabinet for approval. The next phase of our approach will focus on:

* Supporting flexible working and service transformation through modern, fit-for-purpose buildings
* Accelerating estate decarbonisation and energy efficiency investment
* Enhancing the visibility and use of performance data in asset decisions
* Continuing to enable regeneration and economic growth, particularly in the city centre

**Workforce**

The council’s Workforce Strategy has now completed its second year. The progress made so far has given us a clear picture of what’s working, where we’re improving, and what still needs attention to support a modern, resilient workforce.

Overall, retention remains high across the organisation, with staff turnover averaging just 9.5%. Many colleagues choose to stay with us for the long term, supported by strong team cultures and flexible working arrangements. Our apprenticeship programme continues to grow, with 248 employees undertaking an apprenticeship qualifications in 2024-25, helping to create valuable entry points into public service.

The council remains committed to fairness and equality. Women make up 61% of our workforce and 58% of staff in the upper pay quartile. As of 31 March 2024, the average gender pay gap was 2.43%, and the median gap was 3.48%, well below the UK averages of 9% and 7.5% respectively. We also completed a review of the Job Evaluation Scheme for Chief Officers, helping ensure consistent pay and performance recognition at senior levels.

A new performance management system completed its first full cycle during 2024-25. Around 80% of staff received a formal appraisal by the end of the year, with full participation in some services.

Workforce planning is now embedded across all service areas, helping us to use staff, budgets, and assets flexibly to meet service demands. Our overall progress against Workforce Strategy objectives has been strong, with 84% completed by year-end, an improvement on 70% in 2023-24.

At the same time, we face a number of challenges that reflect wider pressures in the public sector. Recruiting and retaining skilled professionals remains difficult in competitive labour markets, particularly for technical and specialist roles. Skills gaps are emerging in areas such as digital, data, and regulatory services. We’re also managing the effects of an ageing workforce and higher sickness levels in some teams, which place pressure on capacity and wellbeing.

In response, we’ve invested heavily in training and development. Nearly 200 managers and aspiring managers have taken part in ILM-accredited programmes, with 65 achieving a Level 5 qualification. A follow-up Level 6 qualification has now been launched, with 10 managers completing it and another cohort starting later in 2025. Through our partnership with Gower College, we also introduced new development routes for aspiring and first-line managers, with strong take-up and more planned.

Alongside this, our HR and OD services continue to modernise. Over half of our HR policies were reviewed during the year, and the average time to hire dropped from 74 days to 43 days. We’ve also launched new digital learning options and seen a 13% increase in the number of staff choosing to use Welsh in the workplace.

Staff engagement remains a key focus. Nearly 2,500 employees took part in the 2024 staff survey, providing valuable feedback on communication, recognition, leadership visibility, and the need for more two-way dialogue. While many welcomed regular updates, digital tools, and support from line managers, others called for better feedback loops, more consistent recognition, and clearer communication from senior leaders. We’re responding by improving how we share information, widening opportunities for staff to shape decisions, and making sure our engagement methods reach everyone, especially those without regular digital access.

In December 2023, Audit Wales reviewed the council’s approach to workforce planning and strategy. They recognised the clarity of our workforce vision and our strong partnership working but also highlighted areas for improvement, including the need to identify the medium-term resources needed to deliver the Workforce Strategy, and to make better use of benchmarking to assess progress and value for money.

We’ve taken action in response. Additional permanent capacity has been secured, and a development needs analysis is underway to identify and address skills gaps. A new overarching workforce plan is due to be published in 2025, and we’re improving our use of internal workforce data and benchmarking to inform decisions and track what’s working.

**Taking account of financial, asset, and workforce management, the Council’s overall use of resources in 2024-25 is assessed as *Good*, with clear progress made in a context of sustained pressure.**

**What our consultation and engagement told us**

At Swansea Council, we continue to see people’s experiences as central to how we assess our performance. Alongside data, inspection findings and financial evidence, we place a strong emphasis on feedback from those who live, work and deliver services in the city. That includes residents, businesses, staff and trade unions. This experience-based evidence has helped shape this self-assessment.

Our engagement activity is guided by the council’s Consultation and Engagement Strategy, which was last updated in 2022. In 2024, we took part in a new national residents’ survey coordinated by Data Cymru and the WLGA. This new approach offers a more consistent and comparable way of understanding people’s views over time. It also gives us more detailed local information, as responses are captured at postcode level. The Swansea survey ran from September to November 2024 and was promoted widely through the council’s communications channels. Over 1,300 people took part. This year’s findings showed that while many residents were satisfied with Swansea as a place to live, fewer felt informed about the council’s work, and only around a third agreed that the council provides quality services overall. Just under half said they trust the council a great deal or a fair amount, and 40% were satisfied with how the council is run. Although lower than we would like our result was the highest of the nine councils that ran the national survey in 2024-25. These results reflect the wider challenges faced by public services and underline the importance of making decisions, performance and governance more visible, accessible and easier to understand.

Our annual budget consultation also remains an important part of the process. In January and February 2025, we invited people to give their views on the proposed 2025–26 budget. A total of 301 people took part in the survey, which outlined the council’s savings proposals and key investment decisions. The feedback informed the final budget and was considered alongside performance, need and legal duties. We know that we need to do more to increase awareness and participation, particularly among those less likely to take part in traditional consultations. Reaching a wider and more diverse audience remains a challenge, and we are continuing to explore more inclusive, accessible and locally relevant ways to involve people in the decisions that affect them.

Staff views are an important part of how we assess our organisational culture and workforce health. The 2024 staff survey, completed by 2,492 employees, 28% of the non-teaching workforce, provided valuable insight into how staff feel about their work, their teams and the council as an employer. While many highlighted supportive teams, flexible working and good access to information, the feedback also pointed to areas for improvement. These include better recognition, clearer responses to staff input, and more visible leadership. We are acting on these findings as part of our workforce and engagement plans.

The council also continues to maintain strong links with the business community, including through Swansea BID. A dedicated business survey was undertaken as part of this review, providing a collective voice on local priorities, performance and partnership. This work is complemented by our regular and structured engagement with recognised trade unions. Trade union representatives meet with HR officers monthly, and separate meetings are held for schools. Trade unions are involved in all policy reviews and play an active role in helping to shape decisions that affect the workforce.

In line with our duties under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, we are working to further strengthen our collaborative approach with trade unions. During the development of this review, we proactively shared emerging evidence with trade union representatives and discussed the findings formally in March 2025. This approach supports transparency and helps ensure union input is considered as part of our performance framework. A dedicated trade union survey also gathered feedback on how the council is performing more broadly, including views on governance, decision-making and use of resources.

Across all internal and partner surveys, there remains confidence in the council’s overall direction and how resources are used. Most staff feel informed about performance, and a strong majority say they speak positively about working for the council. Feedback from businesses and trade unions also reflects positive relationships and a shared commitment to working together.

However, feedback from residents remains more mixed. We recognise that trust and satisfaction can only be strengthened by making the council’s role clearer and more visible, especially around service standards, value for money, and how decisions are made. We also know from experience that people are more likely to take part when they see that their views have made a difference, something we are continuing to improve. Looking ahead, we will use the national survey model to track changes over time and continue to test new ways of involving people who are often underrepresented in consultation and engagement.

**Review and self-assessment of our Wellbeing Objectives**

**Wellbeing Objective 1:** **Safeguarding people from harm – so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation.**

Keeping people safe is one of the most important things we do as a council. Everyone in Swansea has the right to feel safe, at home, in their community, and in the care and support they receive. Our goal is to make sure no one is left at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation, and that the right support is there when it’s needed.

