



Pembrokeshire County Council
Programme for Administration



2021 - 2022

Foreword from the Leader and Cabinet

From publishing Pembrokeshire County Council's first ever 'Programme for Administration' in 2018, setting out the ambitions of the new political Administration, we have come a long way – but there is still much to do.

It's fair to say that the council hasn't always enjoyed the best of reputations and whilst we haven't always got everything right there is no doubt that over the last few years we have laid the foundations to deliver what we set out in 2018 – to deliver positive and lasting change for Pembrokeshire.

This new 'Programme for Administration' will look back at some of those achievements, reflect the work in progress and consider the big challenges that we will need to address as a council and county well into the future.

Much has changed about the council since our original 'Programme for Administration', some of which has come about through the experience of responding to the Covid-19 crisis, and this has reinforced our understanding of where and how we need to continue to improve. There are 'new beginnings' being seen in the council – these aren't our words, they are those of our peers from across local government who we invited in last year to look at us intently to highlight our successes and our shortcomings.

Our confidence and determination are increasing and our ambition is strong – and we will need all of that and more to contend with the challenges being faced. Battling against, and responding to, the disruption and tragedy caused by the pandemic, along with the challenges residents and businesses are facing as a result of the social and economic impact of the crisis, will continue to be the priority for us in the months and years ahead.

At the same time, we will be facing up to a range of other challenges that Pembrokeshire is confronted with – challenges that are complex and require us to work together across the council and with partners such as health, police and town and community councils. These include the challenge of helping to address climate change; addressing levels of child poverty seen in the county relative to the rest of Wales; improving educational outcomes for our young people; managing the increasing demand for social care; and increasing the availability and affordability of housing for local people.

As we work to better understand and address these challenges, we need to work with those experiencing them to ensure we jointly develop the right solutions and approaches. As a council, we do not, and should never think that we do, have all the answers. The Covid-19 crisis highlighted the power of local people and communities, including the voluntary and community sector, to make a major difference and we need to support and build on that way of engaging and enabling citizens and communities.

We face up to all of this as councils in Wales continue to meet the most significant financial challenges ever experienced. We still have brutal cuts to our budget to contend with, which means we need to address a projected funding gap of more than £61m over the next four years from within a current budget of £235m. Just under £12m of this needs to be found in the current financial year and comes on top of bridging a gap of over £98m in recent years, which we have delivered whilst protecting and maintaining key services and support for the most vulnerable in our community.

Going forward, we will help ourselves within this picture of diminishing resources by engaging effectively regionally and nationally, including with both the Welsh and UK governments, to capitalise upon opportunities and funding regimes that exist at that level. Doing so will serve to ensure we secure the best possible advantages and benefits for Pembrokeshire.

We can be proud of our county. It is without doubt one of the most beautiful places in the United Kingdom and the potential that exists here is enormous. We are absolutely committed to fulfilling that potential and, in so doing, making a fundamental difference to the lives of the people and businesses that exist here.

List of Cabinet Portfolios and who holds them:

- Councillor David Simpson (Unaffiliated), Leader
- Councillor Phil Baker (Unaffiliated), Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Licensing and Major Events
- Councillor Michelle Bateman (Unaffiliated), Cabinet Member for Housing
- Councillor Jon Harvey (Unaffiliated), Cabinet Member for Planning
- Councillor Tessa Hodgson (Unaffiliated), Cabinet Member for Social Services
- Councillor Bob Kilmister (Liberal Democrat), Cabinet Member for Finance
- Councillor Paul Miller (Labour), Cabinet Member for Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Culture
- Councillor Neil Prior (Unaffiliated), Cabinet Member for Transformation and IT
- Councillor Cris Tomos (Plaid Cymru), Cabinet Member for Environment, Public Protection and Welsh Language
- Councillor Guy Woodham (Labour), Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning



Corporate Plan Objectives

Pembrokeshire County Council established the following as the objectives for the authority relating to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and this sets a key context for the council's work and the Programme for Administration:

- Education: Pembrokeshire – a great place to learn, live and grow
- Social care: we will do whatever we can to support people in leading the best life they can whilst focusing on prevention and ensuring vulnerable people are safe
- Economic: we will work with partners to promote Pembrokeshire as a great place to visit, live and work
- Housing: enable affordable, decent and adaptable homes for all in sustainable locations
- We will promote pride in Pembrokeshire, seeking to enhance its reputation as a place of exceptional environmental quality
- Transformation in the council: three strands of technology, culture and relationships

