

# Corporate Plan 2013-17

## Consultation Feedback and BCBC Response



Bridgend County Borough Council  
**Working together to improve lives**

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## 1. Executive Summary

- The BCBC Corporate Plan 2013-17 sets out the council's key improvement priorities for achieving better outcomes for our citizens and how we will take those priorities forward. These improvement priorities are:

Priority One –	Working together to develop the local economy
Priority Two –	Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement
Priority Three –	Working with children and families to tackle problems early
Priority Four –	Working together to help vulnerable people stay independent
Priority Five –	Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles
Priority Six –	Working together to make the best use of our resources <sup>1</sup>

- Excluding internal BCBC feedback and the Citizen's Voice feedback from 2012, there were 42 responses to the specific consultation. This reflects feedback from the Carers' Forum being taken as one; 24 responses received through the anonymous online consultation; 16 participants in the focus groups, representing citizens; and one response made verbally to an elected Member of the County Borough Council.
- The analysis of the responses to the consultation indicated support for the improvement priorities, with the priority to develop the local economy being seen as the most important.
- A recurring concern of respondents was whether the priorities were achievable, particularly in light of financial pressures, and how they could be achieved (specific detail).
- The success indicators identified were supported overall, but there was concern that some indicators could not be fully influenced by the Council and that qualitative measures, such as service users' views, should be included in the Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> This priority was added after consultation in response to concerns about affordability, so it will not be referred to in the comments below.

- There were strong suggestions on how individuals and communities should contribute to achieving improved outcomes in priority areas, for instance, personal responsibility and supporting one another.
- There were also suggestions for additional areas to be included in the plan but no common themes emerged. A number of those areas mentioned were implicit elements of priorities already included.

## 2. Background

The aim of the consultation was to ensure that the Council’s Corporate Plan 2013-17 reflects citizens’ priorities and complies with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Measure requires consultation on improvement objectives with the following stakeholders:

- citizens;
- local businesses and, where appropriate, potential businesses;
- statutory and other community planning partners;
- other authorities (especially where any proposed improvement objectives may have an impact upon them); and
- other bodies with whom collaborative working is taking place or is being planned.

## 3. Approach

The consultation period was between 7 January 2013 and 18 February 2013.

Stakeholder/s	Approach	Dates
All	The consultation was advertised on the front page of the Council’s website and in the ‘Current Consultation’ section. The choice of means by which feedback could be given was stated and a direct link provided to the online consultation. A notice was placed in the Glamorgan Gazette advertising the consultation, providing contact details and a link to the online consultation pages.	Published 07.01.13 Live until 18.02.13  10.01.13

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Stakeholder/s	Approach	Dates
Citizens	Two facilitated focus groups were held. There were eight participants in each group, drawn from the membership of the Citizens Panel. The 1500 responses to the "Citizens Voice" survey of 2012 were taken into account.	22.01.13
Local businesses	The consultation document was sent to members of the Bridgend Business Forum and the wider business network members. Details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given were provided. The Business Forum represents the business community in Bridgend on the Local Service Board.	14.01.13
Community Planning Partners	The consultation document was sent to members of the Local Service Board (LSB) with details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given. (The membership of the LSB is detailed in Appendix 1).	14.01.13
Other Authorities	The consultation document was sent to neighbouring authorities and members of the South Wales Improvement Group.	10.01.13
Local Authority Councillors	The consultation document was sent to elected Members with details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given.	11.01.13
Town and Community Councils	The consultation document was sent to Clerks of the Town and Community Councils with details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given.	15.01.13
Schools	The consultation document was sent by email to all head teachers of schools in the Bridgend County Borough including details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given. The consultation and the means by which feedback could be given were also included in the Corporate Director of Children's Services: Report to Governors, January 2013.	07.01.13  January 2013
Bridgend Youth Council	The consultation document was sent to the Bridgend Youth Council including details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given.	15.01.13