We want Swansea to be a fairer, healthier, and more equal city. That means giving children the best possible start in life and helping families stay strong and safe together. It means supporting older people and adults with care needs to live well, stay connected, and be treated with dignity and respect. And it means standing up for the rights of those who may struggle to be heard.

We believe prevention is always better than crisis. That’s why we focus on spotting risks early, acting quickly, and working with people to find the right solution for them. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, not just for social workers, but for every council service, elected member and partner. We’re proud of the professionalism of our workforce and continue to invest in training and leadership to embed safeguarding across everything we do.

**Our Performance in 2024–25**



Full comments and results against each step and KPI can be found in the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25 (link to be inserted).

In our 2023–24 self-assessment, we identified areas for continued improvement. We said we needed to focus on doing what matters to improve outcomes for children, young people and families; continue investing in prevention to avoid escalation into statutory services; embed a new model of support in adult services focused on prevention, early resolution and better use of resources; strengthen strengths-based, preventative work across the council; and maximise external income and funding.

In 2024–25, this work was delivered through a whole-council approach and two major transformation programmes: Transforming Adult Services and Child and Family Services Transformation. Both programmes aim to improve prevention, early help, person-centred support, and smarter use of resources.

Through the Child and Family Services Transformation Programme, more children have been supported to remain safely with their families. The number of children on the child protection register fell to 183 (target: 220), and statutory intervention has reduced overall. This reflects stronger access to early help, therapeutic support and increased local fostering options. A performance specialist secondment supported improvements in placement planning and sufficiency work.

Early Help Hubs supported 872 families during the year. Although this was below the 1,000 target, the service remained stable and had a positive impact despite staffing pressures. Expanding reach and capacity will be a key priority in 2025-26.

Local Area Coordination continued to deliver strong results - supporting over 1,200 residents and helping to form 28 new community groups. This work is now more closely aligned with tackling poverty services through a new delivery model. Regional funds have supported early help, therapeutic services, and support for carers, mental health and learning disability, with outcomes guided by the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership.

In adult services, the new Target Operating Model has started to show results. Residential reablement helped 78.1% of people reduce or eliminate their need for ongoing care, and waiting lists fell by 51%. 46% of initial contacts were resolved at the first point of contact.

The Care Inspectorate Wales inspection confirmed that care is generally person-centred and collaborative, supported by strong leadership and a committed workforce.

A more flexible, needs-led approach to assessments and reviews is now in place, but current performance measures do not yet fully reflect this shift. Only 14.1% of adult care reviews were completed within the year. Safeguarding timeliness also fell short, with just 62.6% of adult safeguarding enquiries and 78.4% of child protection visits completed on time. These gaps highlight pressure on front-line capacity and the need for stronger operational oversight. We are responding with revised reporting, strengthened management focus, and investment in workforce development.

Both transformation programmes are now entering their next phase. In adult services, our 2025–29 model will continue to prioritise prevention, independence and effective use of resources. In children’s services, we are building on strong foundations to expand early intervention, improve placement sufficiency, and reduce reliance on high-cost care. These programmes are essential to achieving long-term sustainability while delivering better outcomes for the people we support.

**How our safeguarding work supports a fairer, safer, and more sustainable Wales**

The work we’re doing to safeguard people from harm contributes directly to a safer, more equal Swansea and to Wales’s national well-being goals. At its core, our approach is about creating strong foundations - a skilled and caring workforce, joined-up services, and a shift in how we help people live safely, independently and with dignity.

Through our transformation programmes, we’re helping teams work in new ways—using digital tools, strengthening care models, and planning support around what matters most to each person. We’re investing in staff development so that prevention and well-being are at the heart of everything we do.

We’re also committed to equality, inclusion and rights. Whether it’s progressing our ambition to become a Human Rights City, ensuring services are accessible and culturally sensitive, or involving people in decisions about their care, we are building more cohesive, resilient communities. Reducing isolation, promoting safety, and amplifying people’s voices are key to this work.

We’re reducing environmental impact through flexible working and smarter use of buildings. Our approach to ethical procurement adds local social value while contributing to broader global goals. The decisions we take locally are supporting a more sustainable future.

None of this happens in isolation. We continue to work closely with partners across health, education, policing, housing and the third sector through the Swansea Public Services Board, the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board and the Regional Safeguarding Board. We also continue to involve people directly—through care planning, co-produced strategies and lived experience—ensuring our services reflect what really matters to them. By nurturing a learning culture across our workforce, we are making this approach the norm.

**Conclusion**

**Based on the evidence of delivery, impact, and the balance of performance measures, the Council’s performance against this well-being objective in 2024–25 is assessed as *Good*.** Outcomes are improving, practice is maturing, and transformation is delivering real impact. But rising demand, capacity constraints and safeguarding timeliness remain areas for focus. Maintaining momentum will require continued leadership, investment and adaptability.

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| **Case Study: Local Area Coordination – Changing Lives, One Conversation at a Time**Across Swansea, Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are quietly transforming lives. Working alongside people in their communities, they offer simple but powerful support, listening, connecting, and helping people take back control of their lives before things reach crisis point.In one case, a woman with serious health and mobility issues hadn’t left her home in eight months. After a few conversations with her LAC, she began to reconnect with her community. She’s now volunteering, has made new friends, and says she feels part of the world again. The outcomes speak for themselves. In 2024–25, LACs supported nearly 1,200 residents, helped form 28 new community groups, and were part of nearly 3,000 positive life changes, from improved mental health to new friendships, from greater confidence to simply feeling less alone.One man, grieving after the loss of his wife, said his Local Area Coordinator helped him cope and find purpose again. "I don’t know where I’d be without them," he told us.This is preventative support at its best, reducing isolation, preventing harm, and helping people thrive in their own communities. Swansea was the first place in Wales to pioneer Local Area Coordination, and the impact continues to grow. In 2023, the team received national recognition at the Wales Safer Communities Awards.It’s a powerful example of what can happen when we build services around people, not problems, and show up with time, care and connection. |

**Additional Improvement Areas Identified Through Self-Assessment**

As part of this self-assessment, we reviewed our progress in safeguarding people from harm and identified several improvement areas that are already being taken forward through the Council’s Corporate Plan and transformation programmes. These include our commitment to prevention, early help, and promoting independence through the Child and Family Services and Transforming Adult Services programmes.

The self-assessment process, supported by service plans and inspection feedback, also highlighted a number of specific operational priorities. Where end-of-year performance against Corporate Plan success measures or KPIs was rated red, corresponding improvement actions have been identified, either in the updated 2023-28 Corporate Plan or in the improvement areas set out below:

* Improving how we use performance and case management systems in adult services, such as Power BI and Mosaic, to support better real-time information, quality assurance, and decision-making.
* Strengthening the quality and consistency of care planning and case recording in children’s services, with a focus on timely updates, clear outcomes, and improved use of the Mosaic system.
* Strengthening support for unpaid carers through earlier identification, more flexible assessments, and improved access to tailored support.
* Embedding trauma-informed and rights-based practice more explicitly across children’s services, supported by therapeutic models and workforce development.
* Improving access and communication at the first point of contact in adult services, including revised arrangements for how people contact and move through the service.
* Tackling workforce pressures in both adult and children’s services through focused recruitment, retention, and development initiatives for social workers and carers.

These priorities have now been captured in service plans for 2025–26 and will be monitored through ongoing performance and transformation activity.

**Wellbeing Objective 2: Improving Education and Skills**

Helping children and young people succeed is at the heart of what we do. That means making sure every learner attends school regularly, feels supported and included, and leaves education equipped with the skills and confidence they need for the future. We want every school to be a place where learners feel they belong and where high expectations are matched with the right support.

