

# Public Document Pack

## Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

### Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.  
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Annwyl Cyngorydd,

### **CYNGOR**

Cynhelir Cyfarfod Cyngor Hybrid yn Siambr y Cyngor, Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr, CF31 4WB/ o bell trwy Microsoft Teams ar **Dydd Mercher, 22 Tachwedd 2023** am **16:00**.

### **AGENDA**

1. Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb  
Derbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb gan Aelodau.
2. Datganiadau o fuddiant  
Derbyn datganiadau o ddi-ddordeb personol a rhagfarnol (os o gwbl) gan Aelodau / Swyddogion yn unol â darpariaethau'r Cod Ymddygiad Aelodau a fabwysiadwyd gan y Cyngor o 1 Medi 2008.
3. I dderbyn cyhoeddiadau oddi wrth:  
(i) Maer (neu'r person sy'n llywyddu)  
(ii) Aelodau'r Cabinet  
(iii) Prif Weithredwr
4. Derbyn cyhoeddiadau gan yr Arweinydd
5. Sylfaen Treth y Cyngor 2024-25 3 - 8
6. Ailddatblygu Neuadd y Dref Maesteg 9 - 14
7. Hunanasesiad Corfforaethol 2022/23 15 - 56
8. Adolygiad Polisi Cyfarfodydd Aml-leoliad 57 - 74
9. Adroddiad Gwybodaeth i'w Nodi 75 - 80

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10. Derbyn y Cwestiynau canlynol gan:

**Cyng Steven Bletsoe i'r Aelod Cabinet - Addysg**

A allai Aelod y Cabinet dros Addysg ddweud wrthyf faint o ysgolion ym Mwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr sydd wedi cyflwyno "cyllideb ddiffyg" ar gyfer blwyddyn ariannol 2023-24 i'r Awdurdod Lleol a hefyd i ddarparu gwybodaeth berthnasol i mi ynghylch sut mae'r Awdurdod yn gweithio gyda nhw i sicrhau na fu unrhyw ddiswyddiadau staff ac na ddilëwyd darpariaeth addysg o ganlyniad i'r cyllidebau hyn.

**Cynghorydd Tim Thomas i'r Aelod Cabinet Addysg**

A wnaiff yr Aelod Cabinet dros Addysg wneud sylw os yw recriwtio a chadw Ffisiolegwyr Addysgol yn foddhaol yn y Fwrdeistref Sirol i gefnogi lles pobl ifanc.

**Cynghorydd Martin Williams i'r Aelod Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a'r Amgylchedd**

A wnaiff yr Aelod Cabinet amlinellu safbwynt yr awdurdod hwn ar gyflwyno 'Lonydd Tawel' i wella diogelwch ffyrdd yn ein cymunedau gwledig a statws unrhyw gynlluniau cyfredol.

11. Materion Brys

I ystyried unrhyw eitemau o fusnes y, oherwydd amgylchiadau arbennig y cadeirydd o'r farn y dylid eu hystyried yn y cyfarfod fel mater o frys yn unol â Rhan 4 (pharagraff 4) o'r Rheolau Trefn y Cyngor yn y Cyfansoddiad.

Nodyn: Bydd hwn yn gyfarfod Hybrid a bydd Aelodau a Swyddogion mynychu trwy Siambr y Cyngor, Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / o bell Trwy Timau Microsoft. Bydd y cyfarfod cael ei recordio i'w drosglwyddo drwy wefan y Cyngor. Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiwn am hyn, cysylltwch â cabinet\_committee@bridgend.gov.uk neu ffoniwch 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643696.

Yn ddiffuant

**K Watson**

Prif Swyddog, Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol a Rheoleiddio, AD a Pholisi Corfforaethol

**Dosbarthiad:**

Cynghorwyr

S Aspey  
H T Bennett  
A R Berrow  
F D Bletsoe  
S J Bletsoe  
JPD Blundell  
E L P Caparros  
N Clarke  
RJ Collins  
HJ David  
C Davies  
C L C Davies  
P Davies  
S Easterbrook  
M J Evans  
N Farr  
P Ford

Cynghorwyr

J Gebbie  
W R Goode  
RM Granville  
H Griffiths  
S J Griffiths  
D T Harrison  
M L Hughes  
D M Hughes  
RM James  
P W Jenkins  
M R John  
M Jones  
MJ Kearn  
W J Kendall  
M Lewis  
J Llewellyn-Hopkins  
RL Penhale-Thomas

Cynghorwyr

J E Pratt  
E Richards  
R J Smith  
JC Spanswick  
I M Spiller  
T Thomas  
JH Tildesley MBE  
G Walter  
A Wathan  
A Williams  
AJ Williams  
HM Williams  
I Williams  
MJ Williams  
R Williams  
E D Winstanley  
T Wood

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024-25</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>HELEN RODGERS REVENUES MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>The council tax base is set in accordance with the Policy Framework and Budget Procedure Rules</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the estimated council tax base for 2024-25, as required by legislation.</b></p> <p><b>The estimated net council tax base is 55,465.69 based on a collection rate of 97.5%, which takes into account the current economic climate.</b></p> <p><b>Council is also required to approve the tax bases for the individual town and community areas for 2024-25.</b></p>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the estimated council tax base and collection rate for 2024-25. This includes approval of the individual tax bases for the town and community areas as detailed in **Appendix A.**

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council tax base) (Wales) Regulations 1995, as amended, the Council is required to set the council tax base upon which council tax is levied by the authority and other precepting bodies, for the following financial year, prior to 31 December each year. This information is required by the Welsh Government to allocate the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to local authorities and by the Council to calculate the council tax required to fund the 2024-25 budget.

2.2 The council tax base is the measure of the relative taxable capacity of different areas within the County Borough and is calculated in accordance with prescribed rules. Every domestic property in the County Borough has been valued by the Valuation Office. Once valued, properties are allocated one of nine valuation bands (Bands A to I). Each band is multiplied by a given factor to bring it to the Band D equivalent as set out in the table below:

Valuation Band	Tax Proportion	Percentage of Band D
A	6/9	67%
B	7/9	78%
C	8/9	89%
D	9/9	100%
E	11/9	122%
F	13/9	144%
G	15/9	167%
H	18/9	200%
I	21/9	233%

2.3 The Tax Base represents the number of chargeable dwellings in the area expressed as Band D equivalents, taking into account the total number of exemptions, discounts and disabled band reductions, with the net tax base calculated by taking account of the Council’s estimated collection rate. Council tax is measured in ‘Band D’ equivalents as the standard for comparing council tax levels between and across local authorities.

### 3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 The gross estimated council tax base for 2024-25 is 56,887.89 Band D equivalent properties and the estimated collection rate is 97.5%. The net council tax base is, therefore, 55,465.69. The estimated collection rate has been maintained at a rate of 97.5% to reflect the current challenging economic circumstances globally, the cost-of-living crisis leading to a higher number of citizens facing economic hardship, and current collection rates. The collection of council tax income will be monitored during the financial year and any proposed changes to the collection rate included within the council tax base report for 2025-26 in November 2024.

3.2 The council tax base is provided to Welsh Government and is used to calculate the amount of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) that a local authority receives in the Local Government Revenue Settlement. In order to ensure consistency across Wales, when determining the RSG, Welsh Government takes no account of Councils’ assumptions about collection rates - for the purpose of distributing RSG, collection rates are assumed to be 100%. Welsh Government also disregards local decisions around council tax premiums when calculating the RSG allocations. The amount of council tax due for a dwelling in Band D is calculated by dividing the annual budget requirement to

be funded by taxpayers by the council tax base. A set formula is then used to calculate the liability for the remaining eight Bands.

- 3.3 The council tax element of the Council's budget requirement for 2024-25 will be based on the net council tax base of 55,465.69. Although the Council calculates the tax base for the whole of the county borough, separate calculations are provided for each town and community council. This council tax base is used by precepting authorities in calculating their own individual precepts. Town and community councils base their precepts on the tax base for each town and community area and details of these are shown in **Appendix A**.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 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.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The well-being objectives are designed to complement each other and are part of an integrated way of working to improve well-being for the people of Bridgend. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of the well-being goals or objectives as a result of this report.

#### **6. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

#### **7 Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications arising from this Report.

#### **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 These are outlined in the report.

#### **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is a statutory requirement for the council tax base to be set in order that it can be submitted to the Welsh Government for use in the RSG and used by Councils and levying bodies to set precepts. Council is recommended:

- to approve the council tax base and collection rate for 2024-25 as shown in paragraph 3.1 of this report.
- to approve the tax bases for the town and community areas set out in **Appendix A**.

**Background documents:**

None

## Estimated County Borough Tax Base 2024-25

Community Council Area	Total Tax Base (No. Band D Equivalent Properties)	Estimated Collection Percentage	Net Tax Base (No. Band D Equivalent Properties)
Brackla	4299.72	97.5%	4192.23
Bridgend	6246.89	97.5%	6090.72
Cefn Cribwr	574.03	97.5%	559.68
Coity Higher	4303.17	97.5%	4195.59
Cornelly	2634.75	97.5%	2568.88
Coychurch Higher	362.92	97.5%	353.85
Coychurch Lower	693.28	97.5%	675.95
Garw Valley	2357.28	97.5%	2298.35
Laleston	5179.42	97.5%	5049.93
Llangynwyd Lower	177.25	97.5%	172.82
Llangynwyd Middle	1070.11	97.5%	1043.36
Maesteg	5820.31	97.5%	5674.80
Merthyr Mawr	154.75	97.5%	150.88
Newcastle Higher	1910.09	97.5%	1862.34
Ogmore Valley	2680.42	97.5%	2613.41
Pencoed	3555.36	97.5%	3466.47
Porthcawl	8437.92	97.5%	8226.97
Pyle	2609.47	97.5%	2544.23
St Brides Minor	2368.44	97.5%	2309.23
Ynysawdre	1452.31	97.5%	1416.00
<b>Total County Borough</b>	<b>56887.89</b>	<b>97.5%</b>	<b>55465.69</b>

