

Taking Monmouthshire Forward

Working together for a fairer,
greener, more successful county.
Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

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Welcome

It is with pride that I introduce the Council's Community and Corporate Plan 2022 -2028 - our first major plan since our election in May 2022.

Taking Monmouthshire Forward: working together for a fairer, greener, more successful county draws on all the resources we have, to become a zero-carbon county, while also supporting well-being, health and dignity for all.

Monmouthshire is a wonderful, beautiful place to work, to live and to visit. Our people, our greatest asset, have shown resilience to adversity - the pandemic, flooding and now the cost-of-living crisis. More than that, we have a kindness and neighbourliness, showing support for each other and for refugees given a safe haven in our county. We know how to work together.

But the challenges we face are great. The impact of climate and nature's crises are visible to us all. We can see and feel the change. Our county is the most economically unequal in Wales. We don't have enough affordable homes. Our population is ageing with many needing the care that we, like all other councils, are struggling to provide.

In developing our strategy, we consulted widely and value the expertise and knowledge of those who contributed. We are grateful for their time and effort.

Our plan does not shy away from what matters to our communities: the big challenges of sustainable transport, homelessness and maintaining key services.

We have been open to new ideas and ways of working.

Last May the electorate of Monmouthshire did not give an overall majority to any one party on the Council. The Council's plan needs to have agreement across the whole Council.

Many years of austerity have made the council a lean organisation, and increasing budgetary pressures require fundamental change in how services are delivered. Now, more than ever, we need to work in partnership with town and community councils, the police and fire services, businesses, housing and voluntary organisations and sister authorities.

As well as delivery, our focus will also be on prevention, with joined up accessible services to help prevent people falling into greater hardship or failing to thrive in work or education. Our aim is to celebrate achievement, protect the most vulnerable and to promote healthier, more active lifestyles.

In delivering change we will work with you, identifying the need and sharing the reasoning, opportunities and options. The decisions we all make now will affect not only us, but our children and generations to come.

We will continue to listen to your ideas and concerns, as we roll out the plan, working together to find the best way to address the challenges we face. Where new and better thinking comes to the fore, we will adopt it. All need to feel they have a voice and that their rights are protected. Only through collaboration and mutual respect can we meet our challenges.

I am aware that our plan takes Monmouthshire into unknown territory. It needs to. But I am confident that the abundant talent and resourcefulness, and the characteristics which held us together during the pandemic will allow us now to make Monmouthshire a welcoming, safe and thriving place for everyone.



Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby
Leader, Monmouthshire County Council

Monmouthshire - Our Place

Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous area in comparison to surrounding areas, offering a high quality of life to its citizens. It is a fantastic place to live, work and visit, occupying a strategic position as a border county between the major centres in South Wales and the south-west of England and the Midlands. Monmouthshire is the economic gateway to South Wales and the largest county in the Cardiff Capital Region.

Monmouthshire is beautiful. Tourism in the U.K. was born in the Wye Valley. Great works by the likes of Turner and Wordsworth were produced here. The county has been fought over for thousands of years. There are more castles per square mile than anywhere else in Wales, we have outstanding Roman remains in Caerwent, great rivers, areas of outstanding natural beauty, an industrial landscape world heritage site, the outstanding Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, major equestrian credentials and an agricultural base that we are very proud of. We have towns and villages that go back centuries, we are the food and cycling capital of Wales, and we have been the birthplace of prominent people that have shaped the world as we know it today.

Monmouthshire has one of the strongest economies in Wales and is best placed for growth of any Welsh county, with circa 4,000 active businesses ranging from international companies to small family enterprises. Skill and qualification levels here are comparatively high, as are employment rates. Our schools are good and highly regarded. People take advantage of road and rail links to

commute into and out of the area for employment opportunities.

Monmouthshire is made up of diverse communities covering an area of 880 square kilometres, with a population of 93,000 and a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare. The rural nature of the county presents challenges for accessibility of public services. Just over half of the total population live in urban areas.

Our population is ageing, with a higher-than-average

proportion of older people in the county. People live for longer and are healthier here than in most other places. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033.

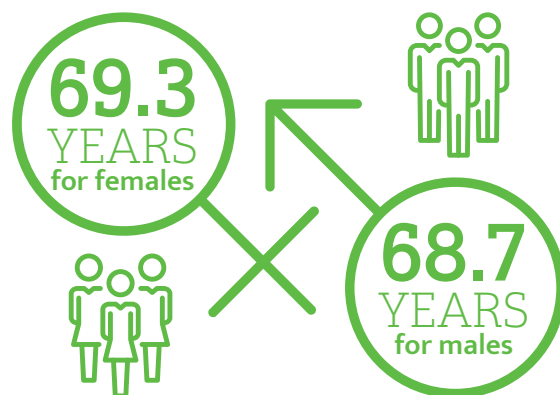
None of our communities are in the most deprived 10% in Wales¹. However, Monmouthshire has the highest level of income inequality in Wales and these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when seen alongside areas of relative wealth.

Some key figures that highlight the position in Monmouthshire are:

- Rising inflation is causing more people to fall into financial difficulties. 23.4% of children live in poverty and 10% of people are living in households in material deprivation.
- An estimated 718 kilo-tonnes of carbon is emitted in the county. This is equivalent to 7.5 tonnes per person, significantly above the UK average of 5.6 tonnes
- The employment rate of 77.7% is significantly higher than the rest of Wales. Gross Value Added per head is the seventh highest in Wales and those working in the county now have the third highest earnings in Wales.
- The local authority maintains four secondary schools, 30 primary schools and one pupil referral unit.
- Over half of Monmouthshire's working age population are qualified to level NVQ4 and above, compared to 38.6% for Wales and 43.6% for the UK.
- Monmouthshire has the highest house prices in Wales averaging £373,000, more than 9 times average earnings. There are currently 4,201 households waiting for social housing in the county, of which 322 are homeless.
- Average healthy life expectancy in Monmouthshire is 69.3 years for females and 68.7 years for males, both of which are above the average for Wales and the other local authorities in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area. However, there are significant differences between the poorest and most affluent areas within our county.
- The county benefits from a wide range of community groups, and the council is an active partner in groups such as the Gwent Public Services Board and Cardiff Capital Region, as well as benefitting from a wide range of collaborative services.