We’re building an education system that is inclusive, aspirational, and sustainable, one that invests in leadership, supports wellbeing, and helps children and young people prepare for life and work in a changing world. That includes strong foundations in literacy and numeracy, rich opportunities for learning in and through Welsh, and a growing focus on digital skills, employability, and real-world experience.

**Our Performance in 2024-25**

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Full comments and results against each step and KPI can be found in the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25 (link to be inserted).

In our 2023–24 self-assessment, we said we needed to strengthen the way we support literacy, numeracy and digital skills; improve equality and equity guidance for schools; progress our capital build programme; complete the rollout of universal free school meals; consult on the sufficiency of specialist places; and refresh our behaviour strategy to promote inclusion. We also said we would continue to focus on raising attendance, reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), and supporting pupils with additional learning needs to thrive.

In 2024-25 we delivered across all of these areas. New professional learning programmes for literacy, numeracy and digital competence were developed with schools and tailored to local needs. Schools reported strong uptake and positive feedback, with specific focus on reading, writing and GCSE-informed numeracy support. A new digital platform is being piloted to allow schools to access professional learning, share resources and track impact more effectively.

Equality and inclusion remained central. New guidance was developed to support schools in aligning with the Strategic Equality Plan and the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. This included tools for reviewing school policies, capturing bullying data, and embedding inclusive practices. Schools also contributed to shaping revised accessibility audit tools and behaviour guidance, supporting a whole-system approach to wellbeing.

Work on the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme continued at pace. Cabinet endorsed the proposed capital investment priorities for the programme and approved the further commitment of funding for the progression of improved facilities for the new special school Ysgol Calon Lân, Bishop Vaughan, and Bryn Tawe. Plans to consult on the amalgamation as the first step towards a new build primary school in the Penderry ward were finalised. The new builds are being designed to deliver net zero operational carbon with a community focus. Take-up of Universal Free School Meals reached 70.98% by year-end, with all primary school pupils covered and five remaining schools operating with interim arrangements pending final capital works.

We made significant progress on additional learning needs (ALN) provision. A full consultation on the future of specialist teaching facilities was completed and approved, with 61 new permanent places being phased in from September 2025. A Welsh-medium pilot at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bryniago informed a longer-term approach to immersion support and bilingual ALN provision. Training on the ALNET Act and tribunal processes was delivered to education and social care staff to ensure a shared understanding of pathways and rights.

To help reduce exclusions and promote inclusion, we co-designed a new local authority behaviour policy with schools and partners. This work was informed by national best practice and local consultation. A model school policy, toolkit, and training package were developed, and the “When the Adults Change” programme was commissioned for all schools to support implementation and culture change.

School leadership development continued to be a strength. Headteachers and senior leaders accessed coaching, national qualifications and peer networks. Five new candidates took part in the NPQH pilot, and uptake of middle and senior leadership programmes remained strong. Schools also helped co-design a new model for performance development, which is now being piloted.

We also continued to improve our offer to support learner pathways and post-16 outcomes. Over 2,200 learners participated in 38 employer-linked activities, and 16 local businesses signed the Swansea Pledge. The “My Choice Swansea” platform is in development to help learners explore post-school options. However, NEET rates rose to 3.24% this year (target: 1.8%). This remains a key concern and will be a major focus for improvement next year.

Welsh-medium education remains a priority. All secondary schools achieved bronze status through the Siarter Iaith framework, and digital tools and immersion support have strengthened learner progression. However, targets for entry into Welsh-medium education and continuity between key stages were not met. Only 15.38% of learners were educated in Welsh at nursery/reception (target: 17.1%) and 94.08% continued into Welsh-medium provision across key stages (target: 98%). More work is needed to build access to Welsh-medium pathways.

Attendance continues to improve slowly. Every school has an Attendance Improvement Plan in place, and additional engagement staff are being funded through the local authority education grant. However, further progress is needed to reach sector targets and reduce persistent absenteeism. Inclusion support and family engagement will remain a focus in 2025–26.

We also made progress on improving the use of data and digital systems, but challenges remain. While platforms such as Teacher Centre and Bromcom are being rolled out, further investment is needed to improve data quality, case tracking, and real-time access to performance information.

Our education services continue to promote inclusion, participation and positive relationships. The council’s school-based counselling provider now works closely with our wider wellbeing teams, helping deliver earlier and more coherent support. A single point of access model is now being explored to bring these services together more effectively.

**How our education and skills work supports a fairer, greener and more prosperous Wales**

Our work to improve education and skills plays a vital role in building a stronger Swansea and a better Wales. At its heart, this objective is about helping every child and young person to thrive, regardless of their background, ability or circumstances.

We’re supporting a more prosperous Wales by strengthening the foundations of learning - through literacy, numeracy, and digital skills - and by expanding access to vocational education, work experience, and careers advice. The new Swansea Pledge is beginning to connect learners with local employers and raises aspirations. Our support for the new curriculum promotes flexible, future-ready learning.

We’re helping to create a more equal and cohesive Wales by improving access to support for vulnerable learners, increasing specialist provision, and embedding inclusive, trauma-informed approaches in schools. This includes rights-based teaching, improved accessibility, and stronger mental health and wellbeing support.

While we didn’t meet all our targets for Welsh-medium education this year, we’re acting to improve access, continuity, and parental confidence. Promoting the Welsh language remains central to our long-term vision.

We’re also supporting a more sustainable Wales. Our new schools are being designed to net-zero standards and to meet community needs. Through sustainable procurement and curriculum content, we’re equipping the next generation with the values and skills to shape a greener future.

Crucially, this is work we do together, with learners, parents, governors, employers and partners. From co-producing strategies to listening to pupil voice, collaboration and involvement are central to our approach.

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| **Case Study: Expanding support for learners with additional learning needs**Swansea is investing in new and improved specialist teaching facilities (STFs) to support pupils with additional learning needs in their local communities. In 2024-25, five new STFs were established and four were expanded. Facilities were also redesignated to better reflect learner needs. This created 61 permanent places, supported by targeted staff training and co-produced guidance. The change was phased to avoid disruption, and a full public consultation shaped future plans. This expansion is already reducing travel, improving access, and ensuring more pupils get support in a familiar, inclusive school environment.How our education work supports a stronger, fairer, and more sustainable WalesOur work in education directly supports Wales’s national goals. We’re creating a more prosperous Wales by giving young people the digital, vocational and core skills they need to thrive. We’re building inclusion and equity through rights-based teaching, accessible schools, and trauma-informed practice. Our capital investment is improving the sustainability of the school estate, with new builds designed to net-zero operational standards and with community use in mind. Across all of this, we’re putting learners’ voices at the centre, through co-designed strategies, school councils, and direct consultation. |

**Conclusion**

**Based on the evidence of delivery, impact, and the balance of performance measures, the Council’s performance against this well-being objective in 2024–25 is assessed as *Good*.** There is clear progress in leadership, inclusion, infrastructure and learner support. Schools are increasingly confident and well-supported, and learners are benefiting from better environments, broader opportunities, and more joined-up support.

But important challenges remain. Persistent issues with attendance, rising NEET levels, and lower-than-expected Welsh-medium progression need renewed focus. Digital systems for tracking performance and supporting decision-making also require improvement.

Our priorities for the year ahead will include strengthening targeted support, removing barriers to engagement, and building on the strong foundations already in place, so that every learner in Swansea has the chance to succeed.