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# Agenda Item 6

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>REDEVELOPMENT OF MAESTEG TOWN HALL</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES  AND  CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>DELYTH WEBB  GROUP MANAGER STRATEGIC REGENERATION</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>In line with the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules, section 3.2, all virements (both revenue and capital) above £500,000 shall require approval of the Council after taking into consideration the recommendations of Cabinet.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>Following the report taken to Cabinet on 21st November 2023, this report provides a short update on the Maesteg Town Hall project and, subject to the approval of the Cabinet report, requests the approval of a virement of £1,173,530 within the capital programme from the Waterton Depot Scheme to the Maesteg Town Hall project.</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- provide an update on the Maesteg Town Hall Project
- subject to the approval of the Cabinet report on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023, seek approval from Council for a virement within the capital programme of £1,173,530 from the Waterton Depot scheme to the Maesteg Town Hall Project, to support an agreed uplift in the capital allocation for the project. The details of the virement are set out in section 8 below.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 On 18th February 2020, the Authority entered into a construction contract with Knox and Wells Ltd for the redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall with an initial contract value of £6,199,387. Knox and Wells Ltd commenced their works contract for the Maesteg Town Hall Re-development in March 2020.
- 2.2 Works started on site in March 2020, just 2 weeks before the national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst limited works were able to continue during this period, delays during that period have had an unavoidable knock-on effect to the completion of the contract due to a number of factors, including a reduced workforce because of pandemic working restrictions and staff self-isolation requirements; Covid lockdown led to significant difficulty in securing materials and sub-contractors as a result of pandemic closures. In addition to this there have been considerable changes in the economic climate and contamination to areas of the site covered by original structures were uncovered.
- 2.3 Early in the programme, in October 2020, the Cabinet member for Education and Regeneration agreed by delegated power referenced CMM-PPU-20-31 to the modification of the Maesteg Town Hall re-development construction works contract to include additional works to refurbish the clock tower, roof cupolas and south annex roof, at additional cost and time to the programme. The decision to undertake these works has significantly enhanced the project and safeguarded these elements. It has also minimised the risk of having to return to site and renovate later. These significant milestones have now been completed but have caused a delay to the original programme. These modifications to the contract were made in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) and resulted in an uplift of £827,624 in the value of the contract to £7,027,011. This uplift was taken from the total project budget and did not require additional finances to be made available within the capital programme.
- 2.4 During the restoration of this magnificent Grade II, 141-year-old building, further discoveries were made, beyond those identified above, which required further additional works to be undertaken to conclude the project. These works included remedying extensive dry rot, and widespread lime plastering works, along with smaller elements across the building. Due to the nature of the historic building these could not have been revealed at design stages without significant intrusive and destructive works.
- 2.5 Therefore on 15th November 2022, Cabinet agreed to the modification of the Maesteg Town Hall re-development construction works contract to include additional works and services by the contractor which had become necessary since the initial procurement and increase the contract value to £7,708,418 in accordance with rules 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. This uplift was taken from the contingency values allocated within the total project budget and did not require additional finances to be sought from the capital programme. In addition, it was

debated and agreed by Council and the decision scrutinised by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at this time.

### **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 The extent of additional works and unforeseen discoveries detailed above over the course of the project have resulted in a delay to the overall project timescales. The detail of a revised programme is being confirmed with the contractor which takes account of the unforeseen works above.
- 3.2 The current contract limits are set at £7,708,418 for the works contract and £327,230 for the professional services contract (total £8,035,648).
- 3.3 To enable the re-development to proceed and address further areas of dry rot not previously identified, and to safeguard specific structures against future dry rot, the works contractor has been asked to provide a cost and programme to accommodate this additional work.
- 3.4 In addition to the works contract there are also other legitimate professional services costs associated with the project which need to be accounted for and would increase overall project costs. Professional service costs are those which cover our external contract manager, surveyors, cost consultant, and external advisors associated with delivering the contract. All known and anticipated costs have been incorporated into the figures presented within this report.
- 3.5 Based on information available to officers at this time, and as agreed by the project manager, the current financial position of the project means that an uplift in capital funding of £1,173,530 is required. It should be noted that these are interim figures.
- 3.6 This interim funding needs to be agreed in order to be able to issue instructions to progress with the scope of the existing contract, so as not to delay the final completion of works further.

### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this proposal. The proposed scheme will develop full disabled access to the Town Hall for the first time. The project as a whole will ensure that there is a positive impact on the equalities agenda.

### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment Template has been completed and a summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is below:

- Long Term: The regeneration of the Town Hall will drive local prosperity, providing local employment opportunities and offering better environments to promote the health and well-being of those who live, work and visit town centres in the long term.
- Prevention: By improving the Town Hall it will strengthen the existing economic assets of not just the Town Hall but surrounding businesses while diversifying its economic base. Converting underutilised commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the town centre.
- Integration: The project will focus on delivering a set of physical, commercial and social improvements through re-developing an iconic Grade II listed building which in recent years has been under used. The project will generate employment opportunities; provide a prominent and suitable arena for commercial, learning and cultural use and help sustain Maesteg Town Centre and increase town centre footfall.
- Collaboration: The Authority will be undertaking a partnership approach to deliver positive enhancement to a key site that will include for repair, restoration and extension of a prominent listed building. The Authority, in partnership with our cultural services providers Awen Cultural Trust, have carefully developed the project through a combination of consultation and community engagement, technical testing and development.
- Involvement: Investing in a community offers a means to connect with local stakeholders. Strong, resilient communities will reinforce the regional and Welsh culture which is a key feature in promoting visitors and tourists to the area. Increased visitor numbers to the Town Hall will help to make the County Borough and wider region.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 Taking action to support decarbonisation is critically important in order to protect and sustain the environment over the long term. The development at Maesteg Town Hall has considered all available options within its design and delivery to meet a reduction in carbon emissions aligned with the Council's wider decarbonisation commitment. This is a Grade II listed building, with significant value in its original design and construction. However significant emphasis will be placed on mitigating and reducing the carbon emissions of our heritage infrastructure and assets.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 Due regard has been paid to the BCBC Safeguarding Policy which seeks to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services. Given the subject matter of this report no negative safeguarding implications have been identified.

## 8. Financial Implications

8.1 The financial impact of the completion of this project is not insignificant. The request to increase the funding package and the associated contract fall outside of the Capital financial envelope for the Maesteg Town Hall Redevelopment within the Council approved Capital Programme. Therefore, subject to Cabinet's recommendation on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023, further funding of up to £1,173,530 is required at this point in time to support the request to increase the contract values.

8.2 Current Maesteg Town Hall capital position:

	Value
Current Capital Project Costs (assessment value)	9,958,660
Capital Programme Budget (total scheme budget)	8,785,130
Capital Shortfall	1,173,530

8.3 This report seeks agreement from Council for a virement of funding from within the existing capital programme of £1,173,530 from the Waterton Depot scheme to the Maesteg Town Hall scheme.

8.4 An application has been made to the National Lottery Heritage Funding (NLHF) for additional grant to finance the new package of work included within the uplift in project costs. If the £316,091 from the NLHF is approved the request to vire £1,173,530 can be reduced to £857,439. The impact of the virement on the Waterton Depot scheme is as follows:

	Value
Current Capital Programme Budget	8,144,000
Revised Budget based on virement of £1,173,530	6,970,470
Revised Budget based on virement of £857,439	7,286,561

8.5 If approved by Council, this will be built into the updated capital programme which will append the Quarter 3 capital monitoring report to Council in February.

8.6 The reason the request is being made to vire from the capital allocation for the Waterton depot scheme is that at present the project has not been progressed and the financial values for delivery are unknown. An update report on this scheme will be brought to Cabinet and or Council once the position is known.

## 9. Recommendations

9.1 Council is recommended to approve a virement within the capital programme of £1,173,530 from the Waterton Depot scheme to the Maesteg Town Hall Scheme. This approval is requested subject to the recommendations of Cabinet following the report being taken to Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023.

9.2 Council is also asked to note that should external capital funding be secured this virement will be amended down to £857,439.

**Background documents:**

None

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>ALEX RAWLIN, POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>Council priorities arising from the self-assessment inform Service Plans and the Annual Improvement Plan which form part of the Policy Framework.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The report outlines the process and findings of the Council’s self-assessment for 2022/23.</b></li> <li>• <b>The approach is more embedded in regular quarterly reporting than in the previous year.</b></li> <li>• <b>The main differences from last year’s final report are –</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Challenge sessions took place earlier</b></li> <li>○ <b>Case studies are included</b></li> <li>○ <b>More comprehensive coverage of consultation and engagement through the year is included</b></li> <li>○ <b>Annual performance data will be published alongside and to support the self-assessment</b></li> <li>○ <b>Planned consultation is more comprehensive.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>The self-assessment judgements are –</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Wellbeing Objective One – Good</b></li> <li>○ <b>Wellbeing Objective Two – Adequate</b></li> <li>○ <b>Wellbeing Objective Three – Good</b></li> <li>○ <b>Use of resources – Adequate</b></li> <li>○ <b>Governance – Good</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Changes have been made to reflect public responses during the formal consultation period</b></li> </ul>

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council’s second corporate self-assessment report and judgements, and to seek approval for the draft report in **Appendix 1**.

1.2 The Welsh Government Statutory guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1, of the Local

Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the Council to present the self-assessment to Governance and Audit Committee. This was completed in July 2023 (pre-consultation) and November 2023 (including changes to be made based on consultation responses).

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which received royal assent in January 2021, set out a new local government improvement regime. The Act requires the Council to make and publish a self-assessment report once each financial year. The self-assessment report has to set out conclusions on whether the Council met the 'performance requirements' during that financial year, and actions needed to improve. The 'performance requirements' focus on -
- Are we exercising our functions effectively;
  - Are we using our resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
  - Is our governance strong.
- 2.2 The Council published its first self-assessment in October 2022 based on performance in 2021/22. The process was new, but based on existing data, reports and review / challenge meetings where possible. Feedback on the report was generally positive in terms of the honesty and transparency of ratings, length of the report and simplicity of the language. However, some Elected Members felt that annual performance data should have been published alongside self-assessment. For the 2022/23 report, the annual performance dashboards (those that were considered at the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) session on 14 June 2023) will be published alongside the self-assessment. For future years, with the new corporate plan, a more user-friendly performance summary will be developed.
- 2.3 Many parts of the self-assessment process have now been embedded in the Council's regular performance management process, for example the regulatory tracker and inclusion of consultation, engagement and involvement in the quarterly dashboard. By design, it was intended that the process for 2022/23 should be simpler and less resource intensive than the previous year.
- 2.4 Existing end of year performance processes / timelines have been used to capture Directorate self-assessments of performance to satisfy the first performance requirement (as in 2021/22). However, this year a simpler template was designed with the previous year's information pre-populated for Directorate Management Teams (DMTs) to update. Directorates were asked provide a realistic assessment of progress, use plain English to outline their challenges and achievements, retain the format of the information and keep contributions brief and to the point. The 4 templates were then collated by the Performance Team for scrutiny and challenge.
- 2.5 The main change to this section is the inclusion of case studies. Having reviewed all other self-assessments in Wales, this is the one feature that stood out. Around half of local authorities included case studies, and they added an extra dimension to the reports.
- 2.6 The second performance requirement, on use of resources, also followed a similar process to last year. The seven use of resources templates were reviewed and



updated by the lead officers. All of the seven areas have been included in the work of Audit Wales in the past year, and in many cases reviewed and discussed by the Governance and Audit Committee, or Scrutiny Committees, or are included in the year ahead, so there is significant additional evidence to draw on. These seven were then collated by the Performance Team for scrutiny and challenge.