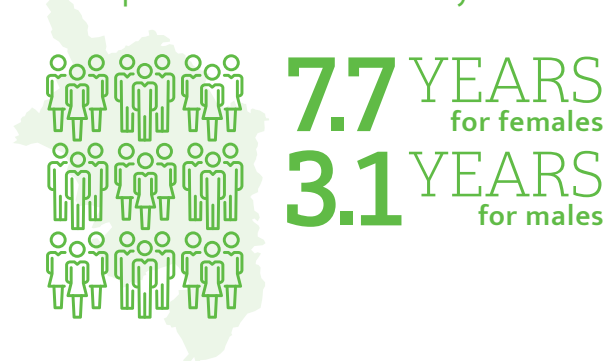
Our challenges and key information

Average healthy life expectancy in Monmouthshire is:



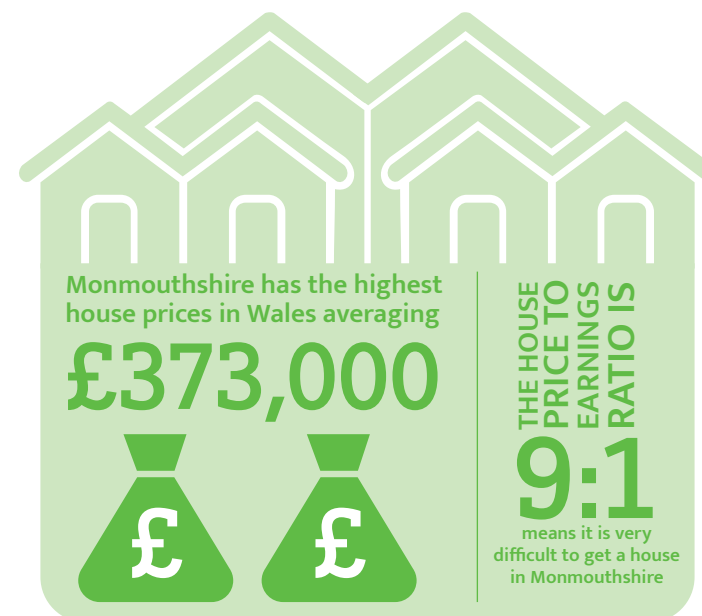
both of which are above the average for Wales

The gap in healthy life expectancy between those in the **most** and **least** deprived areas of the county is:



An estimated **718** kilotonnes of carbon is emitted in the county

This is equivalent to **7.5** tonnes per person significantly above the UK average of **5.6 tonnes**

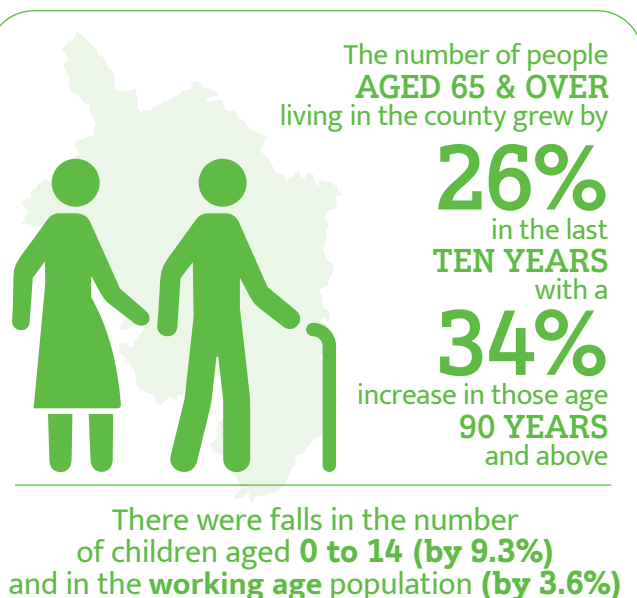


69.5%

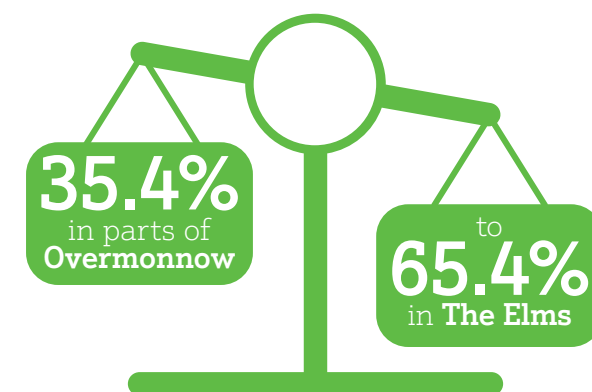
of waste is reused, recycled or composted



This is in line with Welsh Government targets



There are marked variations in **deprivation between communities** within Monmouthshire. For example, the **percentage of households not deprived** in any dimensions varies from:



MCC income includes:

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

£77.5M

BUSINESS RATES

£34.8M

COUNCIL TAX (MCC element only)

£62.6M



MCC spending includes:

EDUCATION

£59.0M

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

£57.9M

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

£23.2M

LEISURE, CULTURE & TOURISM

£4.4M

Our Purpose, Our Objectives

This Community and Corporate Plan sets our ambition for the council and county of Monmouthshire. Our purpose is clear. Monmouthshire will be:

"a zero carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life".

We are hopeful for the future of our place. We are confident in the compassion and creativity of the people who make this county so special.

This is the first plan produced by the Council following the elections in May 2022. It has been developed with councillors from all political parties alongside experts and people from different organisations who came together in the months preceding its publication. We have benefitted from an extensive engagement process that has run across Gwent to inform priorities for public services beyond the Council and conversations held with citizens on the doorstep through the build up to our election in May 2022 are still fresh in our minds. Together we identified the challenges and opportunities facing the county and sought to reach consensus on the things we will do to address these.

The cornerstones of our Plan, our absolute priorities are to tackle inequality, to work hard to decarbonise our county and to work with you all to adapt to a world where climatic change requires us to be much more thoughtful and less extractive. By way of example, it is not enough to mitigate the damage that we see to our great rivers; we will find ways to restore their health, beauty and biodiversity.

Our financial position is challenging so we must make clear choices. Our ambition is high. We believe that we can achieve more but only if we work together and with you. A higher proportion of our money will need to be spent on education and social care. Our youngest deserve the very best start we can give them and we want our talented older citizens to be supported so they can continue to play their full part in community life.

We have a track record of creativity and innovation. We will need to build on this. Our network of relationships needs to continue to develop nationally and internationally. We will be a good partner and we will be open to working with any person or organisation that can further our goals.

We need to find the very best solutions to complex problems and we must have an organisation capable of tailoring what we find to local need.

We need to have a clear voice that carries influence. We expect to be more than a service deliverer. We will advocate for you, we will represent you, we will involve you and we will ensure that Monmouthshire is recognised as a place where good things happen. We will compete for funding from every source that aligns with our purpose.

We will pay attention to the here and now whilst having an eye to the long-term. We will focus on the well-being of current and future generations. We will work with and alongside our communities and empower people to support each other and come up with long-term solutions. By doing this we can build resilience, shifting our public service system away from reacting to crises, and towards prevention and early intervention.

Our purpose requires clear high-level objectives that are measurable. Monmouthshire will be:

- **A Fair place** to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- **A Green place** to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- **A Thriving and ambitious place**, where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop;
- **A Safe place** to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure;
- **A Connected place** where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- **A Learning place** where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

We invite you to join with us in achieving these objectives. We need your energy. This is your county too.

Our Values

Values matter to us. They set out our expectations for ourselves, each other and the way we conduct business with organisations that we work with on your behalf.

Our organisational values are:



Teamwork

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.



Openness

We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.



Flexibility

We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.



Fairness

We provide opportunities for all people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently, recognising that we will sometimes need to take positive action to overcome some of the challenges faced by people with different protected characteristics.



Kindness

We will show kindness to all those we work with, putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

These values provide a foundation for everyone attached to our organisation to be accountable, to be positive and to be bold in delivering on our purpose of:

Monmouthshire being a zero carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

We invite you to join with us. We need your energy, ideas and commitment. It is your place.