Stakeholder/s	Approach	Dates
Registered Social Landlords	Valleys 2 Coast represent all social landlords in the area and liaise via a joint forum. As a member of the LSB, the consultation document was sent to them and details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given provided.	14.01.13
Bridgend Equality Forum	The consultation document was sent to the Bridgend Equality Forum members and details of the choice of means by which feedback could be given provided.	15.01.13
Bridgend Carers' Forum	Presentation of the consultation document to a meeting of the forum and collation of feedback.	12.02.13

## 4. Response Methodology

Almost all respondents to the specific consultation for this plan either completed the online consultation survey or were involved in the focus groups. They, therefore, responded to the specific consultation questions which were:

1. Do you think this plan clearly sets out our priorities and what we will do to achieve them?
2. Are the priorities described in the plan important to you?
3. Do you think the measures of success in the plan are the right indicators to tell us if we are succeeding?
4. What do you think individuals and communities in Bridgend can contribute to help achieve the priorities set out in this plan?
5. Is there anything else you think this plan should cover?

Where feedback did not specifically address these questions or was more cross cutting in nature every effort has been made to reflect comments appropriately under each question.

## 5. Consultation Responses

### **Q1. Do you think this plan clearly sets out our priorities and what we will do to achieve them?**

Opinion was almost equally divided on the clarity of the priorities and clarity of what we will do to achieve them. While many felt that overall they were clear, a number of respondents indicated that the priorities lacked sufficient detail on what would be done to achieve them.

Some respondents were of the view that the achievements and actions were 'somewhat idealistic' and many considered the Council's goals to be unachievable, especially given their limited financial resources. It was suggested that the Corporate Plan should set out what the Council realistically plans to achieve.

Under priority one, working together to develop the local economy, the development of the economy was regarded as the most important but more detail on how this was to be achieved was needed and, in particular, how new jobs would be created. A number of respondents in the focus groups felt that the planned achievement to regulate the market place was particularly unclear.

Respondents involved in the focus groups believed that the planned achievements against priority one may be limited in success unless the following were addressed:

- the appearance of Bridgend town centre and the quality of the shops there;
- the development of derelict spaces in Bridgend Town;
- the limited parking and the cost of parking, particularly in town centres;
- the need to develop tourism;
- high business rates and taxes;
- the irregularity of public transport; and
- the development of cycleways and community routes as alternative transport links should be funded regardless of whether external grants and funding were secured.

Under priority two, working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement, while all respondents saw this priority as important, there was concern about whether it was achievable - in particular, how the Council would go about raising aspirations. It was felt that clarity would be improved if:

- the baseline figures of children who were functionally literate and numerate were provided;
- the relationship with the Welsh Baccalaureate was clarified; and
- the Just Ask service was explained more clearly.

Respondents involved in the focus groups were of the view that the planned achievements against priority two may be limited in success unless the following were addressed:

- an increase in teaching staff;
- more focus on school pupils who are under-achieving;
- a recognition that some of the desired educational outcomes were not suitable for all learners and young people; and
- clearer targets to help track progress over time.

For priority three, working with children and families to tackle problems early, some respondents felt that the planned achievements and actions outlined in the corporate plan were generic and did not sufficiently focus upon issues relevant to Bridgend County Borough, such as alcohol and substance misuse. An explanation of 'Flying Start' and a definition of 'home management' were thought to be needed.

Respondents involved in the focus groups thought that the planned achievements against priority three may be limited in success unless the following were addressed:

- funding for additional social worker posts;
- tackling alcohol and substance misuse problems;
- need more health visitors to have more time to support families in need; and
- involve schools in identifying families needing support.

For priority four, working together to help vulnerable people stay independent, an explanation was believed necessary of what 'supported housing' included and a definition of 'vulnerable' was requested. Given increasing demand for services and the significant pressures on budgets, more detail was required on how this priority can be achieved.

Respondents involved in the focus groups felt that the planned achievements against priority four may be limited in success unless the following were addressed:

- increase support and focus on carers; and
- more involvement of service users and families in planning services.

Under priority five, working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles, there was concern about the extent to which the Council can influence things like smoking and teenage conceptions, and it was thought that more realistic actions should be set. Concern was expressed over the achievability of this priority as some respondents believed that the availability of leisure services had been reduced in recent years.