- 2.7 The third performance requirement, on governance, is largely covered by the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is scrutinised and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. This document was summarised, and used to inform the self-assessment.
- 2.8 The Corporate self-assessment process and findings have, in large part, already been considered by many members through Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) meeting in July and Governance and Audit Committee sessions in July and early November. Changes to the draft self-assessment report have been made as a result of those discussions.

### 3 Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The draft findings from each of the three performance requirements were pulled together into a single presentation for a full-day Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) meeting on 14 June 2023 and considered alongside end of year performance. Their changes were used to develop a draft self-assessment report.
- 3.2 The Council’s proposed self-assessment judgements for 2022/23 are –

<b>Wellbeing Objective One</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing Objective Two</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>Wellbeing Objective Three</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Use of resources</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Good</b>

- 3.3 Following its consideration at Governance and Audit Committee, the Council commended formal consultation on the draft document with the public as well as -
- discussion with Trade Unions
  - discussion with Town and Community Councils at the Town and Community Council Forum

3.4 The Council developed a communication plan for the draft self-assessment. The draft self-assessment was available over the summer on the Council’s website. Social media, the citizen’s panel and a range of partner discussions were used to raise awareness of it. The Council consulted on the draft self-assessment between 17 August and 28 September 2023. The level of responses was –

- 584 visitors to the consultation page
- 238 responses to the questions
- 129 downloads of the self-assessment (just over half of those who responded)

Although a communication plan was developed and implemented, this is still a relatively low response rate. This provides some crucial learning for the self-assessment consultation process in the future which will need to be changed.

3.5 Responses to the individual, closed questions posed throughout the consultation document are summarised in the table below. They show that –

- Just over half of respondents (52 - 56%) agreed that we had provided sufficient evidence in each section of the report (albeit almost half had not read the report)
- A slightly lower proportion (49 - 55%) agreed that it was clear what more we have planned in each section of the report (again, this should not come as a surprise given almost half had not read the report).
- A slightly higher proportion (54 - 58%) agreed the judgements were about right.

	Did we provide enough evidence?		Is it clear what more is planned?		Is the judgement about right?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Wellbeing Objective 1	120 (53%)	105 (47%)	111 (50%)	112 (50%)	121 (54%)	103 (46%)
Wellbeing Objective 2	115 (52%)	108 (48%)	111 (50%)	111 (50%)	131 (58%)	94 (42%)
Wellbeing Objective 3	127 (56%)	100 (44%)	123 (55%)	100 (45%)	125 (56%)	100 (44%)
Use of resources	116 (52%)	109 (48%)	110 (49%)	114 (51%)	128 (57%)	98 (43%)
Governance	116 (52%)	109 (48%)	113 (50%)	112 (50%)	120 (54%)	103 (46%)

The intention was that respondents gave feedback having considered the evidence provided. But almost half of respondents did not download the self-assessment evidence and their responses are likely to be on the basis of individual / anecdotal perceptions of performance. Again, the performance team will reflect on this issue moving forward and seek to find a method that better allows judgements to be made on the evidence provided.

3.6 Large numbers of comments were made on the open questions in each section of the consultation. The most frequent issues raised about the Council were –

- The Council does not listen to residents
- The Council does not provide information on what it is planning / doing
- It is hard to get responses from the Council
- Council tax and business rates are too high

- Bridgend town centre is neglected and does not feel safe
- Services that everyone uses (like roads and pavements, grass cutting, parks, waste collection) are not being prioritised

The feedback also demonstrates that there is more work for us to do to provide information to the public on the Council's priorities and ensure there is greater understanding of the services the Council delivers and the choices it has to make with limited resources. For example, the Council does not set and is not responsible for the level of business rates. The comments are like those in the Corporate Plan consultation. The new Corporate Plan, delivery plan and Performance Indicators have been developed to reflect this and should provide significantly more detail on these areas of interest for future self-assessments.

3.7 As over half of respondents were satisfied with the contents of the consultation report, the judgements have not been changed following consultation. As the results were relatively close in terms of those satisfied or dissatisfied with the contents of the consultation report, changes are made to the broader content and context of the report, to reflect that balance as well as some of the specific feedback and comments including –

- A new section early in the report summarising progress on the specific areas for improvement identified in the first self-assessment.
- Additional general information on the consultation undertaken on the self-assessment and responses received.
- Information on consultation responses to each separate section
- A summary of the key issues raised for each separate section, within that section.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 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 review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this information report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 This report measures progress against the following corporate well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that formed part of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-23:-

1. Supporting a successful sustainable economy
2. Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient
3. Smarter use of resources

5.2 The 5 ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act form a key part of the key lines of enquiry for officer and member challenge of the self-assessment findings. The annual wellbeing assessment will be merged with the annual self-assessment for 2022/23, as it was for 2021/22.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 There are no specific implications of this report on climate change. However, the self-assessment will consider the Council's performance and progress on specific climate change related commitments and targets in the Corporate Plan 2018-23.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 There are no specific implications of this report on safeguarding or corporate parenting. However, the self-assessment will consider the Council's performance and progress on specific safeguarding and corporate parenting related commitments and targets in the Corporate Plan 2018-23

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with these arrangements.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 Council is recommended to: -

- Endorse the corporate self-assessment report 2022-23 in **Appendix 1**

## **Background documents**

None.

## Appendix 1

### Corporate Self-Assessment 2022/23

#### 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 2022 to 5 April 2023.

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 published guidance that told us how to develop our self-assessment and what evidence to use to judge ourselves.

#### 2. The changing world for local government

The world has changed a lot since the pandemic, and it is having a big impact on the way the Council works.

The cost-of-living crisis is making things difficult for you as residents and businesses, and it is making it harder for the Council to manage too. Some of the challenges your Council faces are –

- Increasing energy costs for community centres, leisure centres and schools
- Increasing fuel costs for school transport, home carers and recycling vehicles
- Changes to the cost and availability of goods like food for residential homes and building materials for new schools
- Pay rises for our staff who provide indispensable services
- Government asking us to provide extra services like distributing cost of living payments
- Impacts on residents that add demand to services, including increased homelessness and safeguarding referrals
- Funding for the Council not increasing at the same rate as prices.

#### 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 well-being 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			✓
A healthier 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 more equal Wales	✓	✓	✓
A Wales of cohesive communities	✓	✓	✓
Vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language	✓	✓	
A globally responsible Wales	✓		✓

The Future Generations 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. This report covers the final year of the corporate plan 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 and presents it to councillors who look at the data, check it and ask questions. This was done for the year 2022-23 in June 2023. We use this information to come to a judgement on each priority using this scale -

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

### **Consultation, engagement and communication**

We developed a communication plan for the self-assessment. The draft plan was available over the summer on our website and we used social media, the citizen's panel and a range of partner discussions to raise awareness of it.

For the first time this year, we have formally consulted on our self-assessment. The consultation was available on the council's website between 17 August and 28 September 2023. The response rate was –

- 584 visitors to the consultation page
- 238 responses to the questions
- 129 downloads of the self-assessment document (only just over half of those who responded)

This is quite a low response rate. For future years, we will need to develop a different approach to consulting on our self-assessment.

More detailed responses to the consultation have been included in each section of this document.

## **Our progress against last year's areas for improvement**

In our 2021/22 Annual Self-Assessment we identified a series of areas that needed specific improvements in the 2022/23 year. Below is an update on the work we have undertaken in these areas. More detail is provided on actions to date, and those that are still planned in each detailed section of this report. In 2022/23 we have -

### **Priority One**

Provided **significant, continuing support for schools to deal with the impact of COVID-19**. Schools have done self-evaluation work with their improvement partners to identify where extra support is needed for learners after the pandemic. Young people who are engaging with support services are presenting with a wide range of social and mental health difficulties, and the majority have said the pandemic is the main contributor.

Undertaken a range of activities to **improve school attendance**, including school attendance audits, a new task and finish group with headteachers, education welfare officers and legal representation to revise the local authority's attendance strategy, truancy patrols, encouraging use of a 'buddy system' and reintroducing the Consortium's 'Callio' system.

Appointed an exclusion lead in the Education Engagement Team to help make sure schools follow the **right processes and procedures on fixed-term and permanent exclusions**.

Worked with Central South Consortium to support schools on self-evaluation and assessment, continuous improvement, and **implementation of the new Curriculum**.

Worked with the council's cabinet and scrutiny committees to **address the budget pressures** we are facing in education, including school transport and the school modernisation programme.

Made some improvements to our **staffing capacity issues in the education directorate**, including strengthened staffing resource within Early Help Screening Team and Education Engagement Team, learner support, the Communication and Relationships Team (CART) and the school modernisation team.

Continued to improve the **Bridgend Youth Justice Service**, which is now no longer under special measures and the Youth Justice Board has removed any formal monitoring of the service.

Had our **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)** approved by Welsh Government covering 2022-2027 and appointed a full-time Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Co-ordinator. All actions in the WESP for 2022-2023 have been completed.

**Reinvigorated Bridgend Business Forum** to deliver business support events, including a business support event in June 2022.

### **Priority Two**

Developed an action plan to **address workforce issues in children's social work and domiciliary care**. We have made progress by using agency workers to make sure we meet statutory duties, bringing in social worker support officers, introducing market supplements to salaries, developing a social worker charter and recruiting an officer to



promote the opportunities in social care roles. We are also making progress on international recruitment and growing our own future social workers.

To help us **improve the consistency of social work practice in children's social care** we are implementing the 'Signs of Safety' model of social work practice and staff have received training on this approach. We have had three inspections of our children's social services in the last year, and each has shown improvement.

To **improve the quality and consistency of children's residential care services**, we have done a review of our residential provision and appointing a dedicated Responsible Individual who is responsible for the quality of care. Regulatory inspections have shown an improved position.

To **improve the 'front door' of children's services**, we have put more staff into our multi-agency safeguarding hub and despite increases in demand we are performing well. In adult services, we have improved our use of the 'common access point' by diverting calls that don't need a social services response to other appropriate services in the council.

Set up a youth voice forum to help us listen to the voices of care experienced young people. We are improving the way we **develop services with people who will use them**, good examples of this recently include the young carers card and supported living for people with learning disabilities.

Putting in new pathways to **improve the hospital discharge processes**, but capacity in community care services is still a challenge. We are modernising in-house domiciliary care, getting rid of 'split shifts' and recruiting to vacant posts.

