

CYNGOR TREF CASTELL-NEDD

NEATH TOWN COUNCIL

'Gweithio i'r Gymuned'
'Working for the Community'



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Mayoral Year of Office 2023/24

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Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2023 2024.

Community has been at the forefront of my Mayoral Year with a hope to bring together the numerous community organisations that provide us with support in all shapes and forms.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my Mayoral Year and have been astounded by the sheer number of residents that support and are ambassadors for our fantastic town. It has been very humbling to learn there is so much support for each other when we look and need it.

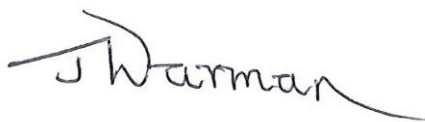
Like my predecessors, I would remind all community organisations that our Community Grant Funding will be open from 1st April to 30th September. The funding can provide financial help and support to clubs and societies who are struggling in these harsh, economic times. Please see our website for an application pack or pop into see us for more information.

This Annual Report describes some of the ways in which we deliver well-being for future generations of Neath residents. We are delighted to be able to continue to provide our Annual Events which the community has responded to positively, thank you for such lovely feedback. I am hopeful that you will all join us and support these Events which will bring the community together and support cohesive, multi-cultural communities.

The support I've received during my Mayoral Year from my fellow elected members of the Council has been exceptional. As volunteers, Councillors are being relied upon more and more to provide 'at root' community services to ensure that the community continues to support the wellbeing of the Town during these difficult times. I wish to thank the officers of the Town Council who offer unwavering support to ensure the Councillors deliver their obligations and the many individuals, volunteers and organisations who work so hard to ensure that the strong community spirit of Neath is protected.

To end, I would like to take the opportunity to express my sadness at the passing of Cllr. Sheila Penry during my year of office. Cllr. Penry held her Town Councillor position with utmost pride, loyalty and passion and I know her lasting legacy and impact will live on in Neath Town Council for many years to come.

Councillor John Warman
Neath Town Council Mayor
2023/24



Every year the Mayoress supports the Neath Town Council Mayoress Appeal in raising funds throughout the 12 months to support and ensure that local children receive Christmas gifts. The Mayoress Appeal group are always looking for new volunteers to help. Please contact us if you are able to devote some time to this worthy cause.

About This Report

This report describes how Neath Town Council has contributed to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Neath using Wales-wide sustainable development principles.

The Report uses a series of Case Studies to illustrate how each goal was achieved.

The Report includes details of future objectives.

The Report covers the municipal year of Councillor John Warman's year of office as Mayor of Neath Town Council, which commenced in May 2023.

This Annual Report, including the Statement of Well-Being, was approved by Neath Town Council at a meeting held on 11th July 2024.

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Visit Us at www.neathtowncouncil.gov.uk



About Neath Town Council

Neath Town Council serves a population of around 48,000 within the Borough of Neath Port Talbot.

Neath Town Council is one of the largest Town Councils in Wales. It provides grass roots services to all parts of a diverse and growing community. The Council's strategic direction is set by its 19 elected Councillors ("Members") who oversee a small team of staff 'officers' responsible for delivering services on a day to day basis.

All elected Members are volunteers into the role.

Details of the elected members and how to contact them are available on our website at www.neathtowncouncil.gov.uk.

Our website also provides notices of all meetings, agendas, reports and minutes, along with many governance documents and other information about the Council.

A Town Council is a corporate body with a legal existence of its own which is quite separate from that of its Members. Its lawful acts, assets and liabilities are its own and not those of its members. Any decisions taken by the Town Council are the responsibility of the whole body, it is irrelevant if any particular Member agreed or disagreed with any particular proposal. A Town Council has the powers to raise money through the Precept and has a range of powers which enable them to spend public money. A Town Council is an elected tier of local government.

Town Councils can carry out a host of functions including the provision of various services such as the provision of Allotments and Community Centres.