Respondents involved in the focus group felt that the planned achievements against priority five may be limited in success unless the following were addressed:

- increase policing of underage sales;
- increase working with community and volunteer groups to provide leisure opportunities;
- include focus on health for carers and disabled young people;
- increase health and leisure facilities; and
- identify links with other priorities in the plan.

**Q2. Are the priorities described in the plan important to you?**

Overall, respondents agreed that the five improvement priorities outlined by the Council were important to the local community of Bridgend County Borough. However, a number of respondents, as set out above, felt that the priorities were too idealistic and not specific enough to be clear on what was going to be done.

For the majority, priority one, working together to develop the local economy, was of most importance as it was considered to be critical in the facilitation of the remaining four priorities. Respondents also thought that the reuse of derelict land in communities and the improvement in transport networks were particularly important. One respondent felt that rail electrification was not important as it was costly and of little benefit to the area. Another stated that the replacement of street furniture was unimportant as it was frequently damaged and subsequently removed.

Priority two, working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement, was felt to be critically important for an individual's future and for the benefit of the economy and community. There were mixed views regarding the importance and achievability of raising aspirations. Some believed that this was inappropriate and unachievable in light of limited job opportunities, while others saw raising aspirations as crucial in improving educational performance. Many deemed that reducing class sizes was fundamentally important to educational attainment, particularly for those children needing extra support.

Participants agreed that priority three, working with children and families to tackle problems early, was an important improvement area for the Council. Participants expressed a view that the reduction and decline in health visitor services had reduced the ability for early identification of problems and they therefore felt this to be a particular area for improvement. In addition, although respondents acknowledged the importance of reducing unintended pregnancies, they did not think this was an achievable priority for the Council.

Participants felt that priority four, working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent, was important and that the Council should work to increase the proportion of vulnerable and older people that were able to live independently. For most this was due to the ageing population within the borough and a personal desire to remain independent once older. One respondent found that taking early action to help people remain independent was particularly crucial, especially for those with mental health needs and learning disabilities. However, there was again concern about the achievability of the priority in times of reduced funding generally.

A few participants believed that priority five, working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles, was more the responsibility of the NHS and it should not, therefore, form one of the council's key priorities. Some participants held quite a strong view that this priority overlapped with the other four priorities and it should be integrated with them. Of particular importance to the participants was the need for increased availability of health and leisure services in their local area.

### **Q3. Do you think the measures of success in the plan are the right indicators to tell us if we are succeeding?**

Overall, most respondents broadly agreed with the areas of measurement outlined for each of the five improvement priorities and were keen to see improvements in these areas in the future. Many, however, felt that the actual measures themselves were not always clear or meaningful in indicating success. In particular, several highlighted that the measures were not as 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound) as they should be.

While some respondents commented that there was a good mix of qualitative and quantitative measures, other respondents stated that there were inadequate qualitative measures. They proposed that the Council should also include subjective measures of success by obtaining the perceptions of local residents and businesses.

Many believed that the Council should publicly report progress on their measures in a simple and accessible way.

For priority one, working together to develop the local economy, respondents were concerned that indicators on worklessness, income, tourism revenue, and young people not in education, employment or training were all things that they would want to see a positive change in, but felt that they are unachievable as they are constrained by external factors including the downturn in the economy. It was therefore suggested that the Council be explicit in the contribution they can make to these kinds of indicators.

Other indicators for priority one, including poor condition of highways and ease of use of rights of way, were thought to need more detail in the definition. One respondent believed that the measure for vacant premises should also reflect the desirability of the shops as well as the rate of occupancy.

Additional indicators suggested for priority one included house prices, local procurement and jobs attracted or created.

For priority two, working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement, one respondent commented that the specific outcomes for educational achievements were not sufficiently ambitious. It was also suggested that for this priority the Council should consider subjective measures, such as parental and child satisfaction, particularly when measuring changes in aspirations. Some respondents felt that the measures should not differentiate between those who receive free school meals and those who do not. Instead, they recommended that the target focus should be on improving educational attainment for both groups.