Five Ways of Working

In delivering our work as a council, we look to the 'Five Ways of Working' established under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

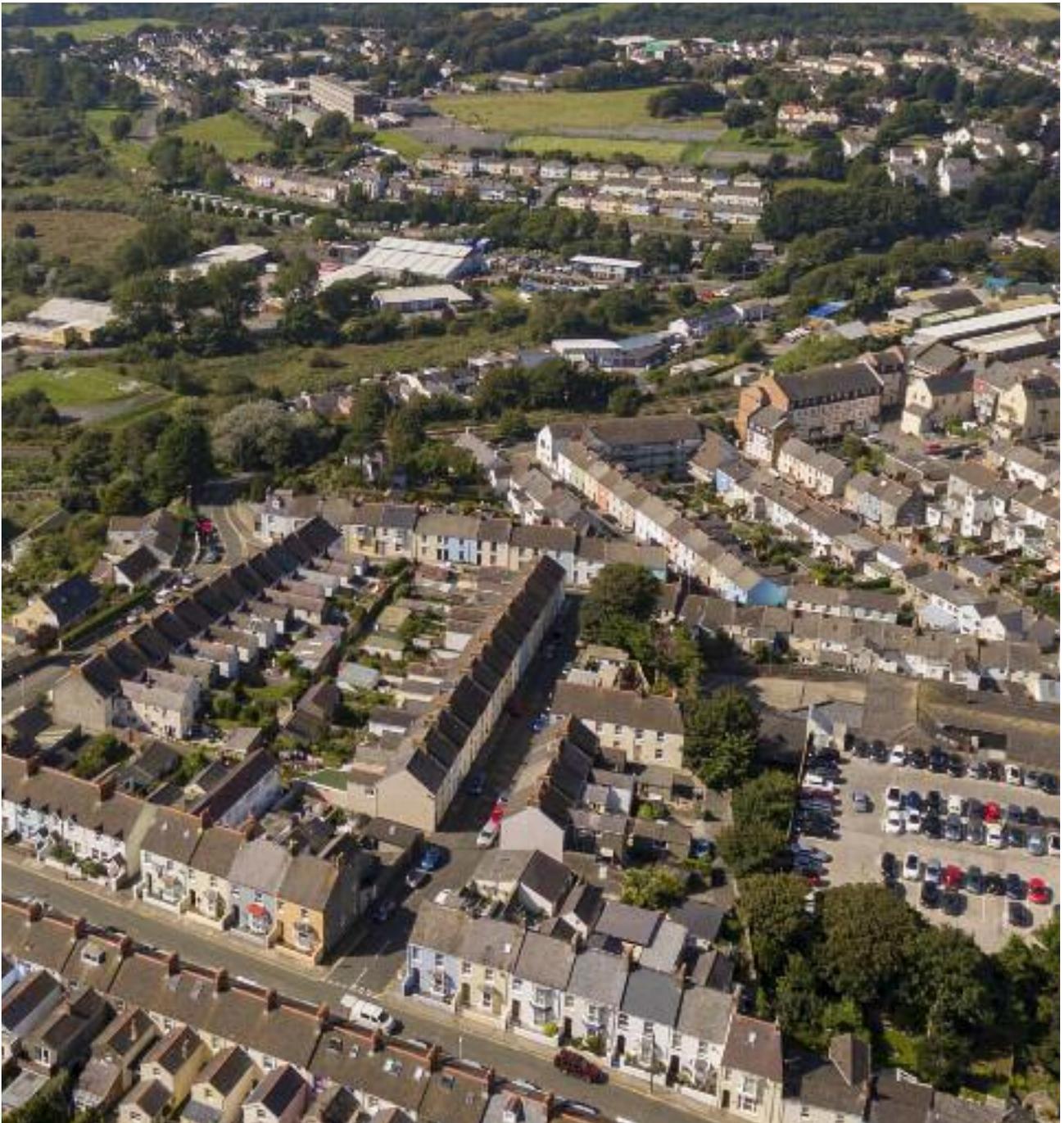
- Long-term: the importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
- Integration: considering how the council's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies
- Involvement: the importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the council serves
- Collaboration: acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the council itself) that could help the council to meet its well-being objectives
- Prevention: how acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives

The 'Well-being Goals' established under the Act are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

Socio-Economic Duty

The Socio-Economic Duty, which commenced on March 31st 2021, is designed to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. As a council we must pay due regard to the Duty when taking strategic decisions and consider and anticipate the likely impact of our decisions on people who experience these disadvantages. The way in which we assess the likely impact of our strategic decisions is through a process called an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). The council has started to embed the principles which will help to ensure we take account of the Duty by reviewing and amending our IIA process.



