**Monmouthshire County Council Corproate Plan Annual Report 2020/2021**

Our Corporate Plan sets an ambitious five-year programme aligned to a clear purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities, and this report identifies our progress during 2020/21. The world has faced considerable changes during this time, and some of the things we initially set out to do have been paused while we focused on keeping people safe, stopping the spread of Coronavirus and reaching out to those who need help.

View the full report at [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/improvement/](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/improvement/) and for further information on our response to the coronavirus pandemic, visit <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/services/planning-for-emergencies/coronavirus/>

**Goal A: Best possible start in life**

* Schools provided childcare during the first lockdown for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. This developed into face-to-face learning when restrictions allowed. They also developed a remote learning approach during the winter lockdown to ensure continuation of learning for all children and young people.
* Following the announcement that there would be no GCSE, AS and A Level examinations in Summer 2021, schools were provided with a range of support to prepare them for the new process for determining students’ grade.
* Throughout the pandemic, safeguarding remained an essential part of our delivery, and the process for receiving and responding to referrals did not change. Many early help and family support services became virtual to ensure continued support and, where possible, adjustments were made to allow visits to take place, such as meetings in gardens.
* Monmouthshire Youth Council continued their activities, despite restrictions, via digital consultations with young people and online webinars to discuss issues affecting young people in order to influence change with decision makers.

1.4% of year 11 school leavers not in education, employment or training

95 foster carers providing homes for childen and young people

**Goal B: Thriving and well-connected county**

* Almost £40 million has been paid in grants to support 2,530 local businesses through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic. Communication has been ongoing throughout to provide advice and guidance to businesses.
* Although progress has been slower than anticipated. We have continued to work with Welsh Government to support access to Superfast Cymru broadband, and promotion of the Access Broadband Cymru scheme for areas outside the Superfast Cymru roll out continues.
* The pandemic had a considerable impact on tourism as lock down was introduced. A digital campaign has continued throughout to keep Monmouthshire at the forefront of people’s minds as a key tourist destination. As restrictions eased, messaging changed to encourage tourists to visit our county, incorporating the Welsh Government-aligned Visit Safely messaging.
* Apprenticeship schemes have been introduced, including the ‘Apprentice in Care’ scheme and the ‘Kickstart’ scheme, both aimed at providing opportunities for young people to build new skills, and improve their future employment prospects.

1,519 new premises with access to high speed broadband

6,478 grant payments have been made to support businesses through the pandemic

**Goal C: Maximise the potential of the natural and built environment**

* Waste and recycling collections continued throughout the year, despite Household Waste Recycling Centres being forced to close at the start of the first lockdown to ensure resident safety.
* A new re-use shop opened at Five Lanes Household Waste Recycling Centre, and four Benthyg Libraries of Things have been established in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth.
* Numerous projects have been supported in Monmouth and Caldicot to improve active travel, and a total investment of £1.4m has been achieved this financial year, the biggest investment into Active Travel in Monmouthshire. Grant funding has also been obtained for Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity, and 24 sites of nature conservation importance were designated, taking the total to more than 700 sites.
* Progress has been made with our Climate and Decarbonisation Strategy, but we recognise there is still a lot more to do. Electric vehicle charging points have been installed at two primary schools, and more are being installed for operational vehicles across the county.

We recycled 68% of all the rubbish collected

7,790 trees were planted

**Goal D: Lifelong well-being**

* The front-door of Adult Services remained open throughout the pandemic and provided assistance to 3,961 people. The Care at Home Service has developed a new ethos of being relationship based, and wherever possible, aims to support people to remain living at home. During 2020-21, 1,324 adults started a domiciliary care service.
* The third version of the Social Justice Strategy was approved in March 2021 and has particular focus on Tackling Poverty and Inequality, Food Development and Homeless Transition.
* Volunteers have been at the forefront of keeping our communities safe throughout the pandemic and we have provided specialist support to volunteer groups, aimed at linking community members, groups and organisations to maximise collaboration and pool resources.
* Whilst the leisure centres were forced to close, MonLife continued to deliver programmes online to maintain well-being and health at home. Programmes included virtual fitness classes and 1:1 sessions, along with 'virtual coffee mornings'.

89% of adult services users are happy with their care and support

56% of adult service users feel they are part of their community

**Goal E: Future-focused council**

* Abergavenny Town Hall has been refurbished so the library area offers more space, and the Hub is being used for a variety of community-focused activities. During lockdown, a Request and Collect service was introduced in our libraries to allow members of the public to loan books.
* Our decision-making processes were temporarily disrupted at the start of the first lockdown but were quickly reinstated via digital meetings. These have proven successful, and technology is being explored to develop the changes that are working particularly well.
* A balanced net revenue budget position was achieved for 2020/21, primarily as a result of Welsh Government COVID-19 hardship funding. Medium-term financial planning has been severely disrupted and, despite presenting a balanced budget for 2021/22, the medium-term prognosis is still of concern.
* Staff have adopted new ways of working to keep themselves, colleagues, and residents safe, and a range of support is available to ensure their well-being is maintained. Despite early supply concerns, 5.3 million items of PPE have been distributed for the safe provision of social care in the county.

85% of planned budget savings were achieved

On average, 11 days per full time employee were lost to sickness

**Coronavirus pandemic**

* We focused on sharing timely updates and information to residents across our communication platforms. We held livestreamed events to share business advice, hosted online financial engagement events, and shared videos and digital illustrations to convey local and national messages.
* Very early in the pandemic, we set a goal of ensuring that every person or family in crisis that we were aware of received support. We established a therapeutic services advice line, which provided 445 families with assistance and guidance within the first 12 months. We also developed a redeployment strategy to ensure staff were available to provide support, where needed.
* We initially reduced many of our grounds maintenance services to redeploy staff into waste and recycling roles, but ensured our roads and cemeteries were safe by prioritising activities based on public safety and road visibility.
* Alongside our Gwent partners, we are contributing to the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect scheme, redeploying staff to ensure it is well supported to respond to peaks in case numbers. The vaccination programme, delivered by Aneurin Bevan UHB, has continued at pace and by the end of August 2021, 89% of residents aged 18 years and older had received two doses; we continue to provide support, where required.