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Bridgend County Borough Council



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*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich
dewis iaith.*

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Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

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Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Friday, 7 October 2022

Dear Councillor,

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee will be held remotely - via Microsoft Teams on
Thursday, 13 October 2022 at 10:00.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2014.
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 10
To receive for approval the minutes of the Committee of 28/07/2022
4. Governance And Audit Committee Action Record 11 - 14
5. Ombudsman Annual Letter 2021 - 2022 15 - 28
6. Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports 29 - 88
7. Porthcawl Harbour Return 2021-22 Annual Audit Letter 89 - 94
8. Disabled Facilities Grant - Progress Report And Position Statement 95 - 100
9. Corporate Self Assessment 101 - 126
10. Forward Work Programme 2022-23 127 - 132
11. Urgent Items
To consider any other items(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the

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meeting as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

S J Griffiths

D M Hughes

M L Hughes

A Wathan

Councillors

A Williams

RM Granville

S J Bletsoe

C Davies

Lay Member:

Mr G Chapman

Mr B Olorunnisola

Ms S Davies

Mr A Bagley

Present

Mr G Chapman – Chairperson

Mr B Olorunnisola	Ms S Davies	Mr A Bagley	S J Griffiths
D M Hughes	M L Hughes	A Wathan	A Williams
RM Granville	S J Bletsoe		

Officers:

Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Simon Roberts	Senior Fraud Investigator
Deborah Exton	Deputy Head of Finance
Mark Thomas	Head of Regional Audit Service
Samantha Clements	Audit Wales
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Nigel Smith	Finance Manager
Eilish Thomas	Finance Manager - Financial Control & Closing
Joan Davies	Deputy Head of Regional Internal Audit Service

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

15. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee of 22 June 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

16. GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ACTION RECORD

The Senior Democratic Services Officer Committees presented a report which provided Members with an update on the Audit Committee Action Record, appended to the report.

A member of the Committee questioned the reason for corporate complaints not being recorded at a senior level and asked whether as a Committee it should request that corporate complaints and Ombudsman referrals be recorded. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed the Committee that a record is kept of Ombudsman referrals and that the recording of complaints received by each Directorate on the CRM system is being looked at to establish whether there are particular trends in the complaints being received. The Chairperson requested that an overview of complaints received be reported to this Committee when available. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change confirmed that the reporting of complaints is on the Committee's work programme.

A member of the Committee referred to a potential overlap and duplication in this Committee's work programme with that of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in that it would also be considering a report on Disabled Facilities Grants and he was keen for this to be avoided as Chair of that Scrutiny Committee. The Chairperson stated that the two Committees had different functions in that the Scrutiny

Committee would look at operational matters in more detail, whereas this Committee would look at the overall process.

The Chairperson asked whether discussions could take place with Audit Wales to progress Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board engaging in the Local Development Plan process on its plans for developing primary health care facilities where new housing development is planned to take place. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed the Committee that this matter is being taken up by the Council with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

The Chairperson queried whether the written information requested by the Committee on the procurement strategy had been sent. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change confirmed that the information had been sent to the Committee.

A member of the Committee queried whether the terms of reference of this Committee could be reviewed as part of the review of the Constitution to avoid duplication with other Committees. The Chairperson stated that this Committee would look at the governance of processes and would not look at operational matters. A member of the Committee stated that the Democratic Services Committee had set up a Working Group which had met today and tasked with reviewing the Constitution. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed this was the case and once the Working Group had concluded its review of the Constitution it would be presented to the Democratic Services Committee or Cabinet and Council for approval, depending on timescales. The Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service informed the Committee that it has an up-to-date terms of reference.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Action Record.

17. **AUDIT WALES GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Committee received an update from Audit Wales on the Financial and Performance Audit work undertaken, and due to be undertaken by it, together with a summary of its Programme and Timetable within the Council.

Samantha Clements, Audit Lead (Performance Audit) of Audit Wales provided a summary of the Performance Audit work undertaken, however the 2022-23 update of that work had been omitted from the papers sent with the Committee papers and a copy would follow. She stated that the unscheduled Care Thematic Review is planned to be delivered in the autumn and the local project of looking at performance management arrangements is currently underway.

A member of the Committee asked whether the Springing Forward – Examining the building blocks for a sustainable future review was accessible. The Audit Lead (Performance Audit) stated that the report is in draft at present, pending a re-draft and once it had gone through the clearing process would be made available to the Committee at its next meeting.

A member of the Committee referred to the definition of sleeping rough and homelessness and asked how metrics are defined across Councils. The Audit Lead (Performance Audit) informed the Committee that she would clarify how metrics are defined in relation to sleeping rough and homelessness across Councils with the Project Manager responsible for this piece of work and she would update the Committee in the future. A member of the Committee stated that he had asked a question on the definition of homelessness and rough sleepers at the last meeting of Council and that he was happy to forward the written reply he had received from the Cabinet Member to the Committee.

A member of the Committee asked whether the Climate Change Baseline Review has been published. The Audit Lead (Performance Audit) stated that if the report had been published it would be available on the Audit Wales website.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Report at Appendix A.

18. **ANNUAL CORPORATE FRAUD REPORT 2021-22**

The Senior Fraud Investigator presented the Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2021-22 which summarised the actions undertaken in respect of counter fraud and provided an update on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise.

He reported on the progress made to improve the Council's resilience to fraud, bribery and corruption, set out in the Fraud Strategy and Framework. A fraud risk register had been developed and the Fraud Prevention E-learning module had now been rolled out across the Council and is mandatory for all new and existing staff and Members to complete. A Fraud awareness training session was also provided to all existing Members in February 2022.

He also informed the Committee of the ongoing measures pursuant to the NFI, whereby data is extracted from the Council's systems and reports and then matched against data submitted from other bodies such as other Local Authorities, Department for Work and Pensions, NHS & Trusts, Police and Housing Associations. He stated that 420 frauds or errors were identified equating to £30,680.42 of recoverable funds, mostly attributable to council tax reduction or housing benefit matches. The exercise resulted in the cancellation of 403 blue badges, where the holder was deceased, generating an estimated cabinet office saving of £231,725.00. The Annual Report also provided detail of the internal counter fraud work undertaken by Internal Audit and the Council's Senior Fraud Investigator including internal investigations, council tax reduction investigations and blue badge investigations.

A member of the Committee asked for details of the number of staff in the fraud team. The Senior Fraud Investigator informed the Committee that the team included himself and an Investigator, who had been redeployed to another service area due to Covid but had since returned and was now picking up fraud investigation work.

A member of the Committee asked whether the grants awarded due to covid could give rise to fraud. The Senior Fraud Investigator stated that Covid-19 grants had been part of the data matching exercise, with no fraud identified. He stated that one grant had been incorrectly paid and had been recovered.

A member of the Committee enquired whether staff had been investigated due to fraudulent activity and if so, whether this had led to their suspension or dismissal. The Senior Fraud Investigator stated that no such activity had been drawn to his attention in the period covering this Annual Report. The Deputy Head of the Regional Audit Service stated that Internal Audit works closely with the Senior Fraud Investigator. The Internal Audit team had investigated allegations of fraud by staff and it would have to consider what information could be reported to the Committee.

A member of the Committee believed that a team of one was insufficient for an organisation of its size and asked whether an investment should be made in a larger team which through fraud investigation would derive more income for the Council. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed the Committee that the Senior Fraud Investigator and Internal Audit work collaboratively. She stated that a great deal of work had been undertaken in relation to Covid grants awarded to businesses and

that, as a result, no issues of fraud were found. She also stated that some authorities put greater resources into fraud and there was potential to work on a regional basis. She felt the balance in the Fraud Team to be reasonable. A member of the Committee stated that the cost of living crisis could give rise to greater fraud and he referred to case studies in other Councils where they had experienced a greater return than the cost of employing fraud officers, which he would share with the Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2021- 22, the measures in place, the work being undertaken to prevent and detect fraud and error and the update on the National Fraud Initiative.

19. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021-22 (UNAUDITED)**

The Group Manager – Chief Accountant presented the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2021-22 for noting.

The Group Manager – Chief Accountant stated that the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2021-22 were signed by the responsible financial officer on 18 July 2022 and would be currently being reviewed by Audit Wales. He anticipated the audit would be largely completed by the end of August 2022 and the audited accounts are anticipated to be brought to the Committee in September for approval. He noted that there were a couple of amendments to the previous year figures to adjust for both the consolidation of Bridgend Council's share of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal accounts and also adjustments to prior year pensions figures as a result of a revised pensions actuarial report.

He confirmed that the draft accounts have been published to the website and any elector from the area can raise any queries to the accounts with the Auditor and the notice advising of this has been published to both the internet and the Council's notice board.

A member of the Committee questioned the reason for Capital Programme Reserves being shown as a zero draw-down. The Group Manager – Chief Accountant informed the Committee that this was due to the way in which the capital programme was funded, allowing reserves to be carried forward to future years and the programme had also slipped.

A member of the Committee referred to there being no mention of climate change in the Statement of Accounts and in line with Welsh Government advice, the Council should report more on climate change metrics. The Deputy Head of Finance informed the Committee the issue of the reporting of climate change had been recognised by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy which is doing a piece of work across public sector bodies as to what can be brought into the Statement of Accounts and the outcome of that would be included in future Statements. The member asked whether the Council's commitment around 2030 and the Council's progress towards that could be referred to in the Statement of Accounts. The Deputy Head of Finance stated that she would look at what could be included in this year's Statement of Accounts on climate change in connection with the Council's commitment around 2030 and the Council's progress towards 2030.

A member of the Committee requested clarification of the continued net contribution to reserves and did it mean that the Council was not spending its capital funding, which could create problems for future years. The Group Manager – Chief Accountant stated that the Council had faced challenges during the pandemic affecting schemes being taken forward in their given timescales which had meant slippage into future years for

completion. He also stated that the Council has a significant capital programme in the current year for which earmarked reserves had been set aside and he anticipated those reducing over the next few years. A member of the Committee referred to a comment by the Corporate Director Communities that her Directorate is resourced constrained. The Chairperson requested the member take this point up with The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change, Deputy Head of Finance and Group Manager – Chief Accountant outside the meeting.

A member of the Committee requested clarification of the prior period adjustments in the reporting of the pensions liability. The Group Manager – Chief Accountant advised that an adjustment was required to be made due to the receipt of a revised pensions actuarial report subsequent to the passing of the accounts to the auditors, but the revised figures were not reflected in the accounts at the time. The figures had now been amended to reflect the revised pensions report.

A member of the Committee questioned if the impact of population change should be reflected in the Statement of Accounts. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change stated that population change was something that would relate to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the modelling going forward and she would discuss the budget setting process with the member of the Committee.

A member of the Committee requested clarification of the figure of £50,924M attributed to the Communities Directorate in the capital programme outturn for 2022-23 and the sums for future years. The Group Manager - Chief Accountant stated that this showed the outturn and a flavour of the next two years capital programme. The Deputy Head of Finance stated that most of the schemes in the capital programme are happening now and would be more significant in terms of their value. Funding that had been approved recently would be spent in 2022-23 or 2023-24. She stated that the Communities Directorate has a significant capital programme. She informed the Committee that the Welsh Government does not give an indication of what long term funding will be and the capital programme is based on the grant funding coming in, with the exception of the 20th century Band B School Modernisation programme in Education and Family Support, where funding is known over 5 years. She stated that a full breakdown of the schemes as reported to the recent meeting of Council would be sent to the member. The member asked whether this was the case with the Penprysg Road Bridge. The Deputy Head of Finance stated that the Council already has the match funding, but not the grant funding and if approved, schemes would be profiled over the years.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2021-22 at Appendix A.

20. **PORHCRAWL HARBOUR RETURN 2021-22 (UNAUDITED)**

The Group Manager – Chief Accountant reported on the unaudited Porthcawl Harbour Return 2021-22 for approval.

The Council's unaudited Return in respect of Porthcawl Harbour up to the financial year end of 31 March 2022, was attached at Appendix A to the report. He explained that the Harbour achieved a balanced position as at 31 March 2022, generating £327,029 in fees, primarily for boat berthing/mooring. The main items of expenditure are staffing costs of £80,762 and depreciation of the Harbour assets of £113,518. The value of the Harbour and associated assets, including the kiosk and slipway, as at 31 March 2022 was £2,943,262.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the unaudited Porthcawl Harbour Return 2021-22 at Appendix A.

21. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021-22**

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change sought approval and inclusion of the Annual Governance Statement 2021-22 (AGS) within the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2021-22.

The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change reported that good corporate governance requires the active participation of Members and officers across the Council and is reviewed on an annual basis, with the findings used to update the AGS. This helped to ensure the continuous improvement of the Council's corporate governance culture. She stated that the inclusion of the AGS within the Statement of Accounts provides an overall appraisal of the controls in place to manage the Council's key risks and identified where improvements need to be made. The draft AGS 2021-22 has been reviewed by Corporate Management Board and seen by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources. She informed the Committee that the AGS will be reviewed as part of the external audit on the Statement of Accounts and should reflect any governance issues right up to the date that the Auditor General for Wales signs off the Statement of Accounts 2021-22.

A member of the Committee referred to the ethics statement and some recent concerns raised and asked whether a policy statement should be included in the AGS of former Councillors becoming officers of the Council. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change informed the Committee if it was felt there was any processes that had been breached, it would be reported in the AGS, however, to date, no breach of process was found. The Chairperson stated that if it is a governance issue it could be looked at by the Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change and Monitoring Officer and potentially was a matter for the Democratic Services Committee to consider. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change said she would consider if a statement on the movement of former Councillors to becoming officers of the Council should be included within the AGS. A member of the Committee referred to recent timings and public perception and asked whether this would fall within this AGS or the following year's AGS. The member concerned was aware of an ongoing investigation, the outcome of which was not yet known. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change stated that the control mechanisms the Council has should be included in this year's AGS. A member of the Committee stated that this point could be borne in mind at the Working Group reviewing the Constitution.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the draft Annual Governance Statement 2021-22 at Appendix A and agreed its inclusion within the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2021-22, subject to the Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change including a statement on the control mechanisms the Council has in place on the movement of former Councillors becoming officers of the Council.

22. **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2021-22**

The Group Manager – Chief Accountant reported on the outturn position for treasury management activities, the Treasury Management Indicators for 2021-22 and highlighted compliance with the Council's policies and practices.

The Group Manager – Chief Accountant reported that the Council had complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements during 2021-22.

The Group Manager – Chief Accountant reported that the Council has managed its day-to-day operational cash flows to ensure sufficient funds are available to meet its financial obligations. He stated that surplus cash is invested securely while ensuring its liquidity, achieving a return commensurate with both. The Council invests surplus funds with central government and other local authorities, and also Money Market Funds which are instant access. Other local authorities are a key area for investment of surplus funds. He stated that it was important to note that these investments are for cash flow purposes and not purely for financial return.

A member of the Committee referred to the Council's investments in other local authorities and questioned whether they were at risk given that some local authorities had gone bankrupt. The Group Manager – Chief Accountant informed the Committee that investing in other local authorities is deemed to be secure and considered safe and that the Council is guided by its Treasury Management advisors when making investments and would suspend investments temporarily if advised to do so. He stated that local authorities had always repaid their loans to this Council on demand. The Deputy Head of Finance informed the Committee that the Council's Treasury Management advisors undertake a great deal of work on behalf of the Council and whilst credit ratings do not apply to local authorities, Arlingclose do take into account the financial situation of local authorities in order to advise in which ones to invest in. A member of the Committee requested that the Finance Department insert some narrative on risk profile and also the cost of borrowing in future Treasury Management reports.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the annual treasury management activities and Treasury Management Indicators for 2021-22.

23. **PROGRESS AGAINST THE INTERNAL AUDIT RISK BASED PLAN 2022-23**

The Deputy Head of the Regional Audit Service reported on the position statement on progress being made against the audit work included and approved within the Internal Audit Risk Based Plan 2022-23.

The Deputy Head of the Regional Audit Service detailed the status of each planned review, the audit opinion and the number of any high, medium or low priority recommendations that have been made to improve the control environment covering the period 1 April to 8 July 2022. She stated that 4 audits had been completed with an opinion being provided, a further audit had also been completed, the draft report issued, and feedback was awaited from the Service Department. She also informed the Committee that 7 audits are currently on-going and another 9 had been allocated to Auditors and are due to commence during the next few months. Based on the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the areas examined through testing of the effectiveness of the internal control environment an audit opinion of substantial assurance had been given to 3 completed audit reviews and an opinion of reasonable assurance to the other completed audit review. To date 1 medium priority and 2 low priority recommendations had been made to improve the control environment. The implementation of those recommendations was being monitored to ensure that the identified and agreed improvements are being made and progress would be reported to the Committee.

A member of the Committee referred to the low and medium recommendations on some of the completed audits and asked whether the Committee needed to be aware of at this stage. The Deputy Head of the Regional Audit Service explained that the low

recommendations are advisory and suggest where minor or small improvements to controls could be made. The medium recommendation made was in respect of the invoicing process at Coychurch Crematorium, which had been taken on board.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the content of the report and the progress made against the 2022-23 Internal Audit Risk Based Plan.

24. **UPDATED FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Deputy Head of Finance sought approval of the proposed Updated Forward Work Programme for 2022-23 and highlighted the core functions of an effective Governance and Audit Committee. She highlighted the items scheduled to be presented at the Committee's next meeting on 22 September 2022 and requested the Committee endorse this schedule, confirm the list of people they would like to invite for each item (if appropriate), and indicate whether any additional information or research is required.

A member of the Committee (Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee COSC) stated that his Committee had agreed that the Cost of Living Payment Scheme be placed on its Forward Work Programme and as Chairperson sought the guidance of the Chairperson of this Committee and the Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change as to the most appropriate Committee in order to learn lessons on the delivery of the scheme. The Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change stated that it was important for a report to be considered on lessons learnt and that it should be considered by the COSC as there had been no breakdown in governance arrangements or processes in the delivery of the scheme but more around the new ways of working and delays encountered in its delivery. The Chairperson of the Committee believed it to be an operational matter and that it be reported to the COSC and following which, this Committee would receive a report to ensure the scheme is monitored and that governance arrangements are robust enough.