Ambitions for Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire County Council is hugely ambitious for the people and communities that we serve. With this comes tremendous responsibility and the taking of difficult decisions. Much of this involves seeking to find the right balance in areas where there are competing demands and thus related tensions.

An example of this is the direct result of Pembrokeshire being one of the most beautiful places in the United Kingdom – which brings both huge advantages and a range of pressures. It comes in the form of seeking to maximise the economic benefits that result from being a county that people want to visit and potentially relocate to, whilst managing the impacts this has on our environment and demands for housing.

The following provide a flavour of the types of key challenges facing the county and the way our ambitions are geared to help to address them:

Housing

House prices and market rent levels are continuing to rise locally, whilst income levels remain below national averages, and thus real challenges are emerging for local people around the affordability of housing.



We are seeking to improve the situation through a variety of approaches. This includes building council housing, with the aim to build 400 council houses over the next five years to supplement the 120 social and affordable homes already being built each year on average. The building of 33 council houses in Johnston is underway and moving forward well and further developments are also being progressed for Tiers Cross and on Charles Street in Milford Haven. As things stand, we are making around £50m of investment in council house building.

We are also working to purchase private properties for social or affordable housing. Additional opportunities exist in the form of empty homes and properties – with there being more than 500 of these in the county that have been empty for more than three years. These could be considered a ‘wasted’ resource of potential homes for local people. A key part of our overall approach is the levying of a council tax premium on second homes and empty properties, with the money this generates enabling investment in more affordable housing.

To live in a decent and warm home can be considered a basic human right and yet many of Pembrokeshire’s homes aren’t up to standard. For our own council housing stock, the Wales Housing Quality Standard has been achieved. However, thirteen per cent of homes in Pembrokeshire are privately rented and some of our most vulnerable residents live in such accommodation. In certain instances some of this accommodation is of a very poor standard. Recently Welsh government has set the challenge of councils over-seeing increased energy efficiency for homes, focused in the first instance, and by 2030, on social housing and private homes where people are living in fuel poverty.

Following changes to Welsh government policy, we have seen an increase in the level of homelessness, with a 360% rise to 69 households that we are providing temporary

accommodation for. Addressing this has required good joint working between the council's homeless service and partner organisations. The key focus in addressing homelessness going forward will be to recognise that it is a much wider issue than just a housing one. Working with other council services and partners we need to prevent homelessness and, where it has proved unavoidable, we must ensure it is rare, brief and unrepeated. This will involve us re-shaping services to rapidly-rehouse and put longer-term solutions in place instead of relying upon emergency, temporary and hostel services.

As people get older or experience challenges linked to disability or mobility, having a home that is accessible and adapted to their needs, and thus enabling them to live there for as long as possible, is tremendously important. We are committed to enabling this to happen by adapting homes in both the social and private housing sector. This is a priority for us and we recognise that a review of this service is required in order to ensure it continues to be able to meet residents' needs. We are also developing sheltered and supported housing for local people in various places around the county, including extra care housing in Neyland.

Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change



The council has joined others in declaring a climate emergency. We recognise the risks posed to communities caused by climate change, including sea level rise and increased storms and flooding and we are seeking to manage and mitigate these.

The council implemented changes to its waste and recycling service to 60,000 households and the county's businesses in late 2019. These have seen the county's recycling rate move to being the highest

in both Wales and the UK – with 71.7% of collected waste being recycled in 2019-20 compared to 62% the previous year.

We are seeking to establish Pembrokeshire as the 'Welsh home of green energy' – supporting the county to lead the way in the production of renewable electricity and hydrogen and, at the same time, boost the local economy. This includes a new generation of 'clean and green' engineering jobs through the likes of the Pembroke Dock Marine renewable energy project and the Milford Haven: Energy Kingdom project exploring the decarbonisation of energy.