A Delivery Framework

Our purpose, our objectives and our values matter. Our intention to be innovative in what we do, our desire to be an outstanding partner and our openness to learning wherever we find it are important. But the stand-out issue has to be what we intend to do. It is actions and outcomes that we will be judged on. In the pages that follow we have set out initial delivery frameworks for each of our six objectives. We are realistic and we expect these to change over time. If the last few years have taught us anything, it has been the need to adapt at speed to changing circumstances.

Our Community and Corporate Plan – at a glance

OUR PURPOSE

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life

OUR OBJECTIVES

Fair place



to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced

Green place



to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency

Thriving and ambitious place



where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop

Safe place



to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure

Connected place



where people feel part of a community and are valued

Learning place



where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

OUR VALUES



Teamwork



Openness



Fairness



Flexibility



Kindness

OUR OBJECTIVES

A Fair Place to Live

Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count. Many of our residents are prosperous and very capable of looking after themselves and their loved ones. However, this is not the case for all and in a rural county inequality is often more hidden than in urban places. We will increase the intensity of our work to help those that need support to live the lives they want.



The issue we face

In our county, households in genuine poverty often live close by others who are extremely affluent. Research shows that this relative income inequality is associated with worse outcomes in things as diverse as health, crime levels and social cohesion.

Poverty affects different groups in different ways. Women are more likely to be in low-paid jobs, with fewer savings than men and therefore at an increased risk of poverty. Households in which someone is disabled are also at higher risk of being in relative income poverty².

The nature of a rural county makes it harder for some people to access basic services, such as transport and health provision. The costs they face can be higher than for those living in urban areas, for example many will be without mains gas to heat their homes while others will face long journeys on public transport to access basic services.

Local government does not have control of all of the policy levers needed to address the root cause of these issues. However, there are things we can do to empower people and ensure they can access support. This can include things like ensuring pupils can get a healthy meal at school and people have access to low-cost sports and leisure activities to help them stay healthy. We can also provide support to help people into jobs, and to signpost them to the financial support they are entitled to.

Monmouthshire is a welcoming place – a County of Sanctuary. The county is now home to more than a hundred families who have fled the war in Ukraine. These new arrivals have the potential to be a real asset to our county, but it creates an extra demand for affordable housing which we have been unable to meet.



What the evidence tells us

More and more people are falling into poverty with inflation going up quicker than incomes. People are having to spend a higher proportion of their income on fuel and energy, the cost of which rose significantly in 2022. Data shows that 9,500 households in our county are in poverty (defined as those who earn below 60% of the median income). One in ten people are living in households in material deprivation while 23.4% of children in Monmouthshire, nearly a quarter of the total, live in poverty ³.

This affects different groups in different ways. Disabled people can face particular barriers to entering the labour market, for example, across the UK less than 5% of people with a learning disability are in employment ⁴.

Across Wales 46% of single parent households are in poverty – twice as high as the overall poverty rate of 23%. As 86% of single parents in Wales are women this will be felt more acutely by them.

The house price to earnings ratio of 9:1 means it is difficult to rent or buy a house in Monmouthshire. There are more than 4,200 households on the waiting list for social housing and a shortage of private rental properties available.

As well as the evidence cited above, we convened a workshop including community groups, agencies and councillors from all political groups, in order to identify gaps, priorities and success stories. The workshop identified that a lot of excellent work is already going on in the county. Our challenge is to ensure that there is a strategic approach and that all our actions lead to a reduction in inequality and poverty in the next five years.

Improved access to advice and benefits for people on low incomes

More than £15 billion of benefits go unclaimed in the UK each year. This could mean over £20 million of unclaimed benefits in Monmouthshire. As a result, many people are needlessly struggling when support is available to them. Our Money Matters Partnership brings advice providers together to ensure that high quality debt, benefits, and money advice reaches everyone in Monmouthshire.

Universal Free School Meals for Primary Pupils

The Welsh Government announced in June 2022 that all primary schools would have universal free school meals by 2024. A recent study by Sustain showed that every £1 invested in universal school meals now could deliver a return of £1.71 - or £41.3 billion over 20 years - as a result of improved educational attainment, health and wellbeing, and wider economic contribution.

The benefits of free school meals are three-fold:

- Boosts attainment and attendance, and increases a child's lifetime earnings
- Improves food security and helps families save on food costs
- Improves diet quality and helps combat childhood obesity, saving the NHS money in the long term

Before this funding became available 1,747 pupils in Monmouthshire primary schools had free school meals. The roll-out to further pupils started in September 2022 beginning with reception, year 1 and year 2. By the conclusion of the roll out we estimate that 6,250 pupils will be benefitting. This will increase attendance and attainment and reduce stigma. School holiday provision will also be implemented.

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement universal free school meals for all primary school children with support in the school holidays for those who need it • Provide enhanced learning opportunities and evidence-based interventions to ensure that pupils from low-income families are able to achieve their full potential • Ensure access to advice services so that people get the maximum financial support they are entitled to • Support children, young people and families through provision of free or low-cost sport and leisure opportunities • Increase the employment of disabled people in our organisation and work with local employers to encourage take up of the Disability Confident pledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children receiving universal free school meals • Percentage of children living in relative low-income families • Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement
Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide employment support advice to help people find jobs • Promote healthier lives and increased physical activity through MonLife sports and leisure facilities and promote access to open spaces for outdoor exercise • Provide pathways to positive lifestyle and exercise choices through the exercise referral scheme • Work with residents to progress the development of the new Magor and Undy Community Hub • Develop an inclusive cultural strategy working with our partners and communities across the county • Work with partners to reduce food insecurity and help people access places to keep warm in winter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of working age people supported into employment through action by the local authority • Percentage of people successfully completing the exercise referral scheme at week 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement • Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a participatory budgeting programme to enable all citizens to have greater influence on how we spend money • Reintroduce Area Committees to amplify citizen's voices and strengthen the links between local and strategic decision-making • Empower and facilitate citizens and communities to develop their own solutions to build resilience • Increase and support the number of people who volunteer • Become an accredited County of Sanctuary for those fleeing war and persecution • Provide more opportunities for people to speak and learn Welsh • Strengthen diversity and deliver greater equality in all protected characteristics by delivering on the commitments of the Race Equality Action Plan for Wales; The Disability Action Plan; the LGBTQ+ action and Gender Equality plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area • Number of young people who take part in the Make Your Mark survey • Percentage of people who volunteer • County of Sanctuary status attained • Number of Welsh speakers i) in the county and ii) employed by the council • Difference in average pay between men and women working in the county • Plans to deliver on equality commitments, including a race equality action plan, are approved by Cabinet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement • Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

OUR OBJECTIVES

A Green Place to Live

We recognise the outstanding beauty of Monmouthshire. As custodians of this stunning place we need to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy it, protect it and conserve it. The natural world in all its guises is the backdrop to our tourism and visitor economy. We will work with others to promote access to our special places whilst protecting the environment, support nature recovery, reduce our carbon emissions, reduce the risk of flooding and promote the circular economy.