The Chairperson of the COSC also requested clarity on the remits of both COSC and the Governance & Audit Committee in reviewing the Corporate Performance Self-Assessment as both committees would be receiving reports in the near future and that duplication should be avoided where possible. The Chairperson of the COSC requested that Democratic Services Offices liaise with Scrutiny Officers to ensure they are aware of the Governance and Audit Committee's Forward Work Programme to avoid duplication.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered and approved the proposed Updated Forward Work Programme for 2022-23.

25. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 15:25

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ACTION RECORD

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Governance and Audit Committee Action Record.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 An Action Record has been devised to assist the Committee in tracking the decisions made by the Committee in the exercise of its functions.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 In order to assist the Governance and Audit Committee in ensuring that decisions made by the Committee are actioned and implemented, the Action Record is attached at **Appendix A**. The Action Record will be presented to each meeting of the Committee for approval.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 Implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is primarily an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 The Committee is recommended to note the Action Record and provide any comment upon this, as appropriate.

Kelly Watson

**Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy
October 2022**

Contact Officer: Mark Anthony Galvin
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

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CF31 4WB

Background Documents:

None

Governance and Audit Committee Action Record

Date of Committee	Agreed Action	Lead	Target Date	Progress	Date for action to be brought to Committee	Completed Date
11 November 2021	Disabled Facilities Grants	Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change	June 2022	A further report be presented to the Committee on the progress of Disabled Facilities Grants to see how the service was being embedded.	October 2022	
15 March 2022	Corporate Complaints	Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change	June 2022	Update to be provided to the Committee on how school complaints were recorded and ensuring they were recorded effectively.	November 2022	
22 June 2022	<p>Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Report Audit Wales to provide report on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health and Social Care Partnership (See quarterly work programme update).</p> <p>Audit Wales to provide Assurance and Risk Assessment report.</p> <p>Verbal update at Committee</p>	<p>Audit Wales</p> <p>Audit Wales</p> <p>Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change</p> <p>Audit Wales</p>	<p>September 2022</p> <p>September 2022</p> <p>July 2022</p>	<p>1. Information to be provided to encourage Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to undertake long term planning from a governance perspective with the Council and developers in the Local Development Plan to provide sufficient local health facilities when planning new residential developments and whether there is sufficient collaboration with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.</p> <p>2. Update on report on the Assurance and Risk Assessment project to be provided to the Committee.</p> <p>3. Council to develop an Action Plan on each of the recommendations emanating from the national report on Direct Payments.</p> <p>4. Audit Wales to discuss with its Local Government Studies Team on what steps are to be taken by the Welsh Government in working with local authorities on the implementation of best practice on Direct Payments.</p>	<p>July 2022</p> <p>October 2022</p> <p>November 2022</p> <p>November 2022</p>	Completed July 2022
22 June 2022	Corporate Risk Assessment 2022-23	<p>Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy</p> <p>Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change</p>		<p>1. Information to be provided to the Committee in writing on the actions enacted within the Corporate Procurement Strategy.</p> <p>2. A Task and Finish Group be set up to monitor and agree a framework of key risks and mitigating actions being taken by officers on the Risk Register.</p>	Completed – Written response provided has been provided to the Committee.	June 2022

		Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change		3. Information to be provided to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the assurance and review of risks scores is ongoing.		
28 July 2022	Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Report Update to Committee	Audit Wales	September 2022	Audit Wales representative to clarify how metrics are defined in relation to sleeping rough and homelessness across Councils with the Project Manager responsible for this piece of work and she would update the Committee in the future.	October 2022	
28 July 2022	Statement of Accounts 2021-22 (Unaudited)	Deputy Head of Finance	September 2022	Information to be included in this year's Statement of Accounts on climate change in connection with the Council's commitment around 2030 and the Council's progress towards 2030.	October 2022	
28 July 2022	Annual Governance Statement 2021-22	Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change	September 2022	A statement be included in the Annual Governance Statement on the control mechanisms the Council has in place on the movement of former Councillors becoming officers of the Council.	October 2022	
28 July 2022	Annual Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021-22	Group Manager – Chief Accountant	Ongoing	Narrative on risk profile and also the cost of borrowing be included in future Treasury Management reports.	Ongoing	
28 July 2022	Updated Forward Work Programme 2022-23	Democratic Services	September 2022	Democratic Services Offices liaise with Scrutiny Officers to ensure they are aware of the Governance and Audit Committee's Forward Work Programme to avoid duplication.		Completed

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HUMAN RESOURCES AND CORPORATE POLICY

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2021 - 2022

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2021-2022 to the Governance and Audit Committee.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

1. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) is independent of all government bodies and has legal powers to investigate complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. They also investigate complaints that Members of local government bodies have breached their authority's Code of Conduct.
- 3.2 The PSOW reports annually on the number of complaints against public bodies received by its office.
- 3.3 The Complaints Officer is the Contact Officer for the PSOW and the Monitoring Officer is responsible for liaising with the PSOW regarding Member Code of Conduct complaints.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 **Appendix A** provides the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2021-2022.
- 4.2 The number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2021–2022 was 55 compared with 31 in 2020-2021. The Ombudsman in his Annual Letter suggests that complaints about public bodies were suppressed during the pandemic and then came through in greater numbers. The figure for 2021-22 represents 0.37 complaints received per 1000 residents. The PSOW intervened in 7 of these cases, one complaint proceeded to investigation and was upheld. 9 cases were out of jurisdiction, 22 were premature, 16 were closed after initial consideration, and 5

were settled by working with the Ombudsman to agree an early resolution. Children's Social Services and Education attracted the largest number of complaints at 8 apiece.

4.3 9 Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority's Councillors were received by the Ombudsman's Office in this period 1 of which was discontinued, 1 referred to the Adjudication Panel and in 7 cases no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct was found. 21 Code of Conduct complaints were received against Town and Community Councils in Bridgend County none of which were referred to the Standards Committee, 7 of which were discontinued, and in 14 cases no evidence of a breach of the code was found.

4.4 The Complaints Standards Authority has this year published the first datasets on complaints handled by local authorities which show that over 15,000 complaints were handled by local authorities. These datasets are published on the Ombudsman's website and on the Council's website.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework or the Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As the report is for noting only, it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The PSOW has the legal power to require authorities to make payments to complainants where they have suffered financial loss or in compensation for distress and inconvenience. Any payments are met from existing budgets. The Council was required to make one payment in 2021-22. Prior to this the last payment was made in 2016/17.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The Governance and Audit Committee is recommended to note the Annual Letter attached as **Appendix A**.

Kelly Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, Human Resources and Corporate Policy

Oct 2022

Contact officer: Charlotte Branford
Information and Data Protection Officer

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Background documents: None

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Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: August 2022

 communications@ombudsman.wales

Cllr. Huw David
Bridgend County Borough Council
By Email only: cllr.huw.david@bridgend.gov.uk

Annual Letter 2021/22

Dear Councillor David

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2021/22) for Bridgend County Borough Council which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the actions being taken to improve public services

This is my first annual letter since taking up the role of Public Services Ombudsman in April 2022, and I appreciate that the effects of the pandemic are still being felt by all public bodies in Wales. Our office has not been immune from this, with records numbers of cases being referred to us over the last two years. The strong working relationships between my Office and local authorities continues to deliver improvements in how we are dealing with complaints and ensuring that, when things go wrong, we are learning from that and building stronger public services.

Complaints relating to Maladministration & Service Failure

Last year the number of complaints referred to us regarding Local Authorities increased by 47% (compared to 20/21 figures) and are now well above pre-pandemic levels. It is likely that complaints to my office, and public services in general, were suppressed during the pandemic, and we are now starting to see the expected 'rebound' effect.

During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) a similar proportion of complaints about public bodies, 18%, when compared with recent years. Intervention rates (where we have investigated complaints) for Local Authorities also remained at a similar level – 14% compared to 13% in recent years.

Page 1 of 9

Complaints relating to the Code of Conduct for Councillors

We also received a high number of Code of Conduct complaints last year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. A record number (20) were referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local standards committees, due to evidence of a breach of the Code.

Supporting improvement of public services

In addition to managing record levels of complaints, we also continued our work using our proactive powers in the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. Specifically undertaking our first Own Initiative Investigation and continuing our work on the Complaints Standards Authority.

October 2021 saw the publication of the first own initiative investigation in Wales: [Homelessness Reviewed](#). The investigation featured three Local Authorities and sought to scrutinise the way Homelessness assessments were conducted. The report made specific recommendations to the investigated authorities, as well as suggestions to all other Local Authorities in Wales and Welsh Government. Some of these recommendations will bring about immediate change – updating factsheets and letter and assessment templates to ensure that key equality and human rights considerations are routinely embedded into processes for example – all the recommendations were designed to bring about tangible change to people using homelessness services in Wales.

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year. The model complaints policy has already been adopted by local authorities and health boards in Wales, we have now extended this to an initial tranche of Housing Associations and Natural Resources Wales. The aim being to implement this work across the Welsh public sector.

In addition to this, the CSA published information on complaints handled by local authorities for the [first time](#) – a key achievement for this work. The data for 21/22 showed:

- Over 15,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities
- 4.88 for every 1000 residents.
- Nearly half (46%) of those complaints were upheld.
- About 75% were investigated within 20 working days.
- About 8% of all complaints closed ended up being referred to PSOW.

The CSA has now implemented a model complaints policy with nearly 50 public bodies, and delivered 140 training sessions, completely free of charge, during the last financial year. The feedback has been excellent, and the training has been very popular - so I would encourage Bridgend County Borough Council to engage as fully as possible.

Complaints made to the Ombudsman

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your Council is attached, along with a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and the Town & Community Councils in your area.

In light of the new duties on political leaders and standards committees to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members, we look forward to working with you, your Monitoring Officer and standards committees to share any learning from the complaints we receive and to support your authority's work.

I would also welcome feedback on your Governance & Audit Committee's review of your authority's ability to handle complaints effectively so that we can take this into account in our work and support its work on the handling of complaints.

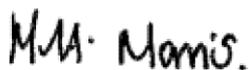
Finally, can I thank you and your officials for the positive way that local authorities have engaged with my Office to enable us to deliver these achievements during what has been a challenging year for everyone. I very much look forward to continuing this work and collaboration to ensure we further improve public services across Wales.

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance & Audit Committee to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance and share any feedback from the Cabinet and the Governance & Audit Committee with my office.
- Continue to engage with our Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 September.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Council and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Morris

Public Services Ombudsman

cc. Mark Shephard, Chief Executive, Bridgend County Borough Council.

By Email only: mark.shephard@bridgend.gov.uk

Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	14	0.20
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.37
Caerphilly County Borough Council	60	0.33
Cardiff Council*	182	0.50
Carmarthenshire County Council	54	0.29
Ceredigion County Council	52	0.72
Conwy County Borough Council	27	0.23
Denbighshire County Council	34	0.36
Flintshire County Council	99	0.63
Gwynedd Council	39	0.31
Isle of Anglesey County Council	29	0.41
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	27	0.45
Monmouthshire County Council	20	0.21
Neath Port Talbot Council	45	0.31
Newport City Council	40	0.26
Pembrokeshire County Council	39	0.31
Powys County Council	55	0.42
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	51	0.21
Swansea Council	71	0.29
Torfaen County Borough Council	18	0.19
Vale of Glamorgan Council	61	0.46
Wrexham County Borough Council	71	0.52
Total	1143	0.36

* inc 17 Rent Smart Wales

Appendix B - Received by Subject

Bridgend County Borough Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	5	9%
Benefits Administration	0	0%
Children's Social Services	8	15%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	2	4%
Complaints Handling	5	9%
Covid19	2	4%
Education	8	15%
Environment and Environmental Health	4	7%
Finance and Taxation	4	7%
Housing	6	11%
Licensing	1	2%
Planning and Building Control	6	11%
Roads and Transport	2	4%
Various Other	2	4%
Total	55	

Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes
 (* denotes intervention)

County/County Borough Councils	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	Discontinued	Other Reports- Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld*	Public Interest Report*	Total
Bridgend County Borough Council	9 17%	22 41%	16 30%	5 9%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2%	1 2%	54
% Share									

Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	13	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	7	54	13%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	7	58	12%
Cardiff Council	45	159	28%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	1	16	6%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	49	14%
Ceredigion County Council	13	46	28%
Conwy County Borough Council	2	24	8%
Denbighshire County Council	4	33	12%
Flintshire County Council	15	94	16%
Gwynedd Council	6	41	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	3	28	11%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	26	8%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	21	10%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	4	36	11%
Pembrokeshire County Council	2	40	5%
Powys County Council	7	55	13%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	3	45	7%
Swansea Council	10	76	13%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	20	10%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	9	62	15%
Wrexham County Borough Council	4	67	6%
Total	160	1108	14%

Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

County/County Borough Councils	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Withdrawn	Total
Bridgend County Borough Council	1	7	0	1	0	0	9

Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Withdrawn	Total
Bridgend Town Council	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Coity Higher Community Council	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Laleston Community Council	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Llangynwyd Middle Community Council	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Maesteg Town Council	5	1	0	0	0	0	6
Newcastle Higher Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Pencoed Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Porthcawl Town Council	0	7	0	0	0	0	7

Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2021/2022. These complaints are contextualised by the number of people each health board reportedly serves.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2021/2022. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

AUDIT WALES GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit to the Committee reports from Audit Wales, including an update on the financial and performance audit work undertaken, and due to be undertaken, by Audit Wales.

2. Connections to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

- 2.2 The Council's performance is an important element in determining the extent to which the well-being objectives can be delivered.

3. Background

- 3.1 Audit Wales undertakes a programme of work during the year to help the Auditor General discharge his duties under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. The Auditor General's functions include auditing accounts and undertaking local performance audit work at a broad range of public bodies, alongside conducting a programme of national value for money examinations and studies. The Auditor General also assesses the extent to which public bodies are complying with the sustainable development principle when setting and taking steps to meet their well-being objectives.

- 3.2 Part 2 of the 2004 Act sets out the powers and duties of the Auditor General to undertake studies in relation to local government bodies in Wales. The most widely used of these provisions is section 41, which requires the Auditor General to undertake studies designed to enable him to make recommendations for, among other things, improving the value for money in the provision of services.

- 3.3 In accordance with Section 89 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Authority is required to keep under review the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and ensuring its governance is effective for securing these performance requirements.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 Audit Wales has produced a number of reports for the Governance and Audit Committee to consider. These are:

- **The Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable - (Appendix A)** - under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Auditor General is required to produce a work programme update for each financial year for each principal council covering both his functions and those of 'relevant regulators' (Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn). At the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2021, Audit Wales reported that they will provide an updated version of this report to the Council on a quarterly basis. **Appendix A** is an updated position as at 30th September 2022.
- **Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management - Bridgend County Borough Council - (Appendix B)** - Audit Wales reviewed the Council's arrangements for managing its workforce, with a primary focus on how well the Council strategically plans the use of its workforce, how it monitors the use of its workforce assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements. They particularly considered how the Council is strengthening its ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services, including those delivered in partnership with key stakeholders and communities, following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Springing Forward – Strategic Asset Management - Bridgend County Borough Council - (Appendix C)** - Audit Wales reviewed the Council's arrangements for managing its assets, with a primary focus on office accommodation and buildings from which the Council delivers services to its residents. They looked at how the Council strategically plans the use of its assets, how it monitors the use of its assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements.
- **Assurance and Risk Assessment Review - Bridgend County Borough Council - (Appendix D)** - Audit Wales undertook the project to find the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. The project also helped them to assess the extent to which the Council is applying the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives. Officers will be in attendance at the meeting to provide an update on the position reported.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the

preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That the Committee notes the Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports at **Appendices A, B, C and D**.

Carys Lord
Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
October 2022

Contact Officer: Deborah Exton
Deputy Head of Finance

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Bridgend
CF31 4AP

Background Documents: None

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Reference: 3175A2022

Date issued: October 2022

Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – Bridgend County Borough Council

Quarterly Update: 30 September 2022

Annual Audit Summary

Description	Timetable	Status
A report summarising completed audit work since the last Annual Audit Summary, which was issued in January 2022	January 2023	Drafting

Financial Audit work

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
Audit of the Council's 2020-21 Grants and Returns	Audit of five claims as required by the terms and conditions of the grants.	In line with the individual deadlines for each grant claim.	Work now completed.
Audit of the Council's 2021-22 statement of accounts	To confirm whether the statement of accounts provide a true and fair view.	Audit Opinion by 30 November 2022	The final audit work is ongoing.

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
Audit of the 2021-22 Returns for Porthcawl Harbour Authority and Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee	To confirm that the returns have been completed correctly.	Audit Opinion by 30 September 2022	Work completed and returns certified on 26 th September 2022.
Audit of the Council's 2021-22 Grants and Returns	Audit of five claims as required by the terms and conditions of the grants.	In line with the individual deadlines for each grant claim.	Audit work to commence following completion of main accounts work over the autumn.