Work is also taking place to reduce the carbon footprint of housing, other buildings and transport and the council is also incentivising the take-up of ultra-low emission vehicles and improving the network of electric vehicle charging points.

Transport

Our work on transport within the county clearly has a major role to play in relation to protecting our environment. It is also fundamental in enabling people to get around for work, school and leisure and reducing traffic congestion is one of our main aims.

We are committed to enhancing the attractiveness, reliability and integration of the transport network, including trains and buses, and maximising the safety of people using our highways and transport systems. Meeting the needs of vulnerable transport service users is also crucial. We continue to support and develop local bus and community transport services to meet the needs of our local communities and to link them with rail services to connect better with places across the South West region and beyond.



The council is keen to support the local visitor economy by working with partners to provide more sustainable travel opportunities for accessing and exploring the countryside. This includes the development of walking and cycling leisure routes that minimise the impact on the natural environment.

Our ambitions for transport include:

- Delivering the A40 Llanddewi Velfrey Bypass, commencing in late 2021
- Undertaking the A40 Penblewin to Redstone Cross improvements, with these also due to start in late 2021
- Improved rail services to West Wales including: South West Wales Metro; London Paddington to Swansea every 30 minutes; West Wales Express; reduced travel time between Cardiff and the South West of Wales; and London by rail in under four hours. A comprehensive public consultation of rail proposals commenced in March 2021.
- Extending the network of cycle and walking routes between Pembrokeshire towns to reduce car usage and encourage people to be more physically active
- Improvements to public transport interchanges in Haverfordwest, Milford Haven and Pembroke Dock
- Bus service reform – with Welsh Government and related funding
- Brynglas tunnels improvements



Broadband and Digital Connectivity



The provision of reliable ultrafast fibre broadband and mobile technologies across Pembrokeshire is worse than in other parts of the country, with a significant proportion of premises not having access to the digital services they require. Such access is fundamental in allowing residents and businesses to thrive.

Around 89% of premises have the capability to access Broadband speeds greater than 30Mbps but only 7% have access to full fibre, compared to equivalent figures in Cardiff of 99% and 39% respectively. In 2019 Pembrokeshire was reported as being in the worst 10% of areas for Broadband internet connection in Great Britain.

We are committed to ensuring communities across Pembrokeshire are benefitting from the necessary connectivity, including full access to high quality broadband by 2023.

The council has successfully secured £4m through a bid to UK government which will see a wide range of council premises and all GP surgeries across Pembrokeshire provided with full fibre connectivity by September 2021 and this will be built on further in the months that follow. A scheme targeting Ambleston, Crymych, Dale and New Moat commenced in 2019, providing full fibre internet connections to over 330 participating businesses and the residents there, also supported with government funding, and is on track for completion this year. This work is being extended to deliver for Herbrandston, Llanycefn, Maenclochog, Nevern, Slebech and Wiston too this year, helping a further 146 business and local residents.

Maximising opportunities for mobile phone connectivity is also a priority.

The flyer is split into two columns for English and Welsh. At the top, it says 'Do You Need Better Broadband?' and 'Ydych Chi Angen Band Eang Gwell?'. Below that, it says 'Register online / Cofrestrwch ar-lein' and provides two website URLs: 'www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/broadband-survey' and 'www.sir-benfro.gov.uk/band-eang-arolwg'. A central graphic of a blue rocket with a pink nose cone is positioned between the columns. The English column lists three questions under 'Do You:': 'Feel it takes too long to download things?', 'Compete with other people in the house to access the internet?', and 'Struggle to run your business efficiently?'. The Welsh column lists three questions under 'Ydych chi'n:': 'Teimlo bod pethau'n cymryd gormod o amser i lawrlwytho?', 'Cystadlu â phobl eraill yn y tŷ i gael mynediad i'r rhyngwyd?', and 'Ei chael hi'n anodd rhedeg eich busnes yn effeithlon?'. At the bottom, it encourages completing the survey in 3 minutes and provides contact information for the Broadband Team and Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire County Council.





There is growing demographic demand for both adults and children's social care services, with this projected to continue for the next decade and beyond. This comes at the same time as the level of resources available to councils has been reducing. Clearly, the issues here go beyond funding and are concerned with people's well-being and them enjoying happy, fulfilling, safe and independent lives.