**The issue we face**

We are in a climate and a nature emergency. We need to take urgent action to mitigate further climate change or risk the planet becoming unliveable for future generations. We must also adapt to the changes that are now inevitable, such as extreme weather events.

At the same time, we face a biodiversity crisis, with almost a fifth of UK plants threatened with extinction and a third of British pollinator species in decline, posing a threat to agriculture and food security. The UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. In Wales 30% of wildlife is found in fewer places than it was in 1970 with one in six species being at risk of extinction ⁵.



What the evidence tells us

Carbon emissions per head of population in Monmouthshire are above the average for the UK with just under half of that coming from transport and around a quarter from domestic properties. This reflects the rural nature of the county with more journeys being made by car, and a relatively old and energy inefficient housing stock. This data indicates where we will need to take action if the county is to play its part reducing global emissions.

The need for nature recovery in our local area is also clear with 34% of species showing a decline in their numbers ⁶.

The health of our rivers is a particular area of concern. Phosphate targets for the Usk are being failed at a rate of 88% and the Wye at 68%. Algal blooms smother other life in the rivers having a direct impact on the species that they provide habitat for ⁷. The health of our rivers is also affected by litter, in particular plastics which can be seen on riverbanks. Studies have also found increasing levels of microplastics in fish and other species.

Monmouthshire County Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Our Climate Emergency Action Plan recognises the importance of managing green spaces to reduce energy use, absorb carbon and increase resilience. When the plan was updated in 2021, the emphasis on nature recovery was strengthened in recognition of the nature emergency. We have also recently declared a commitment to play our part in realising clean, healthy and productive rivers and oceans. We will work with a wide range of partners and organisations such as Natural Resources Wales and Dŵr Cymru, as well as neighbouring Local Authorities, to achieve this.

Our workshops made us aware that our aims can only be achieved by working effectively with residents, businesses and community groups – whether this is in relation to litter, circular economy, re-use, repair and recycling, maximising the use of local produce, sustainable farming practices or the modal shift away from car usage. We need to build on the start we have made to address these issues, integrating climate and nature protection into everything that we do and working with the expertise and energy in our communities, to build a nature-positive response to the challenges we are facing.

Residents continue to clearly state their support for action in this area through well organised third sector groups and routinely through preparedness to play their role domestically by supporting reduce, re-use, recycling approaches with strong compliance.

In Wales 30% of wildlife is found in fewer places than it was in 1970 with one in six species being at risk of extinction.



What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the carbon emissions generated from the council's properties and vehicles • Increase renewable energy generation capacity of council land and buildings • Ensure that our procurement and commissioning processes focus on carbon reduction at each stage of the procurement cycle • Improve walking and cycle routes and integrate these with the public transport network • Expand access to electric charging infrastructure, to support the switch to low emissions vehicles • Continue to deliver an accredited Carbon Literacy programme for businesses, residents and community leaders to empower change • Support communities to reuse and repair items through initiatives such as re-use shops, Benthys and Repair Cafes and use the revenue to fund tree planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon emissions (kgCO₂e) from the Council's assets and operations • Capacity (MW) of renewable energy equipment installed on the council's estate • Local Transport Plan supporting modal shift is produced • Number of active travel routes i) in place ii) in development • Percentage of municipal waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment
<p>Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand the <i>Nature Isn't Neat</i> approach and increase community and partner participation • Work with partners to support landscape scale action to improve ecosystem resilience and tackle pressures on species and habitats • Work with other local councils, partners and landowners to achieve catchment wide improvements to river quality • Work with partners to promote natural flood alleviation • Maintain all current support mechanisms for communities vulnerable to surface water, river and / or coastal flooding while pressing for sustainable natural solutions where possible and engineered solutions where necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of the Special Area of Conservation river catchment waterbodies that fail the phosphorus targets • Number of properties at medium or high risk of flooding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

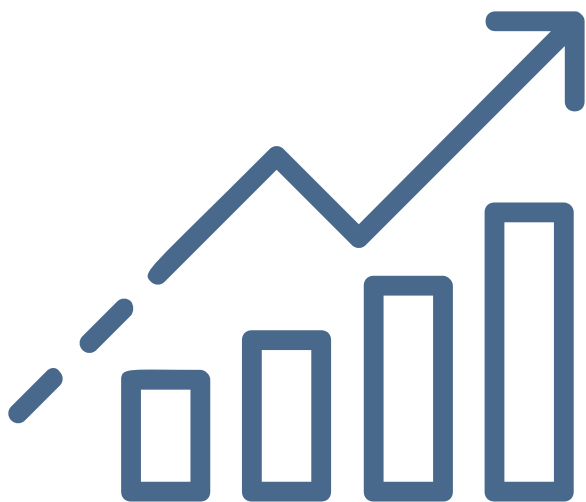
What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote community access to land for growing food • Promote the benefits of local food and reduce food waste • Increase the use of local produce in schools and care homes • Work with <i>Food Monmouthshire</i> - the county's sustainable food partnership, suppliers, processors and logistics to support the development of the local supply chain and reduce our reliance on imported food • Support initiatives to help farmers to increase carbon sequestration and adopt sustainable and regenerative farming practices • Work with Hartpury University's Agri Tech Centre to support existing and new entrant farmers to review existing technologies and adopt new innovations to increase their productivity and competitiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people on the waiting list for allotments • New food strategies and policies approved by Cabinet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

OUR OBJECTIVES

A Thriving and Ambitious Place

Our starting point is a comparatively strong one. Monmouthshire has a strong local economy and is well placed for growth in Welsh terms. There is strength in a number of key sectors which are highlighted and supported at a national level. Employment rates are high as are qualification levels. But there is more that can be done.

Monmouthshire can be more vibrant. The conditions exist to achieve this. We will work with national, regional and local partners to increase investment, improve connectivity and continue the development of an economy which is thriving, ambitious and enterprising.



The issues we face

Monmouthshire is strategically placed as the gateway to south east Wales. Proximity to growing cities such as Bristol and Cardiff increases our ability to attract investment, skilled labour and visitors and creates the conditions for the many successful businesses already located here to thrive and grow.

The vibrancy of our towns is pivotal to our future success, but they continue to be threatened by wider economic factors such as energy costs, declining household spending power and changing patterns of retail. Our towns will need constant and creative re-imagining if they are to retain their role as retail centres, visitor attractions and motors of our county's economy.

Public transport within the county is limited. The bus services that link our towns with rural settlements are too infrequent for people to rely on them to access employment and local services. This results in an over-reliance on cars, increasing congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution. It also means people who cannot afford to own and run their own vehicle face barriers accessing training and employment. We have been successful in attracting £4.1M of grant funding for 2022/23 to develop active travel networks across the county and are working with partners such as Transport for Wales and the Welsh Government to develop integrated solutions including walking and cycling routes to train stations to reduce dependence on private cars.



Changing work patterns are increasing the number of people working from home or from local hubs. This can reduce the need to travel but requires the improved broadband speeds to be rolled out across the county – it is essential that these are delivered in every area.