Been out to tender for a new carer's wellbeing service **to enhance support for carers**. We have a new direct payments policy which was developed with parents and carers. We have developed a young carers network, young carers ambassadors and expansion of benefits through the young carer's ID card.

Worked with BAVO to develop community representative networks that support prevention and well-being, operating our National Exercise Referral scheme and developing Disability Sport, supporting the development of Age Friendly Communities and running programmes of family support including the Family Active Zone, Made for Mams and Early Years opportunities. **Leisure and cultural services are recovering from the pandemic** with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable and preventing escalation of need.

Developed a **Play Sufficiency Action Plan for 2022-24** which has been approved by Cabinet. It aims to secure the best possible play opportunities for children and young people in a broad range of activities across the county borough.

Made further **progress on ALN reform** including implementing the ALN Improvement Plan, developing an effective cluster working model involving additional learning needs coordinators, establishing a weekly ALN Panel and creating an ALN Statutory Team. We have opened a learning resource centre (LRC) for learners with moderate learning difficulties in Welsh-medium primary school (Ysgol Cynwyd Sant) and an LRC for learners with autism spectrum disorder in an English medium primary school (Tremains Primary School).

Commissioned a review report on the **major strategic parks in Bridgend**. In the coming year, we will consider the recommendations and implement an action to address them.

Continued the programme of **improvements to children's play areas** with 9 playgrounds completed in 2022. £2.9m further investment is planned for the next two years, including accessible play facilities

Developed and consulted on a new, four year '**Housing Support Programme 2022-2026**' to explain the top priorities for the council and its partners in the delivery of homelessness prevention and housing support services.

Worked with Welsh Government and other authorities on our **approach to housing refugees** (including Ukrainian refugees)

Worked with the joint partnership board to **understand the needs and views of prisoners in Parc Prison**. The partnership is currently establishing a whole prison approach to the prevention of ill health, promotion of well-being and a focus on recovery and rehabilitation; and to a single shared vision and rehabilitative culture for HMP & YOI Parc.

### **Priority Three**

Concluded the statutory processes for the **Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr and Heronsbridge School** proposals and started the design process for the new schools. We have developed options for delivery during future bands of the School Modernisation Programme, which will be considered in coming year.

Improved the proportion of our buildings that meet **required standards for compliance**, appointing a compliance officer and Schools Surveyor. Statutory compliance is now over 90% on 4 of the 5 Big Risk areas - Gas, Electricity, Fire and Asbestos. A Legionella Officer has also now been appointed.

Continued to develop our future service delivery approach, and now have an agreed **hybrid working policy and flexi-time working scheme in use**.

Awarded an **interim waste contract for 2024-26** to Plan B Management Solutions Ltd, ensuring that our waste and recycling will continue to be collected when the current contract ends in March 2024. We are already working on plans for waste in Bridgend after this contract, from March 2026.

Developed and published a new, **Biodiversity Duty Plan, 2022 to 2025**, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to promoting the resilience of ecosystems.

We have not been able to open the **new community recycling facility in Pyle** and realise the savings this creates. But we have submitted an updated application for a permit from Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

Consulted on, published, and started to implement our **net zero carbon strategy and action plan, Bridgend 2030** to help us respond to the climate emergency.

### **Use of Resources**

The budget for 2022-23 was agreed in February 2022, before major increases in inflation, energy costs and the cost of living. This means our service budgets have been under severe pressure during the year. The **way we monitor and act on financial pressures**

**has improved**, including holding budget briefings for members. In the coming year, deep dives will be added to the budget setting process to make sure all areas of service are examined and reviewed.

**Improved our self-assessment process** to make it part of the council's regular performance management approach and formally consulted on the draft report

**Developed a new, 5 year Corporate Plan** that explains the council's priorities and a 1-year delivery plan to measure our progress on them. As part of this, we have also agreed a plan for improving the way the council manages performance.

Acted on the findings in the **2021 staff survey** and ran a new staff survey in late 2022. An action plan has now been developed to address this including actions on the organisational culture, understanding of priorities, management, communication and engagement, knowledge and skills development and hybrid working.

Developed a **new participation strategy** for the council that will be published soon, and a digital engagement platform to help residents contribute to council decision making by taking part in consultations.

Made plans to set up a working group with commissioners and the corporate procurement team, to help us **make commissioning more consistent**.

**Improved our asset management** by reviewing the 2030 Strategic Asset Management Plan, reducing our maintenance backlog, improving our management of Statutory Building Compliance, and made progress on the Integrated Works Management System (IWMS) to improve our data and benchmarking.

Developed a **Strategic Workforce Plan** which will be approved at Cabinet in the coming year. Strategic Workforce Planning training for Directors and HR officers has been undertaken with the Local Government Association.

### **Governance**

Completed work on the Council Chamber and Committee rooms, so **hybrid meetings** can be held.

Developed a **new constitution and easy read guide**, to make us consistent with other councils across Wales.

Done a programme of **induction, training and development with elected members**.

## 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	<b>GOOD</b>
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- **Learner outcomes** – There is no data available for the school year 2021-2022 for comparison with previous years. We continued to align monitoring and evaluation processes with Welsh Government's 'Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability'. Work continued with secondary schools to improve progress of Key Stage 4 learners and to retain Post-16 learners. A Post-16 Improvement Plan has been approved. Schools submitted 'Statements of Intent' for any changes to their curriculum, to share good practice, improve collaboration and avoid duplication. Unfortunately, young people in Bridgend who are engaging with support services are presenting with a wide range of social and mental health difficulties, and the majority have said the pandemic is the main contributor. We delivered the first phase of the universal primary free school meals for pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.
- **School support** – We worked with Central South Consortium to support schools on self-evaluation and assessment, continuous improvement, and implementation of the new Curriculum. Estyn resumed school inspections in spring 2022. There are currently no schools in statutory categories in Bridgend, but six schools are receiving 'enhanced monitoring'. School self-evaluation work with their improvement partners continues to identify where additional support is needed for learners after the pandemic. Officers offered enhanced support and more frequent monitoring visits to any early years non-maintained setting if concerns were identified after inspections.
- **Welsh Language Education** – The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) has been approved by Welsh Government covering 2022-2027 and we have appointed a full-time Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Co-ordinator. All actions in the WESP for 2022-2023 have been completed. Welsh language immersion provision continued to develop and numbers of Year 1 learners in Welsh-medium primary schools has increased. Our capital schemes are helping to grow Welsh-medium school places. Construction work for the Welsh-medium childcare scheme at Bettws was completed.
- **Attendance and exclusions**– The creation of an exclusion lead within the Education Engagement Team has assisted schools in ensuring the correct processes and procedures are being followed related to fixed-term and permanent exclusion. While the percentage of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions in primary schools, in the 2021-2022 school year (reported in 2022-2023), was static when compared to pre-pandemic levels, the situation in secondary schools was double pre-pandemic levels.
- **Regeneration** - The Town Centre Masterplan for Bridgend, including redevelopment of the Railway station are progressing. The new site for the Bridgend College Campus in the town centre is being cleared and prepared and the planning application is in. The Placemaking agenda for Porthcawl is looking at infrastructure, public realm, and green

spaces. The Aldi store at Salt Lake is now open. The £6m sea defences scheme is complete at the Eastern Promenade and open to the public. The Council got an £18m grant for the Grand Pavilion, to refurbish and extend the venue and provide a wider range of events and activities. We are working with housing providers to invest in housing in the Town Centres. Maesteg Town Hall is progressing, but its completion date is delayed. We are investing in town centres and working with partners to redevelop sites and buildings. The regeneration programme delivered over £600k of improvement grants for commercial premises after covid. There is £1.36m support available for a further 3 years. Vacant properties in all town centres have decreased.

- **Business support** - The Bridgend Elevate and Prosper Project (EAP) is supporting start-ups and micro-business. Business start-ups have increased to 770, that is by a further 28% since 2021-22. The socially responsible 3-year procurement strategy and delivery plan is ensuring our spending is more accessible to local small businesses and the third sector. There is significant demand for the new commercial units at the Cosy Corner development in Porthcawl and we are working with Agents to let these new premises which will open in August 2023.
- **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. The number of people from the Employability Scheme who have gone into employment is 392 in 2022-23. We have also addressed work poverty by assisting some 107 people into higher paid jobs.
- **Tourism** – We have worked with partners to put on events to increase tourism in Porthcawl, including the Senior Open Golf tournament at Royal Porthcawl. Also giving advice on the Porthcawl Triathlon, Porthcawl Truck Gathering and the Porthcawl Elvis Festival. The Cosy Corner development will provide new community facilities following a £3m investment and will be complete in late summer 2023. More people are visiting Bridgend and Porthcawl, this is up by 3% from last year and has now reached pre-pandemic levels. Tourism expenditure data will tell us more at the end of the year.
- **Transport** - Work is continuing on new active travel routes throughout the Borough to ensure that communities are linked via sustainable transport means. This work is funded via a Government Grant scheme and an annual application is submitted. The active travel schemes are included as an integral part of the Council's Strategic Transport Plan, which is in the process of being updated and will be put forward to Cabinet for approval in Autumn 2023. The Porthcawl Metrolink Project is progressing well and is on target for completion in Spring 2023. Other major transport schemes including the new Penprysg Road Bridge in Pencoed and improvements to the Railway Station in Bridgend remain strategic priorities but are not currently funded. Work will continue with partner organisation such as Transport for Wales, Welsh Government and the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) to look at potential funding opportunities.

## Regulators assurances

Our education services were last inspected by Estyn in [March 2019](#). Since the inspection, we have been working to address their recommendations, raising the standards of literacy in primary schools, improve outcomes for post-16 learners in sixth forms, increasing the pace of improvement in schools causing concern and strengthening the role of the Welsh Education Strategic Forum (WESF) to deliver the priorities in the WESP.

Estyn also carried out an inspection of Adult Community Learning in February 2023 and the Estyn report that was published on 7 June 2023 identified that many learners make suitable progress in their learning with the partnership offering a useful range of courses, based on the Welsh Government priorities of literacy, numeracy and digital skill, and

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) The partnership provides a range of impartial advice, guidance and support to help learners stay on track and progress in their learning and Estyn identified that the partnership worked effectively together providing advice, support and guidance to learners with honest evaluations.