For priority three, working with children and families to tackle problems early, the indicators identifying looked after children and children in need were regarded as inappropriate measures of success because there will always be children in these situations. Setting targets for these indicators, some respondents believed, may encourage under-recording or a lack of referral to an appropriate service. Some, in fact, felt that the Council should aim to increase the number of looked after children, children identified as in need and children on the child protection register, as this would reflect greater identification and support.

Some additional success measures were suggested for priority three, including the number of people entering work as a result of working with families, and increased skills and qualifications achieved following support.

Most of the indicators identified for priority four, working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent, were considered to be useful. However, a few respondents thought that the measure of the number of older people supported in the community may not be appropriate as support in the community should only be used where this is in the best interests of the individual involved, either personally or medically. One respondent felt that the measure for delayed transfers of care was not clear and should be explained more fully.

In line with comments against other priorities, it was suggested that the Council should consider subjective measures of success, including the satisfaction of service users, carers and families towards services.

For priority five, working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles, although respondents were keen to see positive changes in the indicators outlined in this section, they felt that the actual measures specified would not be helpful in measuring performance over the short timescale of the corporate plan. Particular concerns were expressed about teenage conceptions, smoking and binge drinking because the Council would have limited influence over these things. There were also doubts expressed about the reliability of the data for binge drinking.

Some respondents suggested that the measures should include particular reference to the health needs of young carers and the support for disabled children to access leisure opportunities.

In addition to those indicators specified for priority five, respondents recommended that the Council include a measure that focuses on the availability of leisure facilities and sports clubs. Some suggested that every school be required to provide a sports club or leisure facility.

**Q4. What do you think individuals and communities in Bridgend can contribute to help achieve the priorities set out in this plan?**

Overall, respondents thought that individuals and communities could contribute, and that the Council should encourage and seek citizens' involvement. There was a recommendation that the Council add a section for each priority in the plan with suggestions for how citizens and communities can contribute.

A common theme that emerged from the consultation was engagement. It was considered critical for local residents and businesses to share their views on improvements needed in communities and make recommendations on how they could be achieved. Some felt that the outcomes of past consultations have not always been taken on board and that that the Council needs to re-build trust by being seen to be acting on citizens' views. One respondent thought that it was necessary for citizens to urge town and community councils to better influence Bridgend County Borough Council.

Linked to priority one, working together to develop the local economy, some respondents acknowledged that individuals could work with the Council to secure an appropriately skilled workforce and improve the employability of those out of work. Several respondents said that they would personally be willing to volunteer to share key skills, including those specific to a particular trade. It was suggested that the Council should identify skills shortages and find a way (e.g. volunteering) to allow people to share their skills and improve employability of individuals.

In support of priority two, working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement, some suggested that parents and others within the community could volunteer within schools to assist children to read and write and improve their numerical skills. One respondent who was currently involved in such a voluntary role noted the positive impact this had upon the ability of

children at the school. Additionally, it was suggested that individuals within the community could volunteer to share their skills in particular trades to improve the employability of young people.

For priority three, working with children and families to tackle problems early, one respondent recommended that those with knowledge and experience of dealing with people with mental health problems and learning disabilities should volunteer to raise awareness of such issues. The respondent said they would be keen to volunteer to share knowledge within schools, community groups and organisations to ensure such problems are identified as early as possible.

Linked to priority four, working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent, it was acknowledged that many individuals were already currently involved in helping older and vulnerable people to remain independent, through adopting a carer role for friends or relatives. It was felt that other citizens could volunteer to assist older people to live independently, for example, by helping with shopping, cleaning and collecting prescriptions.

In support of priority five, working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles, a number of respondents believed that people could undertake voluntary work, for example, running sports clubs. Some also recommended that local schools can develop their role by hosting community events or sports facilities where suitable community venues were not available.

Some additional ways that respondents suggested citizens and communities could make a contribution were:

- being prepared to take personal responsibility;
- being prepared to report problems;
- parents listening to their children read;
- parents ensuring that their children eat healthily and take exercise;
- shopping locally; and
- walking to work.