Skill levels in the county are high, but with no higher education establishments many young people leave the area to attend University, and high property prices and unaffordable rents contribute to a net outflow of young people from the local labour market.

19.5% of the total area of industrial and business sites identified in our most recent Local Development Plan was available for development. Nevertheless, potential investors have highlighted a lack of land and readily available units for potential businesses to move into. This is also limiting the growth potential of existing businesses.

The replacement Local Development Plan is expected to be adopted in Summer 2025. It will set out the planning policy framework to enable the provision of approximately 6,240 additional jobs by allocating 38ha of employment land and including policies to facilitate economic growth.

There is poor connectivity within Monmouthshire and between our towns and the surrounding cities of Bristol, Bath, Newport and Cardiff.

What the evidence tells us

Monmouthshire has an employment rate of 77.7%, significantly higher than the UK figure of 75.5%. We have the highest number of active enterprises in Wales at 777 per 10,000 population⁸. A high proportion of these are micro-enterprises employing fewer than ten people. The Gross Value Added, or GVA, per head of population is the seventh highest in Wales.

The largest industries are health, wholesale and retail, manufacturing and accommodation and food. 3,120 people were employed in the tourism sector pre-Covid which is around 9% of the total jobs in the county.

Monmouthshire has an ageing population with 58.4% of the population of working age, this is nearly five percentage points below the British average. The replacement Local Development Plan needs to provide housing that meets the needs of a younger population, with more affordable homes, including more social housing for rent.

The number of vacant retail premises in several town centres is at higher levels than has been the case for several years. Shopping patterns in a post pandemic world suggest that these town centres will need to adapt to a different set of consumer needs if they are to be successful.



What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek the investment to implement the existing placemaking plans in Caldicot, Usk, Wye Valley Villages and Chepstow • Work with local people to create placemaking plans for Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor • Support the amenities, events and experiences that attract people to our towns making use of facilities such as our museums, the newly refurbished Borough Theatre in Abergavenny, Caldicot Castle, Chepstow Drill Hall and Chepstow Castle • Work with property owners and landlords to minimise town centre vacancies • Ensure town centres are accessible via active travel and public transport such as the proposed Magor Walkway station • Continue to support the tourism sector and enhance the experience for visitors to our county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of new placemaking plans for Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor • Town centre footfall • Percentage of vacant town centre premises • Annual economic impact of tourism to the county • Number of passengers using Monmouthshire railway stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy • Cabinet Member for Inclusive & Active Communities • Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Environment
<p>People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more support for people who wish to start their own business including schemes such as Elevate Monmouthshire which is delivered using Community Renewal Funding, in partnership with the Alacrity Foundation and TownSq. • Promote career paths in shortage areas such as care and construction earlier and more consistently. • Commit to specific activity in care apprenticeships and scale up delivery through Y Apprentis and similar schemes • Develop better links with further and higher education • Work with partners including the Cardiff Capital Region and Western Gateway to develop the skills needed by the workforce of the future including green and digital industries • Encourage innovation and clustering in sectors such as food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of start-up businesses assisted by the local authority and its partners • Number of working age population supported into employment by the local authority • Reduced labour shortages in sectors such as care and construction • Average gross disposable household income per head • Number of school leavers not in education, employment or training • Percentage of care experienced young people who have completed at least 3 months in education, training or employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of a modern, accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system through the implementation of a local transport plan • Develop active travel routes that encourage people to walk and cycle to towns, schools and local key destinations • Invest in better bus infrastructure and work with partners to enhance the local railway system including the development of a new station at Magor and improvements at Severn Tunnel Junction to improve access and usage • Work with partners to increase the frequency of train services, creating plans for a metro that links Monmouthshire to Bristol, Newport and Cardiff • Develop a county wide digital solution that matches those who need to travel with those who have car spaces • Maintain and improve key highways infrastructure including roads, pavements and bridges • Work with Gloucestershire County Council and The Forest of Dean District Council to improve transport infrastructure which reduces congestion in and around Chepstow • Make representations to Welsh Government for a speed limit reduction on the A40 at Raglan and other sites of community concern, and work with Welsh Government, Town and Community Councils and schools to address road safety issues, particularly around schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of active travel routes created or enhanced • Number of rail and bus passengers • Percentage of local authority fleet which is made up of ultra-low emission vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities; • Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy; • Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Environment • Cabinet member for Inclusive & Active Communities • Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Environment

OUR OBJECTIVES

A Safe Place to Live

For most people, Monmouthshire is a really good place to live but not for everyone. This needs to change. We will work with partners to create a safe place that people are proud to call home, increase the availability of good quality affordable housing, reduce homelessness and promote approaches to help homeowners to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.



The issue we face

House prices in Monmouthshire are the highest in Wales. The ratio of prices to workplace-based earnings makes property ownership unaffordable for many. This is compounded by the limited availability of private rental properties.

A shortage of development land and increased phosphate levels in rivers has led to much development being put on hold, restricting supply and driving up prices. This means many people have to move out of the area making it harder for employers to recruit, causing knock-on effects for the local economy, key services and the longer-term viability of our communities.

Recent changes to Welsh Government policy have resulted in a significant increase in pressure to provide temporary and permanent accommodation to homeless households. There is a limited supply of suitable accommodation while squeezed incomes and rising living costs mean demand for affordable accommodation continues to rise at a rate well above that which can be met by local housing associations.

Those who do own a home can also face challenges. Monmouthshire has an older, less energy efficient housing stock than many parts of the country. Carbon emissions from homes are a significant part of the county's carbon footprint. This contributes to fuel poverty, something that is likely to be experienced by more households given the current economic climate and high energy prices.

People need a place to call home, they also want to feel safe and have a sense of belonging. Anti-social behaviour is increasing in some parts of the county, and residents have voiced concerns about the responsiveness of agencies. In Monmouthshire we are seeing rising levels of crime, albeit levels are still below neighbouring areas and national averages.

Rapid Rehousing

Monmouthshire is experiencing unprecedented numbers of people in temporary accommodation as we grapple with a shortage of affordable housing. We will be using a rapid rehousing approach to prevent homelessness reoccurring and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

Rapid Rehousing is an internationally recognised approach which ensures that anyone experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.

What the evidence tells us

House prices in Monmouthshire rose 35% between 2016 and 2021 and now average £373,000⁹. This is significantly higher than the Wales average of £224,000 and the UK average of £295,000¹⁰.

The ratio of house prices to earnings is the highest in Wales with average house prices at around 9 times workplace-based earnings, compared to the Wales average of 6.5 times.

Monmouthshire also suffers from a limited supply of private rented properties. The number of properties available to rent reduced by almost 50% between 2010 and 2019, with prices increasing by 25% over this period. The private rental market is highly unlikely to be a viable option for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance or Universal Credit with only 5.75% of privately rented properties in Monmouthshire affordable for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance¹¹.

There are currently 4,200 households waiting for social housing in the county, of which 322 are homeless. Modelling predicts that around seven out of every ten new households will be priced out of the housing market.

These factors all contribute to higher numbers of homeless households in the county. More homeless households are having to be housed in temporary accommodation with numbers increasing from 18 households at the end of 2019 to 200 in March 2023. The number of households unintentionally homeless and in priority need has increased fivefold from 15 in 2020/21 to 78 in 2021/22.