The way social care operates in Wales has changed significantly since the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A move from the previous deficit model of assessment and care provision, to a strengths based approach underpinned by the 'Signs of Safety' model of practice, has led to a significant difference in social work practice and to more positive conversations with, and outcomes for, our population. We have carried out local research amongst users and staff and this has shown us that the approach is viewed positively. We will continue to build on this.

Further investment is needed in innovative service models and adopting a whole-organisation approach across the council to 'well-being' is key to the preventative agenda. Our ambitions around this are growing but we recognise the resource constraints. Prevention plus a focus on supporting people with 'what matters' to them has led us to shift from traditional service models to more innovative community-based approaches. Supporting the development of 'active', 'connected' and 'kind communities' is at the heart of our new way of working with communities.



Our ambitions include increasing the take-up of 'non-traditional' models such as 'direct payments' and 'shared lives' so people and carers have a greater choice, control and flexibility in relation to the care they receive. We have also worked with our community to co-produce and then consult upon a new model of day opportunities and are keen to bring this new inclusive community-based model to fruition, which we believe can also be delivered at reduced cost. We have also invested in delivering some services directly as a council, such as reablement and home care, rather than inviting others to deliver them for us and we will continue to explore balancing direct delivery with community-led approaches and a range of commissioned models of care delivered through others.

In recent years there has been a steady and continued rise in the number of children who are looked after by the council – from 153 in March 2017 to 220 in March 2021. This includes an increase from 184 children in March 2020, at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This type of level of increase has been commonly experienced across Wales.

Our children's service received inspections in 2018 and 2020 and both reported positively overall. Areas for improvement were highlighted that had already been identified internally and actions have been developed to address these.

Most fundamentally, the council's ambition is to avoid children needing to enter into our care through us acting early wherever possible and seeking to prevent issues arising. For those children who do need our support or protection, we will look to provide this whilst they remain within their own family. Children who require care away from their family will be placed within Pembrokeshire, or as close to the county as is possible, and will be supported to return home at the earliest opportunity. To help with this, we are seeking to develop within the county our own residential care facilities for children. This includes a proposal for a residential unit for young people in care to help them prepare for independence and adulthood. We have also acquired a property with which to develop our own in-house assessment and support service for parents and babies, reducing the need to commission services away from the area and allowing parents to remain in their local area for support and intervention.



There are significant developments planned in the area of foster care recruitment with a view to expanding our in-house resources. Our local marketing and recruitment approach will be developed in a more strategic way, with data-analysis and business-intelligence principles being applied to the process, allowing for targeted marketing and recruitment that responds to local demand. Pembrokeshire is also a key partner in the national effort to develop and launch the 'Foster Wales' brand, allowing local authorities to further publicise fostering via a national website, supported by marketing and communications specialists. Developments also include efforts to standardise payments, support and training for foster carers across councils.

Pembrokeshire's children's services intends to significantly improve how it interacts with the children and young people it supports, protects and provides care to. We will, with the support of Pembrokeshire's Children's and Young People's Rights Officer, ensure that children's rights are at the centre of what we do, and that children and young people are empowered to participate and co-produce plans, policies and procedures. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will feature prominently in our decision-making, and we will follow the lead of the Children's Commissioner for Wales in seeking to embed a rights-led approach within our work. We have already introduced a young person's representative onto our Corporate Parenting Board and have begun developing consultation activity for children with a disability who attend our respite unit. Future work will include introducing a charter for children and young people, the development of which will directly involve a variety of young people's groups.

Regional collaboration is a growing area of activity for children's services in West Wales and Pembrokeshire will be a key partner in developing a regional commissioning forum for children with complex needs. This will strengthen our ability to commission appropriate placements in collaboration, particularly with health board colleagues. We are also collaborating with regional colleagues in developing regional residential provision for children with the most complex of needs, which will allow us to keep such children closer to home and rely less on private sector provision that is located away from Pembrokeshire and the region.



Educational Outcomes

Improving educational outcomes is a key priority for the Administration. Our vision is to:

- Enable every learner, regardless of their background, to become the best they can be
- Inspire every learner to be ambitious, capable, confident, responsible and resilient
- Create a nurturing environment where every learner can thrive, make progress and express themselves
- Equip learners to be confident multilingual global citizens, rooted in their Welsh language and culture

We are working collaboratively with our schools to deliver the improvements identified in the council's Estyn inspection report and to forge our strategy that delivers key national ambitions. These include reforming the curriculum and delivering high quality provision for learners with additional needs.