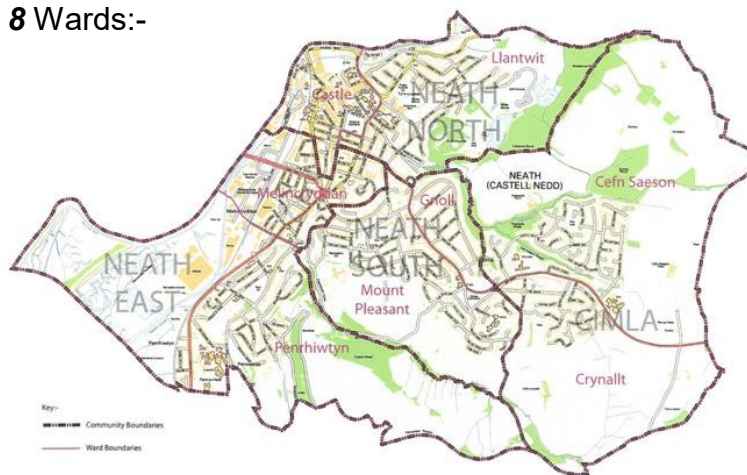
Parish/Town Councils were established in 1894 by an Act of Parliament and were further reformed into Town and Community Council by the Local Government Act 1972, when Wales was divided into communities. The Town Council has a duty to ensure that the rules for the administration of the council are followed: The council must appoint a chair, appoint a Clerk, appoint a responsible financial officer, appoint an independent and competent internal auditor hold an annual meeting of the council and keep records of all decisions related to council business.

Neath Town Council meetings are held weekly as outlined below, except for August recess. Committee meetings are:-

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| - Full Council | 1 st Thursday of the month |
| - Events Working Party | 2 nd Tuesday of the month |
| - Estates Sub Committee | 2 nd Thursday of the month |
| - Finance Sub Committee | 3 rd Thursday of the month |
| - Policy & Personnel Sub Committee | 4 th Thursday of the month |
| - Castle Sub Committee | when necessary |

Neath Town Council is split into **8 Wards**:-

- Penrhiwtyn
- Mount Pleasant
- Melyncrythan
- Gnoll
- Castle
- Llantwit & Merra
- Cefn Saeson
- Crynallt



The Council derives almost all of its funds from its precept. That is, an additional amount which is added to Council Tax bills based upon the Council's estimated expenditure. Of this amount, £401,315 will be made up from the precept and the remainder will be funded from the Council's Reserves

Further information about the Council's finances, including its Annual Accounts, can be seen at www.neathtowncouncil.gov.uk.

The Report describes how Neath Town Council delivers services which contribute to the well-being of Neath and its communities.

The Council would encourage views from the public about its services.



Have you received a Grant from the Council for your Community Group?

Have you attended one of our Community Events?

Do you have any suggestions to improve our website and social media presence?

We would very much welcome your views on how these services are provided.

Chapter Two:

A Resilient Neath

Neath Town Council is committed to providing a wide range of training opportunities to its staff and councillors to ensure competency so that the staff and councillors can provide the best possible service to the public.

The Council continues to be an active member of One Voice Wales. This ensures that the area of Neath Town is fully heard and represented when policy decisions are being taken by Central and Welsh Government that effect the services that are provided to the public.



The Council continues to subscribe to the Society of Local Council Clerks to ensure that the Clerk is kept abreast of all current and new legislation to ensure compliance and take part in consultations applicable to local government.

Neath Town Council are committed to send representation to the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Community Liaison Forum to ensure that the Neath Town area has a voice in the Forum.

Neath Town Council are also 'signed' into a Charter with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council which sets out an agreement of expected responsibility and communication between them and the Town Council.

The Council has made substantial changes in the management of its community halls to ensure all Health and Safety requirements are met. Working with the Fire & Rescue Service to ensure all public places continue to be and are 'safe' and 'fit for purpose'.

The Council has invested in additional training for all staff to ensure the Council is run efficiently and effectively.