Performance Audit work

2022-23 Performance audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment (ARA)	<p>Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle. At the Council the project is likely to focus in particular on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial position • Capital programme management • Use of performance information –with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes • Governance theme – Setting of well-being objectives 	Ongoing	Scoping
Thematic review – unscheduled care	<p>We intend to undertake a cross-sector review focusing on the flow of patients out of hospital. This review will consider how the Council is working with its partners to address the risks associated with the provision of social care to support hospital discharge, as well as prevent hospital admission. The work will also consider what steps are being taken to provide medium to longer-term solutions</p>	October to December 2022	Scoping
Thematic review – digital / service user perspective	<p>Likely to focus on an aspect of ‘digital’ possibly with a service user emphasis.</p>	March 2023	Scoping
Local project	<p>We will review the Council's performance management arrangements and establish how well they inform the Council of progress in meeting its priorities</p>	July to October 2022	Drafting

Local government national studies planned/in progress

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Bridgend Council
Poverty	Understanding how local authorities ensure they deliver their services to minimise or reduce poverty.	Autumn 2021 – Autumn 2022	Clearance – publication October 2022	Yes – interview with nominated officer at the Council
Social Enterprises	Review of how local authorities are supporting and utilising social enterprises to deliver services	Autumn 2021 – Autumn 2022	Clearance – publication November 2022	Yes – interview with nominated officer at the Council
Building Social Resilience and Self reliance	Review of how local authorities can build greater resilience in communities	Autumn 2021 – Autumn 2022	Report drafting	Yes – interview with nominated officer at the Council
Building safety	Review of how well local authorities are delivering their responsibilities for Building Safety	September 2022 – August 2023	Project initiation	Yes – interview with nominated officer at the Council and survey

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Bridgend Council
Planning for sustainable development - Brownfield regeneration	Review of how local authorities are promoting and enabling better use of vacant non-domestic dwellings and brownfield sites	October 2022 – September 2023	Project development	Yes – interview with nominated officer at the Council and survey
Corporate Joint Committees	Assessing CJsCs' progress in developing their arrangements to meet their statutory obligations and the Welsh Government's aim of strengthening regional collaboration.	September 2022 – January 2023	Setting up fieldwork	Yes – We are exploring the Council's perspective via our routine liaison meetings. Fieldwork includes interviews with the chief executive, director of finance and chair of each of the four CJsCs.

Estyn

Estyn planned work 2022-23	Scope	Timetable	Status
Local Government Education Services Inspections	<p>Estyn inspected Anglesey and Swansea local government education services during the summer term. The reports were published in August and early September. Estyn carried out a post inspection improvement conference in Torfaen in September and will be monitoring Pembrokeshire local authority in early October. Estyn has updated the inspection guidance to reflect a greater emphasis on socio-economic disadvantage and inequity and to make minor tweaks in response to feedback from inspections in 2021-22</p>	<p>Inspection guidance review – July. Published on web-site September 1.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
Curriculum Reform thematic review	<p>Welsh Government have also asked Estyn to review the school improvement services in south-west Wales.</p>	<p>Evidence collecting in June/July – findings presented to WG in September</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW planned work 2022-23	Scope	Timetable	Status
Report of Performance Evaluation Inspection of Children's Services	The purpose of this inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation, on behalf of Welsh Ministers	May 2022	<u>Published</u>
Programme 2022-23	We continue to test and evaluate our revised approach – including assurance checks, improvement checks and PEI's. This will result in a revised operating framework for inspection and a revised code of practice.	April 2022- March 2023	In progress
Joint work	We continue to work with partners, sharing information and intelligence including completing joint reviews. We currently are working in collaboration with HIW for a national review of the stroke pathway and CMHT inspections.	Current	In progress
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Annual Monitoring Report for Health and Social Care 2021-22	Following the publication of the 2020-21 report planning is underway for the next report publication date to be confirmed	Publication to be confirmed	Drafting/Data collecting
Annual meeting with Statutory Directors of Social Services	CIW will meet with all Directors of Social Services	December 2022 and January 2023	Planning

CIW planned work 2022-23	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>National review of Care Planning for children and young people subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings</p>	<p>Purpose of the review</p> <p>To provide external scrutiny, assurance and to promote improvement regarding the quality of practice in relation to the care planning for children and young people subject to the public law outline pre-proceedings</p> <p>To consider the extent to which practice has progressed since the publication of both the CIW 'National Review of care planning for children and young people subject to public law outline pre proceedings' and the publication of the PLO working group report 2021 including best practice guidance.</p>	<p>September 2022</p>	<p>Planning/surveying</p>
<p>Joint Inspection Child Protection Arrangements</p>	<p>Cross-inspectorate approach. Areas to be determined. We will complete a further 4 multi agency joint inspections.</p> <p>We will publish a national report late 2023</p>	<p>Autumn 2022-Spring 2023</p>	<p>Planning</p>

CIW planned work 2022-23	Scope	Timetable	Status
Cafcass Assurance Check	<p>CIW will continue to develop its approach to inspection and review of Cafcass Cymru. We have published its first Assurance check letter.</p> <p>We will evaluate our approach and will consult on our revised approach late 2022. This will result in a revised operating framework for inspection and code of practice.</p>	September – December 2022	Planning

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs published since January 2022

Report title	Publication date and link to report
Equality Impact Assessments: More than a Tick Box Exercise?	September 2022
Welsh Government – setting of well-being objectives	September 2022
Welsh Government workforce planning and management	September 2022

Report title	Publication date and link to report
NHS Wales Finances Data Tool – up to March 2022	<u>August 2022</u>
Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030: Evidence Report	<u>August 2022</u>
Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030	<u>July 2022</u>
Sustainable Tourism in Wales’ National Parks	<u>July 2022</u>
Third Sector COVID-19 Response Fund – Memorandum for the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee	<u>July 2022</u>
The Welsh Community Care Information System - update	<u>July 2022</u>
Tackling the Planned Care Backlog in Wales – and waiting times data tool	<u>May 2022</u>
The new Curriculum for Wales	<u>May 2022</u>
Unscheduled care – data tool and commentary	<u>April 2022</u>
Direct Payments for Adult Social Care	<u>April 2022</u>
Local Government Financial Sustainability data tool	<u>February 2022</u>

Report title	Publication date and link to report
Joint Working Between Emergency Services (including data tool)	<u>January 2022</u>

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs (work in progress/planned)¹

Title	Anticipated publication date
Welsh Government accounts commentary 2020-21 ²	September / October 2022
Collaborative arrangements for managing local public health resources	October 2022
National Fraud Initiative (summary report)	October 2022
Cyber resilience follow-up (learning from cyber-attacks)	October 2022
Flood risk management	November 2022
Orthopaedic services	November 2022
Quality governance in the NHS	November 2022

¹ We will continue to keep our plans under constant review, taking account of the evolving external environment, our audit priorities, the context of our own resourcing and the capacity of audited bodies to engage with us. This includes maintaining some flexibility so that we can respond to developments in Welsh Government policy and areas of possible interest for the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee. On 22 September we published an article to our website providing an [update on the development of the Auditor General's work programme](#) following our consultation in spring 2022. We will be bringing some additional new work into our programme during the rest of 2022-23.

² To include commentary on issues raised in the Auditor General's report on the accounts concerning a payment made to the former Permanent Secretary and COVID-19 business support.

Title	Anticipated publication date
Digital inclusion	November / December 2022
Affordable housing	To be confirmed

Good Practice Exchange events and resources

Title	Link to resource
<p>Tackling poverty in Wales: responding to the challenge - This shared learning event will bring people together from across public services to share ideas, learning and knowledge on how organisations can respond to the challenges caused by poverty. We will share examples of approaches being taken by organisations within Wales and across the UK.</p>	<p><u>Tackling Poverty: Cardiff event</u></p> <p><u>Tackling Poverty: Conwy event</u></p>
<p>Direct Payments Provision – A webinar discussing our report on Direct Payments Provision and how they can be a key part in implementing the principles of the Social Service and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014</p>	<p><u>Direct Payments Provision webinar recording</u></p>
<p>Responding to the Climate Emergency in Wales</p> <p>A webinar discussing emerging findings from our baseline review of public bodies' arrangements to respond to the Welsh Government's carbon reduction targets for 2030.</p>	
<p>Covid Perspectives: A series of recorded conversations learning how organisations have adapted to the extended period of uncertainty following the initial covid emergency.</p>	<p><u>Good Practice Audit Wales</u></p>

Recent Audit Wales Blogs

Title	Publication date
<u>Cost of living and putting away the bayonet</u>	21 September 2022
<u>Heat is on to tackle Climate Change Audit Wales</u>	18 August 2022
<u>Direct Payments in Wales</u>	15 June 2022
<u>Unscheduled Care in Wales – a system under real pressure</u>	21 April 2022
<u>Skills Competition Wales</u>	18 February 2022
<u>Cyber resilience – one year on</u>	9 February 2022
<u>Helping to tell the story through numbers</u> (Local government financial sustainability data tool)	3 February 2022
<u>Call for clearer information on climate change spending</u>	2 February 2022
<u>Actions speak louder than words</u> (Building social resilience and self-reliance in citizens and communities)	14 January 2022

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Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management – Bridgend County Borough Council

Audit year: 2021-22

Date issued: August 2022

Document reference: 3134A2022

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to Audit Wales at infoofficer@audit.wales.

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This document is also available in Welsh.

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The Council has arrangements to monitor workforce issues, it has not yet developed a framework to effectively benchmark, measure success and affordability of its future services delivery model but has acted on lessons learned 10

Summary report

What we reviewed and why

- 1 We reviewed the Council's arrangements for managing its workforce with a primary focus on how well the Council strategically plans the use of its workforce, how it monitors the use of its workforce assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements.
- 2 Like many other councils, Bridgend is experiencing significant workforce challenges, and years of continued service restructures and staffing cuts to deliver savings are impacting on its ability to plan and maintain service performance.
- 3 We delivered this review as the world moves forward, using the experiences from the global Covid 19 pandemic, to look at how councils are strengthening their ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services, including those delivered in partnership with key stakeholders and communities.
- 4 We have delivered this project at all councils as part of our 2021 audit plans to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The project had three main aims:
 - to gain assurance that councils are putting in place arrangements to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services.
 - to explain the actions that councils are taking both individually and collectively to strengthen their arrangements; and
 - to inspire councils and other organisations to further strengthen their arrangements through capturing and sharing notable practice examples and learning and making appropriate recommendations.

What we found

- 5 We found that the Council is taking action to respond to its significant workforce issues, but needs to develop a corporate workforce plan shaped by the sustainable development principle, to address these challenges and strengthen its resilience
 - The Council lacks an up-to-date workforce strategy underpinned by the sustainable development principle and needs capacity to effectively shape solutions for its significant workforce challenges in the medium to long term
 - The Council has focussed on addressing short term critical workforce pressures particularly in Social Services, but in the absence of a strategic WFP to guide and inform approaches to managing these challenges we have emerging concerns about the Council's resilience to continue to respond to critical issues
 - The Council has arrangements to monitor workforce issues and it has not yet developed a framework to effectively benchmark, measure success and affordability of its future services delivery model but has acted on lessons learned.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Strategic workforce planning

- R1 The Council needs to urgently develop its strategic workforce approach, embedding the sustainable development principle at its core, to enable it to address the significant workforce issues it faces. For example:
- Integrating with its workforce planning and with other key strategies and business planning;
 - Reflecting longer term service demand; and
 - Considering how it can maximise benefits from collaboration with other organisations.
-

Monitoring and review arrangements

- R2 The Council should develop a suite of strategic quantitative and qualitative measures to enhance its ability to understand the impacts and affordability of its workforce plans and actions.
- .
-

Monitoring and review arrangements

- R3 The Council should also explore opportunities to benchmark its own performance over time and its arrangements with other bodies to provide a different dimension to its performance management data. Whilst also offering an insight to how other bodies are performing and discovering notable practice elsewhere.

Detailed report

The Council is taking action to respond to its significant workforce issues, but needs to develop a corporate workforce plan shaped by the sustainable development principle, to address these challenges and strengthen its resilience

The Council lacks an up-to-date workforce strategy underpinned by the sustainable development principle and needs capacity to effectively shape solutions for its significant workforce challenges in the medium to long term

Why setting a clear vision is important:

- 6 A clear strategy for its workforce and well-developed delivery plans are important to ensuring an efficient and effective workforce over the short and longer term. It is also important to identify how the workforce strategy aligns and is integrated with other relevant strategies including, asset management, digital and carbon reduction. Learning from the changes brought about by the global Covid-19 pandemic, can help Councils strengthen their ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services.

We found that:

- 7 The Council's workforce plan 2017-18 to 2020-21 has expired. The supporting action plan was updated in early 2021 to reflect changes in operational activity necessitated by the pandemic, such as working from home and the need to manage staff wellbeing.
- 8 We noted that the Council planned to put in place arrangements to embed workforce planning into service business plans and place further responsibility on managers to manage their own workforce plans. However, some delays have been caused in embedding this process across the organisation due to limitations in capacity arising from managing the pandemic with already stretched resources.
- 9 It follows that at the time of this review future workforce plans were in their initial stages of development for 2022-23. These plans, combined with the outputs from the Council's engagement with staff and trade unions, will improve the Council's understanding of the skills and capacity needed for its future service delivery model requirement.
- 10 The Council is also in the process of developing its high-level Human Resources Strategy 2022-2025 which is intended to support the delivery of its corporate workforce plan. It is titled Supporting the Delivery of the Council's Future Service Delivery Model which emphasises its key focus. As the Council has not yet determined its future operating model this draft strategy has not yet been considered by members. The draft strategy covers a relatively short time horizon and as such could be improved to demonstrate long-term thinking and

consideration of longer-term trends likely to influence its existing and future workforce.

- 11 The Council needs to ensure its future strategic approach to its workforce is shaped by the sustainable development principle. For example,
 - by embedding long-term thinking and consideration of longer-term trends within its existing arrangements;
 - identifying how the workforce strategy aligns and is integrated with other relevant strategies; and
 - exploring opportunities with partners to collaborate on workforce arrangements and develop regional solutions to regional challenges.
- 12 We found that the Council's strategic capacity to effectively plan in the short, medium, and long term was stretched. Before the pandemic, our corporate assessment in 2016 and later 2017 follow up report found that both sickness absence and recruitment remained long standing challenges for the Council. Senior officers we spoke to as part of our recent review said they had little 'space' to think and reflect on developing strategy.
- 13 The pandemic has exacerbated the workforce challenges placing significant strain on the workforce. For example, like other bodies, the Council is experiencing difficulties recruiting and retaining HGV drivers, legal and ICT staff. Workforce challenges in social services are particularly significant due to increasing and more complex workloads, and recruitment and retention issues.
- 14 After many years of managing austerity, the Council has restructured services and functions, and reduced posts to deliver savings. As a result, the Council has a lean management structure, spreading the span of strategic responsibility among fewer staff. For example, the Communities Directorate has one of Head of Operations supporting the Corporate Director. This directorate has five Group Managers and one Manager who oversee a diverse range of functions such as Planning and Development, Strategic Regeneration, Corporate Landlord, Highways and Green spaces, Waste, Economy and natural resources. We understand that the Council has experienced recruitment and retention problems among technical staff in this directorate further diminishing resilience such as surveyors, estates officers and planners. Some of these issues pre-date the pandemic and are longstanding.
- 15 The Human Resources and Organisational Development service has been under considerable pressure to help support staff during the pandemic, when the workforce is undergoing substantial change while also facing unprecedented issues in the employment market.
- 16 Our review of the Council's arrangements to become a 'Digital Council' also found that the Council had not determined the resource (people or financial) requirements needed to deliver its digital strategy. We have since found that there have been some delays in progressing the Council's digital plans due to staff shortfalls.

- 17 In addition, the level of sickness absence across the Council is increasing. The Council's 2020-21 overall level of sickness absence was 9.2 days per FTE, which was higher than the Welsh average of 8.4 days. The Council's 2021-22 overall level of sickness absence increased to 12.36 days per FTE.
- 18 These challenges are not unique to Bridgend, but officers told us they 'felt' that the Council's resilience had become critical with significant resource pressures emerging in some services as mentioned above.
- 19 Our financial sustainability report published in September 2021 found that the Council continues to have a strong financial position and its levels of useable reserves continue to be at a comparatively high level. Given the current workforce challenges and concerns about resilience, it is vital that the Council fully understands the scale of these challenges and affordable solutions.

The Council has focussed on addressing short term critical workforce pressures particularly in Social Services, but in the absence of a strategic WFP to guide and inform approaches to managing these challenges we have emerging concerns about the Council's resilience to continue to respond to critical issues

Why effectively managing the delivery of planned changes to workforce is important

- 20 It is important that workforce plans deliver the intended outcomes efficiently and effectively so that actual expenditure is as close to the levels planned as possible and councils meet their statutory duties. Effective collaboration with other organisations and involving communities about their needs can improve the services delivered to residents. Where councils do not have the range of skills, knowledge and expertise to effectively manage both ongoing asset management and deliver strategic changes, this may reduce the ability to deliver the intended outcomes.

What we found

- 21 During the pandemic staff worked differently, with large numbers working from home or being redeployed to other roles. We recognise that this was an extremely challenging time for the Council having to make swift changes to re-prioritise service delivery according to Welsh Government lockdown rules and set up emergency governance arrangements.
- 22 Building on these experiences the Council decided to introduce a new 'blended' operating model for those staff who can continue to work from home. This is intended to help relieve capacity issues and make savings through more efficient working practices and use of assets. To manage and oversee progress the Council has set up a Future Services Delivery Board chaired by the Chief Executive Officer and workstreams to oversee this.

- 23 The Council has maintained regular engagement with trade unions and staff during the pandemic. Responses from staff surveys have been largely positive about how the Council managed the rapid transition to working from home, and adaptations for those who can't. The Council recognises that it needs to involve service users and stakeholders more generally to understand future demand for services and what this may mean for business and workforce planning. It also needs to further explore opportunities to collaborate with partners in addressing workforce challenges and delivery of bodies' well-being objectives and national well-being goals.
- 24 The Council recognises workforce as a corporate risk. Its corporate risk register includes the following risk: 'The Council is unable to attract, develop or retain a workforce with the necessary skills to meet the demands placed upon the authority and its services.' Our review has found that the Council is focused on dealing with the 'here and now,' trying to find solutions to some of its critical workforce challenges. The solutions adopted include the following:
- payment of real living wage to all social care staff;
 - regrading of front-line social workers;
 - introduction of market supplement policy to direct salary increases as appropriate based on business case in areas where it is difficult to retain and recruit staff; and
 - a significant increase in 'grow your own' activity to increase the number of apprentices and graduate placements.
- 25 Further the Council has endeavoured to bolster management capacity in Social Services with the appointment of a deputy head of children services
- 26 In acknowledging the severity of the systemic workforce challenges in Social Services, the Chief Executive chairs the children social care improving outcomes board which also includes an independent advisor. This Board is set up to oversee progress, given its limited capacity, in achieving its two highest priorities: retention and recruitment of domiciliary care and children's social care workers. The Council is now actioning a critical response plan.
- 27 We understand that the pandemic will have slowed down improvement activity as staff were redeployed and redirected to manage the crisis, but we remain concerned about the Council's resilience to respond to critical issues and free up the time necessary to develop and deliver strategic plans to provide solutions to these challenges in the medium and longer term.