Using our education improvement strategy, 'Pembrokeshire 2027', the council aims to ensure all children and young people in Pembrokeshire are able to:

- Attend a good school
- Develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens
- Become happy and resilient learners, with a focus on both academic achievement and personal well-being
- Have equality of opportunity – with the council championing the success and life chances of all children by narrowing the gap in education outcomes

We have identified five areas to focus on immediately and make sure we get them right. These are:

- Focus on quality teaching in every classroom
- High expectations for all including the most vulnerable
- Strengthen recruitment and retention
- Strengthen impact of school-to-school working
- Strengthen school leadership



Welsh Language

Pembrokeshire County Council produced its first Welsh Language Strategy in 2016 and this is currently being reviewed, with a view to publishing the next iteration which will run until 2026. The council is also developing a 10 year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, which is due for publication by January 2022. Discussions on how the two strategies will interlink and support one another have already been begun.

Planning Service

The council's Planning service is a statutory function. It is required to prepare and monitor a Local Development Plan for Pembrokeshire, which fundamentally is about shaping the look and nature of the county, and it receives around 1,200 planning applications each year. The Planning service also includes an Enforcement Team which investigates and resolves breaches of Planning control. In addition, the service has a remit around heritage assets, biodiversity and landscape, Public Rights of Way, common land and village greens.

An effective Planning service is key to preserving and enhancing the environment which makes Pembrokeshire such a special and attractive place to live, work and visit. It also has a critical role to play in delivering housing, helping businesses move to and grow within the county and managing the potential related impacts on communities and our environment.

The review of the Pembrokeshire Local Development Plan is progressing well. However, we also recognise that the performance of certain aspects of the Planning service, including the timeliness of processing Planning applications, is not currently at the level we want it to be. As a result, we recently undertook a comprehensive review in order to better understand the reasons behind this and how they could be addressed. Changes are being made on the back of this and we are confident this will enable the Planning service to respond more quickly and effectively to residents and businesses. We aim to have achieved noticeable and measurable improvements within the next 12 months.



Key regeneration and building projects underway

Pembrokeshire County Council is leading the way on a number of major regeneration and building projects fundamental to the future look and economic prosperity of the county. Central to this has been the creation of a Strategic Capital Fund of £20m as a catalyst to draw in funding and support from others.

Western Quayside, Haverfordwest

Western Quayside forms part of the council's ambitious plans to revitalise Haverfordwest as a retail and leisure destination. Formerly an empty department store, the site is being re-developed to create flexible commercial space capable of accommodating a variety of food sector establishments within a quality internal and external environment. The aim is to create an attractive and vibrant local produce destination and marketplace, combining this with the potential for leisure and community use to encourage greater vitality and vibrancy within the town centre.



The quality-led approach includes plans for external meeting areas as a focal space for community events and activities to extend its use into the early evening. Further green infrastructure investment will serve to widen the positive environmental impact and lengthen the time people wish to spend in Haverfordwest town centre. The development will connect and enhance the riverside aspect of Bridge Street, improving visitors' first impression of the town.

Riverside, Haverfordwest

The recent purchase of the Riverside retail centre provides the opportunity to address changing retail patterns and meet Haverfordwest's wider requirements.



The purchase of the site is the last piece in the jigsaw to fully harness the river as a key attraction in the town. The centre has the potential to provide high quality retail which will encourage more visitors and extend the amount of time they spend in Haverfordwest.

The redevelopment of the multi-storey car park is a key part of the approach to regenerating the town and integrating the town's transport hub.

South Quay, Pembroke

The South Quay project focuses on the refurbishment of properties on Castle Terrace and the creation of a new public visitor centre, library and café. Landscape and public realm enhancements are also proposed, with the aim being to connect to Northgate Street.

The overall approach is one of demonstrating vision and ambition for the revitalisation of Pembroke, investing in the unique offer of the town and capitalising upon its heritage. The South Quay redevelopment will provide the first phase in delivery of this ambition, demonstrating the council's commitment to the town and establishing a link between Pembroke's medieval and iconic castle and the rest of the town.