**Additional Improvement Areas Identified Through Self-Assessment**

The self-assessment process, informed by service plans and inspection feedback, also identified a number of specific operational priorities. Where performance against Corporate Plan success measures or KPIs was rated red at year-end, corresponding improvement actions have been included either in the updated 2023–28 Corporate Plan or in the improvement areas below:

* Reducing NEET levels through stronger transition planning and better integration with post-16, youth, and careers services.
* Strengthening Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision, including clearer referral pathways, reintegration planning and quality assurance.
* Improving digital systems for performance monitoring, case tracking, and real-time decision-making across education services.
* Developing a single point of access model for emotional wellbeing and counselling support in schools.
* Ensuring consistency and inclusivity in ALN provision, with particular focus on Welsh-medium, neurodivergent, and early years learners.
* Review of school attendance panels and LA protocols.
* Further integration of counselling data and services within the single access model.
* Embedding learner voice more fully in secondary settings.

These improvement areas will be taken forward through service plans and monitored through ongoing performance and transformation activity.

**Wellbeing Objective 3: Transforming our Economy and Infrastructure – so that Swansea has a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy and local infrastructure**

Transforming Swansea’s economy and infrastructure remains a central priority for the Council. We want Swansea to be a dynamic, connected, and modern city - one that provides quality jobs, thriving communities, and infrastructure that supports business growth, community life, and a sustainable future.

In 2024-25, we continued to invest in major regeneration schemes to revitalise the city centre and surrounding areas, attract investment, and improve the quality of public spaces and amenities. Our work spans from creating new business hubs and cultural attractions to investing in transport, housing, and green infrastructure.

We also want Swansea’s economy to work for everyone. That means supporting inclusive growth, strengthening town centres and district shopping areas, and creating the right conditions for local businesses to flourish. Through our transformation programmes and capital investments, we’re helping create new jobs, stimulate economic activity, and ensure long-term resilience for the city and county.

Our approach is underpinned by strong collaboration, with partners in government, the private sector, education, and the third sector, to maximise the impact of our investments and make sure the benefits are felt across all our communities.

**Our Performance in 2024–25**

 

Full comments and results against each step and KPI can be found in the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25 (link to be inserted).

In last year’s self-assessment, we said we would progress flagship projects in the city centre, boost business support, and maximise the impact of UK Shared Prosperity and Transforming Towns funding. We also committed to moving forward with major housing and regeneration schemes in partnership with Urban Splash and other developers.

Progress has been significant. In the city centre, the 71-72 Kingsway innovation hub was completed and is now being fitted out for occupation by tenants. The scheme is expected to support up to 600 new jobs. Castle Square Gardens secured planning consent, with construction due to start in spring 2025. Tramshed Tech has taken up occupancy at the restored Palace Theatre, bringing a new creative and digital workspace to life. Design work also advanced on the Civic Centre, St Thomas, and Central North developments, all forming part of the £1 billion regeneration partnership with Urban Splash.

We made further headway in enhancing the visitor economy. Skyline’s Kilvey Hill leisure development secured planning permission. Early work also began on new ferry service proposals and on incorporating an interactive aquarium into city masterplans.

Through our More Homes Programme, we delivered 41 new affordable homes in 2024-25, alongside a further 175 homes secured through housing associations and Section 106 agreements. We completed the conversion of the SPARKS Centre in Blaenymaes, began work on a new build scheme at Brondeg, and acquired 34 former Right to Buy properties. Master planning progressed for a major estate regeneration scheme in Penlan, and early feasibility work started on potential developments in Gorseinon. Planning permission was also granted for a major scheme in Bonymaen, which will deliver 132 homes across four sites, to be developed in phases over the coming years.

More than 300 homes have been added to the Council’s housing stock through this programme so far. In 2024-25, the full £26 million Social Housing Grant was used to support delivery by both the Council and local housing associations. This work is an important step towards our target of providing 1,000 affordable homes over the next ten years.

In 2024–25, we delivered £42 million of improvement works to Council housing as part of our long-term programme to meet the new Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023. This investment, supported by Welsh Government grants, has helped the Council and local businesses build new skills and expertise in renewable technologies through our retrofit programmes. It enabled the installation of solar panels, battery storage, and major energy efficiency upgrades to the fabric of homes in Sketty, Penyrheol, Craig Cefn Parc, Fforesthall and Waunarlwydd.

We also made progress in planning, asset management, and place-making. The Local Development Plan replacement advanced to public consultation stages. Meanwhile, the city centre placemaking strategy was developed and work continued on rationalising the council’s estate to free up land for redevelopment and reduce carbon emissions.

Nevertheless, some challenges remain. Securing tenants for large retail spaces like the former Debenhams unit is progressing well, and regeneration timescales remain complex given the scale and interdependencies involved. We continue to manage financial risks carefully and seek maximum value through partnership, phased delivery, and external funding.

**How our regeneration and infrastructure work supports a fairer, greener and more resilient Swansea**

Economic transformation is about more than buildings. It’s about helping people thrive, by creating jobs, enhancing skills, building confidence, and offering real opportunity.

Through our investments, we are directly supporting Swansea’s economic resilience and community well-being. We’re creating inclusive places to live and work, improving connectivity, enhancing culture and tourism, and delivering homes that people can afford. By embedding community benefits into our contracts, we’re also creating training and employment opportunities for local people, especially those furthest from the labour market.

Our transformation work is aligned with the goals of a more equal and prosperous Wales. Through strategic housing investment, city centre regeneration, and local infrastructure improvements, we are laying the foundation for long-term prosperity.

Environmental sustainability is a core part of our regeneration work. We are reducing carbon through building design, investing in energy efficiency, and promoting active travel. Our work on the LDP, climate adaptation, and sustainable drainage all support the Net Zero 2030 ambition. The Property Services team continues to reduce the council’s operational estate and increase renewable energy usage at council sites.

Our approach is collaborative. We’re working across sectors, through the Swansea Public Services Board, regional economic boards, and direct partnerships, to align efforts, unlock funding, and deliver joined-up results. Consultation and co-design are embedded in planning and delivery, ensuring that regeneration reflects local need and builds stronger, more resilient communities.

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| **Case Study: 71-72 Kingsway, Innovation in Action**The transformation of 71-72 Kingsway has created a new high-quality innovation hub at the heart of the city. The development provides state-of-the-art office and co-working spaces aimed at tech and digital businesses, supporting up to 600 jobs and boosting the city’s creative economy.The project is a flagship of the Council’s wider regeneration strategy. Funded through a mix of Council investment, Welsh and UK Government funding via City Deal, it shows what’s possible when ambition meets collaboration.Already, the building is becoming a home for start-ups and established firms alike. Tenants cite the modern design, flexible space, and strong digital infrastructure as key reasons for choosing Swansea. By supporting the next generation of businesses, 71-72 Kingsway is helping to secure Swansea’s economic future. |

**Conclusion**

**Based on the evidence of delivery, outcomes, and the balance of performance measures, the Council’s performance against this well-being objective in 2024–25 is assessed as Good**. Strong progress has been made in creating jobs, supporting businesses, delivering regeneration, and expanding cultural and visitor infrastructure. Most success measures and KPIs were on track, and investment has been maintained despite financial and economic headwinds.

Challenges remain in a small number of longer-term capital projects, where timescales and delivery dependencies have required amber ratings. However, these are being actively managed, and the strategic direction remains clear and well supported.

Our priorities for 2025–26 include continued delivery of key regeneration schemes, supporting high-quality employment, and aligning local economic opportunities with regional and national growth strategies to ensure inclusive, sustainable outcomes for communities.

**Additional Improvement Areas Identified Through Self-Assessment**

The self-assessment process, informed by service planning and the Senior Managers Assurance Statements, also identified a number of specific operational priorities. Where performance against Corporate Plan success measures or KPIs was rated red at year-end, corresponding improvement actions have been included either in the updated 2023–28 Corporate Plan or in the improvement areas below:

* Strengthening systems for asset management and housing compliance reporting.
* Improving void turnaround times and delivery of housing adaptations.
* Developing a new estate management plan to improve tenancy sustainment and neighbourhood support.
* Addressing workforce resilience and succession planning in property and planning services.
* Finalising the council’s accommodation strategy, including the decant of the Civic Centre and long-term plans for the Guildhall.