Chapter Three:

A Healthier Neath

Neath Town Council supports the health and wellbeing of its community.

This year, Neath Town Council have added to its existing 'Party In the Park' event which emphasises the need for community engagement and bringing Neath residents into Victoria Gardens, Neath to get everybody together and promote wellbeing.

Being a Jubilee year, we are also adding to the free Events to mark this memorable occasion.



The Council also support many organisations and classes by providing safe and accessible halls which enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of the community with classes such as :-

Keep Fit Classes

Zumba Classes

Karate Classes

Boxing Club

U3A Meetings

Choirs

Church Drop In Groups

Children's Drama Club

Dance Classes

Yoga Classes

Mother & Toddler Classes

Breastfeeding Classes

Weight Watchers Meetings

Flying Start Classes

Line Dancing sessions

Bingo Nights

Training locations for various projects



Chapter Four:

A More Equal Neath

The Council promotes and encourages equality of opportunity across all economic backgrounds and circumstances.

The Council provide accommodation for various community groups who might not have the opportunity to meet if the council were not providing the venue to hold their meetings.



Neath Town Council strongly encourages and promotes its Equality Policy. As the community is becoming a multi-racial society, this naturally reflects the composition of Neath's communities in which we serve. It is hoped that now COVID restrictions have eased, we will continue to see involvement and inclusion from all ethnic communities.

Neath Town Council continue to work with NPTCBC Social Services to provide locations for contact centres to occur in the location community.

The Council's Citizenship Awards recognise local citizens and groups who deserve recognition for what they do or have achieved or overcome. These Awards are presented annually in the Community.

We work with many other organisations to help improve the quality of life in Neath. We enjoy excellent relationships with local schools, churches, uniformed organisations and the police and fire service.

Our previous Youth Representative has moved onto study at University and we are therefore looking for a replacement to help us with our connections with the youth community. Have a look at our website for further information if you wish to be involved!

We are also delighted that we were able to extend the term of our Community Engagement Officer for a further year to ensure the community projects which were started continue to be monitored. Again, please look at our website for information on how to get involved.



The Council continue to work with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to ensure Neath is a vibrant and welcoming Town via its Joint Charter.

The Council is also committed to an ongoing rigorous Internal and External Audit process, on an annual basis, to ensure public money is managed efficiently and effectively.

Chapter Five:

A Neath of Cohesive Communities

Neath Town Council is at the heart of a very diverse community. During the year, the Mayor of the Town Council is privileged to attend local events run by a variety of organisations and group which clearly take pleasure from having the Chairperson of the Town Council visiting and supporting them.

Neath Town Council is part of and supports-

Provides a Community Christmas Festival

A King's Coronation Party

Provides Hanging Baskets for the Town

Provides Summer Festival Bunting throughout the Town

Provides a free annual Party in the Park

Sponsors Neath Ale & Cider Festival

Supports Neath Food & Drink Festival

Provides Melyn Remembrance Services

Promotes Mayoress Appeal Christmas Appeal

We are proud to be able to deliver free community events designed to be fun for the whole family. As a Town Council, we are focussed on supporting these events in the future, when it is safe to do so.

We enjoy working with our key partners to deliver a joined up, cohesive and sustainable community events!



Chapter Six:

A Neath of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language

Neath is a compact, classic market town with charm and character. The Romans established a fort in Neath in circa 75 AD and a Norman castle was built around 1100 AD. The town was awarded a historic charter in 1280 by Gilbert de Clare, Lord of the Borough, this being the first official protection of the town as a trading centre.

Based in the heart of Neath, Neath Castle was established by Robert, Earl of Gloucester (founder of Margam Abbey), some time between 1114 and 1130.

The stone buildings you can see are later, and the gatehouse to the north was built in the 1320s. The castle was virtually demolished in 1321, after the war between Edward II's lover Thomas le Despenser and the rebellious English lords, and subsequently rebuilt.

Edward II himself took refuge here before his capture and gruesome death in 1327.