Pembrokeshire Food Park



The Pembrokeshire Food Park is a new 23-acre development located at the Withybush Business Park on the outskirts of Haverfordwest. It will provide a highly significant opportunity to food producers in South West Wales, offering an attractive location for high quality production facilities and onward distribution. This includes 'start-up incubators' to support 'kitchen table' entrepreneurs through their initial development as a business and on to the first stages of scaled-up production.

Development work is already taking place on site, with the road infrastructure works complete. It fulfils a need for a national scale investment which will include an innovative mix of facilities focused on local food and drink producers who need expansion space but for whom standard industrial units may be prohibitively expensive.

Pembroke Dock Marine Energy Programme

This is a collaborative project, that forms part of the Swansea Bay City Deal with government and other councils, to develop a world class centre for marine energy. It is acting as a catalyst to attract interest and investment from the marine and green energy sectors.

Proposals are at various stages of development, seeking to exploit hydrogen development, offshore floating wind, fixed turbine and wave energy. Inland, proposals are being examined for further hydrogen, wind energy and solar developments. Pembrokeshire is ideally placed, geographically and topographically to maximise such opportunities, giving the county and Wales greater levels of energy production, independence and resilience. The project will expand upon the region's existing high-skill cluster site and develop and enhance the existing infrastructure and facilities. It will help to launch a new industry that can deliver significant benefits for the local supply chain and the coastal community of Pembrokeshire, as well as Wales and the wider UK.

21st Century Schools Programme

The 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme is a Welsh government initiative delivered with councils and other key partners. It focuses on creating schools and other places of learning where the environment improves the delivery of education and standards of achievement. In doing so, there are also rigorous standards that need to be met in terms of related environmental and community benefits derived from the projects. This has included the creation of 84 apprenticeships and more than 7,000 weeks of work for trainees, unemployed people and people leaving education or training. It also enables us to reduce the money we would need to spend on maintaining badly out-dated buildings.

In the first phase of activity, which concluded in March 2019, capital investment of over £120million was made in Pembrokeshire. The second phase, now underway and running through to 2025, will see a further investment of £106million in the county.

Alongside this sits work to address issues of over-crowding or surplus places in schools and we have been successful in achieving this with, for example, more than 700 places created at Ysgol Caer Elen in Haverfordwest plus more than 250 in two Milford Haven schools. At the same time, nearly 300 surplus places were removed at Ysgol Bro Gwaun in Fishguard, more than 200 in Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi in Saint Davids and nearly 200 in Henry Tudor School in Pembroke.

The council has also secured funding from Welsh government to establish a new stand-alone Welsh language primary school. This is in Pembroke and will open in January 2023. It represents a cornerstone of Pembrokeshire's contribution towards the government's aspiration of there being 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. The total amount of funding secured to deliver this project is over £6.5m.



Other key achievements

During the first year of the pandemic, the council has worked to distribute to local businesses around £78million in grants from government to ensure that they continued to exist. More than 5,000 enquiries about such types of support were received and the council put in place an extensive range of communications to help local companies understand what was available to them.

The pandemic also saw the creation of the Pembrokeshire Community Hub, with the council fulfilling a role that enabled the huge efforts of local people to make a fundamental difference in a context of genuinely life and death matters. This centred upon supporting people who were shielding, including undertaking the distribution of food boxes. More than 100 community groups aligned themselves with the Hub in order to support the response.



Throughout the pandemic our Contact Centre has remained open to deal with all enquiries from the public. Not surprisingly, we saw a 20% increase, compared to the previous year, in calls taken in the period from April 2020 to March 2021, with an average of over 19,000 calls a month answered.

Covid-19 generated a digital revolution and we worked with Digital Communities Wales to enable people to stay connected, crucially including those living in care homes. Joint working between education and children's services during the pandemic saw a comprehensive schools-based provision made for vulnerable children during lockdown, which provided support to children and families and safeguarded some of those children who might have been at increased risk of harm.

Thus far during the pandemic, in excess of 15,000 emergency and urgent responses were made for repair works in council houses. In addition, and despite pressures due to restrictions in working practices and the availability of materials and contractors, we were able to ensure that the planned improvement works to council housing could continue and see the full utilisation of the grant funding we have received from Welsh government.