The number of households unintentionally homeless and in priority need has increased fivefold

A prominent issue raised during our workshops was the need for wider preventative work through focusing on earlier intervention which would help to alleviate pressure on housing demand and reduce the need for temporary accommodation. A Rapid Rehousing approach to homelessness has developed to transform the delivery of homeless services.

Evidence globally shows links between inequality and crime levels. While there are no studies of this locally, recorded crime in Monmouthshire increased by 25% in the five years to 2021 with increases across ten crime categories.



What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
Increased supply of good quality affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a Replacement Local Development Plan with affordable housing and well-connected net zero carbon development at its heart • Work with partners to develop homes for social rent on public sector land and bring more empty properties back into use • Buy accommodation which can be rented-out at affordable levels • Explore the feasibility of, and opportunities for, co-operative and community housing • Explore whether the Council should act as developer in addition to working with registered social landlords to bring forward new homes • Explore new ways of constructing homes quickly and efficiently, such as modular builds • Review and update the shared housing allocations policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratio of house prices to earnings • Number of additional units of affordable housing i) granted planning permission and ii) delivered in the year • Percentage of social housing allocated to homeless households • Number of households in band 1 with a homeless duty e.g. waiting for social housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities & Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Economy
Reduce the number of people who become homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce an innovative Rapid Rehousing approach to prevent homelessness recurrence and the need for temporary accommodation and deliver on the rapid rehousing action plan. • Reduce the use of B&B accommodation by acquiring more private leased properties and purchasing properties for temporary housing • Eliminate the use of B&B accommodation for households with children and young people • Work collaboratively with social services to avoid care leavers becoming homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of homeless applicants who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless • Number of additional/new units of homeless accommodation delivered in the year • Number of young people and households with children in B&B accommodation • Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation • Number of care experienced people who are homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to advice and support for homeowners and landlords to retrofit homes to alleviate fuel poverty, increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions • Work with partners to maximise the benefits of funding schemes such as Eco4 to reduce fuel poverty • Conduct a feasibility study into a purchase-retrofit-rent out approach to bringing empty properties into use as exemplar social homes • Take steps through the RLDP to ensure that new homes built in Monmouthshire have the highest energy efficiency standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of homes that have a poor/good energy efficiency rating • Average carbon emissions per capita in Monmouthshire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities
Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with police, partners and communities to tackle anti-social behaviour • Continue to develop our CCTV network and maintain street lighting • Ensure that schools, police, youth and social services work together and focus on crime prevention • Work with partners across Gwent to tackle violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence • Work with Town and Community Councils and communities to tackle litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and dog fouling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population • Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling • The proportion of those referred to the youth offending service who subsequently re-offend. • The number of rapes and sexual offences committed in the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Equalities & Engagement • Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

OUR OBJECTIVES

A Connected Place Where People Care

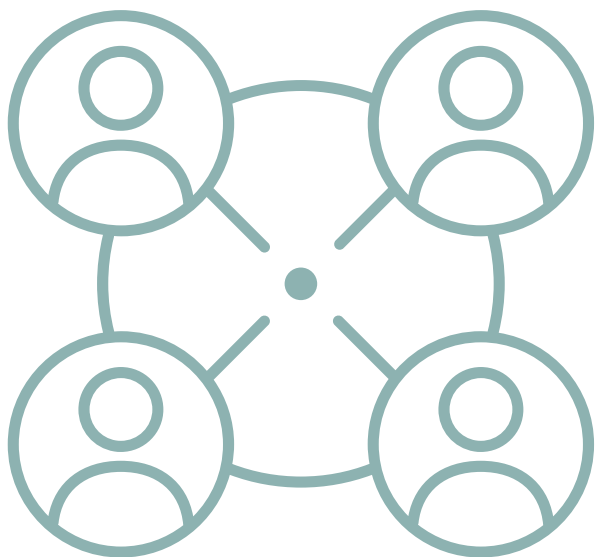
Monmouthshire will be a place where people's contributions are valued, they feel part of a community and are connected to others.

The issue we face

The health and social care system is facing significant challenges and statutory services are struggling to cope with the volume and complexity of demand.

We have a track record of delivering innovative approaches and rich partnership working. However, budgets are contracting, and recruiting and retaining key staff is becoming more challenging. This means that people cannot always access the support they need.

We recognise that well-being is about far more than treating people when they get sick. There are many factors that can have an impact on our health including the environment, housing, what we do for work, how much we earn, our lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These wider determinants of health, sometimes called the social determinants, can impact in either a positive or negative way on physical and mental health.



What the evidence tells us

Monmouthshire has an ageing population with 12.1% of the population aged 75 or over which is the highest in the Cardiff Capital Region area.

Alongside overall life expectancy, it's important to look at the number of years that people experience good health. Average healthy life expectancy in Monmouthshire is 69.3 for females and 68.7 for males, both are above the average for Wales and the other local authorities in the Aneurin Bevan Health Board area. This hides inequalities at a local level with the gap in healthy life expectancy between those living in the most and least affluent parts of the county being 7.7 years for females and 3.1 years for males.

*At a county level,
Monmouthshire residents
experience better health than
those of neighbouring parts of
Wales*

Improving healthy life expectancy for everyone, through increased physical activity and healthier diets could help people to have more years of good health. This will reduce the demand for social care and health services.

We have a good track record of partnership working and recognise the importance of maintaining and building on regional partnerships to develop enhanced community and primary care through local Neighbourhood Care Networks or NCNs.

87% of adults receiving care and support are happy with the services they receive compared to 89% in the previous two years. Maintaining satisfaction levels will be challenging in the face of budget and workforce pressures. Alongside this we will continue to transform services enabling them to keep pace with the expectations of today's service users who will have very different ideas of what it means to live independently and have a good life than those of the generation that went before them.

The number of people providing unpaid care is on the increase across the UK. Research shows that carers are providing tens of billions of pounds of unpaid care in the UK. These people perform a vital role and without their efforts the health and social care system would become overwhelmed.

The numbers of children who are looked after by the local authority has risen in recent years and remains at just above the Welsh average at 120 per 10,000 population.

Research shows that young people who have experienced care, often have much poorer outcomes in adult life than their peers. They are more likely to not be in education, employment or training and they are more also likely to be homeless¹². Our Corporate Parenting Strategy and Panel provide key opportunities to promote and further the needs and interests of this group.

The local authority is supporting an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This group often have different needs to the wider population.