### Consultations and engagement activities

Consultation	Dates	Findings and Impact
WESP 2022-2032 and 5 year WESP plan.	July 2022 to March 2023	WESP was approved by the Welsh Government and workshops held with Welsh in Education Forum to create the five-year WESP plan.
Healthcare needs policy	January to March 2023	Consultation and engagement sessions held with pupils, staff and parents. Pupils felt their health care needs were being met in school and that if they voiced an opinion then they would be listened to. Pupils felt confident that staff had the knowledge and awareness to take action where needed. Information was provided to schools and parents to explain the policy. Further awareness to staff and pupil provided in regard to assisting with their health care needs.
Planning for improvement	Ongoing	School support attend and support the engagement of all primary and secondary schools leads within the 'Planning for Improvement' network. Workshops take place, alongside guest speakers / opportunities to network / share information.
Seren activities	Ongoing	Activities organised by Seren hub co-ordinators aim to provide learners with increased resilience to dealing with exam stress, workload and everyday life. Learner voice is regularly requested, and feedback has informed us that their engagement in the events has been impactful.
Higher education programme	Ongoing	Aimed across all key stages has also promoted resilience and healthy mental well-being whilst dealing with school pressures.
Bridgend Forces Festival	June 2023	We worked with 'Forces Fitness', 'YourNorth' and 'SSCE Cymru' to create the 'Bridgend Forces Festival' for service children. 100 service children, who are categorised as vulnerable learners, came together for the first time to take part in activities to improve their well-being and resilience. The festival highlighted emotional challenges that service children face in their education through interviews and questionnaires.
Local Development Plan – Examination in Public	January to March 2023	The Planning Inspector is considering the evidence, but no significant changes have been requested to date. It is anticipated the outcome will be known in late Autumn 2023.
Consultation on the Hybont Project at Brynmenyn Industrial Estate	Dec 22 ongoing	Two public exhibitions held on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2022 these were followed up with a post consultation feedback public information event on the 9 <sup>th</sup> February 2023. The formal planning application has now submitted and is being determined by the LPA.
Consultation on 2030 Strategy	Dec 2022 ongoing	The Strategy is now approved by the Council and an action plan was approved by Cabinet in December of 2022.
Placemaking strategy in Porthcawl	Completed May 2023	The overarching strategy was consulted on in March 2022, and provides a framework to shape future development within the regeneration area. Flowing from that a further consultation

		on Public Open Space has also been taken place between to May 2023, including meetings with all schools in Porthcawl, stakeholder workshops and public consultation at the Pavilion.
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## **Consultation responses**

The responses to the consultation on the self-assessment showed –

- 53% of respondents believed we provided enough evidence of our actions / progress
- 50% of respondents believe it is clear what more we have planned
- 54% of respondents think the judgement of ‘Good’ is about right

The main issues raised in the open questions about this wellbeing objective were –

- Bridgend town centre is neglected, with lots of empty shops
- Business rates are too high and there isn’t enough support for businesses
- Education is so important that budgets should be protected

## **What will we do to improve?**

Some of the main improvements we will make for this priority are –

- Using the Post-16 Improvement Plan, we will work with schools to improve outcomes for learners in sixth forms.
- The use of permanent exclusions will be reviewed, and we will increase opportunities for managed moves in schools in Bridgend.
- We will support the ambitions of the local authority’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) (2022-2032).
- We will deliver at least 20 more face-to-face Adult Community Learning sessions and increase learner engagement by 20%.
- That the Bridgend Business Forum delivers business support events in 2023.
- Introduce the Integrated Works Management System (IWMS) to improve the speed of work instructions and real time statutory compliance data.

## **Case studies**

### **Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd**

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd is a Welsh-medium secondary school that received The Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) grant, to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic on learners. The funding provided an opportunity to recruit a teacher to focus on Years 11, 12 and 13, to provide support and increase retention of post-16 learners. The school has also appointed a classroom assistant to help learners with welfare issues, transition and develop the use of Welsh to build learners’ confidence. The school encourages learners to have confidence in speaking Welsh, by providing tutor sessions and cross-cutting activities to practice oral language, in groups or through one-to-one sessions. The school also works with parents so that they also emphasise the importance of using the language. The school has focused on addressing the needs of different learner groups and aspects of the curriculum, by setting up groups to develop literacy, numeracy and digital competency skills, as well as providing transition to learners in years 5 and 6. Learners have been graded based on their support requirements so that targeted support can be provided, which includes one-to-one work with the pastoral team, mentoring sessions and additional help with their work. Through blended learning and

collaboration with other schools, resources and expertise can be shared to enhance the support provided to learners. The school plans to work in partnership with universities to utilise cross-cutting skills to develop a balanced programme of learning.

### **Oldcastle Primary School**

Oldcastle is an English medium primary school in Bridgend with 445 learners. Well-being champions have worked with all year groups on key life skills. Learners have experienced how to cook, grow vegetables, basic sewing, and increased understanding of the importance of keeping healthy. A well-being dog is now part of the team, supporting more anxious learners arriving at school every morning, and working with target groups during 'Thrive' and well-being sessions. The 'Recruit Recover and Raise Standards' (RRRS) grant has also been utilised to employ a Family Engagement Officer trained in the Thrive approach to work with learners and their families. They address attendance issues using a mixture of approaches including one-to-one, nurture groups, attendance meetings, and linking with external agencies. A structured enrichment programme takes place every Friday afternoon delivered by the whole school staff. This offers a range of activities, skills, and experiences. Through this, all learners have access to the same opportunities. External professionals are often involved, and a network of community members now exists. As a result of the grant and the projects it has supported, there are closer relationships between the school, parents, and the community. Attendance has improved across the whole school, most notably amongst learners with anxieties around attending school. Behaviour has improved with Thrive and 1-to-1 sessions available to be booked or accessed instantly.

### **Corneli Primary School**

In 2015, Corneli Primary School opened a savings scheme, in partnership with Bridgend Lifesavers Credit Union. Since then, Corneli Primary has won a Credit Unions of Wales award for a video entry and has been nominated for a Credit Unions of Wales School Partnership. Nearly all pupils and families now understand the benefits of regular saving and financial management. Through pupil voice, older pupils have taken ownership working alongside staff and governors to successfully manage weekly savings provision. The majority of staff, as well as members of the community, save on a weekly basis as role models for pupils. The school has created a real-life context where pupils can save for a purpose. The school has enhanced its Enterprise initiative weeks and has had an integral role in developing the 'Four Purposes' of Curriculum for Wales. Standards of financial literacy have increased across the school impacting on problem solving and thinking skills. A more positive impact has developed on attitudes towards financial management within the community, as well as enhanced life skills and social skills needed to thrive in society, and enhanced life chances and quality of life and to enable future aspirations for employment and economic well-being.

### **Cosy Corner Development**

In October 2020 the planned regeneration of the Cosy Corner site, by Credu, ended and the site returned to the Council as a partial commenced construction site. We wanted to develop this prominent and valuable site for a community facility. We have worked with Visit Wales to develop a design and secure funding and in May 2021, appointed architects to develop a single storey glass and stone building containing community facilities, including accessible toilets and a changing place facility, new facilities for Marina Berth Holders and the Harbour Master, shops and restaurant. This building will be surrounded by landscaped grounds and





have a children's play area and outdoor seating. Extra Welsh Government funding has been secured, planning permission granted and in May 2022 John Weaver Construction were awarded the construction contract. The site will be completed, opened and occupied by new businesses by August 2023 and will hugely enhance the tourism and community offer on the

Porthcawl waterfront as well as providing business and employment opportunities.

## 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 well-being 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** - Increases in demand in children's social care continue, including people contacting social care and needing safeguarding investigations. There are challenges across the health and social care system and difficulties recruiting and keeping social care staff. We have focused on improving quality and performance. Our plans to improve workforce recruitment and retention, include using agency workers to make sure we meet our statutory duties, bringing in social worker support officers to case management teams, introducing market supplements to salaries in some teams, development of a social worker charter and recruitment of an officer to promote the opportunities in social care roles. We are making progress on international recruitment. Social worker trainees and secondees are being supported to help us develop a professional social worker workforce in the long term. We are also making sure that specialist well-being support can be provided.
- **Children's services** - Delivering children's social care services is still very difficult but we are making progress on our top priorities of practice improvement, workforce, provision of services, hearing and acting on the voice of people and effective partnership working. We have worked with partners to prepare, understand and act on learning from the child practice review and our own internal reviews, including 6 week and 6 month plans for all parts of children's social care. We have retained our gold, silver and bronze governance structures to deal with continuing high levels of contacts to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and information advice and assistance services (IAA). These services have been reviewed and a future model for the service agreed. We have appointed a lead for Social Worker Transformation who has started implementing 'Signs of Safety' model of practice to drive practice improvement. We are embedding focused learning from audits and reviews and enhanced performance data to ensure continued management oversight of the service. We have done a review of our residential provision and strengthened leadership by appointing a dedicated Responsible Individual. We have improved our Quality Assurance framework in residential children's services. The solo residential provision which was registered in November 2022 will build capacity into our residential services.
- **Adult services** - There have been challenges in meeting care and support needs in a timely way in adult services. We are improving our customer services and response

times to initial inquiries through the Social Work Review Project and Corporate Front Door project and the introduction of the new telephone systems. We are focused on strength based social work practice and quality assurance and management oversight is being strengthened. A new 'Outcome Focused, Strength Based' model of practice has been launched which will strengthen further how we understand and act on what matters to individuals. Pressures in meeting the needs of older people is a high priority. We are putting in new pathways to improve the hospital discharge processes, although capacity in community care services is still a big challenge. We are modernising in-house domiciliary care services, getting rid of 'split shifts' and recruiting to vacant posts in care and support roles. Deep dives are being done in every adult social work team and a new operating model will be approved in 2023. Where changes have been needed more quickly, they have been made. We are transferring the Council's telecare service from analogue to digital and improving the use of assistive technology to improve outcomes for people. We are reviewing our learning disability direct services to make sure we have a sustainable day opportunities and supported living model.

- **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform** – Our ALN implementation Plan 2022-2023 was completed and Early Years ALN processes were established and embedded. We continued the quality assurance monitoring of local authority individual development plans (IDPs) for learners and the use of Early Years ALN toolkits by Early Years settings. We held events for school staff and partners to support those involved with ALN Reform. We extended our provisions for primary-aged learners with ALN, opening two new learning resource centres in autumn term 2022 - one at Tremains Primary School for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, one at Ysgol Cynwyd Sant for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- **Safeguarding** – We are accountable to the Regional Safeguarding Board for making sure we are safeguarding children and adults at risk. They are responsible for publishing child / adult practice reviews. One child and one adult practice review were published in 2022/23 about Bridgend. Four more child practice reviews will be published in the coming year. We host a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) where Council officers and partner agencies work together to respond to safeguarding concerns. In the last year we have strengthened the leadership and governance of social care services by employing dedicated Responsible Individuals who oversee the safety and effectiveness of these services. We hold Corporate Safeguarding Group meetings monthly where safeguarding data is reviewed. Silver group meetings take place fortnightly / weekly chaired by the Corporate Director to consider performance data and areas of pressure so that the whole council understands what's going on. These meetings report up to a fortnightly gold command meeting chaired by the chief executive and attended by the Leader/ Deputy Leader. We have improved the way we safeguard children at risk of harm from criminal or sexual exploitation. Two officers have been appointed and an exploitation panel established bringing together partners to address the risks. We also have an Education Safeguarding Board which meets termly and examines safeguarding data and practice across the directorate. Information is about policies and procedures is shared. All schools in Bridgend have adopted the Safeguarding Board policy. Schools do audits on their safeguarding approach and 90% of schools are rated as green, 10% as amber and none are red.
- **Housing** - The Council's housing duties changed during the pandemic and we must provide accommodation for 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 different options including hotels and Airbnb's to provide temporary accommodation as the supply of suitable accommodation can't be met through our usual supply of accommodation. During 2022/2023 we have also needed to provide housing for Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war in their country. At the end of March 2023 198 Ukrainian individuals had arrived in the local authority, of which 100 individuals have found housing in the area. The Council has also worked with one of our Registered Social Landlords to bring 35 long term voids back into use.