The Council has arrangements to monitor workforce issues, it has not yet developed a framework to effectively benchmark, measure success and affordability of its future services delivery model but has acted on lessons learned

Why effectively reviewing the workforce is important:

- 28 Councils should use data to monitor whether they are achieving their intended outcomes effectively and efficiently over the short and longer term. Using benchmarking data can provide useful insight into Councils individual performance and can identify opportunities for learning from other organisations.

We found that:

- 29 In its MTFS 2022-26, the Council has estimated that it will deliver £3.3 million savings and £630,000 managed service reductions under the Council's well-being objective 'smarter use of resources.' The Council's MTFS sets out that the Council intends to achieve these savings through further reducing its workforce. It has set out that it will do this through continued vacancy management, redeployment, early retirements, and voluntary redundancies. It has not ruled out needing to make some compulsory redundancies
- 30 As stated above, the Council last updated its forward-looking workforce plan in 2019, before the pandemic. The Council needs to prioritise developing its corporate workforce plan setting out how it plans to address its workforce challenges over the short, medium, and long-term with metrics against which to measure success and affordability. This should be embedded into existing performance management arrangements while ensuring close alignment with Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and that the sustainable development principle is integral to its thinking.
- 31 The Council should also explore opportunities to benchmark its own performance over time and with other bodies to provide a different dimension to its performance management data. Offering an insight to how other bodies are performing and discovering notable practice elsewhere.
- 32 Workforce is one of the highest rated risks on the Council's corporate risk register. We can see that workforce issues have been considered at Cabinet and Corporate Management Board (CCMB) meetings, which aren't open to the public.
- 33 Given that the workforce related risk is one of the highest rated risks on the Council's Corporate Risk Register, we would expect this to be a key topic for members and for them to be challenging progress to address this risk. We are aware that Cabinet and Corporate Management Board receive detailed reports highlighting workforce issues. Although we recognise there will be some limitations due the potential sensitivity of some workforce information, we have not seen evidence of mitigating actions being discussed and challenged in a formal public committee such as the Governance and Audit Committee. As such we have

concerns that this committee is not being used effectively to address and monitor how well this particular risk is being mitigated.

- 34 During our review, officers also acknowledged weaknesses in the quality of its workforce data relating to vacancies. For instance, the Council does not know the numbers of vacant posts that are being/have been deleted as part of staff restructures at any given point in time. It is important that the Council has robust workforce data to inform its planning and decision-making.
- 35 During the pandemic In July 2020, each Directorate completed a corporate questionnaire ('COVID-19 Service Recovery Planning Assessment') that was designed to identify lessons learnt from each of its services areas during 'COVID-19 Lockdown' that would assist the Council to plan to ensure that services are better prepared should another Lockdown situation arise.
- 36 It is positive that the Council commissioned an external review of its wellbeing resources engaging with a range of staff (including school staff) at workshops and focus groups. The key themes and focus of the review were very much about changing the culture of the Council as an employer to provide support to staff to improve their wellbeing and mental health. In response to this review the Council has since appointed a Wellbeing Officer to support the roll out of this initiative.



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Springing Forward – Strategic Asset Management – Bridgend County Borough Council

Audit year: 2021-22

Date issued: August 2022

Document reference: 3133A2022

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The Council made positive progress in delivering its previous asset management strategy and now needs to ensure future strategic asset plans are fully shaped by the sustainable development principle. However, workforce challenges are impacting on its ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory safety requirements

7

The Council has an interim short term asset management plan in place while it determines its future operating model and will need to ensure its longer-term approach for its assets is fully shaped by the sustainable development principle

7

The Council made positive progress in implementing its previous asset management strategy. However, significant workforce challenges are affecting its ability to plan more strategically, and ensure its buildings meet statutory buildings requirements

10

The Council has arrangements in place to review its assets and is improving the systems to inform these arrangements, but like many other councils, it is not benchmarking and learning from other councils

13

Summary report

What we reviewed and why

- 1 We reviewed the Council's arrangements for managing its assets with a primary focus on office accommodation and buildings from which the Council delivers services to its residents. We looked at how the Council strategically plans the use of its assets, how it monitors the use of its assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements.
- 2 We delivered this review as the world moves forward, using the experiences from the global Covid 19 pandemic, to look at how councils are strengthening their ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services, including those delivered in partnership with key stakeholders and communities.
- 3 We have done this project at all councils as part of our 2021 audit plans to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The project had three main aims:
 - to gain assurance that councils are putting in place arrangements to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services;
 - to explain the actions that councils are taking both individually and collectively to strengthen their arrangements; and
 - to inspire councils and other organisations to further strengthen their arrangements through capturing and sharing notable practice examples and learning and making appropriate recommendations.

Exhibit 1: asset base

The table below sets out key aspects of the Council's asset base in 2022.

Asset type	Number
Core Corporate Offices	5
Schools	59
Leisure centres	8
Libraries	4 standalone

Asset type	Number
	7 located within leisure centres or community centres
Community Centres	8 directly managed by BCBC 17 leased out to a third party
Residential homes	10
Recycling centres	3

Source: Bridgend County Borough Council

- 4 The Council's Asset Management Plan 2021-22 sets out that the Council has a total asset value of £484.5 million.
- 5 We undertook the review during the period November 2021 to February 2022.

What we found

- 6 Our review sought to answer the question: Is the Council's strategic approach strengthening its ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of its services in the short and longer term?
- 7 Overall, we found that the Council made positive progress in delivering its previous asset management strategy and now needs to ensure future strategic asset plans are fully shaped by the sustainable development principle. However, workforce challenges are impacting on its ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory safety requirements.
- 8 We reached this conclusion because:
 - the Council has an interim short term asset management plan in place while it determines its future operating model and will need to ensure its longer-term approach for its assets is fully shaped by the sustainable development principle;
 - the Council made positive progress in implementing its previous asset management strategy. However, significant workforce challenges are

affecting its ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory buildings requirements; and

- the Council has arrangements in place to review its assets and is improving the systems to inform these arrangements, but like many other councils, it is not benchmarking and learning from other councils.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Strategic workforce planning

R1 The Council needs to ensure the sustainable development principle is driving and shaping its approach to all its assets as it develops its strategy during 2022. For example:

- integrating with its workforce planning and with other key strategies and business planning;
- reflecting longer term service demand;
- considering how it can maximise benefits from collaboration with other organisations; and
- to determine more long term and sustainable options for addressing its maintenance backlog and improving the condition of its estate.

Statutory Building Compliance

R2 The Council should address as a priority its health and safety related statutory building compliance performance so that it is meeting its statutory duties relating to electrical, gas, asbestos, legionella, and fire risk testing.

Monitoring and review arrangements

R3 The Council should develop a suite of strategic quantitative and qualitative measures to enhance its ability to understand the impacts of its assets plans and actions as part of its strategy development during 2022.

R4 To strengthen its arrangements, during the next 12 months, the Council should explore how it can compare its data, arrangements, and the learning from other organisations, for example through existing professional networks.

Detailed report

The Council made positive progress in delivering its previous asset management strategy and now needs to ensure future strategic asset plans are fully shaped by the sustainable development principle.

However, workforce challenges are impacting on its ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory safety requirements.

The Council has an interim short term asset management plan in place while it determines its future operating model and will need to ensure its longer-term approach for its assets is fully shaped by the sustainable development principle

Why setting a clear vision is important

- A clear asset management strategy and well-developed delivery plans are important to identify the intended usage of assets over the short and longer term; the funding available to maintain and develop assets, as well as the anticipated future level of demand for, and cost of, providing services. It is also important to identify how the asset management strategy aligns and is integrated with other relevant strategies including, agile working, workforce, digital and carbon reduction. Learning from the changes brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic, can help councils strengthen their ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services.

What we found:

- The Council's previous AMP covered 12 years and expired in 2021. Recognising the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic and the need to prioritise responding to the pandemic, the Council has developed an interim AMP until the end of 2022. This timescale links with the Council's updated Corporate Plan and capital strategy.
- The Council has set out a clear vision in its interim AMP "to have a lean sustainable estate that enables the Council to live within its means and support delivery of our wellbeing objectives". The interim AMP sets out four objectives underpinning its vision. There are a range of projects and actions to deliver these objectives and to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

- The interim AMP links with the Council's well-being objective, 'Smarter Use of Resources'. It also highlights how it will support the Council reduce its carbon footprint. The Council is in the process of defining how it will operate in the future, so it has not yet articulated its longer-term plans and how they will align with each other. For example, the interim AMP doesn't consider other key resources and plans, such as digital and workforce, although these will clearly impact upon each other. This interim plan is, therefore, deliberately short term in focus while the Council determines its future operating model, recognising that this may influence its strategic approach to its assets.
- Like many organisations, the pandemic has served to accelerate some of its plans for its estate. The Council has set up a Future Service Delivery Model (FSDM) group to consider how the Council will move forward from the pandemic. Office accommodation is one of the workstreams of this group. This group should provide a useful mechanism to facilitate an integrated approach to plan and implement its operating model.
- The Council has engaged its officers to understand the current demand and need for office space. It has set out a series of principles which would underpin its future service delivery model, including hybrid or blended models of working. The Council intends to wait until its future model of working is agreed by Cabinet before taking further decisions about its office accommodation. This would include whether it can further rationalise its estate or explore options for regional and partnership working.
- The Council has estimated that the cost of its maintenance backlog is about £63 million. The Council has a range of reserves and funds to help with this backlog. However, the sum of these falls significantly short of the £63 million needed to address its maintenance backlog in its entirety. Therefore, the Council prioritises work using a matrix that prioritises health and safety issues. The risk of this approach is that issues are not addressed until they have become more serious, and potentially more costly. We would expect the next iteration of the AMP to consider more sustainable options for addressing the maintenance backlog and improving the condition of its estate.
- The Council intends to develop an eight-year AMP during 2022, which will take it up to 2030. This will give the Council the opportunity to consider its medium-term plans. It will also enable it to tie in with other corporate plans and strategies, such as the 'Carbon net zero by 2030' plan.
- Our review also found that the Council is mindful of the impact its decisions may have on the local economy. Officers were considering the different opportunities and challenges that may influence its strategic approach to its assets, such as its economic futures framework, local development plan, transport improvements, and increased regional working.

- As the Council considers its strategic approach to its assets, it is important that it ensures this is fully shaped by the sustainable development principle. For example, the Council should:
 - adopt a longer-term approach to the planning of its assets. The Act's statutory guidance states, 'it is ... expected that public bodies and public services boards will look at least 10 years ahead, although best practice would be to look 25 years ahead. In some contexts, it will be longer.' To do this, the Council needs to take account of longer-term trends and future service demand that may affect service provision and the efficient use of its built assets.
 - ensure that it takes an integrated approach to its planning from the outset so that outcomes and resources are maximised. Its approach to its workforce, estate and digital resources will clearly impact each other. The Council does not have a strategic workforce plan and the digital strategy and interim AMP are currently not aligned.
 - build on relationships with other organisations, including those forged during the pandemic, to explore further opportunities for sharing and collaborating on assets to help deliver mutual and regional benefits.
 - strengthen its approach to involving service users in its considerations of the future of its assets. Some of the plans that the Council are considering will have a longer-term impact on how services are delivered. We accept that public engagement has been challenging during the pandemic. We expect that the Council will use the time-period covered by its interim AMP to gain a greater understanding of service users' views and the potential impact of changes to the way the Council uses its assets. In 2019 the Council's citizen panel survey found that most residents were not using the online services that were available to them, for example to pay Council Tax. The Council would need to understand whether the pandemic has changed that picture.
 - consider more broadly how its strategic approach to its assets can help the Council deliver its well-being objectives and how it may impact on the delivery of others' well-being objectives too.

The Council made positive progress in implementing its previous asset management strategy. However, significant workforce challenges are affecting its ability to plan more strategically, and ensure its buildings meet statutory buildings requirements

Why effectively managing the delivery of planned changes to assets is important

- 9 It is important that asset management plans deliver the intended outcomes efficiently and effectively so that actual expenditure is as close to the levels planned as possible and councils meet their statutory duties. Effective collaboration with other organisations and involving communities about their needs can improve the services delivered to residents. Where councils do not have the range of skills, knowledge, and expertise to effectively manage both ongoing asset management and deliver strategic changes this may reduce the ability to deliver the intended outcomes.

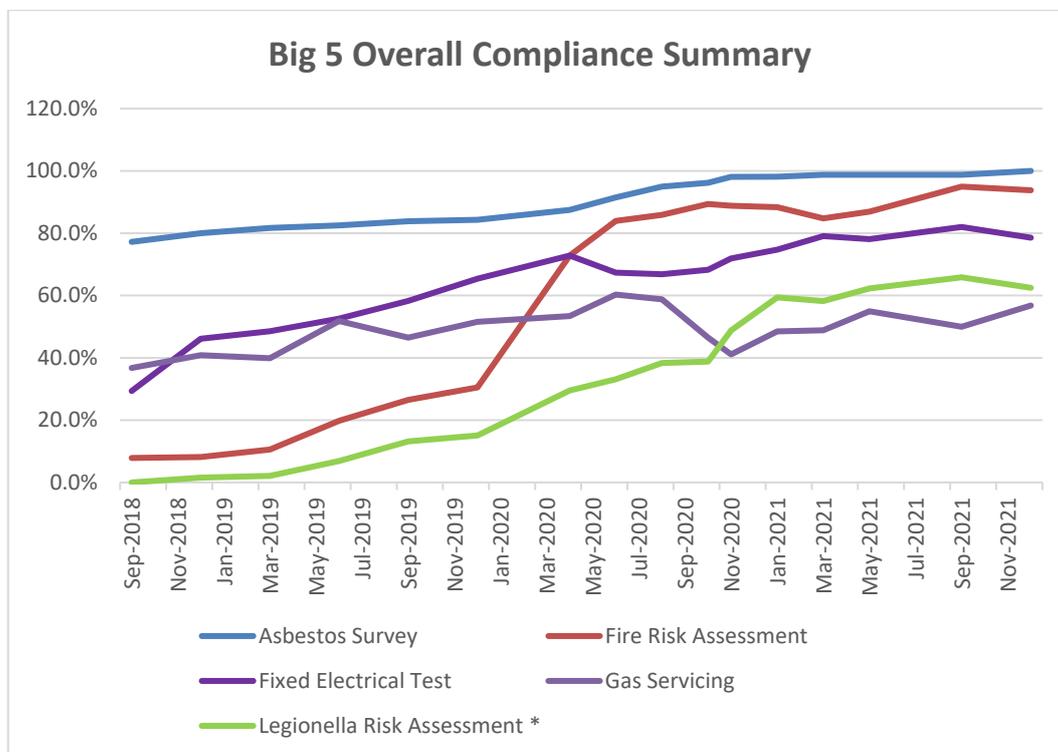
What we found

- The Council made positive progress in delivering its previous asset management strategy. For example, it has:
 - rationalised its estate. Since 2009, the Council has sold a range of assets, which has reduced its maintenance backlog by just over £20 million and generated £24 million in capital receipts.
 - taken up opportunities to share assets. For instance, it is sharing a fleet maintenance facility with South Wales Police and co-located with South Wales Police and the health board in Ravens Court.
 - outsourced its culture and leisure assets to Arwen and Halo respectively.
 - transferred a range of assets to Town and Community Councils, and other community organisations. This has been supported by a dedicated community asset transfer (CAT) officer and underpinned by a CAT policy and guidance. The Council has estimated these CATs have resulted in annual savings of about £300,000.
 - transferred the maintenance and management of assets from services to a corporate landlord model in 2018. This model covers strategic asset management, facilities management and the design and delivery of major projects.
- Like many organisations, the Council has made changes to the way it operates since the beginning of the pandemic. The Council's office-based workforce has been working from home since March 2020. The Council took considerable efforts to ensure that those staff who needed to work from its

offices were able to do so safely. The Council is also at the initial stages of considering further changes, such as:

- allowing straightforward services and transactions that moved online during the pandemic to remain online, and
 - the development of local hubs, where services are accessed in local communities rather than via the civic offices.
- During the pandemic, the Council worked closely with its partners to deliver services and share its buildings. For instance, Ravens Court was used as one of the vaccination centres. The Council is keen to build on this experience. For example, it is exploring opportunities for regional use of assets and to work with Awen Cultural Trust and Halo Leisure around well-being and prevention services, but we understand discussions are at an early stage.
 - Like many other councils, the Council is experiencing significant retention and recruitment difficulties in its property team. It currently has several vacant posts including senior surveyor and general surveyor roles. It has had some posts vacant for two years.
 - The Council is starting to explore different ways of organising its teams to help address some of these capacity issues. It is also looking at market supplements to the salaries in this area and working with external recruiters, but so far with limited success. Senior management recognise that they need to consider more sustainable solutions to these challenges.
 - Stretched capacity is having an impact on the Council's ability to plan and do as much, as quickly as it would like. This is particularly illustrated in the Council's health and safety related statutory building compliance rates as shown in exhibit 1 below. This covers areas such as electrical, gas, asbestos, legionella, and fire risk testing.
 - We have raised concerns with officers about the Council's performance given the potential major impacts of poor safety. We can see that the issues are being discussed at various assets related meetings. Officers have told us that they are working to address these concerns, but so far improvement in the performance has been slow. **Exhibit 1** shows that there has been some improvement in some areas, but gas and legionella testing remain significant issues. Notes of the Corporate Landlord Board meetings suggest that the Council will struggle to improve performance without additional staff.