These improvement areas will be taken forward through service plans and monitored through ongoing performance and transformation activity.

**Wellbeing Objective 4: Tackling poverty and enabling communities - so that fewer people live in poverty and more people can shape their local area and their future**

Poverty affects every part of a person’s life, from their health and housing to education, employment and access to services. In Swansea, we’re committed to tackling poverty in all its forms, working alongside residents and communities to reduce hardship, build resilience, and improve people’s chances of living well.

Our vision is one of prevention and partnership. We’re focused on early help, relational services, and community-led solutions that recognise people’s strengths as well as their needs. We know that tackling poverty is not just about income. It’s about inclusion, empowerment, and giving people more control over their lives. That means good quality housing, access to food and fuel, support with debt and benefits, and help to move into education, training or work. But it also means reducing stigma, strengthening community assets, and making services more accessible, connected, and responsive.

This objective brings together a wide range of programmes and services - housing, benefits, employability, financial inclusion, volunteering, lifelong learning, and local area coordination. Central to this is the Enabling Communities transformation programme, which is helping to embed co-production, strengthen community resilience, and build a more collaborative approach to public service delivery. Through new tools, policies, and shared definitions of resilience and self-reliance, the programme is laying the foundations for stronger relationships and more joined-up responses across the city.

**Our Performance in 2024-25**

 

Full comments and results against each step and KPI can be found in the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25 (link to be inserted).

In our 2023-24 self-assessment, we said we needed to strengthen strategic alignment, improve support for people in temporary accommodation, increase access to affordable homes, reduce inequalities in qualifications and grant take-up, and continue embedding co-production and community leadership in our work.

In 2024-25, we made good progress across these areas, with a refreshed strategy, stronger partnership models, and new transformation programmes underway. A final draft of the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy was developed with partners and people with lived experience and will proceed to public consultation. Work has also started to establish a Lived Experience Panel to shape delivery and drive accountability. This marks a key shift in how we work- with people, not just for them.

Through our Cost of Living response, the Welfare Rights Team helped residents access over £1.6 million in benefits and resolved more than £130,000 in debt. Welfare rights advice led to confirmed income gains of £467,000, well above target. Our “Swansea Spaces” initiative continued, with targeted grant schemes and communications campaigns reaching those most affected by rising costs.

We also continued to support people into work and learning. Our employability programmes helped 143 people into employment, well above our target, and nearly 670 people in total were supported through Communities for Work Plus. While the number of adults gaining accredited qualifications (108) fell short of our 200 target, uptake of digital, essential and lifelong learning offers remains steady, and further work is planned to increase engagement. A new Corporate Volunteering Policy has been developed to support inclusive participation and community action.

Housing and homelessness remained key challenges. We delivered 41 additional council homes in 2024–25 and exceeded our target for local authority-led affordable housing. However, both Registered Social Landlord (RSL) (158) and Section 106 (20) completions fell slightly short. High levels of temporary accommodation use, especially B&B placements, persisted, though new supported housing provision is due to open in late 2025 to help alleviate pressure.

We also began transforming the way we support people and communities. A new Target Operating Model for the Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities (TPEC) service is being implemented, with neighbourhood teams aligned to ward areas. This includes a redesign of Local Area Coordination to increase coverage and resilience while maintaining the strengths-based approach. The Enabling Communities programme has directly supported this shift by embedding co-production principles, establishing a corporate approach to volunteering, and developing shared strategies for community resilience.

A Prosperity Hub model is in early development, building on a review of community assets in high-deprivation areas. These efforts are underpinned by the Enabling Communities programme’s work to map local assets, engage community leaders, and pilot new models of collaborative working that support early help and prevention.

Elsewhere, we continued to meet our statutory obligations. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims were processed well within DWP targets. Free School Meals were assessed within seven working days. These services are under pressure, but performance remains stable.

Co-production remains central to our approach. The scrutiny inquiry on poverty concluded with positive feedback and a set of recommendations now being taken forward. We also evaluated public feedback on barriers to access and inequalities, helping to shape future service design.

**How our work supports a more equal, prosperous and cohesive Wales**

Everything we do to tackle poverty is about building a fairer Swansea and a more equal Wales. That means reducing hardship, removing barriers, and helping people feel seen, heard and supported.

We’re contributing to a more prosperous Wales by investing in employability, lifelong learning, and volunteering. Our services help people build confidence, skills and pathways to work, while also supporting those unable to work to access the financial help they need.

We’re helping build a more cohesive and equal Wales by involving people with lived experience in decisions, tackling stigma, and embedding human rights across services. Our community-focused transformation is creating stronger connections and more accessible support, closer to where people live.

And we’re supporting a more sustainable future by investing in affordable, energy-efficient homes, and supporting resilient communities through strengths-based models, local leadership, and shared responsibility.

**Conclusion**

**Based on the evidence of delivery, impact, and the balance of performance measures, the Council’s performance against this well-being objective in 2024-25 is assessed as *Good*.** Progress has been made in refreshing the Tackling Poverty Strategy, supporting employability, mitigating cost-of-living pressures, and expanding early help and financial inclusion support. Most success measures and KPIs were achieved, with strong performance in benefit processing, welfare rights, and employment support.

However, key pressures remain. High levels of temporary accommodation, a rise in NEET rates, and shortfalls in affordable housing delivery present significant challenges. While these are being addressed through transformation activity and targeted improvement plans, sustained focus and collaboration will be required to deliver better long-term outcomes.

Priorities for 2025-26 include strengthening housing pathways, embedding the new Tackling Poverty Strategy, and continuing to align community-focused services with a place-based model to improve equity and resilience across Swansea.

**Additional Improvement Areas Identified Through Self-Assessment**

The self-assessment process, informed by service planning and the Senior Managers Assurance Statements, also identified a number of specific operational priorities. Where performance against Corporate Plan success measures or KPIs was rated red at year-end, corresponding improvement actions have been included either in the updated 2023–28 Corporate Plan or in the improvement areas below:

* Improving pathways into accredited learning and strengthening adult qualification outcomes through wider engagement and targeted support.
* Increasing the level of external grant funding secured for poverty-related development, reviewing capacity and approach.
* Embedding a new Target Operating Model for the TPEC service, including neighbourhood-based delivery, workforce development and performance frameworks.
* Developing a single “Prosperity Hub” model to co-locate services and support in areas of high deprivation.
* Reducing reliance on Bed and Breakfast placements through improved move-on options and new supported housing capacity.
* Strengthening community engagement through delivery of a Lived Experience Panel, enhanced co-production and local area coordination redesign.

These improvement areas will be taken forward through service plans and monitored through ongoing performance and transformation activity.

**Wellbeing Objective 5: Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change – so that we protect and restore nature while becoming a net zero carbon council by 2030 and helping Swansea reach net zero by 2050**

Swansea’s rich and diverse natural environment is one of our greatest assets. From the Gower National Landscape to the green corridors of our city, these spaces are vital to our well-being, economy and resilience. Yet the pressures of climate change, habitat loss and unsustainable practices continue to threaten ecosystems and biodiversity locally and globally. That’s why delivering nature recovery and climate action remains a key council priority.

We’ve committed to the ambition of achieving net zero carbon emissions as a council by 2030 and to supporting a whole-place shift to net zero by 2050. We’re also working with partners to deliver Swansea’s Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and Biodiversity Duty Action Plan, both of which aim to protect and restore ecosystems and enhance quality of life for current and future generations. This work is underpinned by two major transformation programmes - Net Zero 2030 and Future Waste - which are accelerating our transition to a greener, more circular economy.