The rear of the Castle perimeter wall has been restored. During this restoration work, CADW have stated that there has been a 'significant find' of a 16th Century wall. Works have been suspended by CADW to document the find. Updates on this project will be posted on our social media and website.

The Castle is open daily during the week and on Saturdays.

The historic character of the town is evident from its built environment and street patterns, a legacy of previous times. Today it is an attractive historic market town with a Victorian Market and major multiple retailers at the core of the commercial area.



Neath has excellent transport links with main line railway connections to London, Cardiff and Swansea while the M4 motorway is a short distance away. The A465 'Heads of the Valleys' trunk road passes close to the town and gives access to the Midlands and beyond. Regular bus services link the town to the surrounding valleys.

Neath also has a unique rugby heritage, the Welsh Rugby Union was inaugurated in the town's Castle Hotel in 1872, and the town's senior club is among the oldest in Wales.

We are looking to redevelop the Neath Castle area in the next year, an ambitious project which is at its creation stage.

Chapter Seven:

A Globally Responsible Neath

The Council hopes to encourage others to make sustainable development in their decision making processes.

All Christmas lighting provided in Neath Town is using LCD lower emission lighting and energy saving.

The Council have investigated, and now use horticultural chemicals that have less impact on the environment, which are more effective so they can be used less often in relation to Neath Castle and our Community Hall gardens.



The Council have also agreed to extend the grass cutting of Neath Castle grounds to 3 weekly to encourage cross pollination.

'Bee Friendly' areas have been identified in all Town Council Community Centres to encourage and support biodiversity.

Wildflower areas have been created in all available areas to encourage biodiversity across its Community Centres and at Neath Castle.



The Council recycles their waste whenever possible and are now meeting the new recycling laws which came into force in April 2024.

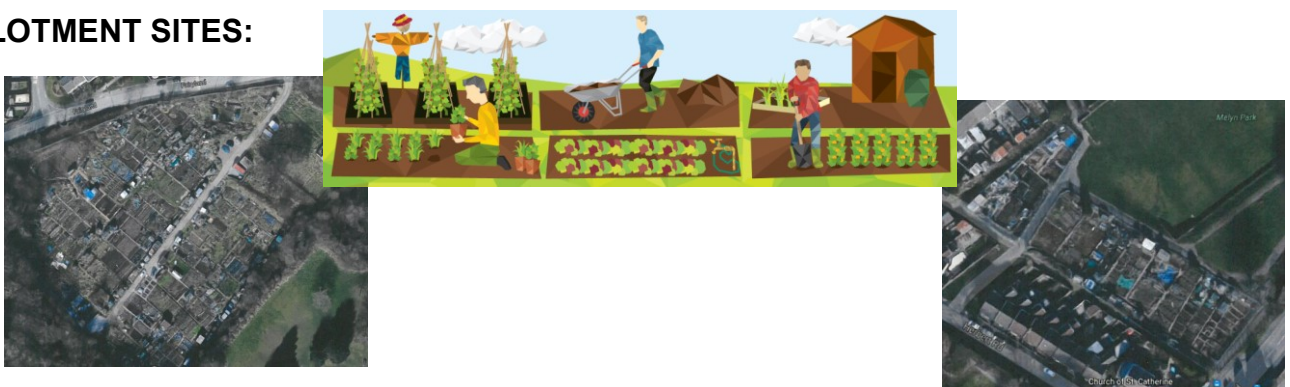
The Council have litter picking teams within the community. If you would like to get involved – have a look at our social media pages or give us a ring!

The maintenance of efficient machinery is being continually monitored which produces lower emissions.

The Council dispose of all ink and toner cartridges via a recycling initiative and rechargeable batteries are used when possible.

The Council are members of the [National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Limited](#) which provides information and advice regarding Allotment and Cultivation.

ALLOTMENT SITES:



Chapter Eight:

A Competent Council

Finally, the Council continues to strive towards meeting tests of competency which are:-

Councillors are declared elected and not 'co-opted' into their position. this election term is 5 years and end in 2027.