- **Community Safety** – We have dealt with 1219 anti-social behaviour referrals and 88% were successfully addressed at stage 1. We have worked with partners to improve CCTV coverage, brighten up spaces with Street Art and employ taxi marshals so that no-one is left waiting alone after a night out. The review of regional Community Safety arrangements has been completed. Assia domestic abuse service has completed needs assessments on 2,010 referrals. We have delivered exploitation workshops for college students and tutors and training on domestic abuse awareness and coercive control. All Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) representatives across the region have been fully trained in the process and understand their role. A SafeLives review resulted in us recruiting a dedicated Older Persons IDVA alongside our Male Victim IDVA. We chair and contribute to the local joint agency Events Safety and Advisory Group which advises event holders on risk assessments and general safety and good practice planning for public events.
- **Recreation, green and open spaces** – In November 2022, Council approved the Biodiversity Plan 2022-25, setting our plans to protect and enhance biodiversity. It includes new projects at the disused coal washery site at the Ogmore Washeries and the “Dune 2 Dune” Project, bringing together nature reserve managers, volunteers and landowners to sustainably manage habitats along the coastline of Bridgend. A comprehensive programme of improvements to children's play areas is continuing with 9 playgrounds completed in 2022. There is £2.9m further investment in playgrounds throughout the Borough targeted for the next two years, including accessible play facilities, such as wheelchair friendly roundabouts. We have transferred a further 10 assets in 2022-23 through the community asset transfers programme (CAT's). This is below target, but is reflective of the cost price inflation everyone is experiencing.
- **Youth Justice** - There was a reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the Bridgend Youth Justice Service (YJS) and a reduction of re-offending behaviour among children and young people. In line with the ‘Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021’, a robust system was developed to monitor the education, training and employment (ETE) of young people engaged with the YJS and ensure education needs are met. The service continued to collect and present the views of service users to education provisions. An in-house accreditation scheme enabled ETE work undertaken by service users to be recognised and awarded accordingly. The Council also made a bid for funding through the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) via its Trauma-Informed Practice Funding Round, co-funded by the Home Office, which funds projects that aim to gain knowledge of successful strategies to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. This ‘Relationship Building Together’ (RBT) project would help us look at how services using the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) can benefit children and young people affected by trauma.
- **Family Support** - Edge of Care services supported 527 children and prevented over 90% of them from becoming care experienced. Funding was secured to continue development of a trauma-informed approach. The ‘Rise Service’ was successfully implemented, providing practical, emotional and therapeutic support to families.

Despite the increasing complexity of cases supported by the Early Help staff, 75% of Team Around the Family support plans were closed with a successful outcome, 2% higher than in 2021-2022. Inspectorate Wales categorised all of our Flying Start settings as 'good' or better.

- **Prevention and Well-being** – These services are steadily recovering from the pandemic with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable and preventing escalation of need. We are including working with BAVO to develop community representative networks that support prevention and well-being, operating our National Exercise Referral scheme and developing Disability Sport, supporting the development of Age Friendly Communities and running programmes of family support including the Family Active Zone, Made for Mams and Early Years opportunities. Services for carers have been reviewed and improved including developing a carers ID card. Like other services with high energy consumption, leisure venues have significant cost pressures.

### Regulators assurances

An inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons in 2022 found significant improvement in our Youth Justice Service. Since then, the Bridgend Youth Justice Service has further strengthened its management structure, partnership relationships, preventative service offer and first-time entrant system, to give good, timely services to children who need support. The service is no longer under special measures and the Youth Justice Board has removed any formal monitoring of the service.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out a Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) of children's social care, published in May 2022. They identified a number of areas requiring improvement where they had significant concerns. The Improving Outcomes for Children Board, chaired by the Chief Executive and informed by an independent advisor, focused on delivering actions in the 3-year strategic plan to address these concerns and make improvements.

CIW undertook a follow up improvement check in November 2022 which found that improvements had been made but further actions are needed, so it remains that the Authority's Childrens Services require improvement. Evidence from other councils who have been in similar positions tells us that 3 years is a realistic timescale to progress from being a service where there are serious concerns to one that requires improvement (at the end of year 1) to adequate and then good performance. And it requires understanding and action across the council to improve. We will test progress against our 3 year plan in coming months and present an updated plan to Cabinet in September 2023. This will be a sustainability plan, financial strategy, workforce plan and action plan.

There have also been a number of inspections of regulated care services. Where priority action notices or improvements have been identified there has been good progress made in follow up inspections in the vast majority of cases.

### Consultations and engagement activities

Consultation / engagement	Dates	Impact
Engagement on the play sufficiency assessment	March 2022- Nov 2022	Diverse range of engagement exercises on play opportunities and facilities with children and young people including those with diverse needs.

Care experienced and care leavers' Youth Forum	Ongoing	Meet regularly to inform a range of work – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Director's Annual Reports.</li> <li>recruitment and selection for a variety of Children Services posts.</li> <li>media clips for Member training</li> <li>The Corporate Parenting brand / strategy</li> <li>name of a new Childrens Residential home</li> <li>consultation on the Saving Policy and evaluation of Foster Carer Reviews</li> </ul>
Care reform	Ongoing	Two young people represent Bridgend CEC Forum as Ambassadors for Voices from Care Cymru. They have been involved in a summit meeting with Ministers to discuss reform of the care system in Wales. The result has been a declaration on radical reform to the care system and the production of a Welsh Parliament report 'If not now, when?'
Promoting advocacy	Regular Meetings	Engagement including the local advocacy attending Bridgend Locality Safeguarding & Community Safety Group, promotion of advocacy as part of routine contract monitoring with providers, Learning Disability Advocacy Service, People First Bridgend, being embedded in local stakeholder groups.
Community meetings in domiciliary care services	Quarterly	Feedback on areas including health and well-being, Health and Safety, community and 'at home' activities
People's First Bridgend, an independent advocacy group for people with learning disabilities and autism	Regular meetings	Contributions on the development of services. Including advocacy, self advocacy, easy read documentation, support for representation in planning groups and assistance with service developments.
Group for people with experience of substance misuse	Regular meetings	Link to similar regional groups. Involvement in appointments / service developments.
The young carers network	Quarterly - engaged over 280 young carers	Well-being workshops were co-produced and ran, in partnership with young carers, "You are Valued" days. Young adult carer ambassadors are leading the network group. Young Carers Network Group created and co-produced opportunities to support physical and mental well-being.
Feel good for life	August 2022	The National Lottery has provided 5 years investment to further progress the work and develop learning and insight into the Feel Good for Life programme
What Matters conversations by the carer well-being service	410 conversations	581 people received information, advice or assistance including signposting.
Consultation on service user experiences	May 2023	4 online questionnaires to inform the annual director of social services report and how to

		improve our services. Analysis of findings will be included in the 2022/23 annual report
Homelessness strategy	Throughout the year	Stakeholders have been engaged during the year in the development of the new homelessness strategy. This included interviews with officers and elected members, service users and partners and an online survey. The findings have been included in the homelessness strategy and action plan.

## Consultation responses

The responses to the consultation on the self-assessment showed –

- 52% of respondents believed we provided enough evidence of our actions / progress
- 50% of respondents believe it is clear what more we have planned
- 58% of respondents think the judgement of ‘Good’ is about right

The main issues raised in the open questions about this wellbeing objective were –

- Town centres do not feel safe – there are drugs and alcohol everywhere
- There is not enough for children to do and playgrounds aren’t good enough
- There should be more focus on cleanliness and maintenance of open spaces

## What will we do to improve?

Some of the main improvements we will make for this priority are –

- We will increase adult basic education provision by 50%.
- Working with our partners, we will take the actions within the ALN Implementation Plan for 2023-2024.
- We will develop an effective cluster working model involving ALN co-ordinators and we will train individual development plan (IDP) champions within ALN clusters.
- In partnership with Mudiad Meithrin, we aim to provide Welsh-medium childcare in Bettws and in the Ogmere Valley by September 2023.
- We will make UPFSM available for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils from April 2023 and Nursery pupils from September 2023.
- Complete the merger of the community safety partnerships to create one Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Safety Partnership and continue to ensure local issues are considered in a timely manner
- Consult on our new draft homelessness strategy and get it agreed by members
- Work with Welsh Government and other authorities on our approach to housing refugees (including Ukrainian refugees)
- Improve our work with Registered Social Landlords to improve housing options.
- Address workforce issues in social worker and social care worker including international recruitment and ‘growing our own’ workforce of the future
- 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 through implementing our Signs of Safety model of social work practice.

- Improve outcomes for adults with care and support needs through implementing our 'Strength Based, Outcome-Focussed' model of social work practice
- Open our new children's residential care service and implement enhanced therapeutic support for all our residential care and inhouse fostering services
- Deliver year one of a sustainability plan for children and families
- Work with partners to deliver our Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Work on admission avoidance and discharge services with the NHS to reduce delays in people receiving care
- Develop capacity in reablement services so more people are able to be supported to retain or regain independent living skills
- Provide enhanced support for adult and young carers through carer's networks
- Enhance well-being and preventative support in all parts of the County through appointment of local community co-ordinators
- Modernise learning disability services to ensure people are supported to live as independently as possible and enjoy meaningful day time occupation
- Awareness Raising of the Bridgend Biodiversity Duty 22-25
- Continuing to progress Community Asset Transfers

## Case studies

### Telecare

Telecare supports people in their own homes when they need support to remain independent. It offers the security of knowing someone can help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Telecare packages are tailored to individual's needs, and adapt as peoples' needs change. In 2017, BT announced plans to switch off their analogue telephone network and replace it with a digital solution. This meant we had to switch over to digital technology, and we decided to become one of the first Welsh authorities to do this. £1.4 million funding for the project was agreed as part of the budget setting process and the project team manage this budget. The project team are working with the installers - Care and Repair. At the moment, the remaining replacement installations are taking place by post code area. The next phase of the project will see new installations taking place.