Exhibit 1: Council’s statutory buildings compliance



* generally indicates legionella risk assessment undertaken rather than actual compliance levels. Actual compliance will be lower.

Source: Corporate Landlord Health and Safety compliance board papers December 2021

- We found a similar picture in our strategic workforce review as well as related issues in other areas we have looked at, such as digital and disabled facilities grant. Our strategic workforce report raises concerns about the impact stretched capacity is having on the Council’s resilience and provides more detail on our findings.

The Council has arrangements in place to review its assets and is improving the systems to inform these arrangements, but like many other councils, it is not benchmarking and learning from other councils

Why effectively reviewing the delivery of planned changes to assets is important

10 Councils should use data to monitor whether they are achieving their intended outcomes effectively and efficiently over the short and longer term. Using benchmarking data can provide useful insight into Councils individual performance and can identify opportunities for learning from other organisations.

What we found

- The Council did condition surveys of its assets in 2016 and 2020. Therefore, it understands the condition, value, running costs and maintenance requirements of its assets. This information is captured quarterly in a dashboard. It is considered by the departmental management team and through the Council's corporate performance assessment process. However, like other organisations, these costs are likely to have increased because of increased material costs and supply chain issues.
- Currently, the Council's assets data and asset management information is spread across several software systems. The Council recognises the limitations of its current asset management software. It is planning to replace it with a system that will hold more information in one place and make it simpler for officers to maintain up to date records of statutory building inspections.
- In 2018 the Council moved to a corporate landlord model to provide a clearer, centralised corporate view of assets, recognising that the previous model was fragmented. During our review, officers were open that the pandemic has affected the Council's ability to fully embed this model and that further work is needed to ensure this is operating as intended.
- The Council has governance arrangements in place to monitor and review its assets. Key decisions and performance data about assets are considered by the Corporate Landlord Board (CLB) and the Corporate Landlord Health and Safety Board, which meet quarterly. Each service is represented on the CLB. There are also service specific boards, such as the schools' modernisation board. There has also been a community asset transfer task and finish group. Issues can be escalated to Corporate Management Board if necessary. For instance, Corporate Management Board (CMB) and scrutiny have received updates on community asset transfers. CMB has also been updated on the Council's building safety statutory compliance checks although performance rates remain an area of concern.

- The Council's interim AMP sets out some targets, such as the level of capital receipts and community asset transfers it is aiming to deliver in 2021-22. These will help the Council determine its progress in delivering its interim plan. However, the Council is not currently benchmarking its assets related performance or approach with other councils to explore how it can learn and strengthen its arrangements. We appreciate this has been difficult during the pandemic.
- The ability to compare data and performance with other organisations will continue to be an important element of arrangements to secure value for money. It will be a challenge for councils to consider particularly as they continue to implement the requirements relating to self-assessment set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. To strengthen its arrangements, the Council should explore how it can compare its data, arrangements, and the learning from other organisations, for example through existing professional networks.



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Assurance and Risk Assessment Review – Bridgend County Borough Council

Audit year: 2021-22

Date issued: September 2022

Document reference: 3179A2022

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with Section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and Section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

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What we reviewed and why

- 1 We undertook this project to find the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. This project also helped us to assess the extent to which the Council is applying the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives.
- 2 This report summarises our findings in the areas where we have undertaken more detailed Assurance and Risk Assessment work. We will also produce an Annual Audit Summary in the autumn of 2022 that will summarise all our audit work undertaken since our last Annual Audit Summary in January 2022.
- 3 We focused on the following areas at the Council:
 - Financial position
 - Implications of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
 - Carbon reduction plan
 - Disabled Facility Grants
 - Statutory Building Compliance
- 4 Our evidence bases for this work included conversations with officers and reviewing relevant documents.
- 5 The Assurance and Risk Assessment project has been ongoing throughout the year. We fed back emerging findings to officers as we undertook this work and held a workshop with Corporate Management Board in February 2022 at which we shared emerging findings in relation to some aspects of this work. We also used the workshop to gather the perspectives of senior managers on the key audit risks in relation to the Council and to inform our forward planning.

Financial position

The Council continues to be well placed to maintain its financial resilience. However, this will be tested by challenges being posed by the current economic climate

- 6 We reviewed the Council's financial position during April and June 2022. This included consideration of the Council's financial reserves position, the delivery of planned savings and performance against the planned budget for the year.
- 7 In recent years, the Council has consistently underspent its annual budget and increased its useable reserves. In 2021-22, the Council underspent its budget by £331,000 and subsequently increased its useable reserves by about £20 million. It continues to have a comparatively high level of useable reserves at just under £104 million, equating to about 30% of the net cost of services. The latest increase in useable reserves in 2021-22 is due in part to late receipt of grant funding from the Welsh Government. However, this masks financial pressures in Social Services and Wellbeing, and reduced draw down of capital funds due to restricted activity during the pandemic. Financial pressures remain in the service areas of Homelessness, Waste and Home to School Transport. The Council is managing these by increasing budget allocations to meet increased demand/costs.
- 8 The Welsh Government's indicative funding settlements on an all-Wales basis of 3.4% and 2.5% respectively for 2023-24 and 2024-25 provide a degree of funding certainty over the medium term. However, medium-term financial planning will continue to rely on a range of assumptions, and when coupled with the changing socio-economic landscape in this period of significant economic uncertainty, planning for financial resilience and future budget rounds will continue to be challenging for councils.
- 9 The Council's financial strategy effectively illustrates the strategic financial direction for the Council over the next four years. The strategy has remained largely unchanged except for recognising future uncertainties due to the pandemic in terms of hardship funding and increases in demand for some services. The Council has a history of delivering its planned savings. The Council delivered 96% of its 2021-22 targeted savings at £1.7 million. The level is quite low due to more recent positive settlements.
- 10 The Council has estimated a budget gap of £27.9 million for 2022-23 to 2025-26. It has begun to develop savings plans for 2022-23 but has not yet fully decided how it is going to meet the budget gap in future years. The Council will need to do this as it develops its medium-term financial strategy to contend with the significant economic uncertainty.
- 11 We also published a [Local Government Financial Sustainability Data Tool](#) in February 2022 which includes a range of financial data for councils, national parks and fire and rescue authorities in Wales.

Implications of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The Council is developing and implementing aspects of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act

- 12 We reviewed the Council's response to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 in the period May 2021 to August 2022. We reached this conclusion because the Council:
- fully reconstituted its Governance and Audit Committee to meet the requirements of the Act.
 - appointed, in April 2022, a Policy and Public Affairs Officer to focus on developing its first self-assessment under the Act and to further improve its arrangements.
 - plans to integrate its first annual self-assessment within its annual performance report to be published in October 2022.
 - has not yet developed a Participation Strategy as required by the Act. It plans to discharge its consultation duty under the 2021 Act through existing mechanisms of engagement with trade unions, businesses in the local area, residents, and council staff.
 - in common with other Welsh councils, is engaging with the Welsh Local Government Association to help develop the arrangements and resources needed to undertake Panel Assessments.

Carbon Reduction Plans

The Council has a draft carbon reduction strategy but has not yet fully determined the resources needed to deliver it nor how others will contribute to its delivery

Context

- 13 In July 2022, the Auditor General published Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030, which looked at decarbonisation actions in 48 public bodies, including all councils. This report found uncertainty that the collective public sector ambition to meet net zero by 2030 will be met. Our work found significant, common barriers to progress that public bodies must collectively address to meet the collective ambition. We found that while public bodies are showing commitment to carbon reduction, they must now significantly ramp up their activities, increase collaboration and place decarbonisation at the heart of their day-to-day operations and decisions.

- 14 In the report, the Auditor General makes the following five calls for action from public bodies:
- strengthen your leadership and show your collective responsibility through effective collaboration.
 - clarify your strategic direction and increase your pace of implementation.
 - get to grips with the finances you need.
 - know your skills gaps and increase your capacity; and
 - improve data quality and monitoring to support your decision making.
- 15 The following paragraphs set out the findings of our local audit work on the Council's decarbonisation action plan. These findings sit within the wider context of the Auditor General's July 2022 report that calls for increased pace and stronger leadership across Wales in reducing carbon emissions.

What we looked at

- 16 We undertook an assessment of the Council's arrangements to develop and deliver its Decarbonisation Plan between April and June 2022. We gathered evidence through interviews, document reviews and the Council's returned Call for Evidence on the Decarbonisation Baseline Review.

What we found

- 17 We found that the Council has a draft carbon reduction strategy but has not yet fully determined the resources needed to deliver it nor how others will contribute to its delivery.
- 18 At the time of our fieldwork, the Council was consulting the public on its draft strategy, 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' (the draft strategy). The draft strategy sets out the Council's ambition to become a carbon neutral council by 2030 as well as the long and short-term risks and opportunities.
- 19 The Council also sets out its carbon baseline figure, and how it hopes to reduce its carbon footprint, although some plans are more well developed than others.
- 20 The Council will need to establish how its forthcoming net zero delivery plan can contribute to the seven national well-being goals. It will also need to determine how delivery will affect its other well-being objectives, and impact on other public bodies' well-being objectives.
- 21 The Council has involved officers, members, other organisations, such as the Bridgend Public Services Board (PSB) and the Carbon Trust, and the public in the development of the draft strategy. It understands that delivering its strategy will require the involvement of a range of organisations and communities. The draft strategy does not set out how public sector partners can contribute to the carbon reduction goal. However, on a regional level, the Council will contribute to the development of a wider plan covering the PSB footprint that will set out how

partners can help reduce carbon emissions. At the time of our fieldwork, this wider work was at a developmental stage.

- 22 The Council has put some resources in place to facilitate the development and delivery of the strategy. This includes £50,000 to support the development of the strategy and action plan. It has also created posts of Decarbonisation Programme Manager and Decarbonisation Project Officer. At the time of our fieldwork, the Council had not been able to recruit a Decarbonisation Project Officer, which could slow down the Council's progress in delivering its strategy. Although the Council can articulate the costs of specific and current projects, it is aware that delivering the strategy in its entirety will have significant resource implications that it has yet to quantify fully. The Council also intends to contribute to the development of a wider strategy covering the PSB footprint.
- 23 The Council is putting governance arrangements in place to oversee the delivery of the strategy once it is finalised. It has set up a Decarbonisation 2030 programme board which will oversee and track progress against the strategy. The Council has also developed a series of action plans to deliver the commitments in the strategy, with a corporate manager allocated as Senior Responsible Officer to each plan. These officers will report progress to the programme board annually.

Recommendation

- R1 To meet its net zero ambition, the Council needs to fully cost its action plan and ensure that the action plan aligns with its Medium Term Financial Plan.

Disabled Facility Grants

Background

- 24 In August 2019, we published our report Service User Perspective of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). This report concluded that 'most service users we spoke to were happy with the housing adaptations service, but the Council is not maximising opportunities to improve the service and deliver value for money'.
- 25 As part of our 2021-22 programme of work, we assessed the Council's progress in meeting the proposals for improvement contained in our 2019 report. The Council has reported progress towards meeting our proposals for improvement to the Corporate Management Board, and Governance and Audit Committee. This progress has been slower than planned. It entered a collaboration with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council for a period of up to two years to provide support whilst developing its internal model. This arrangement is tapering off and will end in

March 2023. During this time, the Council has explored different approaches to delivering DFGs adopted by neighbouring authorities to inform its learning.

What we found

- 26 The Council has been slow to respond to our proposals for improvement and performance remains poor, worsened by the pandemic. It is developing a new operating model for 2023-24 which is intended to be simpler, better co-ordinated and more responsive to service user needs.
- 27 We reached this conclusion because:
- since 2016-17, the average number of calendar days taken to deliver a DFG has increased and Bridgend remains in the bottom quartile of performance. We recognise that the pandemic has negatively affected the pace of change with increased costs, lack of continuity of contractors, access issues to property and recruitment and retention issues.
 - the service is starting to see improvement in performance/time taken to deliver adaptations. These improvements are not yet apparent in performance data overall because they are concealed by a persistent backlog of overrunning, more complex projects that will affect the overall average figure. The Council intends to develop local performance indicators which will break down this data by size of project enabling a more granular understanding of performance. The Council is also investing in a new digital platform to streamline the referral process, simplify engagement for the service user and produce better data to manage performance.
 - the Council is expecting that its new service delivery model will be in place for the next financial year, 2023-24. It is intended to be simpler, and more person centred whereby officers will manage the process from start to finish forming a single point of contact for service users.
 - the Council has not yet filled its new DFG team staffing structure. It has experienced difficulties recruiting surveyors. Officers are collaborating with the Corporate Landlord Department to explore a proposal of joint working to appoint a trainee surveyor in the future. The service has also procured some surveyor support to ensure it has the technical skills needed to deliver the service. Once resolved the new operating model will include joint working with a Housing Occupational Therapist (funded by Social Services), Surveyor and Contractor. This multi-disciplined team should help in the delivery of applications and better manage service user expectations in a more co-ordinated way.
 - the Council has recognised the future potential to run a shared service on a Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board footprint and informal sharing of information has taken place.

28 However, these arrangements are still in their infancy and not yet impacting on service delivery. We will be keen to understand the impact of these new arrangements.

Statutory Building Compliance

The Council has improved its statutory building compliance targets in asbestos surveys and fire risk assessments where compliance remains at higher levels. However, it is not meeting its targets for gas servicing and legionella testing and therefore not mitigating all the significant risks associated with non-compliance

29 We reviewed the Council's compliance with statutory building regulations in the period between July 2021 and January 2022. Our work included interviews with officers and a review of documentation relating to the statutory building compliance performance for the 'Big Five' requirements of:

- Asbestos Survey
- Fire Risk Assessment
- Fixed Electrical Test
- Gas Servicing
- Legionella Risk Assessment

30 At the time of our work, we found mixed performance across the Big Five building compliance areas. We base our findings on December 2021 data from the Corporate Landlord Health and Safety Compliance Board. We asked the Council for more up to date information but they were unable to provide this until September as part of clearing this report. Our findings are, therefore, based on the December 2021 position.

31 It is positive that the Council has improved performance in the following areas:

- compliance with the Asbestos Survey programme has remained high at 100%.
- compliance with the Fire Risk Assessment programme has seen significant improvement over the timeframe covered by the board papers (September 2018 – December 2021) at 93.8%.
- compliance with the Fixed Electrical Test Programme has also seen improvement over the same timeframe between September 2018 – December 2021 at 78.6%. This is one of the highest levels since September 2018. However, this still means that more than 21% of properties are not compliant.

- 32 Areas where performance needs to improve include:
- performance against the Gas Servicing programme. Compliance in December 2021 stood at 56.8%, meaning that just over 43% of the properties had not been checked.
 - performance against the Legionella Risk Assessment programme compliance stood at 62.5% in December 2021. We note that this relates to the assessment rather than actual compliance, which will be lower. Although performance has improved since September 2018, over 37% of properties are not meeting their statutory requirements.
- 33 We note that the properties that have gas servicing and water hygiene monitoring overdue include schools and care homes. The Council has a duty of care towards all its vulnerable citizens which it cannot currently demonstrate when these buildings are not compliant with statutory regulations. This puts the Council in clear breach of its statutory duties. It also poses a significant risk to the members of the public who use those buildings as well as reputational and financial risk to the Council should an accident or injury occur.
- 34 Whilst we know the Council is aware of the issues and is working towards improvement, we are concerned about the pace of progress. We are particularly concerned about gas servicing where compliance is low and has not been consistently improving. We recognise that the Corporate Landlord department was focused on managing health and safety arrangements during the pandemic and has ongoing issues with recruitment and retention. However, it is evident that the Council should take a longer-term view on how it can improve and keep compliance with the statutory requirements.
- 35 In clearing this report, the Council told us that it has recently improved its performance in four of the five compliance areas. This includes improvement with gas servicing. However, performance in doing legionella risk assessments has worsened. As this information was provided to us in September as part of the clearance of this report, we have not yet been able to confirm this position. We will explore this as part of our 2022-23 work.



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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

PORTHCAWL HARBOUR RETURN 2021-22 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit the Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter 2021-22 for Porthcawl Harbour, attached as **Appendix A**, for noting.

2. Connections to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

- 2.2 The Council's financial performance is an important element in determining the extent to which the corporate well-being objectives can be delivered.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Appointed Auditor is responsible for providing an opinion:

- on whether the information contained in the Annual Return is in accordance with proper practices; and
- if any matters have come to the auditor's attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Attached at **Appendix A** is the Annual Audit Letter 2021-22 for Porthcawl Harbour, confirming that the Appointed Auditor intends to issue an unqualified audit certificate, confirming that there are no matters that they wish to draw to the Committee's attention.

- 4.2 The letter also confirms that the Appointed Auditor is satisfied that there were no misstatements found in the Annual Return and no other matters affecting their audit opinion.

- 4.3 The Appointed Auditor certified the Harbour Return on 26 September 2022, confirming that the audit of the annual return had been completed.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is a legal requirement for the Statement of Accounts to be signed by the responsible financial officer, approved by the relevant committee, and published by 31 July following the end of the financial year to which it relates. If this is not possible then the Council is required to issue a notice to this effect, known as a Regulation 10 Notice, setting out the reasons for the delay. The Council issued the notice confirming that the audit had not been completed as at 31 July 2022 in compliance with the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended).

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As this report is for information and is retrospective in nature it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 These are reflected in the body of the report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- notes the Annual Audit Letter 2021-22 at **Appendix A**.

Carys Lord
Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
September 2022

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Background Documents: None

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Reference: 3152A2022

Date issued: September 2022

Dear Members

Porthcawl Harbour Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

The auditor is responsible for providing an opinion:

- on whether the information contained in the Annual Return is in accordance with proper practices; and
- if any matters have come to the auditor's attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

We received the draft Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2022 in line with the agreed deadline. We have completed our audit work and we are reporting to you the issues arising from our work.