What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that information, advice and assistance is available to provide timely access to social care • Work with partners to enable people to stay in their own homes and communities wherever possible • Provide early help and preventative services that reduce the likelihood of children and families requiring long-term support • Invest in the provision of high-quality placements for vulnerable children and young people who cannot be placed with foster carers • Increase in-county placement options and work with partners to ensure that care will be provided without profit • Expand the Family Time service to provide increased flexibility to meet children's needs in line with their individual care plans • Support effective discharge from hospital by facilitating further opportunities for integration between health and social care including increased in-reach into hospital settings • Continually review all funded care packages to ensure they remain appropriate and equitable across recipients • Provide a high-quality residential care facility for people with dementia • Expand the availability of carers for those who wish to receive direct payments to arrange their own care and support needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of adult service users who have had the right information or advice when they needed it • Percentage of assessments completed within statutory timescales • Number of children supported to remain living with their family • Number of children who are rehabilitated home after a period of being looked after • Percentage of families reporting a positive outcome after a Building Stronger Families intervention • Percentage of placements of children who are looked after which are with in-house foster carers • Number of patients waiting for discharge from hospital for social care reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public sector partners across Gwent to improve the social determinants of health such as income and access to green spaces • Provide a varied range of activities in a safe environment, such as community hubs and leisure centres, for children, young people and adults to participate in a wide range of activities that contribute to health and well-being • Explore new ways to improve the refurbishment of Caldicot Leisure Centre • Promote healthier lives and increased physical activity through the provision of sports and leisure facilities and open spaces under the MonLife brand • Maintain and develop early help and preventative services for children and families • Promote whole school approaches to support the mental well-being of children and young people • Provide direct care which is flexible and supports people to achieve their personal outcomes • Work in partnership with carers to provide a range of services that are responsive to their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average healthy life expectancy at birth • Average difference in healthy life-expectancy between men and women • Number of people attending i) MonGames ii) Food and Fun iii) Active Play • Percentage of adult service users who are happy with the care and support they receive • Percentage of people who have had a positive outcome following a period of reablement • Number of carers and young carers supported by the carers team • Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week • Percentage of people who attend or participate in arts culture or heritage activities three or more times a year by local authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services • Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities • Cabinet Member for Education
<p>A professional and passionate social care workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote social care as a career of choice and find innovative ways of growing recruitment of the best people • Encourage diversity and inclusion within the workforce with representation of more people from different ethnic minorities and with disabilities and / or specific support needs • Uplift fees for care providers to ensure they can continue to pay the real living wage to retain key staff to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of job vacancies in social care workforce • Percentage of the workforce from ethnic minority backgrounds • Percentage of workforce with disabilities and / or specific support needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services

OUR OBJECTIVES

A Learning Place

Monmouthshire will be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn; developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential.



The issue we face

The pandemic has had a substantial effect on schools and pupils. The two years of uncertainty and significant disruption to learning has inevitably left a legacy. All pupils experienced time away from formal learning and the school environment and this has led to challenges for both students and the professionals in our schools. Since schools have reopened the education system in Wales has continued to evolve with reforms and developments including the new Curriculum for Wales and the introduction of a new Additional Learning Needs Act.

Schools recognise that there is still a need to support all learners to secure the necessary skills and knowledge that we would expect them to have at the relevant point in their education. The pandemic created new challenges for all learners but impacted more upon those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. In particular we have seen attendance at school at much lower rates than before the pandemic. The emotional and mental well-being of pupils was often affected, with many experiencing increased uncertainty, anxiety and


loneliness. In line with our guiding principles, it is vital that we develop more opportunities to listen and learn from our pupils and students.

Before the pandemic we knew that our disadvantaged learners did not achieve the outcomes we would wish. The pandemic has worsened the learning experiences of many vulnerable students such as those eligible for free school meals.

We have strengthened our capability to promote and ensure that we have an inclusive education system. This new team are supporting schools across Monmouthshire.

The current economic climate is putting a strain on many families and posing a risk to emotional and mental well-being, meaning those feelings of anxiety are likely to continue, for both pupils and families. As costs increase and budgets tighten, schools will be under pressure to deliver high quality performance with limited resources, putting a strain on both pupils and teachers.





Monmouthshire's adult population generally are more qualified, on average, than other counties in Wales.

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What the evidence tells us

Across Wales, the number of pupils persistently absent increased during the pandemic and has remained high at around 10%, compared to less than 3% pre-pandemic. In addition, the attendance gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and those not, was exacerbated by the pandemic, increasing from 6% to 16%. Persistent absence in primary-aged pupils has increased to 5%, compared to 1.6% before the pandemic. Research has found that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people, with many reporting increased feelings of depression.

Professionals across Monmouthshire recognised that the strain on emotional and mental well-being has continued beyond the 'end' of the pandemic. The rising costs are causing stress not only to families who are having to spend

more on uniforms and school supplies but also to schools who are facing increased energy and staffing costs.

The Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing recognises and seeks to address the impact of the pandemic and the return to school.

The Curriculum for Wales offers an opportunity to support learners' health and wellbeing as a core part of their time in school.

Monmouthshire's adult population generally are more qualified, on average, than other counties in Wales. Over half of Monmouthshire's working age population, or 52.6%, are qualified to level NVQ4 and above, compared to 38.6% for Wales and 43.6% for the UK. A much smaller percentage of our population hold no qualifications. In Monmouthshire 3.1% of working age adults have no

qualifications compared to 8.3% and 6.6% for Wales and the UK, respectively. However, Monmouthshire has the third lowest number of people attending community learning activities in Wales. Continued learning as adults not only contributes to development and increases opportunities, but it can also benefit mental well-being.

Getting Children Back to School

Pupils have suffered an unprecedented disruption to their learning over the past few years as a result of the pandemic. It is vital that we support schools to secure high levels of attendance and minimise levels of persistent absence. We need to develop our engagement with families and schools to minimise any potential barriers to school experiences.

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an inclusion strategy that recognises the challenges brought about by the pandemic • Develop new approaches to improving attendance focusing on early identification of need to address all barriers to school attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of pupil attendance at primary level (all learners and those eligible for free school meals) • Percentage of pupil attendance at secondary level (all learners and those eligible for free school meals) • Number of permanent and fixed term exclusions • Engagement of schools in professional learning and resources around Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Education
<p>The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a consistent and uniform approach to ensure that excellent teaching and learning is the basis of the school day • Develop a broader 14-19 offer including more collaboration between comprehensive schools and further education partners • Develop more opportunities to listen to and learn from our pupils and students • Promote and develop greater opportunities for children and young people to learn and speak Welsh in both Welsh medium and English medium schools • Work with partners to provide a wide-ranging professional learning offer that develops and supports our school teams to provide excellent learning experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Estyn Inspections recognising positive progress towards the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales • Range of courses available to reflect the needs and interests for 14-19-year olds • Meeting the range of targets set out in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) • School based staff access a wide range of appropriate and focused professional learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Education

What we want to achieve	The actions we will take	How we will measure progress	Who is accountable
<p>A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that our provision meets the needs of a wide range of learners including vulnerable groups and those with additional learning needs • Universal provision effectively supports all learners to achieve their potential • Maintain a continual focus on school and classroom approaches to improving outcomes for children eligible for free school meals • Develop a broader educational offer to include both academic and vocational pathways and engage partners from public and private sectors • Develop more support, such as coaching and mentoring for pupils • Ensure those at financial disadvantage have access to IT equipment • Improve the affordability and accessibility of adult education courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress of vulnerable learners is good • A good range of appropriate provision to meet the needs of vulnerable learners • Additional Learning Provision (ALP) meets the needs of vulnerable learners in the county and is of good quality • Number of adult learners enrolled in local authority community education • Percentage of adults with qualifications at Level 4 and above of the national qualifications framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Education
<p>Continue our programme of school modernisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a new, carbon neutral, 3 – 19 school in Abergavenny • Increase Welsh medium primary school provision including a newly refurbished school on the site of Deri View and the opening of a seedling provision in Monmouth • Develop a strategic review of all schools and their catchment areas • Undertake a 'learning led' review of educational provision in Chepstow to create a sustainable education plan for the town • Continue to develop the county's early years offer supporting both the maintained and non-maintained sectors to provide the greatest opportunities for families • Maximise the opportunities for greater community usage and engagement in our schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All measured by attainment of key milestones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Education

Our Council

We want to be a council that works alongside and with citizens, neighbourhoods and communities. We will be a values-led organisation where we encourage our people to be accountable, innovative and courageous.