### Super -Agers



BCBC has led a regional project called Super-Agers, to support older adults to have healthy and active lives and to be connected to support in their community. The programme has included community based exercise and activity sessions and also the training of older adults to lead and run their own activities. The Super-Agers programme has included events such as the Olypage games including inter-generational approaches with young people from Bridgend College and local secondary schools. £3.80 of social value has been delivered for every pound invested. People who have done the activities have valued the support provided, opportunities to have social interaction and build bonds in their communities and opportunities to gain information and advice in less formal settings.



## Corporate Parenting

We have recently launched a new Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Deputy Leader, worked with care experienced children, young people, care leavers and Bridgend Youth Voice Forum to co-produce the document, working with council officers, partner agencies and elected members. The strategy focuses



on addressing the needs, views and wants of our care experienced children and young people to help them live happy, fulfilling lives. It includes a list of promises made by over forty professionals, carers and councillors, stating their own commitment to children and young people. The strategy has been welcomed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Deputy Minister for Social Services, both of whom visited Bridgend for the launch of the Strategy. The launch event itself was facilitated by eight representatives of

Bridgend Youth Voice Forum

## Signs of Safety

Children Social Care is working with Wales' only Licensed Signs of Safety Consultant, to implement the Signs of Safety framework. It is a child protection framework using a questioning approach, and focusing on the strengths in families to ensure safety and good care. The framework uses assessment, danger statements and safety goals to help professionals and families through the child protection process. Children's Social Care introduced Signs of Safety to their workforce and partner agencies during two Launch days in March and through two multi agency workshops in April. The Leadership Team also presented their Leadership Promise, which highlighted their commitment to staff and the families they work with. Staff have been attended training and practice days to help them use the signs of safety approach. There are also workstreams that focus on meaningful measures, system alignment, leadership and management, learning and development and partner agencies. Social Workers and Social Work Assistants have provided lots of examples of where they have used a number of creative direct work tools with children to help achieve positive outcomes. Families who have been involved in using this framework, report that they feel more positive about intervention, felt more included and able to understand the process.

## Community Asset Transfers (CAT)



To date the Council have spent or committed £1.38 million in improving community assets including, sports pavilions, bowling greens, children's play areas and community centers through the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme. This has been an

investment in assets that have been or are to be handed over to community groups, sports clubs or town and community councils for future management and operation. The CAT program secures the long-term viability of assets and makes sure that future generations

continue to be able to enjoy the benefits these assets bring to the community. 10 further assets were transferred in the 2022/23 financial year.

### 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 made budget reductions of over £18.5 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	<b>GOOD</b>
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- **Budget reductions** - The budget for 2022-23 was agreed in February 2022, before major increases in inflation, energy costs and the cost of living. This means our service budgets have been under severe pressure during the year. We have had to pay for increases in staff pay, energy costs across all our properties, and increased cost of food in the school catering service. There also been a significant pressure on the capital budget due to inflation, supply chain issues and lack of staff.
- **Digital transformation** - Bridgend County Borough Council's Digital Strategy outlines how we aim to achieve being a Digital Council. It aligns with the ambition of the Welsh Government 'Digital First' strategy focusing on; getting smarter by understanding challenges; using resources more effectively, developing integrated solutions and planning future developments based on better evidence. End-to-end integrated digital services will be built around the people who use them, meeting our priorities to help people and their communities. The successful implementation of the digital strategy will lead to improved services, embedded community benefits, integration with well-being goals, citizen satisfaction and reduced service costs.
- **Estates** – 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, reduce or use our office spaces in a smarter digitally enabled way. Our capital receipts have achieved their targets, as the sale of the land at Salt Lake in Porthcawl to Aldi was completed at £3.5m. Although our buildings are classed as safe, some compliance targets have not been met, but they are significantly improved, with gas, electricity, fire safety and asbestos compliance being above 90%. We have appointed a legionella officer and have commissioned a new legionella contract and expect to see compliance in this area significantly improve over the next twelve months.
- **School modernisation** - Construction was completed of the Bettws Welsh-medium childcare setting, and we commenced a process to source a service provider. The statutory consultation processes concluded for the replacement Mynydd Cynffig Primary School, replacement Heronsbridge School and the replacement Ysgol

Gymraeg Bro Ogwr and we commenced the design stage for all three schools. We concluded the first stage of the design process for the Bridgend West scheme, which will provide a new English-medium primary school (that is, to replace Afon y Felin Primary School and Corneli Primary School), and replacement Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr. We commenced consultation processes in respect of a proposed enlargement to Coety Primary School and a proposal to establish a Welsh-medium seedling school and childcare provision in Porthcawl. We completed a scoping exercise and commenced the tender process for kitchen pod schemes, which will form a critical element of the next implementation phase for the delivery of UPFSM.

- **Corporate change** – We developed a plan for future working with our staff and trade unions, improved staff well-being activities, and continued work on our 'grow your own' schemes to develop apprentices and graduates. The Future Services Delivery project continues to look at the hybrid working model which offers a blended approach that takes account of the wide range of services delivered. We have some new regional frameworks where we procure goods and services jointly with other authorities, for example grounds maintenance and civil engineering.
- **Waste** – Our recycling rates are 70.49%, making us one of the top recyclers in Wales. Waste generated per person has reduced by 9% over the last year. 76% of people rate waste services as very or fairly good. The new community recycling centre at Pyle is complete although the site is yet to gain its operators licence from Natural Resources Wales. We recycle 40% of Street litter. Public campaigns are ongoing around food waste recycling, reminders on what to place in recycling containers, nappies and garden waste. Anti-dog fouling messages, including on our enforcement policy have been promoted. We are out to tender for an interim waste contract for 2024 to 2026. This will use the same vehicles and waste collection methodology. Options for future waste services are being prepared for post-2026.
- **Sustainability** – We are part of the Welsh Government's net zero carbon plan for the public sector and now have an approved Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy. 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 which is already savings energy and reducing utility bills. Phase 2 of the re-fit scheme is being designed. £3m of Active Travel routes have been implemented we have an additional £1.5m to continue routes throughout the borough. We have invested £1.3 million to install energy and cost saving technologies to reduce energy consumption and CO2 emissions. Including replacing all our 16,000-street lighting in the Borough with LED bulbs. We have installed a network of electric vehicle charging points across the Borough, 27 chargers are in use, 20 are awaiting power connection. We are trying to speed up our fleet transition. We have implemented a Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy to make sure our suppliers also focus on climate change and circular economy.

### **Regulators assurances**

In August 2022, Audit Wales completed a review of the council's performance management arrangements. The review sought to answer the question: Do the Council's performance management arrangements support robust and effective decision-making and improvement? Overall, it found that: The Council's performance management arrangements do not consistently enable it to effectively evaluate and manage its performance. Following the review, we have made improvements in various areas but there is a lot more to do. A plan has been developed so that these improvements can be

agreed, communicated and monitored, including recruiting to the remaining vacant post, developing and publishing a new performance framework, improving our data quality and accuracy and improving our performance culture.

The Local Government Association (LGA) carried out a peer review of our Communications and Marketing functions during February 2023 which involved assessors spending a number of days talking to the key individuals involved in providing this service, seeking feedback from relevant stakeholders and observing how the Council communicates both within the organisation and externally with residents. As a result, we received a series of recommendations from the review and an action plan has been developed for the next year, that will help our communications to be more effective and more aligned to our priorities.

### Consultations and engagement activities

Consultation	Dates	Impact
Héronsbridge School	April 2022 to May 2022	Consultation processes concluded in respect of a 300-place replacement Heronsbridge School on the Island Farm site. Engagement with staff and pupils regarding the school relocation and Cabinet approval gathered for relocation.
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr	March 2023	Consultation processes concluded in respect of regulated alteration to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr in the form of an enlargement of the school to 2.5 form-entry, a 90-place full-time-equivalent nursery and an 8-place observation and assessment class. The replacement school will be located on land off Ffordd Cadfan, Brackla. Consultation session held around the design of the school.
Mynydd Cynffig Primary School	July 2022 and October 2022	Consultation processes concluded in respect of regulated alteration to Mynydd Cynffig Primary School in the form of an enlargement to 2 form-entry plus a 75 full-time-equivalent nursery. Engagement sessions held with staff, pupils and governors around the design of the site.
Budget Survey	December 2022	The findings informed the final budget proposals and Corporate Plan objectives which were approved by Cabinet at the end of February and Council on March 1st. They have also informed this self-assessment.
Staff survey	December 2022	Responses are feeding into the ongoing development of the strategic workforce plan as well as informing corporate plan objectives.

### Consultation responses

The responses to the consultation on the self-assessment showed –

- 56% of respondents believed we provided enough evidence of our actions / progress
- 55% of respondents believe it is clear what more we have planned
- 56% of respondents think the judgement of ‘Good’ is about right

The main issues raised in the open questions about this wellbeing objective were –

- It is hard to talk to council staff
- Complaints about roads, potholes and 20mph limits
- Complaints about waste collection, litter and flytipping

### **What will we do to improve?**

Some of the main improvements we will make for this priority are –

- A new nine-year investment programme for school modernisation will be established during this year in preparation to commence in April 2024.
- We will complete the creation and integration of key information into the new management information system and develop data reporting mechanisms to ensure services have access to good quality data, which can be used to inform service improvements.
- Continue to address the recommendations of the Audit Wales reports on workforce planning, asset management and performance management
- Continuing to develop our Future Service Delivery approach
- Develop our budget, savings plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Implement the provisions of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes)(Wales) Bill once these are known and understood. Following completion of the public consultation, Cabinet will decide on the content of the Air Quality Action Plan for the Park Street Air Quality Management Area and implement improvement measures.
- Implement the action plan for communications following the LGA peer review
- Complete, consult on and publish a new workforce strategy
- Work with HMLR to migrate all local authority land charges data to a central register to streamline the homebuying process
- Agree a regional framework for food procurement by December 2023
- Refreshed Corporate Fleet Transition Plan to accelerate move to ULEV.
- Develop options for our future waste service model for post 2026
- Open the new community recycling facility in Pyle and realise the savings this creates.
- Design & Implement Phase 2 of the Re-fit Scheme to reduce our building energy costs
- Put in place a further 43 electric vehicle charging points by August 23

### **Case studies**

#### **Grow Our Own**

We want to invest in people to develop future skills and secure employment. Staff development is promoted to enhance skills and our human resources teams have been encouraging the use of grow your own approaches to help with recruitment challenges. These include an apprenticeship programme which started in 2013, and focused on ICT, Procurement and Building Control. Following appointment, regular support is also in place for the learners and their managers, whilst a programme of planned workshops is established for all apprentices. With Corporate investment and coordination, there has been an increase in the number and range of apprenticeships, including in social care, highways and planning. We have now appointed 151 apprentices, with 85 securing permanent roles. This has increased capacity; helped us overcome skill shortages and helped with staff retention. The council launched the introduction of a corporately

coordinated in-house graduate scheme in 2021, recognising that such roles can make an important contribution towards building capacity, skills development, and workforce planning, at a higher level. We have appointed 7 graduates across a range of services, such as planning, digital transformation, policy performance and public affairs, commissioning and civil engineering. The aim is to provide graduates with a programme where they will be exposed to genuine challenges early on in their development. They will be equipped with a base of skills to meet and manage these challenges effectively and ensure that each experience provides opportunity for personal growth.