The Town Council has a CiLCA qualified Clerk which is the recognised qualification for local and community councils. The Clerk also attends ongoing training sessions as part of their CPD to ensure the Council is up to date with new regulations.



We have proven sound management and financial systems. Our accounts are scrutinised by Welsh Government and the regulatory authorities.

Neath Town Council has developed a 'cluster approach' to various services with neighbouring Neath and District Town and Community Councils in an attempt to gain more competitive costs for grouped services. The group continue to meet regularly, sharing common practice, supporting each other and ensuring the cluster group is well supported throughout the community. This group-led approach has been identified in Welsh Government as an example of 'best practice'.

Agendas, minutes, accounts and contact details can be viewed at www.neathtowncouncil.gov.uk.

You can e-mail the Clerk at clerk@neathtowncouncil.gov.uk.

A Charter is in place to govern our relationship with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

The Council continues to play a part in the development of policies which impact on the Local Council sector.



***If you have any questions about your community
please give us a ring and we will try to help!***

Statement of Well-being: Neath Town Council

This Well-Being Statement sets out the Council's commitment to the principle of sustainable development to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, 'the Act', defines sustainable development as the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals. In this regard the Council recognises the role it has to play. Therefore, it will promote sustainable development in how it goes about meeting its duty under the Act and when working for and with the communities that make up its area.

The Act puts in place seven well-being goals. These well-being goals are indivisible from each other and explain what is meant by the well-being of Wales. The Council embraces these well-being goals and will place them at the heart of its forward planning and decision-making arrangements to improve the general quality of life (well-being) within its administrative area. The Act provides a more detailed definition for each of the seven well-being goals. However, for the purposes of this statement the seven goals are:

<p>A Prosperous Wales (1)</p>	<p>A Resilient Wales (2)</p>	<p>A Healthier Wales (3)</p>	<p>A More Equal Wales (4)</p>	<p>A Wales of Cohesive Communities (5)</p>	<p>A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language (6)</p>	<p>Globally Responsible Wales (7)</p>
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When applying these well-being goals to the functions, activities and services provided by the Council; the Act requires the Council to think more about the long term, to work better with people and communities and also other public bodies, to look to prevent problems and to take a more joined up approach.

The Council will go about this by making the following Commitments:

- ✓ Look to the long term so that its actions or lack of action does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- ✓ Taking an integrated approach to applying the seven well-being goals when deciding upon priorities.
- ✓ Involving the diversity of the population in the decisions affecting them, when and where it is applicable to do so.
- ✓ Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions.
- ✓ Understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring.

- ✓ Take all reasonable steps towards meeting the local objectives in the local well-being plan that has affect in its area. In this regard and when the Public Services Board publishes its local well-being plan, the Council will consider and review the local objectives contained in the plan alongside its own objectives for the year ahead.
- ✓ Form its own judgement of what steps it would be reasonable for it to take towards meeting the local objectives in its area, on the basis of its own knowledge and consideration of the circumstances and characteristics of its area.
- ✓ Report annually detailing the progress it has made in meeting the objectives contained in the local well-being plan prepared and published by the Public Services Board.

The Council commits to the following set of Well-Being Actions:

- ✓ Publishing this well-being statement on its website.
- ✓ Incorporating this well-being statement into its Annual Report, which provides an overall framework to focus the Council's future activities, investments and spending priorities.
- ✓ Submitted an updated 'Town and Community Council Annual Report outlining its contribution towards the objectives of the Well-Being Plan' to NPTCBC. This will feed into the local Public Service Board on its progress and development against the Plan
- ✓ Incorporating the seven national well-being goals into its future Strategic Planning
- ✓ Continue to extend its influence and reach into the community to help sustain general well-being in the communities that make up its area.
- ✓ It will do this by dedicating resources to promote community development through the Council's work programme; eg via its Grant Aid initiative.