The Council is accustomed to change. It is recognised across the U.K. as being creative, innovative and open to new ideas. These qualities will be necessary if we are to continue to do well in the challenging circumstances described throughout this Plan.

Our budgets may not be large compared to other local authorities, but we will build on our greatest asset - our people, our on-payroll staff and our citizens. Working together we can make a positive difference.

We will put citizens front and centre

We will strengthen how we work with and for communities. We will build on what has already been put in place. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 gives us a useful framework to facilitate community asset building. We will supplement this by maintaining wider networks which will support our communities to thrive and be resilient. Open and honest relationships with our residents and partners matter to us.

We recognise that people are the experts in their own lives, and our public participation strategy will reflect that. We will work to understand what matters to people and what we can do together so that we can all see the benefits. We want Monmouthshire to be a place you are proud to live in or be a part of.

During the first 12 months of this plan, we will review our customer service channels (online, phone and in person). It matters to us that the Council is accessible and that all enquiries get a prompt response. We know this is not always the case now. We will reset service standards that you can be confident in.

We will value our staff

We have a passionate and dedicated workforce who deliver a wide range of services and are always open to new ways of working. Many of them are Monmouthshire residents. They have a real interest in the Council doing well because their families are recipients of service. Every town and village in the county will have Council staff living there. This proximity matters to us.

A new People Strategy will help to ensure that our workforce is well trained and highly motivated. It will also address questions about new skills / roles that may be needed over the next four to five years. We will seek to capitalise on the skills of the widest possible pool of talent and develop a diverse and inclusive workforce by meeting our equality, diversity and inclusion commitments, including becoming a Disability Confident employer.

We will be a good partner

Partnership is core to how we work. A council of our size needs to embrace partnership with others to achieve our purpose. We will always seek to be a good partner and a partner of choice. We will commit for the long term and work through issues that arise. Regionally we will work with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region and the Gwent Public Services Board to fulfil our commitments on for example, decarbonisation, transport, housing and regeneration. We will strengthen our collaboration with community and town councils and continue to lean into the expertise and enthusiasm of the many volunteers and community groups that make this county so special.

We will be financially responsible

This plan has been produced against the backdrop of economic uncertainty. We face rising energy costs, inflation and escalating borrowing costs, alongside increased demand pressures in areas such as children's services, adult social care, homelessness, additional learning needs, and home to school transport.

We will always be responsible and meet the needs of our citizens in the most cost-effective way. If we cannot afford to do something, we will be open about the reasons before making changes.

Alongside this we will continue to bid for external funding wherever success will advance our purpose. We will not be distracted by small sums that require disproportionate time to secure and subsequently manage. We will look to work with Welsh Government, UK Government and internationally wherever there is advantage to Monmouthshire to do so.

We will make good use of everything we own

We have a diverse land and property portfolio. In the first 12 months of this plan, we will undertake a review of property assets and develop a new Asset Strategy.

We will aim to reduce running costs and the climate impact of our services, and ensure that all our services and public buildings are fully accessible. We will put our partnerships with the managers of community and cultural buildings in local authority ownership on a long-term sustainable footing, generate rental income, and identify the best way to repurpose or redevelop any surplus or under-used assets.

We will spend well

Our new socially responsible procurement strategy will support us to buy goods and services that are sustainable, ethically produced, local where possible, and in line with our priorities. We will seek to reduce our carbon footprint while delivering community benefit and social value.

We will be smart with digital & data capabilities

We will use digital and data to deliver services and meet customers' needs in ways which were unimaginable ten or fifteen years ago. As a small organisation we do not have the scale of resources to do everything by ourselves. We will build our network and collaborate with others to bring the latest practice to Monmouthshire.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Community and Corporate Plan sits at the heart of our performance management framework. This ensures there is a shared understanding of what needs to be achieved and makes sure that it happens.

All other plans will be built from the Community and Corporate Plan. These include the high-level enabling strategies that form the Council's policy framework and the strategic plans that provide the detail that brings this strategy to life.

We are a partner in the Public Service Board, which is responsible for setting well-being objectives for the county of Gwent. The local authority's own well-being objectives are set by Council and form the backbone of the Community and Corporate Plan. We produce an annual report self-assessing our progress against the objectives. Each of our teams has a service business plan that aligns to deliver these objectives. We have a range of performance measures that we use to keep track of our progress. Our risk management policy enables us to manage strategic risks to our delivery. Our employee aims and objectives show the contributions that individual colleagues make to these objectives and delivering our vision in accordance with our values.

Underpinning our performance management framework is a suite of measures that enable us to understand how well processes are working and more importantly to track progress against the things that matter.

Each objective identifies some of the measures we will use to evaluate our progress. The measurement framework provided as an appendix to this report provides further details of the targets that Cabinet will use to track progress. This data will be reported to the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee to ensure accountability and transparency.

When we are dealing with complex issues it isn't always easy to measure progress quarterly or annually in a single number. In the plan we've highlighted some of the more accessible metrics and milestones but behind all major programmes of activity we have a separate project plan or service business plans that describe the specific actions we will be working on to deliver the objectives. We will use these alongside a range of other evidence to self-assess our progress through an annual self-assessment report. This will clearly identify how well are we doing, how we know (the evidence we have used), and what and how we can do better.

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- 1 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, measured at Lower Super Output Area level
 - 2 <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Poverty/peopleinrelativeincomepoverty-by-whetherthereisdisabilitywithinthefamily>
 - 3 <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/homepage/>
 - 4 <https://www.base-uk.org/employment-rates#:~:text=Severe%20or%20specific%20learning%20difficulties,Autism%3A%20Employment%20rate%202021.7%25>
 - 5 State of Nature report (2019)
 - 6 The Greater Gwent State of Nature report
 - 7 A Cardiff University study showed a substantive decline in otter populations in 2021 for the first time since the 1970s.
 - 8 <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/Businesses/Business-Demography/activebusinessenterprisesperpopulation-by-area-year>
 - 9 <https://www.principality.co.uk/mortgages/house-price-index>, Data Used for Quarter 3 2022
 - 10 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/housepriceindex/september2022#house-prices-by-country>
 - 11 Local Housing Market Assessment conducted by Monmouthshire County Council
 - 12 <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-05/No-Place-Like-Home-Report-IKEA.pdf>