Audit certificate and opinion

It is our intention to issue an unqualified certificate and report for the year ended 31 March 2022 and there are no matters in respect of the opinion which we wish to draw to your attention.

Qualification issues

There are no qualification issues to report.

Misstatements in the Annual Return

There were no misstatements found in the Annual Return.

Other matters not affecting our opinion

There are no other matters affecting our audit opinion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Derwyn Owen', enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Derwyn Owen

Engagement Director

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT – PROGRESS REPORT AND POSITION STATEMENT

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Governance and Audit Committee on actions taken to progress improvements to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service and provide information on the position to date.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
- 1. Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 - 2. Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council’s well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Previous reports to the Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and Cabinet / Corporate Management Board (CCMB) have outlined the critical need to re-shape and improve the delivery of the DFG service within Bridgend. Members of the Governance and Audit Committee received a report on 22nd April 2021 outlining the new model of service and a further report on 11th November 2021 providing an update on progress made in relation to the implementation of the new model, together with the actions taken to meet the recommendations of the Audit Wales report in 2017/18 on the Service Users Perspective. Of particular note within that report was a key recommendation regarding Council controls: *‘Council needs to be assured that it has appropriate controls in place to provide effective oversight of the adaptations process, given it is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the adaptation’*.
- 3.2 Members also received information on actions taken to respond to the Regional Internal Audit Service report in 2019/20 which had concluded that there was Limited Assurance in relation to the service.

- 3.3 On 1st April 2021, the Council ceased the provision of the agent delivery model and the functions for end to end delivery of DFGs and ceased providing contact details for local agents (external businesses that oversee works). However, the applicant still has the choice to go externally for DFG works to be delivered. As at this point, there were works already under the remit of various agents and a number of legacy jobs which were required to be fulfilled by agents as this work continued to be under their remit. Since then a number of cases have been returned to the Council as the agent was unable to fulfil the jobs due to the complexity. This meant that the service dealt with additional numbers of unexpected and complex cases.
- 3.4 The report to Cabinet on 19th January 2021 outlined the potential risks with regards to the internalisation of the service and move to a new operating model which could mean that the Council is unable to achieve the aspirational targets which have been outlined in numerous reports. Risks identified at that time included the inability to recruit staff that would affect the timeline; delays in the new Framework Agreement or the ability to enter into the Collaboration Agreement with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC); and in general the availability of contractors and material costs.
- 3.5 A number of key actions were identified to develop the new operational model and this report provides an update on the progress made on these key components of change below and responds to the risks identified above.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Although a number of actions have been progressed, some of the risks identified in paragraph 3.4 above have affected the speed of change and have required a number of mitigating actions to manage. Below is an update on progress and risks.
- 4.2 Collaboration Agreement. As planned, the collaboration arrangement with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is being tapered off as this was an interim arrangement only. Discussions are currently taking place to finalise all actions required of NPTCBC to bring the arrangement to a close with the final cessation date being discussed with NPTCBC. At this point, all works undertaken by them will be completed and no new cases taken on.
- 4.3 Staff Recruitment. Staff movement and an inability to recruit had been identified as a risk factor and this remains a high level risk to delivery. Staff movement and the lack of interest in posts when advertised has meant that the staff team has not been enlarged as planned. The service currently has 1 long term permanent member of staff and 1 newly appointed assistant who are being supplemented by agency workers. Although the recruitment processes will continue, it remains a concern that Bridgend is unable to attract staff. To mitigate this as far as possible the following has been actioned:
- A re-evaluation of salary levels of the surveyors has been undertaken to make Bridgend competitive in this field and there has been upgrading of a number of posts;
 - Agency workers have been engaged;
 - Proposals for a joint working arrangement with Corporate Landlord to set up a traineeship for a surveyor post has been undertaken and will be taken forward when appropriate management systems are in place;

- External surveyors have been commissioned to support the service and operational delivery. This arrangement is through the South East Wales Technical and Professional Procurement Framework (SEWTAPs) and has started on 1st October 2022. The focus will be on the more complex large scale adaptations. Project management support will also be secured shortly via the same framework.

4.4 Development and Implementation of a Contractors Framework. Market engagement with local contractors has been undertaken including 1:1 meetings and workshops and the information gathered from these meetings has been used to inform the Framework. External legal support for this work has been secured to review the Specifications and the Terms and Conditions documentation prior to tendering. Delegated Authority is in place for the Chief Officer, Finance, Performance and Change to undertake the procurement process on completion of legal advice. The target date for the implementation of the Framework is April 2023 but efforts will be made to complete this prior to the new financial year if possible.

4.5 Policy and Procedures. The removal of means testing for small and medium schemes has been adopted since April 2022. Additional funding had been made available from Welsh Government to cover additional costs of this via the Enable Grant. An uplift of £89,973 on the core grant of £180,000 has been provided for the additional purpose of compensating local authorities for loss of income by not requiring a contribution from service users for the provision of small and medium sized adaptations. The financial and operational impact of this change will be reviewed to understand more fully the implications of this policy. Other changes include -

- Sell to Wales is being used to tender jobs for the allocation of works to contractors
- New Schedule of Rates has been developed, which will be regularly reviewed to respond to increasing costs
- New procedure guidelines have been drafted and will be finalised on the implementation of the Framework
- Liaison is taking place with Welsh Government officers in relation to the Welsh Government Housing With Care grant funding which allows for the top up of funding for large schemes over and above the maximum grant level of £36,000.
- Since April 2022 Valleys to Coast (V2C) has had access to the Property Adaptation Grant from Welsh Government. This will allow V2C to undertake adaptations on their own properties. Unlike other local Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), adaptations for V2C properties were previously processed via DFGs.

4.6 Monitoring and Recording. Until the Framework Agreement is established, works have been procured through the Sell to Wales system with contractors tendering for jobs. All contractors are required to be registered and verified with Construction Line (accreditation for the construction industry throughout the UK) to meet Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs). The volume of cases dealt with under this process is dictated by the process and the capacity of the team to oversee each case. This process will continue until such time that the Framework is operational and to date 35 jobs have been commissioned through this route, taking approximately 6 – 7

weeks between the issuing of tender documentation and the awarding of the contract. This has an impact on the number of average days taken to deliver a DFG and this will be significantly shortened once the Framework Agreement is in place.

- 4.7 Software System. A new software system has been commissioned which will support case and performance management alongside the key performance indicators required for Welsh Government and will inform the new performance indicators proposed below in paragraph 4.10. It is expected that the new software will be in place by April 2023.
- 4.8 Performance Indicators. The report on 22nd April 2021 to the Governance and Audit Committee reported the current measurement for the DFG service is PAM/015 – the average number of calendar days taken to deliver a new Disabled Facilities Grant. The report further outlined the aspirational targets set at that time of 240 days for 2021/22 and 210 for 2022/23 to reflect the foundational nature of the new service model. These were set on a number of presumptions that the pilot year of 2021/2022 would achieve the actions that had been outlined previously ie that the framework would be in place; that the staffing structure would be expanded; and that the challenges and impact of Covid would be significantly reduced.
- 4.9 These presumptions have not been met and the continued risk to service delivery is outlined in paragraph 4.13 below as performance has been affected by the issues raised in this report, not least staffing difficulties. In addition the challenges presented during Covid such as the lack of available contractors and the rise in material costs has had an operational impact as the service, already under capacity, was required to catch up on delays and many jobs had to be re-priced and re-evaluated due to rising costs.
- 4.10 The average number of days reported for 2021/2022 is 320 days. This has not met the improvement expected when the target performance indicators referenced in paragraph 4.8 above were identified. Efforts will continue to make significant improvements to the average number of days, however, it is considered that the PAM/015 is not an indicator of effort or milestones reached for each application. Further, larger complex cases and legacy cases being dealt with is having a disproportionate effect on the average days reported. In order to have further clarity and understanding of performance, additional informal performance indicators will be recorded. The new software when operational will support the collation and reporting of the following:
- Categorisation of jobs into small, medium, large, and average times for each category
 - Number of cases processed within a 6 month period of being received by the DFG team
 - Number of cases cancelled and for what reason
- 4.11 Communication and integration. In order to involve applicants and provide greater information to applicants the service has adopted a joint approach on many levels. The housing dedicated Occupational Health Therapist (OT) continues to liaise and communicate with hospital OT's on childrens cases; the OT advises and assesses adaptation needs on homelessness and rehousing cases for the housing service;

joint meetings are held with the applicant, DFG surveyor and contractor before work starts on the property to ensure that everyone is informed and kept up to date.

4.12 Further changes to the way the Council communicate and inform applicants will go hand in hand with the development of the software with the intention of simplifying processes, providing on-line information, and automating where possible letters and forms for ease of access.

4.13 In conclusion, the service has faced a number of challenges and has been prevented from making the changes as planned. There is progress being made on a number of levels which will have a positive effect in the near future. However, risks remain for the service:

- recruitment continues to be a pressure point which may cause an over reliance on agency or external support;
- material costs may increase to a level that will require constant review and re-pricing of works;
- The Framework Agreement may not attract contractors due to the economic benefits of working in the private sector; or the current economic climate and uncertainty may impact on the number of contractors available to do this work. If this proves to be the case further consideration will need to be given in relation to the best service model to ensure delivery.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect on policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsive Wales

Long term	Ensuring best use of available accommodation allowing individuals to live safely in their own homes
Preventative	Through a person centred approach preventing an individual escalating into hospital services
Involvement	Providing individuals the choice to remain in their home ensuring they are part of the process from start to finish managed through a single point of engagement
Integration	Ensure individuals can remain within their communities providing an array of benefits including stability through the maintaining of local support networks
Collaboration	Developing a Framework Agreement to support the DFG service. Working in partnership with Social Services to deliver the required adaptations necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the individual.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- Note progress to date to improve the DFG service and the current position.

Carys Lord
CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
October 2022

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Background documents: None

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's corporate self-assessment report, as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and to seek comments on the report in Appendix 1.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

- 2.2 The Authority's self-assessment and improvement planning process contributes to the achievement of the corporate well-being objectives. As the Annual Wellbeing Assessment has been subsumed into the self-assessment, this report also fulfils the reporting requirements under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3. Background

- 3.1 A report on the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the proposed process for completing the corporate self-assessment was brought to Governance and Audit Committee on 22 June 2022.
- 3.2 The self-assessment report sets out conclusions on how well the council met the 'performance requirements' during the financial year 2021-22, and actions needed

to improve. The process has now been completed and the draft report is included in Appendix 1.

- 3.3 The Welsh Government Statutory guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1, of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the council to make a draft of its self-assessment report available to its governance and audit committee. The committee must review the draft report and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or action the council intends to take.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The process, as reported to Governance and Audit Committee in June, was followed and has now been completed. The findings and judgements have been collated into a single, simple, accessible report. In line with the Welsh Government (WG) and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) guidance, the self-assessment report and annual well-being assessment have been merged into a single document, which is attached at Appendix 1.

- 4.2 Welsh Government provided updates on already published reports and their evolving thinking about self-assessment reports at a meeting with the council on 12 August. WG asked that reports provide clarity on the real, high-level issues around performance in the authority e.g. in Bridgend they would expect to see evidence of the inspection work underway around our social services.

- 4.3 Welsh Government also reflected that the 'so what' factor will be very important, with us outlining improvement areas for future years.

- 4.4 Finally, Welsh Government added that there is minimal value in conducting formal consultation / engagement on the self-assessment report. They would prefer to see a summary of key engagement / consultation work over the year, relating to the well-being objectives. This feedback has been integrated into the draft report.

- 4.5 One self-assessment report has already been published – the report for Powys County Council. There are lots of strong points in the Powys report for us to learn from. Their section on the local government context in Wales is good. Their performance section covering each well-being objective is strong, it summarises all of their performance indicators and commitments simply, and includes a list of engagements and auditors' judgements. This is reflected in our self-assessment report.

- 4.6 Following consideration by GAC, the report will be presented to Cabinet for endorsement on 18 October 2022 before being submitted to Council for their approval on 19 October 2022. The report will be translated and designed and published in late October.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There will be no effect on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equalities Act 2010 Implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.
- 6.2 It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The 5 ways of working – long-term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention - form a key part of the key lines of enquiry for both the performance work and the use of resources workshops held in July. The annual well-being assessment has been merged with the annual self-assessment for 2021-22.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with these arrangements. The cost of translation, design and publication will be met from within existing budgets.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Governance and Audit Committee is recommended to: -

Review and provide any recommendations for change to the corporate self-assessment report 2021-22.

M Shephard
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
October 2022

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Background documents

None.

Appendix 1 – Corporate Self-Assessment

1. The purpose of this report

In January 2021, the Welsh Parliament passed a new law that changed the way councils work. Every year, we must publish a self-assessment report. This report covers 6 April 2021 to 5 April 2022. We want the report to assure Welsh Government that we are performing well. We also want it to tell them that we are using our money and other resources properly and making decisions in a sensible, open way. Most importantly, the report must tell local residents, businesses and all stakeholders how we are doing. Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association have published guidance that tells us how we should develop our self-assessment and what evidence we should use to judge ourselves.

2. The changing world for local government

The world has changed a lot in the last 5 years, and this has had a big impact on the way councils work. Some of the main changes are –

- **The coronavirus pandemic** meant we have been asked to do different things, demands on services have changed and many of our staff have worked remotely.
- **UK leaving the EU** meant we have lost some of our funding and workforce. Prices and availability of some of the things we buy has changed, e.g. building materials for our new schools.
- **The war in Ukraine** has also has an impact on availability and prices of some of the things we buy, e.g. fuel prices for recycling vehicles.
- **The cost-of-living crisis** has meant we have been asked to do different things by Welsh Government and increased demand on some of our services.
- **Climate change** is causing extreme weather events like storms and heatwaves have put pressure on us to do more about flood prevention and water safety.
- **A long period of austerity** reducing the funding for the council at the same time as rising demand for services and inflation increases our costs.
- **Local government elections** have changed the councillors who make decisions on our priorities and services.

3. How is the council performing?

Every 5 years the council publishes a new Corporate Plan. This plan describes the council's priorities, why they are important and how progress will be measured. The priorities, or wellbeing objectives, show our commitments to our citizens and our contribution to Wales's seven well-being goals -

Well-being Goal	Priority 1: A successful sustainable economy	Priority 2: Helping people be more healthy & resilient	Priority 3: Smarter use of resources
A prosperous Wales	✓		✓
A resilient Wales			✓

Well-being Goal	Priority 1: A successful sustainable economy	Priority 2: Helping people be more healthy & resilient	Priority 3: Smarter use of resources
A healthier Wales	✓	✓	✓
A more equal Wales	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of cohesive communities	✓	✓	✓
Vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language	✓	✓	
A globally responsible Wales	✓		✓

The Act says we must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Based on the sustainable development principle, our well-being objectives will deliver long-term positive outcomes. We review progress every year to make sure our actions are getting us closer to our goals. The last full corporate plan was published in 2017, (although it is refreshed and updated annually), with three priorities for the council -



When we developed this corporate plan, we thought hard about the type of organisation we wanted to be. Our vision is to act as **One Council** working together to improve lives.

We have a process for measuring how we are doing on these priorities. We use –

- performance indicators,
- evidence on delivery of our projects,
- feedback from residents, businesses, and partners, and
- the views of our regulators and auditors.

Each part of the council pulls this information together for their services. They present it to councillors who look at the data, check it and ask questions. This was done for the year 2021-22 in June and July 2022. We use this information to come to a judgement on each priority using this scale -

EXCELLENT	Very strong, sustained performance
GOOD	Strong features, minor aspects need improvement
ADEQUATE	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects need improvement
UNSATISFACTORY	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths. Needs urgent improvement.

Priority One – Supporting a successful, sustainable economy

We want to build a place where people can have good jobs and careers and improve their family income. Prosperity boosts health and well-being and creates more resilient communities that need fewer services. Education is the most important part of improving the life chances of young people. Our main ways of achieving this objective are -

- **Improve learner outcomes** – Support children, adults and families to get better education outcomes;
- **Growth and prosperity** - Promote the conditions for growth and prosperity by helping people and business to succeed.

What is our judgement?

Supporting a successful, sustainable economy	Good
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- **Learner outcomes** – exam result data is not available for 2021/22 due to the pandemic and Welsh Government guidance. Instead, we have provided information on our work to support schools dealing with effects of the pandemic.
- **School support** - We have supported schools to reduce the pandemic's impact on teaching and learning. Guidance and risk assessments for schools were updated each time national guidance changed. Schools have blended learning to support self-isolating pupils and for homework. We have worked with the education consortium to support two primary schools to be removed from the Estyn category of 'special measures'. Schools in Estyn review or monitoring categories has fallen from 12 to 1, with 4 schools getting 'enhanced' support.
- **Welsh Language Education** – We have completed the actions in our last Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). We have developed, and recently agreed with the Minister our new WESP plan 2022-32. The number of Year 1 learners in Welsh-medium primary schools has increased from 119 to 122. The total number of places was 162, so there is still a surplus of Year 1 places. We are enlarging Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr and the consultation on enlarging Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr is done. Welsh-medium childcare will be built at Bettws and Ogmores Valley.
- **Safeguarding** - the Education Engagement Team helped schools to audit their safeguarding. Many strengths were identified and some areas for improvement e.g. how effectively they communicate about safeguarding, how clear governing bodies are on their roles and responsibilities and increasing the voice of children, parents and carers. One school identified a lot of issues and has been supported to address them. Safeguarding audits will continue annually.
- **Attendance and exclusions**– During the pandemic attendance levels have worsened. In primary schools, attendance has reduced by 4.7% from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022 and by 7.6% in secondary schools. We have done lots of work to address attendance, including supporting schools on attendance, a task and finish group revising our attendance strategy, and attendance audits have been done to show good practise and areas for development. Behaviour is becoming more of a problem, so the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions is increasing. We are working with schools to make sure they follow the graduated response, use behaviour tools and access local authority support when they need it. The Communication and Relationships Team are speaking to schools to share ways to improve behaviour.