The pandemic also saw restrictions on our ability to undertake adaptations in people's homes, with us limited to being able to carry out works linked only to emergencies and people being discharged from hospital. Whilst this saw a reduction compared to the previous year, 285 properties were adapted, enabling people to safely remain at, or return, home.

During the Covid-19 period, our engagement with council housing tenants has focused on providing accurate, accessible and timely communication to them. Our Tenant Participation Strategy has seen us make good progress in the area of digital engagement. We launched our Facebook page for the housing service and this allowed us to continue to engage during the pandemic with people who would normally have used other services, such as our customer service centres. It has also brought us into contact with other tenants, enabling them to access services, make enquiries and get quick responses. In addition, over 5,500 welfare calls were made to tenants during the first lockdown and we have continued this during subsequent lockdown periods.



We have secured the removal of the tolls on the Cleddau Bridge, with resulting economic and social benefits for businesses, local people and visitors.

We have established an 'Enhancing Pembrokeshire Grant' using money generated from the council tax premium levied on second homes and empty properties in the county. This supports community projects aimed at reducing the impact of second home ownership and enhancing sustainability in those communities.

We are keen to develop our relationships with city, town and community councils further, working with the likes of the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS), PLANED and Once Voice Wales. There are a number of joint seminars underway exploring how we work together going forward.

We have launched the 'Connect2 Pembrokeshire' digital platform to support community connectedness, community activities and the promotion of person to person time-banking and informal exchange. Also, we have established the 'Connect to Kindness' campaign to improve well-being as part of enabling active, connected and resourceful communities.

Funding has been secured to develop volunteering amongst council employees in order to support local communities and initiatives.

Against an unprecedented financial backdrop, we are committed to doing everything we can to continue to improve productivity within the council. The roll-out of our 'Smarter Working' project, centred on the use of information technology, has enabled us to continue to function during the pandemic and we have seen productivity increases as a result.

We are delivering a range of projects across the council linked to our drive to secure savings and improve customer service. The following are just some examples:

- Introducing technology allowing social care staff to work and operate from any location, including home, reducing unnecessary travel and increasing the time they can spend with people in communities
- Developing technology to support our staff out and about delivering housing maintenance, in order to increase efficiency and improve customer service
- Within education, we are deploying technology for all schools to support the inclusion of 'digital' at the heart of the curriculum
- We have provided technology to over 500 school pupils to ensure they can continue their education at home during the pandemic
- We have introduced a texting service to help customers, including our waste collection reminder service
- Our 'Penfro' facility, using artificial intelligence, has received and sent more than 300,000 queries and messages, helping customers night and day
- We launched our new MyAccount digital platform for citizens and businesses in March 2021, with over 27,000 users signing up
- The provision of remote access technology supported the democratic process in Pembrokeshire, through enabling the undertaking of formal council meetings, during the pandemic



With partners, we have established 'Visit Pembrokeshire' as the first multi-agency destination management organisation in Wales in order to maximise the benefits for the county from tourism. A new destination management plan has also been established, together with on-going support for major events.

We have established a 10-year leisure strategy with plans for further investment, including support for 4G pitches, improved marketing and enhanced access to facilities.

Over the last three years we have delivered around 15kms of 'Active Travel' improvements to the cycling and footway network to provide better connectivity in the county. The council has been awarded over £1.3m to deliver additional schemes in 2021/2022 and has carried out extensive consultation with residents on this, generating around 4,000 responses.

We have increased our cohort of trainee social workers to aid our supply of staff into the future

We are developing our use of apprenticeships as a council, with the skills and employment benefits this brings

We are delivering an additional £1m of road safety schemes this year

We have increased our resources around street cleaning and fly-tipping, which we know are a priority for our residents

We became the first council in Wales to webcast all our formal council meetings

Our 'Smarter Working' project commenced in 2018 and has been key to modernising the way we work. The flexible working that this has enabled was crucial in ensuring, as soon as the Covid-19 crisis emerged, we could continue to keep vital services running through staff working from home. It has also enabled us to reduce our accommodation needs and costs. We have invested around £370,000 to support our changed ways of working and in return have secured property sales of nearly £500,000, reduced our running costs by nearly £400,000 per year and avoided costs of nearly £4.5m that would have been necessary to keep buildings up to standards.

And, finally, we have once again been confirmed as the best of the best at this year's 'Loo of the Year Awards'!