Nature recovery and climate action are embedded in corporate planning, service delivery and risk management. Across the council, we are investing in greener infrastructure, scaling renewable energy, reducing waste, supporting environmental innovation, and enabling practical action across communities. At the same time, we continue to face real delivery challenges, especially around capacity, data, and access to long-term funding.

**Our Performance in 2024–25**

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Full comments and results against each step and KPI can be found in the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25 (link to be inserted).

In last year’s annual review, we identified a number of areas where we needed to improve our work on climate change and nature recovery. These included boosting staff and councillor training, reviewing how we use our vehicle fleet, strengthening regional collaboration on energy and transport planning, increasing internal engagement with our Biodiversity Duty, and improving how we monitor our emissions and track nature recovery actions.

Over the past year, we’ve made meaningful progress across these fronts. Our LED Street lighting programme is now 94% complete, delivering both emissions savings and lower energy costs. The Net Zero 2030 delivery plan has continued to guide action across key areas like buildings, fleet and procurement, supported by better data tools and strengthened governance.

Tree planting efforts exceeded expectations, with 344 new trees added across the city, and a county-wide tree opportunity map completed to help guide future planting. We’ve also introduced a new electric vehicle charge-point management system to improve functionality, data accuracy and accountability.

Through our Environmental Partners Framework, we launched a new Energy Toolkit and expanded school-based energy audits, empowering staff and pupils to take practical steps toward energy reduction. The second phase of the council’s public building retrofit programme also progressed, with new funding secured and energy conservation installations planned.

Our Natural Environment Team continued delivering local nature recovery, from wildflower planting and managing invasive species to engaging communities in improving their green spaces. These efforts are guided by the Swansea Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and supported by biodiversity funding.

On a regional level, collaboration remains strong. A Local Area Energy Plan is on track to launch in summer 2025, and work on the Regional Transport Plan is progressing toward final submission to Welsh Government by year-end.

We also reported a small but welcome reduction in the council’s scope 1 and 2 emissions for 2023–24, meeting national reporting requirements and reinforcing our commitment to measurable progress.

These actions reflect a broader shift in our delivery model. Through the Net Zero 2030 transformation programme, we’re aligning governance, data, investment and innovation to support decarbonisation across the council estate. The Future Waste programme complements this by focusing on circular economy principles, behavioural change and regulatory compliance, ensuring our approach to recycling, reuse and sustainable resource use continues to evolve.

Despite this progress, key challenges remain. Training uptake across the workforce has been lower than expected. A full fleet review has been delayed to 2025-26 due to software transition. Internal ownership of the Biodiversity Duty is still limited, and many delivery teams are dependent on short-term grant funding. These constraints have a real impact on our ability to scale or accelerate delivery, and the corporate risk of not meeting net zero by 2030 remains significant.

**How Our Work Supports a Greener, Fairer and More Resilient Swansea**

Our work on climate change and nature recovery contributes directly to Wales’s national well-being goals.

We are helping to build a more prosperous Wales by supporting green innovation and infrastructure that create new economic opportunities and skills for the future. Our Net Zero 2030 delivery plan is central to this ambition, and we have plans via projects like the Blue Eden renewable energy development to deliver long term change and improvement. These initiatives will not only reduce emissions but also attract investment and support jobs across the city.

A healthier Wales is emerging through greener public spaces, cleaner air and better access to nature. Our work to improve biodiversity, promote active travel and embed public health thinking in environmental design is helping people live more active, connected and balanced lives.

We’re also supporting a more equal Wales by making climate and nature action accessible to everyone. Campaigns like “Do the Little Things” and our Energy Awareness outreach programme help people understand the changes they can make, while community volunteering and place-based projects give residents a voice and role in shaping their local environment.

In creating a Wales of cohesive communities, we’re bringing people together around a shared goal. From school children planting wildflowers to residents leading local conservation work or helping with energy audits, our communities are at the heart of this movement. These local actions are strengthening neighbourhood ties and growing collective resilience.

Finally, we are contributing to a globally responsible Wales by embedding sustainability in the way we buy, build, and move. From our electric vehicle fleet to energy-efficient buildings and greener procurement practices, we’re making choices that align with international climate and biodiversity goals - because what we do locally matters far beyond our own borders.

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| **Case Study: Energy Toolkit Empowering Change Across Council Buildings**In 2024-25, the council’s Energy Team launched a new Premises Manager Energy Toolkit to support energy reduction across the council estate. The toolkit empowers officers to audit their buildings, identify practical changes, and take local ownership of emissions and costs.To boost impact, one of our Environmental Partners worked directly with schools, supporting them to complete their own audits and embed sustainability in daily operations. The response was overwhelmingly positive with pupils, staff and site managers all playing a role in making buildings greener.This initiative reflects our Net Zero 2030 transformation programme in action, empowering people with practical tools, strengthening data, and embedding sustainable behaviours at every level of the organisation. |

**Conclusion**

**Based on the evidence of delivery, impact, and the balance of performance measures, the Council’s performance against this well-being objective in 2024-25 is assessed as *Good*.** Progress has been made across both nature recovery and net zero 2030 workstreams, including strengthened internal governance, improved energy audits, emissions tracking, and delivery of funded environmental projects. The number of green infrastructure projects, tree planting, and community engagement opportunities has increased, and new strategies are being developed to guide future activity.

However, several key performance indicators and milestones are rated amber or red, reflecting delivery pressures and resource constraints. Challenges include the pace of staff training, system-wide decarbonisation, and maintaining progress without significant new investment. The risk that the Council may not meet its net zero 2030 target remains high, and this is reflected on the corporate risk register.

Priorities for 2025-26 include accelerating the roll-out of training, improving access to capital investment for buildings and fleet, embedding climate impact in core decisions, and maintaining delivery momentum despite financial constraints.

**Additional Improvement Areas Identified Through Self-Assessment**

The self-assessment process, informed by service planning and the Senior Managers Assurance Statements, also identified a number of specific operational priorities. Where performance against Corporate Plan success measures or KPIs was rated red at year-end, corresponding improvement actions have been included either in the updated 2023–28 Corporate Plan or in the improvement areas below:

* Expanding internal training and awareness through webinars and refreshed e-learning modules for staff and elected members.
* Completing a comprehensive fleet utilisation review to identify opportunities for green transition.
* Strengthening governance and reporting of emissions and biodiversity action, including better integration of data platforms.
* Increasing internal engagement with the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty across departments, supported by clearer expectations and role-specific actions.
* Enhancing the EV charging network with improved back-office management, monitoring and access protocols.
* Continuing targeted community engagement and nature recovery actions under the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan, supported by longer-term investment strategies.
* Increase staff participation in climate change and nature recovery training to help embed the culture and capacity needed to deliver the Net Zero 2030 ambition.

These improvement areas will be taken forward through service plans and monitored through ongoing performance and transformation activity.

**Wellbeing Objective 6: Transformation and Financial Resilience**

Swansea, like many local authorities, is under intense pressure. Demand for public services continues to grow, particularly in areas like social care and homelessness, while the real-terms value of our funding continues to fall. Inflation, workforce shortages, and complex social challenges are driving up costs at a time when residents and communities are relying more than ever on what we provide. Against this backdrop, simply doing more of the same is no longer sustainable. The council must continue to develop - modernising how we work, managing resources responsibly, and building the resilience needed to serve both current and future generations.

Transformation and financial resilience is one of our core well-being objectives because it supports every other priority in the Corporate Plan. It underpins our ability to protect essential services, meet our legal responsibilities, invest in what matters most, and achieve better outcomes for residents. This is not just about reducing costs - it’s about changing the way we work, so that services are shaped around people’s needs, delivered more efficiently, and continually improved.