- **Regeneration** - We have made progress on the Town Centre Masterplan for Bridgend, including plans for redeveloping the Railway station. Our placemaking Strategy for Porthcawl has been approved. Work starts soon on the ALDI site and work to secure sea defences will soon be complete at Eastern Promenade. The relocation of Bridgend College to the town centre is progressing, and we are working with housing providers to invest in housing in the Town Centre. Maesteg Town Hall is progressing well. We are investing in town centres and working with partners to redevelop sites and buildings. The regeneration programme delivered over £600k of improvements grants for business premises after covid. There are more vacant properties in some town centres.
- **Business support** - We have provided business rates relief to 1028 businesses and £50 million business grants. We have received funding to deliver the Bridgend Elevate and Prosper Project (EAP) to support start-ups and micro-business. Our new, socially responsible 3 year procurement strategy and delivery plan aims to make our spending more accessible to local small businesses and the third sector. Business start-ups have increased by 14% to 550 in 2021-22.
- **Support for employment** - Employability Bridgend provides support to residents and council employees, including unemployed people, and those in work but struggling with low skills or in-work poverty. Even during the pandemic we reached job outcome targets, but we have not worked with as many people as we expected. The end of EU funding and strength of the job market may have an impact on work in the coming year. The number of people from the Employability Scheme who have gone into jobs has increased by 27% to 556 in 2021-22.
- **Tourism** – We have worked with partners to put on events to increase tourism in Porthcawl, including giving advice on the Porthcawl Triathlon, Porthcawl Truck Gathering, Forest Festival and the Between the Trees festival and funding a road closure for the Porthcawl Elvis Festival. Cosy Corner will provide new community facilities following a £2.1m investment and will be complete in Spring 2023. More people are visiting Porthcawl - around pre-pandemic levels. Tourism expenditure data will tell us more at the end of the year.

Regulators assurances

Bridgend's School Service has performed well during 2021-22. Progress has been made in addressing the recommendations made by the [Estyn report in March 2019](#).

- **Literacy** - All schools with a school improvement priority linked to literacy are on track to meet their target and getting the support they need
- **Post-16 learners** – as mentioned, it isn't possible to compare results with previous years. But schools tell us that many learners have done better than expected, haven't been disadvantaged and done well with university applications.
- **Improvement in schools causing concern** – new monitoring processes have been set up to help us find problems quickly and speed up improvement.
- **Welsh Education Strategic Forum** - The group now meets every term. We have new Sub-groups to make sure we're making good progress on objectives.

HM Inspectorate of Probation, did an [inspection of youth offending services](#) in Bridgend, published in June 2022. The rating of the service was 'Requires improvement'. The service used to be part of a Western Bay service that got an 'Inadequate' rating in 2018 and was

disbanded. Since the 2018 inspection there has been real improvement. Staff have a passion for their work and are trying to deter children from crime. But they still face significant challenges, including lack of mental health support for children in Bridgend. The report made six recommendations.

Consultations and engagement activities

Consultation	Dates	Impact
Enlargement to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr	7/2/22 – 21/3/22	Consultation responses are being considered in 2022-23 with the outcome of consultation report in June and a further report on the complete process in September.
Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	27/9/21 – 19/12/21	Following consultation, positive changes were made and our new, 10-year WESP has been approved.
Placemaking Porthcawl strategy	01/04/21 -08/03/22	Following consultation, amendments were made to the strategy, including additional public open space on Salt Lake. Cabinet approved the strategy in March 2022.
Economic development strategy	01/04/21 -08/03/22	Following engagement with stakeholders including local businesses, educational establishments, training providers and the public services board (PSB) the strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2022.

What will we do to improve?

All improvements planned will be published later in the year. Some of the main improvements we will make for this priority are –

- Developing a permanent exclusion panel for the council to support all schools
- Activities to improve school attendance, including truancy patrols, a marketing campaign, a 'buddy system' and the Consortium's 'Callio' system.
- Significant, continuing support for schools to deal with the impact of COVID-19
- Addressing the budget pressures we are facing, including school transport
- Implement the new curriculum
- Address our staffing capacity issues in the education directorate
- Continuing improvement of the Bridgend Youth Justice Service
- Putting the new WESP 10 year plan in place from September 2022
- Reinvigorate Bridgend Business Forum to deliver business support events.
- Deliver a business support event in June 2022.
- Speed-up the business grant payment process through automation

Priority Two – Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient

We want to provide support to help individuals and families thrive. A focus on prevention and wellbeing helps us support people to lead independent lives and reduces the likelihood of them becoming dependent on council services. Our main ways of achieving this objective are -

- **Community support and services** – Provide support and services to those who need our help and help them to stay independent for as long as possible.
- **Resilient communities** – Develop innovative ways to improve well-being and deliver services.
- **Health and well-being** – Improve the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children and young people and vulnerable citizens.

What is our judgement?

Help people & communities be healthy & resilient	Adequate
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- **Social services** - 2021/22 has been a difficult year for Social Services. We have experienced the same challenges as other councils – increasing demand for services, recovery from the pandemic, financial challenges and difficulties in recruiting and keeping staff. We are working with human resources to improve our workforce planning. In the short-term, our only option is to use interim and agency staff, but in the longer-term we are investing in recruiting internationally, ‘growing our own’ workforce and supporting and retaining existing staff. But there have been extra unique and tragic circumstances in Bridgend that have increased the challenges, scrutiny and recovery work needed. The death of Logan Mwangi is a tragedy. We must learn and improve from the lessons that come out of the Child Practice Review to be published in autumn 2022.
- **Children’s services** - In early 2022, we declared a ‘critical incident’ in children’s services. Caseloads were too high and some of our assurance systems weren’t working well. Children and families were not getting the assessments or support they needed. The whole council focused on delivering improvements. Staff were moved from other parts of the council to help and we brought in extra staff. Our new ‘care experienced children’s team’ is improving outcomes for children and families. The number of care experienced children in Bridgend has reduced and stability of placements has improved. We have invested in in-house care homes, including the development of Tir Mor, for over-18 care experienced young people. Our new, trauma informed support model is improving outcomes for young people. We have developed safeguarding and early help hubs. We are improving how we parent our children and support them to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Adult services** - We have struggled to meet people’s care and support needs. The biggest difficulties have been in care and support at home services. This has a knock-on effect to the NHS when people need to be discharged from hospital. We have had high levels of staff absence and the independent sector is delivering less hours of care. We are working with the NHS to make improvements and work has been done to address our workforce problems. Our work on integrating health and social care is strong. Our community occupational therapy works well to keep people independent and has drastically reduced waiting times. Adult safeguarding is effective. Waiting times for

deprivation of liberty safeguards (DoLs) have been cut. Learning disability services are driven by the voice of people with support needs through a new, coproduced plan.

- **Early help** – we have a clear, joined-up way of delivering early-help. A screening team sits alongside the multi-agency safeguarding hub and three locality hubs, where education welfare officers, family support workers, family engagement officers, youth workers, wellbeing workers and school counsellors work together. Demand for these services has increased. Edge of care services intervene in families to avoid children coming into the care system and the youth justice service is improving. Youth support and early years and childcare services are good but demand is increasing and they have workforce challenges.
- **Additional Learning Needs reform** – We have finished the first stage of ALN Reform, and all statutory roles are in place. We are working with partners to make sure that the young person's ALN needs are met in a person-centred planning (PCP) way. We are now working on the next phase, where every young person with an ALN has their additional learning provision (ALP) identified in an individual development plan (IDP).
- **Leisure** - We have strong partnerships for leisure and culture with Halo and Awen. Following the pandemic, we have focused on rebuilding participation in leisure and cultural activities. Participation levels are steadily increasing. The demand for free / low cost activities is increasing as the cost-of-living crisis deepens so we are working with Halo and Awen to develop more of these.
- **Housing** - The pandemic has changed our housing duties. Under Welsh Governments 'All In' approach, we have to provide accommodation all homeless people. People presenting as homeless and numbers of people on the register for social housing have increased. We have had to rely on hotels and AirBNB's to provide temporary accommodation as supply of suitable accommodation can't meet demand. We received 1656 applications from 2553 people for support, including many applicants with complex support needs. We supported 3,066 households through Housing Support Grant services, including floating support to households threatened with homelessness. We work with Welsh Government and other councils to improve our approach to homelessness and refugees. Time taken to deliver facilities in people's homes for disabled people has fallen slightly.
- **Community Safety** – We have dealt with 1557 anti-social behaviour referrals and 88% were successfully addressed at stage 1. We have completed full needs assessments on 1767 Domestic Abuse referrals. We have opened a remote evidence suite to allow victims or witnesses to give evidence away from court. We have delivered a 'Snip it in the Bud' Campaign, supporting hairdressers and barbers to identify warning signs and signpost to domestic abuse services.
- **Recreation, green and open spaces** - The pandemic has highlighted the importance of open and green spaces for well-being. We work hard to protect and enhance our environment, including the designation of Bedford Park and Frog Pond Wood as nature reserves, plans to improve children's play facilities, (including increasing accessible play facilities) and improving the Cwm Taff nature network. We are also doing a review of our three major parks. The importance of community asset transfers (CAT's) is increasing and we have transferred 11 assets in 2021-22 (above target). External funding has been added to BCBC CAT funding to transform & invest into pavilions at Bryncethin, Cae Gof, Pencoed and Rest Bay, renovate Coychurch Play Area, and refurbish community centres at Brackla, Bryntirion and North Cornelly.

Regulators assurances

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out an [assurance check](#) in 2021. During 2021/22 we have been progressing the actions identified in this report. For example, setting up groups to support workforce recruitment and retention, the provision of specialist behavioural support to the parents and carers of disabled children and reducing the waiting lists for occupational therapy assessments.

In May 2022 CIW [inspected children's services](#). The inspection highlighted some strengths, for example our recognition of the importance of ensuring children's voices are heard, the development of our in-house residential services, positive relationships with partners and our new practice development plans. It also showed some areas needed significant improvement, for example issues with timeliness of documents, availability of in-house foster care placements, and the consistency of practice and timeliness of assessments. CIW have advised us that given the scale of improvement needed they have 'serious concerns' about Children's Services. We have developed an action plan to address the problems and will report our progress to CIW. They will be closely monitoring our performance.

Consultations and engagement activities

Consultation	Dates	Impact
BING carers network	Ongoing	We have worked with BAVO and other organisations to better understand and support carers, through a new carer friendly network group. This has resulted in a vast range of new activities, opportunities and support for carers from many different organisations working across the Borough.
Disabled Facilities Grant consultation with future delivery providers	Dec 2021 - Jan 2022	Feedback is helping us develop a contractor's framework for the new, in-house DFG model. This will help us deliver longer-term independence for people in their own homes, more quickly to a higher quality.
Coproduction – learning disabilities	Ongoing	Coproduction is an important part of our learning disability development plan. We recently commissioned a new supported living service in a coproduced way supported by a 3rd sector organisation.
Support at home	Ongoing	Questionnaires are used to assess the service people are receiving (both short- and long-term care). Issues that the people raise are dealt with individually. Information we get is also used to influence our models of service.
Consultation and engagement to develop our homelessness strategy	Oct - Dec 2021	We consulted partners and service users to help us make best use of our grants to support homeless people. Our understanding of their needs will inform the new strategy / action plan working with partners.
Day service	Ongoing	People First are leading a programme of consultation events to help us redesign our services and develop a new Learning Disability Service Development Plan.

What will we do to improve?

- Address our workforce issues in children's social work and the domiciliary care workforce, including developing options for employing staff who don't drive.
- Improve the consistency of social work practice in children's social care, which supports improved outcomes, allows families to stay together (wherever possible) and safeguards people from harm.
- Improve the quality and consistency of children's residential care services
- Improve the 'front door' of children's and adults services
- Improve the way we listen to and act on the voices of people
- Work on admission avoidance and discharge services with the NHS
- Address gaps in social care services e.g. on domiciliary care for adults, new extra care development and complete residential development priorities for children
- Provide enhanced support for adult carers and young carers
- Making further progress on ALN reform and addressing financial pressures in ALN education
- Continue the recovery programme of leisure and cultural services
- Develop a play action plan and take forward the play sufficiency assessment
- Enhance wellbeing and preventative support in all parts of the County
- Develop long term financial sustainability and targeted investment of non-recurring funding
- Improve the information for Councillors on service quality and performance
- Complete and act on the strategic review of major parks
- More investment in children's play areas
- Develop and consult on a new homelessness strategy
- Work with Welsh Government and other authorities on our approach to housing refugees (including Ukrainian refugees)
- Working with the joint partnership board to better understand the needs and views of prisoners in Parc Prison

Priority Three – Smarter use of resources

We want to make the best possible use of public money. We want to make smarter use of our resources while minimising reductions in services. Over the period 2018-19 to 2022-23, the council is expected to make budget reductions of over £20 million. As austerity continues, it becomes harder each year to make further cuts. Our main ways of achieving this objective are -

- **Transforming our estate** – Using our land and buildings to improve service delivery, reduce running costs, minimise our impact on the environment and meet the needs of service users.
- **Corporate change** - Embracing innovation and technology, developing the skills and approaches of staff and new ways of working.
- **Environmental sustainability** - Protecting and safeguarding the environment by lowering the council's carbon footprint, looking at waste reduction, re-use and recycling and promoting environmental responsibility in communities.

What is our judgement?

Smarter use of resources	Good
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- **Budget reductions** - The budget for 2021-22 included proposals for £1.76 million cuts, but we didn't quite achieve that target. This is partly because the community recycling centre relocation to Pyle did not go ahead. Financial pressures are being felt in Social Services and Wellbeing, Homelessness, Waste and Home to School Transport. Social services benefits from significant short term grant investments. These investments are helpful but don't address the longer-term sustainability of social care.
- **Estate** – We are looking at how our buildings will be improved / remodelled through the Future Service Delivery Model. Digital transformation will help us find ways to remodel, reduced or use our office spaces in a smarter digitally enabled way. Our capital receipts were lower than target due to two delayed projects, which we expect to go ahead in 22-23. Most of our buildings now comply with health and safety requirements, but our target was not achieved.
- **School modernisation** - Proposals for Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sgêr and Mynydd Cynffig Primary School are being implemented as well as a new English-medium school (to replace Afon Y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools). Consultation concluded on enlargement of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr. Construction commenced on Welsh-medium childcare buildings at Bettws and Ogmere Valley.
- **Corporate change** – We developed a plan for future working with our staff and trade unions, improved staff wellbeing activities, and continued work on our 'grow your own' schemes to develop apprentices and graduates. Our Future Services Delivery project is well underway. We have some new regional frameworks where we procure goods and services jointly with other authorities, for example highways materials and plant hire. The new WiFi infrastructure project has been completed across all schools in Bridgend giving access to learners and staff, with support on using the Hwb platform to help learning.
- **Waste** – our recycling rates have increased again to 72.9% (target 68%). 76% of people rated waste service as very or fairly good. New community recycling centre works have been completed although the site is yet to open. A reuse shop has opened

at Maesteg Community Recycling Centre. We are now recycling 40% of Street litter. Public campaigns are ongoing around food waste recycling, reminders on what to place in recycling containers, AHP and garden waste. Anti-dog fouling messages, and messages regarding the departments enforcement policy have also been promoted.

- **Sustainability** –We have signed up the Welsh Government’s net zero carbon plan for the public sector. We have been developing a new net zero plan – Bridgend 2030 – which will accelerate our reduction in emissions. We are the first council in Wales to use new Welsh Government Greenhouse Gas Reporting Protocol. We have successfully implemented the £1.3m Ref-fit programme on 19 school buildings. £3m of Active Travel routes have also been implemented in 2021. We have invested £1.3 million to install energy and cost saving technologies to reduce our energy consumption and CO2 emissions. We have set baseline for the gas and electricity consumption and CO2 emissions of our buildings. We have done a review of actions and spending on biodiversity.

Regulators assurances

In Audit Wales’ Annual Audit Summary 2021, a summary of the council’s financial sustainability was included. It said, ‘During 2020-21, we examined the financial sustainability of each council in Wales. In Bridgend County Borough Council, we concluded in August 2021 that the Council has maintained a strong financial position during the pandemic and has strengthened its Medium Term Financial Strategy’.

In Audit Wales, Springing Forward, strategic asset management report (not yet publicly available), the key finding was, ‘The Council made positive progress in delivering its previous asset management strategy and now needs to ensure that its strategic asset planning is fully shaped by the sustainable development. However, workforce challenges are impacting on its ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory safety requirements’.

In Audit Wales, Springing Forward, Workforce planning report (not yet publicly available), the key finding was, ‘The Council is taking action to respond to its significant workforce issues, but needs to develop a corporate workforce plan shaped by the sustainable development principle, to address these challenges and strengthen its resilience’.

Improvement plans will be developed to address the areas for improvement in both of these reports.

Consultations and engagement activities

Consultation	Dates	Impact
Annual budget consultation	20/9/21 – 14/11/21	A detailed report was prepared on the findings of the annual budget consultation which was taken to Cabinet December 2021 and has fed into corporate planning and financial planning for the year ahead.
Alterations to Mynydd Cynffig Primary School	23/11/21 - 12/1/22	Responses from parents, pupil, staff and governors were largely very positive. Other responses (allotments and ATC) have been considered separately. Cabinet approved proceeding with the proposal. Replacement school opening 2025.

Alterations to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr	7/2/22 – 21/3/22	Consultation responses are being considered in 2022-23 with the outcome of consultation report in June and a further report on the complete process in September.
Staff survey	21/6/22 – 30/07/22	A detailed feedback report was prepared to demonstrate the findings of the survey and an internal action plan has been developed to act on areas for improvement.

What will we do to improve?