**Q5. Is there anything else you think this plan should cover?**

Respondents offered many suggestions on additional areas for inclusion in the plan, although no common areas emerged from those suggestions. It is noted that a number of suggested additions were elements of priorities already included in the plan but clarity was needed.

The issues that respondents considered needed a greater or specific focus within the plan were:

Priority one, working together to develop the local economy -

- dog, fouling, litter, refuse collection and fly-tipping;
- the environment;
- open spaces;
- the promotion and regeneration of Pencoed, as was planned for Bridgend and Maesteg;
- a commitment to reduce the number of traffic lights in operation;
- adult learning/education;
- sustainability; and
- promoting tourism.

Priority two, working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement -

- vocational opportunities for young people;
- a greater focus on underachievers in schools; and
- training school staff to identify learning disability and mental health problems early.

Priority three, working with children and families to tackle problems early -

- increased focus on poverty and actions to alleviate poverty;
- work within communities to increase community cohesion, tolerance and pride in the borough; and
- training in parenting skills.

Priority four, working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent -

- working with third sector partners, joint ventures and partnership working;
- greater focus on supporting carers; and
- more support for people with mental health issues, disabilities, special needs and autism.

Priority five, working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles -

- alcohol and substance misuse and reduction of underage sales;
- promotion and support of healthy eating;
- increase accessibility of leisure facilities; and
- promotion of physical activity.

In addition, across all priorities, respondents believed that there was a need for greater focus on ensuring value for money, on more opportunities for citizens to feed in their views and be engaged in decision making; and for sustainability.

## **6. Actions Taken in Response to the Consultation Feedback**

The Council considered all information gathered through the consultation process while finalising its corporate plan for 2013-17. Key actions taken in responses to the consultation feedback are.

- To improve clarity, we re-visited all the priorities and the contents for each, and simplified the 'language' of the document to make it as clear as possible. We added definitions or explanations wherever necessary. We also included a Glossary of Terms in the final plan to explain or define any specific terms or acronyms that may justifiably remain.
- In response to concerns about how achievable the priorities and supporting activities are, we reviewed each priority to ensure our aims and planned actions are realistic and affordable.
- Also, to respond to concerns over the affordability and achievability of the priorities in the current financial climate, we strengthened the alignment of our Mid-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2013-17 to the Corporate Plan. Our MTFS sets out how we will use our resources to support our improvement priorities. We also added a sixth priority, working together to make best use of our resources, setting out how the Council will work to achieve efficiencies and savings.

- We received suggestions on improvements and additional areas for inclusion. A significant number of these areas related to on-going services that we provide. In response, we have included more information in the section dealing with Existing Services and also information on progress and relevant achievements so far under each priority.
- For each priority, we added a section containing some suggestions on actions that citizens can take, under the subtitle of 'How can you get involved?', in response to the useful suggestions we received on citizens' engagement in achieving the Council's priorities. The final plan also includes a signpost to Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO), where volunteers can obtain information, advice and guidance on all aspects of volunteering work.
- To address concerns that the details on the planned achievements and commitments to deliver the priorities were inadequate, we strengthened our clarification of the levels of detail that could be found in our directorate business plans and service delivery plans in the section on Effective Business Planning, as specific information is contained within those lower-level plans.
- The measures of success were generally supported, but we have taken action to simplify and clarify the measures further, and added qualitative measures where we thought fit.
- To give a longer-term picture of progress, we have included a table showing the baseline data for the measures of success and performance already achieved, where relevant.
- We added a section in the introductory area of the plan to the effect that sustainability and equality underpin everything we do.
- Finally, to emphasise collaboration and shared responsibility, we amended the title for each priority by adding 'working together' and the subtitle of the section 'How will we know we are succeeding?' to 'How will we know if we are collectively succeeding?'.

**Appendix 1: Membership of the Bridgend Local Service Board**

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board

Bridgend County Borough Council

Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations

Bridgend Business Forum

Bridgend College

Environment Agency Wales

South Wales Fire & Rescue Service

South Wales Police

Valleys 2 Coast

Wales Probation Trust

Welsh Government