Transformation and financial resilience are not one-off programmes - they are long-term commitments. In a rapidly changing world, this objective is about ensuring the council is not only fit for today’s challenges, but able to adapt and thrive in the future.

**Our Performance in 2024-25**

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Full comments and results against each step and KPI can be found in the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25 (link to be inserted).

In our 2023-24 self-assessment, we identified nine areas for improvement: long-term financial planning, sustainable service delivery, inclusive digital transformation, workforce development, external oversight, procurement strategy, equality and diversity, staff wellbeing, and carbon reduction. During 2024-25, we made meaningful progress across these areas, although some challenges persist.

The Council’s Corporate Transformation Plan completed its second year, with thirteen programmes working to modernise services, improve outcomes and support financial sustainability. The plan is now overseen by a single Corporate Transformation Board and supported by stronger programme governance, clearer reporting, and an Interdependency Matrix that helps manage shared risks and delivery pressures. These arrangements have improved oversight and collaboration across services, although pressure on internal capacity remains a key risk. Most programmes made visible progress, though the pace of delivery varied, and some experienced delays due to staffing shortages, procurement complexity and funding constraints.

The Digital and Workforce and Organisational Development (OD) transformation programmes were particularly relevant to this objective. The Digital Transformation Programme delivered major improvements to how residents access services, how staff process requests, and how data and infrastructure are used across the organisation. More than 207,000 online forms were submitted through automated systems, well above our target. Services such as bulky waste collection, pest control appointments, job applications, free school meals and planning comments were digitised, and the Swansea Account was launched to give residents a secure platform for tracking their interactions. While uptake of the Swansea Account fell short of the stretch target, this reflects phased rollout and the need to integrate it with more services.

A key focus during the year was improving digital inclusion. A strategic review of our approach was completed alongside the refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy. This informed a new Customer Charter and set of Service Standards, which will undergo annual review, with compliance checks beginning in 2025-26. We also reviewed telephone access, leading to early improvements in call handling and a reduction in abandoned calls across contact centres. The Improving Customer Access project completed procurement of a new phone platform, with rollout beginning in April 2025. Infrastructure investment also continued, including the installation of small cells in urban areas and rollout of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme in rural communities. Some digital projects were delayed due to market testing and capacity constraints, and ensuring services remain accessible for residents who are not digitally connected remains a key priority.

The Workforce and OD Programme also progressed significantly. Following the reorganisation of the HR and OD service in 2023, the focus shifted to delivery. Nearly 200 managers and aspiring managers took part in accredited development, including a new Level 6 qualification. A new induction process, e-learning platform and coaching offer were launched, and workforce planning tools were introduced for all services. Time to hire reduced from 74 to 43 days, and 100% of staff in Corporate Services completed annual appraisals using the new InPhase performance module. The gender pay gap remained stable, and use of Welsh in the workplace increased. These developments are strengthening the culture, skills and resilience needed to deliver change, though pressures in frontline services, staff turnover and workforce fatigue remain risks.

Financial resilience continued to be a key focus. The Council set a balanced budget for 2025–26 and updated its Medium Term Financial Plan to 2029. Of the £12.7 million in required savings for 2024–25, 71% was delivered. The remainder is being addressed through ongoing service redesign, efficiency and transformation. Risks linked to inflation, workforce pressures and capital borrowing are being actively managed, with further clarity expected following the UK Government’s spending review. Measures such as holding contingency funds and delaying external borrowing are helping to protect long-term value for money.

Sustainable service delivery remained a priority in high-pressure areas such as social care and homelessness. Preventative models and early help services were further developed, and targeted investment helped stabilise some frontline services. Work also continued to embed ethical and sustainable practices across the organisation. On procurement, we introduced new checks on fair pay, ethical standards and social value, including conditions around modern slavery, safeguarding, equality and the Welsh language. These improvements will be further developed following the introduction of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act.

We deepened our commitment to equality, diversity and human rights. Swansea’s first integrated Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan was launched in March 2024, supported by a detailed action plan and monthly oversight by the Strategic Equality Board. We also adopted a new Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and supported community-led initiatives in key areas.

Staff wellbeing and sickness absence remained high priorities in 2024-25. A new absence management policy was developed in collaboration with trade unions, launching in May 2025. It will be supported by targeted training, enhanced access to occupational health and employee assistance services, and the deployment of absence advisers in the largest directorates. Despite these measures, average sickness absence remained high at 12.3 days per full-time equivalent employee, exceeding the corporate target of 10 days. In 2025-26 will sustain our action to address the underlying causes, including workload, stress and service pressures.

Insights from the 2024-25 staff survey reinforce the importance of this focus. While many staff recognised flexible working and supportive teams as positives, comments also highlighted concerns around wellbeing, workload, and the need for more visible action in response to staff feedback. These findings are shaping our approach in 2025-26, with a focus on embedding wellbeing into everyday practice, improving access to support, and ensuring that engagement leads to meaningful change.

Work to support our net zero ambition also progressed. Phase 3 of our estate’s high-level retrofit assessments was completed, and implementation planning for 2025–26 began. Phase 4 will start in September 2025, with assessments forming part of a five-year capital delivery programme. Behaviour change activity also expanded across schools, including two climate summits and building-level energy audits. Action plans tailored to each school will be issued in May 2025, with further rollout across other service areas planned.

Corporate systems continued to evolve. The InPhase system was enhanced with a risk management application and ongoing work focused on aligning planning, performance, risk and finance. This will remain a priority in 2025–26 to ensure integration across directorates. Performance monitoring remained stable overall. Ninety-three per cent of invoices were paid within 30 days, just short of the 95% target, and 98% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to on time by year-end. There were no data breaches resulting in enforcement action.

We also strengthened governance and accountability by combining internal self-assessment with external insight. Independent reviews by Audit Wales, CIW, and the Governance and Audit Committee informed service planning and highlighted priority areas. The CIW inspection of Adult Services supported operational changes, while feedback from national and local surveys helped shape strategic decisions.

In summary, 2024-25 saw solid progress in embedding the Council’s transformation and financial resilience agenda. Digital and workforce programmes delivered tangible improvements, financial planning was strengthened, and core systems were enhanced. At the same time, we remain focused on challenges around workforce resilience, service demand, sickness absence, and equitable digital access. Priorities for 2025–26 include accelerating the pace of transformation, closing the remaining savings gap, embedding inclusive digital and workforce practices, and maintaining a sustainable, ethical approach to delivery.

**How our work contributes to a fairer more sustainable Swansea**

Swansea Council is making a strong contribution to Wales’s national well-being goals through its transformation work and corporate planning. By helping people, communities and the workforce develop the digital skills and leadership needed for the future, we’re supporting a more prosperous Wales. We're also reducing our environmental impact by reshaping how we work, rationalising our office spaces and adopting hybrid and home working models that cut travel and lower carbon emissions, helping build a more resilient Wales.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and human rights is central to our aim of becoming a Human Rights City. We’re embedding this rights-based approach into everything we do and supporting inclusive, cohesive communities across Swansea. At the same time, we’re taking global responsibility through ethical procurement and projects that generate community benefits while cutting emissions.

Our approach is shaped by the sustainable development principle. We're planning for the long term, using corporate transformation programmes to future-proof how we work and deliver services. We're focused on prevention too, identifying and managing risks early, using digital tools and automation to improve services, and helping people access support before problems escalate.

Collaboration is key, both within the council and with our partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Through bodies like the Swansea Public Services Board and the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee, we’re working together to achieve shared goals. We’re also strengthening how we involve people—expanding from consultation into co-production, piloting new approaches and learning from best practice as we deliver our public participation strategy.