- Develop our budget, savings plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the coming year.
- Develop an improvement plan for our areas for improvement in Audit Wales reports – around workforce planning and asset management
- Continuing to develop our Future Service Delivery approach
- Developing options for our waste service both in the medium term up to 2026 and longer term
- Conclude the statutory processes for the Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr and Heronsbridge School proposals. Develop options for delivery during future bands of the School Modernisation Programme.
- Develop a new biodiversity plan
- Open the new community recycling facility in Pyle and realise the savings this creates
- Improve the proportion of our buildings that meet required standards for health and safety
- Consult on and then implement our net zero carbon strategy and action plan, Bridgend 2030.

4. How is the council using its resources?

We have always had to report how well we are using our resources. For example, we must tell Audit Wales about our spending, our workforce and our buildings. Until recently, we didn't have a common process to review how we are managing all of our different resources. This year, to help us judge our use of resources and write this report, we developed a new process. We held workshops with staff from all around the council to look at –

- finances,
- procurement,
- corporate planning,
- performance management,
- risk management,
- workforce planning, and
- asset management.

To come to our judgements, we used –

- performance indicators e.g. staff vacancy levels and building maintenance,
- evidence on delivery of our projects and improvement plans,
- feedback from customers, staff and trade unions, and
- the views of our regulators e.g. Audit Wales report on workforce planning

We asked questions based on the wellbeing of future generations act, including –

- Do we focus on prevention, not just putting things right when they go wrong?
- Are we making strong long-term plans?
- Do we share ideas, plans and resources with partner organisations?
- Are we making links and doing things consistently across the council?
- Are we involving the community and customers in key plans and decisions?

Like the performance information, we presented our findings to councillors who scrutinised the information, checked it and asked questions. We used the same scale from excellent to unsatisfactory as the one used for performance judgements. This was done for the year 2021-22 in July 2022.

What are our judgements?

Use of resources	Adequate	Day-to-day management of our resources is good. There are clear and agreed working models and strong, working relationships between corporate teams and directorates. Use of resources overall is adequate. Although day-to-day management is good, our longer-term planning for using our resources is not as strong. The pandemic has had a big impact on our planned work. Some of the new working models aren't yet fully working. There are vacancies and staffing issues in corporate teams, and the managers who work alongside them. In some areas, we need to improve member engagement and challenge. We need to make sure we have modern, joined-up IT systems that help with decision-making. Some directorates are better than others in the way they engage and work with corporate teams.
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Our overall judgement looks at use of resources of all types. We also have a specific judgement for each resource type, to help us with our improvement planning.

Finances	Good	Financial management is good. We successfully balance our budget every year and keep within budget during the year. Feedback from our regulators is positive. We have a healthy financial position, and respond quickly to new pressures, through effective management of budgets and reserves and member challenge. Schools and social services funding have been protected in recent years. As a result, the communities directorate budget is stretched.
Corporate planning	Good	Corporate planning is good. We have a clear process for developing the plan and senior managers and politicians are involved. The corporate plan is focused on the long-term. We consulted widely on the last corporate plan which is brief and accessible. A new one will be developed this year for sign-off in March 2023.
Risk management	Good	Risk management is good. Major improvements have been made to the way we identify and manage risks. We have a new Corporate Risk Management Policy and reports are simple and accessible. Issues raised in previous internal audits have all been addressed.
Procurement	Adequate	Commissioning and procurement is adequate. Procurement is good. Major improvements have been made to the way we procure goods, services and works. We have a new, Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy, delivery plan and Contract Procedure Rules. We need an improved and more consistent approach to commissioning across directorates.
Performance management	Adequate	Performance management is adequate. There are long-standing processes for managing how we perform against our Corporate Plan. The corporate performance team and people in directorates work well together. We have positive relationships with our regulators. But performance outside the corporate plan is not as well understood and not managed consistently. There are vacancies and staffing issues in the performance team. We need to develop better challenge of performance with stronger scrutiny and improved benchmarking with other councils.
Workforce planning	Adequate	Workforce planning is adequate. Workforce management is good but more capacity among managers and in the HR team is needed. We need to focus on strategic workforce planning to assess workforce needs in the longer-term including pay, terms and conditions.
Asset management	Adequate	Asset management is adequate. We have clear principles, a strong set of policies and procedures and good directorate engagement. But we need to address the workforce and financial challenges that prevent us from planning more strategically and resulting in a reactive approach.

What will we do to improve?

Full detail on improvements planned will be included in our improvement plan later in the year. Some of the main improvements we will make in our management of resources are –

- Set up a corporate commissioning group to develop a strong and consistent approach to commissioning across the council and share good practice
- Roll-out procurement training to improve stakeholders understanding of the new strategy, delivery plan and procurement rules
- Improve the way we manage performance that is not part of the corporate plan
- Improve the scrutiny of performance by councillors
- Consider new IT systems for performance management and asset management
- Develop strategic workforce planning across the council looking at long-term workforce needs with a broader consideration of pay, terms and conditions.
- Review our management structure, gaps and vacancies
- Establish a new corporate plan for 2023-2027
- Complete and publish a new asset management plan, focusing on sustainability
- Address the maintenance backlog and statutory building compliance performance.

5. How good is the council's governance?

Organisations that have good governance use clear decision-making processes and communicate openly about what they are doing. They work well with their stakeholders, manage the risks they face, and take responsibility for their assets.

We have always had to report on our governance, to Audit Wales. There is a clear process for developing an 'Annual Governance Statement' that has existed for many years. This year, to help us judge our governance and write this report, we have added more thinking about our consultation, engagement and involvement. We did this by holding a workshop with staff from all around the council –

To come to our judgements, we used –

- performance indicators e.g. on member meetings,
- evidence on delivery of our improvement plans,
- feedback from members, staff and trade unions, and
- the views of our regulators and auditors.

We asked each other lots of questions based on some of the important factors in the wellbeing of future generations act, including –

- Do we focus on prevention, not just putting things right when they go wrong?
- Are we making strong long-term plans?
- Are we using good governance for our partnership arrangements?
- Are we making links and doing things consistently across the council?
- Are we involving the community and our customers in key plans and decisions?

Like the performance and resources information, we presented our findings to councillors who scrutinised the information, checked it and asked questions. We used the same scale from excellent to unsatisfactory as the one used for performance and resources judgements. This was done for the year 2021-22 in September 2022.

What is our judgement?

Governance	Good
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Organisations that have good governance use clear decision-making processes and communicate openly about what they are doing. They work well with their stakeholders, manage the risks they face, and take responsibility for their assets.

Decision making

Our governance arrangements are good, and have worked well, including during the pandemic. Our [Governance Framework](#), [Code of Corporate Governance](#) and [Constitution](#) explain how we work, how we are accountable and how decisions are made. Through these documents (along with the Member's Code of Conduct, Standards Committee and role of Internal Audit) the Council operates with integrity, ethical values and within its legal powers.

Our governance arrangements are reviewed each year to update the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). It is considered and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee.

Major issues were identified in the Council's 2020-21 AGS, so in the past year we have made improvements including –

- Claiming money from Welsh Government via the hardship fund to make sure our finances are sustainable
- Doing a review of our financial procedure rules and the code of corporate governance and improving them, and
- Running training for staff to help protect the council from the increasing risk of cyber fraud.

We have made additional changes to our governance as a result of the pandemic, the local elections and changes to legislation including the new Local Government Act –

- Making major changes to the Governance and Audit Committee, including updating their terms of reference and recruiting four new lay members to the Committee with one of these lay members now chairing the Committee.
- Developing a Future Service Delivery Model which shows plans for hybrid working that supports the Council's 2030 agenda and our goal of becoming a Digital Council by 2023. This was presented to Cabinet in September 2021.
- Developing a new relationship with members, including running a significant training programme for new members that includes information on use of performance, resources, governance and an introduction to self-assessment.
- Holding Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings virtually, recording and saving them on the Council's website for the public to access, to make decision making more transparent.
- Making preparations to support the governance arrangements for the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC).

Consultation, engagement and involvement

Consultation with our local residents and businesses is good. The corporate consultation team have a programme of future consultations and support directorates to consult in a timely and effective way. We have a range of consultation channels, mechanisms and groups, but these could be broadened. Engagement and involvement is adequate. Engagement activities take place in directorates, some using industry best practice. But engagement is patchy and the corporate team is not always involved or informed. Engagement is usually reactive rather than proactive. The pandemic has had a big impact on our capacity and ability to engage. There is not yet much activity focused on trust or relationship building between the community and BCBC and we need to develop a new engagement platform.

We have positive and constructive social partnership arrangements. We work with recognised Trade Unions (TU's), with clear and regular arrangements for consultation and engagement. Local and regional TU representatives meet HR officers monthly. Other officers are brought in as needed, for example the Chief Executive on future service delivery and the Section 151 Officer on the budget. Two Cabinet members attend bi-monthly so TU representatives can talk to them directly. There are separate meetings for schools. TU representatives play an important role in decision making and organisational change. They contribute different ideas and perspectives and support their members at

meetings which focus on the workforce impacts of any changes. All HR policy reviews are done with full consultation with TU's.

As well as regular staff and trade union engagement, we run an annual staff survey. The last one, in summer 2021 had over 1000 responses. The survey contained 51 questions, many of which repeated previous surveys so we can see how we are doing over time. Overall satisfaction with BCBC as an employer is increasing, from 59% in 2018, 66% in 2020 and 73% in 2021. A detailed feedback report was developed, and an internal action plan is in place to act on issues from the staff survey.

Engagement with regulators is strong and systematic. Regular meetings take place between regulators and senior officers in the Council to discuss regulators' work and the council's improvement plans.

What will we do to improve?

Full detail on improvements planned will be included in our improvement plan later in the year. Some of the main improvements we will make in our governance are -

- Improvement work on the Council Chamber and Committee rooms, so hybrid meetings can be held.
- A new constitution and easy read guide will be presented to Council later this year, to make us more consistent with other councils across Wales.
- Developing a programme of Cabinet training with the WLGA
- Acting on the findings in the 2021 staff survey and running a new staff survey in late 2022
- Develop a new engagement, involvement and consultation plan to support the new corporate plan
- Develop a new engagement platform
- Monitoring financial pressures happening as a result of the pandemic, exit from the European Union and the conflict in Ukraine, and
- Monitoring the challenges facing our services (including outsourced services) as a result of rising prices, supply chain issues and staffing issues

6. Our Strategic Equality Plan

In developing the equality objectives, we have talked to our residents, stakeholders and employees and used relevant information, including EHRC reports, Welsh Government reports and internal strategies. In addition to this we have:

- Developed a [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#) and associated action plan
- Reviewed our previous Strategic Equality Plan and action plan to see how we have done;
- Developed a consultation toolkit so we have a more consistent and effective way of engaging with our communities;
- Given further consideration to each of the nine protected characteristics covered by the three main aims of the general duty and the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other actions prohibited in the Equality Act 2010;
- Looked at regional approaches to meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller families and people who have experienced domestic abuse and hate crime.

How do we identify and collect relevant information?

We are committed to collecting and using data to identify where some protected characteristic groups experience a disproportionate impact or where we could deliver services in a different way. We collect data on customers and residents via our consultation and engagement activities and on our employees via our own internal systems. We will collect and use the following equality data:

- Employment profile data for all protected characteristics;
- Service user data so that we understand the characteristics of the people who use our services;
- Job applicants for all protected characteristics.

This data will be published annually as part of our Strategic Equality Plan annual reporting process. In addition we will publish annually:

- The Full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken;
- The Strategic Equality Plan action plan review;
- The Strategic Equality Plan annual report.

How effective are the council's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information?

Each year we try to improve the Equality Monitoring Data we hold for employees. We encourage employees to update information through communications / appraisals.

What do our arrangements tell us regarding the equality of access to employment, training and pay?

Every year, we report our 'equalities in the workforce' report to councillors. This tells us about our numbers of employees with protected characteristics. It also tells us about pay, recruitment and training of employees with protected characteristics. This is all put

together and included in the strategic equality plan. Areas for improvement are included in the [strategic equality plan action plan](#).

7. Review of our self-assessment process

We have assessed and reviewed our process as we have gone along. We think we started the process to late which meant planning and implementation were a rush.

We were not clear enough on the timescales and deadlines for providing information. The performance management part of the assessment demonstrated the lack of consistency in the way directorates manage performance outside the corporate plan. We found we didn't have the range of evidence we expected for all directorates. Engagement and regulator information are not generally collected or discussed as part of our regular performance management work.

The use of resources workshops were a one off, stand alone exercise, not really in keeping with the guidance. Consideration of use of resources should be better embedded in our business planning and performance management. Communication with participants on the use of resources workshops was last minute and not very detailed. People had minimal time to prepare their thoughts for the workshops. Although in person meetings took place for some of the workshops, others had to be done virtually due to a spike in Coronavirus cases. Those done in person were much more challenging and engaging.

Due to time restraints, there was not enough engagement, communication or discussion with members and officers around the council – in the process or in the final report. The process evolved as we were going through it. This shows we are positive, flexible and adaptable, but it also means members and senior officers weren't always sighted on the changing approach.

The structure and style of the corporate plan and wellbeing objectives (as well as the rush of our directorate self-assessments) made writing a brief and accessible report difficult. We did not consider in any detail how we would present our self-assessment until the very end of the process. We might have done things differently if we had considered this earlier.

What will we do to improve?

- Make clear and early decisions on our process, timelines and responsibilities for our 2022-23 assessment based on learning from year 1 and best practice
- Improve our business planning process to be more comprehensive and consistent. To include corporate plan and other areas of performance.
- Effectively communicate our quarterly performance management process, requirements and timelines to business managers and directorates
- Include management of the different types of resources in our 'business as usual' performance management process. Also include engagement and regulator evidence.
- Develop a clear hierarchy of reports and ensure that people understand it
- Develop a corporate plan structure and style that better lends itself to completing our self-assessment in future years
- Align our AGS and self-assessment process
- Engage a broader range of staff and members in the self-assessment process

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the updated Forward Work Programme for 2022-23.

2. Connections to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The core functions of an effective Governance and Audit Committee include the responsibility to:
- review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's financial affairs.
 - consider the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting, governance processes, performance assessment and complaints arrangements.
 - seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors.
 - consider the effectiveness of the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements.
 - be satisfied that the Council's assurance statements properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it.
 - oversee the work of internal audit (including the annual plan and strategy) and monitor performance.
 - review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary.
 - receive the annual report of the Head of Audit.
 - consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies, where applicable.
 - ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.

- review and approve the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to Members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit.
- review and make any recommendations for change to the Council's draft self-assessment report.
- consider panel performance assessment reports into how the Council is meeting its performance requirements.

3.2 Effective Governance and Audit Committees help to raise the profile of governance, internal control, risk management and financial reporting issues within an organisation, as well as providing a forum for the discussion of issues raised by internal and external auditors. They enhance public trust and confidence in the financial governance of an authority.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 In order to assist the Committee in ensuring that due consideration is given to all aspects of their core functions the proposed updated Forward Work Programme for 2022-23 is attached at **Appendix A**. Committee Members are asked to endorse this schedule, confirm the list of people they would like to invite for each item (if appropriate), and indicate whether any additional information or research is required.

4.2 Shown below are the items scheduled to be presented at the next meeting on 10 November 2022.

Proposed Agenda Items – 10 November 2022	
1	Governance and Audit Committee Action Record
2	Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports
3	Audited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement
4	Half Year Review of the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23
5	Internal Audit Progress Reports
6	Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring Report
7	Treasury Management Half Year Report 2022-23
8	Corporate Risk Assessment 2022-23
9	Updated Forward Work Programme 2022-23

4.3 Following the cancellation of the September meeting, the Forward Work Programme has been amended and the Committee should note that the report on the complaints process, originally scheduled to be brought to the September meeting, will now be brought to the meeting in January 2023. In addition, the final Audited Statement of Accounts, including the Annual Governance Statement, should now be brought to the meeting in November, as a result of additional testing required during the audit of the accounts, and ongoing discussions with Audit Wales and with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) on valuations and infrastructure assets.

4.4 The schedule of items for discussion at specific meetings may be subject to change, to take into account other items that need to be considered, and operational factors.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Committee considers and approves the updated Forward Work Programme for 2022-23.

Carys Lord
Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
October 2022

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Background Documents: None

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GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23	Frequency	22 June 2022	28 July 2022	22 September 2022	13 October 2022	10 November 2022	26 January 2023	27 April 2023
				CANCELLED				
Standing Items								
Governance and Audit Committee Action Record	Each meeting	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports	Each meeting	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Updated Forward Work Programme	Each meeting	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual Accounts								
Statement of Accounts 2021-22 (unaudited)	Annually		✓					
Porthcawl Harbour Return 2021-22 (unaudited)	Annually		✓					
Audited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement	Annually					✓		
Porthcawl Harbour Return (audit letter)	Annually				✓			
Governance								
Annual Governance Statement 2021-22	Annually		✓					
Half Year Review of the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23	Annually					✓		
Self Assessment of the Governance and Audit Committee	Annually						✓	
Audit Wales Annual Audit Plan (included in Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports item)	Annually							✓
Annual Audit Summary (included in Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports item)	Annually						✓	
Internal Audit Reports								
Annual Internal Audit Report 2021-22	Annually	✓						
Internal Audit Shared Service Charter 2022-23	Annually	✓						✓
Internal Audit Annual Strategy and Audit Plan 2022-23	Annually	✓						
Internal Audit Progress Reports	Quarterly		✓			✓	✓	✓
Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring Report	Quarterly					✓	✓	✓
Treasury Management								
Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021-22	Annually		✓					
Treasury Management Half Year Report 2022-23	Annually					✓		
Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24	Annually						✓	
Risk Assurance								
Corporate Risk Assessment 2022-23	At regular intervals	✓				✓		
Corporate Risk Assessment and Corporate Risk Management Policy	Annually						✓	
Counter Fraud								
Corporate Fraud Report 2021-22	Annually		✓					
Anti Tax Evasion Policy	Biennially							✓
Others								
Complaints Process	Ad hoc						✓	✓
Disabled Facilities Grants	Ad hoc				✓			
Annual Self Assessment of the Council's Performance	Annually	✓			✓			

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