Finally, we’re linking local action to wider goals by developing a framework that shows how our services and transformation work support national and regional strategies. This helps ensure everything we do aligns with broader priorities and delivers real outcomes for people in Swansea.

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| **Case Study: Public Services at the Heart of Swansea**Swansea Council is transforming the former St David’s Shopping Centre into a modern public sector hub that brings public services, shops, and restaurants together under one roof. Developed in partnership with regeneration specialists Urban Splash, the project will house council offices and other public sector organisations above new commercial units—drawing hundreds of workers into the heart of the city and boosting local footfall.This is the first phase of a long-term partnership to reshape the area, with Urban Splash also leading future proposals for the seafront Civic Centre site, which will be opened up for public feedback. The hub is part of a wider set of developments planned for 2025, including a major revamp of Castle Square with new green space and pavilions for food and retail, a 600-job office scheme at The Kingsway, and the launch of Y Storfa, a new community hub offering local services from the former BHS store on Oxford Street.Together, these projects are expected to generate jobs, increase investment, and create a more vibrant, welcoming city centre. They will also make it easier for people to access services, support the local economy, and give residents a voice in shaping Swansea’s future. |

**Conclusion**

**Based on the evidence of delivery, impact, and the balance of performance measures, the Council’s performance against this well-being objective in 2024-25 is assessed as *Good*.** The Council delivered a balanced budget, strengthened its Medium Term Financial Plan, and made strong progress across digital, workforce, and organisational transformation programmes. Improvements were recorded in digital service access, financial oversight, and staff development, with key risks actively managed through strengthened governance and audit arrangements.

However, a number of challenges remain including planned savings delivery, sickness absence levels that are above target, and some transformation milestones experienced delay due to funding and capacity pressures. Performance on a small number of indicators was below target, and further work is required to embed inclusive digital access, support staff wellbeing, and ensure the full benefits of transformation are realised.

Priorities for 2025-26 include accelerating savings delivery, improving use of resources, embedding sustainable workforce and digital practices, and maintaining momentum across all corporate transformation programmes.

**Additional Improvement Areas**

The self-assessment process, informed by service planning, performance data and assurance statements, also identified a number of operational priorities that are not yet fully reflected in the Corporate Plan. Where year-end performance against success measures or KPIs was rated red, corresponding improvement actions have been included either in the updated 2023-28 Corporate Plan or in the improvement areas below:

* Improve the quality and consistency of customer service and follow-through, to raise resident satisfaction with how the Council handles queries and issues, building on newly introduced standards and access improvements.
* Increase the take-up and visibility of the Swansea Account, by integrating it into more services and strengthening communication and user support.
* Enhance data integration across finance, risk, and performance systems, to ensure programme governance and strategic decisions are supported by timely, connected insight.
* Strengthen procurement monitoring to ensure fair work, social value and sustainability are embedded and ready for implementation of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act.

These improvement areas will be taken forward through service plans and monitored through ongoing performance and transformation activity.

**Overall Assessment and Cross-Cutting Priorities for Improvement**

This Annual Review fulfils Swansea Council’s legal duty under Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to undertake a self-assessment of performance for the year 2024-25. It provides a balanced evaluation of how effectively the Council is using its resources, delivering its Well-being Objectives, and applying the sustainable development principle in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

**Overall Assessment of Performance**

**Based on our performance across governance, use of resources and delivery of well-being objectives, we assess Swansea Council’s overall performance in 2024–25 as Good.**

The Council maintained high standards of governance, delivered improvements in key service areas, and demonstrated resilience and adaptability in a challenging financial and operating environment. Our internal audit, external inspection, and service performance evidence confirm that our governance, financial management, and transformation arrangements remain robust. Key priorities were advanced through focused programmes of work, particularly in adult services, children’s services, education, digital access, workforce, and regeneration.

The Council ended the year with a balanced budget, positive audit outcomes, and strengthened corporate planning and oversight frameworks. All six Well-being Objectives were graded as 'Good', reflecting consistent progress across all areas.

At the same time, we recognise that rising demand, ongoing cost pressures, and delivery capacity continue to present challenges. The pace and consistency of savings delivery, recruitment into specialist roles, and embedding of improvement practices remain areas for continued focus. Nonetheless, the Council has demonstrated a clear commitment to learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement, with effective arrangements in place to sustain progress in 2025-26.

**Cross-Cutting Insights**

Our self-assessment for 2024-25 highlights a number of cross-cutting themes that shape how well we deliver services, manage resources, and govern the organisation. These insights reflect patterns across our six Well-being Objectives and provide a strategic lens through which we understand performance and plan improvement.

**Delivery Strengths and Challenges**

Across the Council, we continue to deliver core services to a high standard while advancing ambitious transformation programmes. Major progress was made in digital access, workforce development, inclusion, and regeneration. However, some delivery timelines were affected by recruitment gaps, market pressures, and project complexity, particularly in high-demand areas like housing, social care, and digital infrastructure.

There is strong evidence of improvement planning at service level, but success increasingly depends on our ability to align delivery capacity with the scale of our ambition. The need for greater clarity around benefits realisation and programme dependencies was a consistent theme across objectives.

**Governance and Decision-Making**

Governance remains a clear strength, with high levels of assurance across internal audit and external inspection. Ethical standards, risk oversight, and decision-making frameworks are robust and well-embedded. Nonetheless, several governance themes emerged across services, including the need for more consistent policy compliance, clearer ownership of improvement actions, and stronger links between performance, risk, and financial information.

We also identified opportunities to strengthen the Council’s use of insight and evaluation in decision-making, particularly by improving access to real-time data, better integrating digital systems, and deepening our use of resident and service user feedback.

**Use of Resources**

Strong financial governance, careful use of reserves, and strategic investment in transformation programmes allowed the Council to end the year with a balanced budget. However, significant pressures persist, especially around workforce sustainability, digital maturity, and long-term capital financing.

While individual services have made good use of assets and people, we must continue to take a more corporate, forward-looking approach to workforce and asset planning. This includes developing future skills, aligning estates with service models, and tackling systemic risks like sickness absence and recruitment into critical roles.

**Key Enablers for the Future**

The self-assessment highlights several enablers that are helping the Council navigate change:

* Leadership and culture: Clear vision, strong values, and senior support for innovation.
* Collaboration: Positive relationships across departments and with external partners.
* Programme governance: Improved oversight of corporate transformation and performance.

To sustain this progress, we will focus on improving pace, building delivery capacity, and embedding good practice across the organisation. These themes underpin the cross-cutting priorities for improvement set out in the next section.

**Cross-Cutting Improvement Areas**

In addition to service-specific improvement areas, the self-assessment process highlighted several cross-cutting priorities that are being addressed through service plans, corporate transformation programmes, and governance oversight:

* Strengthening the use of digital systems and data to support real-time decision-making, performance monitoring and service improvement
* Enhancing workforce resilience, including targeted recruitment and retention in high-risk services, better succession planning, and continued investment in leadership and skills development.
* Linking transformation more explicitly to financial sustainability, ensuring that change programmes deliver measurable benefits in service outcomes, cost reduction and value for money.

These cross-cutting priorities are already reflected in directorate service plans and are being tracked through the Council’s performance, governance, and transformation frameworks.

**Looking Ahead**

Swansea Council continues to demonstrate a strong culture of accountability, innovation and commitment to improvement. This self-assessment confirms that the Council is governing effectively, aligning resources with strategic priorities, and delivering outcomes that support a fairer, greener and more resilient city and county.

With continued focus on workforce, financial sustainability, and joined-up service transformation, the Council is well placed to meet the challenges ahead and maintain progress in delivering for the people of Swansea.