### **Valleys 2 Coast**

A digital platform was launched in March 2021 to allow elected members and the public to report issues with V2C homes or in their local area. Since then, 45,605 users have created an online account. There are 105 forms available via the digital platform. From May 2022 to February 2023 there were 82,343 transactions. Using this digital platform has enabled the Council to review some of its operational models of work, for example, the waste and recycling team introduced tablets for operatives to receive all fly-tipping, litter, abandoned vehicles and other waste issue reports. This has led to the team working more efficiently, as well as reducing the need to produce paper work tickets and unnecessary administrative tasks.

### **Empty Properties**

Bridgend Council worked in partnership with Valleys to Coast to bring 35 long term empty properties back into use. This was done using over half a million pounds from Council resources. Our contribution allowed Valleys to Coast to secure an extra £2 million of funding from Welsh Government towards the refurbishment and improvement of the properties. Investment was not only focused on bringing the properties back into use but also improving the energy efficiency of the homes, reducing running costs for the future tenants.

### **Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme**

Welsh Government made funds available for a 2022-23 Fuel Support Scheme to help people with their living costs. Eligible households claimed a one-off £200 cash payment to provide support towards paying their winter fuel bills. The scheme was open to households where an applicant was in receipt of specific benefits between 1 September 2022 and 31 January 2023. To administer the scheme, the Council developed an on-line system that maximised automated technology to process applications quickly and accurately, with minimum data input. In just the first week of the scheme, 9,500 applications were completed (out of 10,500 applications received), with around 9,000 of these approved for payment. At the end of the scheme, 17,854 Bridgend households had received a payment – a total of over £3.57 million of support during the cost of living crisis.

### **Street Lighting**

Between 2018 and 2023 the authority has been replacing our traditional street lights with energy efficient LED lamps. We have changed around 20,000 streetlamps. The work was funded using £2.242 million from the Salix loan programme, (Salix is a non-departmental public body, owned wholly by Government. Salix administers funds on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.) As well as reducing the carbon impact of the authority and contributing to the net zero 2030 ambitions, the programme is delivering annual energy cost savings of around £420,000 every year.

## 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 did not have a common process for reviewing 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 a workshop with managers and staff 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 each other questions based on the well-being 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. This was done in June 2023.

## What are our judgements?

Use of resources	Adequate	<p>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.</p> <p>Use of resources overall is judged as adequate again this year. Significant improvements are underway, particularly around workforce planning, asset management and performance management – with detailed improvement plans agreed following poor judgements in regulatory reviews last year. We are keen to implement these plans but to become ‘good’ will require additional investment in support services.</p> <p>There are still some vacancies and capacity issues both in corporate teams, and the senior managers who work alongside them. In some areas, we need to improve member engagement / challenge and develop modern, joined-up IT systems that help us with decision-making. Some directorates are better resourced than others to be able to respond and</p>
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		work with corporate teams. Those with well-resourced business teams were seen as more successful.
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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 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. The cost of living crisis has impacted on our funding, with much higher than anticipated pay awards and unprecedented levels of price inflation. Our budget has faced unavoidable pressures from all services and any previous flexibility within the budget has been eroded.
Corporate planning	Good	This year we have developed a new corporate plan to reflect the ambitions of elected members, staff and partners. It also reflects the challenges we face including covid recovery and the cost-of-living crisis. It is a different, more accessible document than ones produced in the past. The development process has been more inclusive, working closely with elected members, staff, trade unions, and partners at three stages of its development. The corporate plan was agreed by council on 2 March 2023.
Risk management	Good	Risk management is good. Further improvements have been made to the identification and management of risk, through an updated Corporate Risk Management Policy. Reporting of risk is simple and accessible. The Corporate Risk Assessment is reported to Governance and Audit Committee and up to two risks are looked at in more detail, with the relevant Chief Officer, so members of the Committee can probe in more depth. A review by internal audit of our Risk Management, in March 2023, gave us a 'Substantial Assurance' opinion, and raised no findings or recommendations.
Procurement	Adequate	Commissioning is adequate. Procurement remains good. The Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy, delivery plan and updated Contract Procedure Rules have been embedded and extra training has been provided. We have some new regional frameworks, for example grounds maintenance and civil engineering. We need to work to develop a culture of forward planning and early engagement between commissioners and the corporate procurement team. This will lead to opportunities to identify and address problems and better consider things like Decarbonisation and Community Benefits. A working group will be set up with commissioners and the corporate procurement team, to help us collaborate better to meet the objectives of the Strategy.
Performance management	Adequate	Performance management is adequate. We have had an internal audit of performance indicators and an Audit Wales review of performance management which found that the Council's performance management arrangements do not consistently enable it to effectively evaluate and manage performance. Since then, we have made improvements, but there is more to do. Performance management arrangements are patchy but are good in some areas. A plan has been developed so that these improvements can be agreed, communicated and monitored, including recruiting to the

		remaining vacant post, developing a new performance framework, clarifying roles and responsibilities, improving our performance culture, data quality and accuracy.
Workforce planning	Adequate	Workforce management is good. Feedback from employees, managers, trade union representatives and internal audits is generally positive. Managers are assisted to deal effectively with people issues through appropriate and timely support from HR. The HR operating model, aims to give managers an improved service based on an increasing focus on proactive and preventative HR services and an incremental reduction in the need for and provision of reactive support services. The overall judgement is assessed as adequate as we need to improve capacity amongst managers and in the HR team, and focus on strategic workforce planning, long term workforce needs and succession planning. Following an Audit Wales review of Workforce Planning, we are developing a Strategic Workforce Plan 2023-2028, developing HR policies and procedures, co-designed and to focus on proactive HR services. We need to continue to streamline HR processes, including using automation.
Asset management	Adequate	Asset management policy is good with strong engagement from directorates. The asset management strategy for our property is dynamic and reviewed regularly. The overall judgement is adequate, based on the need to address workforce and resource challenges that result in a continued reactive approach. In response to last year's Audit Wales review we have; reviewed the 2030 Strategic Asset Management Plan, reduced our maintenance backlog, improved our management of Statutory Building Compliance, and made progress on the Integrated Works Management System (IWMS) to improve our data / benchmarking. More improvements are needed, including adopting the strategic asset management plan, continuing improvements in the maintenance backlog and statutory building compliance, implementing the IWMS and focusing on our workforce capacity. Separate reviews are in place for management of other assets including highways / streetlighting.

### Consultation responses

The responses to the consultation on the self-assessment showed –

- 52% of respondents believed we provided enough evidence of our actions / progress
- 49% of respondents believe it is clear what more we have planned
- 57% of respondents think the judgement of 'Good' is about right

The main issues raised in the open questions about this issue were –

- Council tax is too high and shouldn't be increased
- Staff shouldn't be working from home any longer
- Some council buildings aren't needed anymore

## **What will we do to improve?**

Some of the main improvements we will make in our management of resources are –

- Developing and implementing a Strategic workforce plan
- Communicating and implementing the Performance Management Improvement Plan (PMIP) including developing a Corporate Delivery Plan and Performance Framework
- Asset management improvements, including adopting the strategic asset management plan, continuing improvements in the maintenance backlog and statutory building compliance, implementing the IWMS and focusing on our workforce capacity
- Making Corporate planning and updates earlier in the year
- The system we use to monitor and report risk will be improved
- We will work to identify more longer term savings options, based on agreed priorities
- A working group will be established with relevant commissioners in the authority and the corporate procurement team
- Review and update the council's hybrid working policy
- Consider building rationalisation as part of the development of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS)
- Streamline HR processes, including using automation.

#### 4. 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 have well established and effective political governance, with Cabinet as part of regular Cabinet/Corporate Management Board meetings and formal Cabinet meetings, and with full Council when necessary. With scheduled Overview and Scrutiny meetings and an enhanced and important role for the Governance and Audit Committee. Additionally, when required separate member panels are set up to improve the governance process and make better evidenced based, informed decisions. For example, the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) which is used to share emerging budget issues on a confidential cross party basis and the Social Care Member Panel which allows risks and issues in that service to be discussed and better understood at an earlier stage.

#### 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 work well. Our [Governance Framework, Code of Corporate Governance](#) explain how we work, how we are accountable and how decisions are made. In 2022 we developed a new constitution to take into account the new legislative requirements placed on local authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It was approved by Council on 19 October 2022 and implemented from 1 December 2022. A [guide to the Constitution](#) has also been produced and published, to help members of the public understand our constitution. 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. Governance arrangements are reviewed each year to update the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). It is considered and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. A number of significant issues were identified in the Council's 2021-22 AGS, so in the past year we have made improvements including –

- Publishing our first Corporate Self Assessment in October 2022
- Developing a transition plan for the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee
- Updated our Medium Term Financial Strategy to reflect the current position and started a review of our earmarked reserves
- Done work to assess and address issues with increased costs in existing contracts and tenders for new contracts, including a specific piece of work for the social care sector.
- Completed a member induction programme, events, training and drop-in sessions.
- Raised awareness of roles and responsibilities for GDPR when working from home.
- Developed a multi-locations meetings policy, approved by Council on 15 June 2022.

## Consultation, engagement and involvement

There is a large amount of consultation with our local residents and businesses. 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 are in the process developing our new engagement platform which offers various methods of communication tools which are being utilised for enhancing our abilities to connect with residents.

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 December 2022 had over 1000 responses. The survey contained many questions which repeated previous surveys so we can see how we are doing over time. Overall satisfaction with BCBC as an employer has increased in recent years but reduced slightly in the last year, from 59% in 2018, 66% in 2020, 73% in 2021 and 67% in 2022. A detailed feedback report was developed, and an internal action plan is being developed 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.

### Consultation responses

The responses to the consultation on the self-assessment showed –

- 52% of respondents believed we provided enough evidence of our actions / progress
- 50% of respondents believe it is clear what more we have planned
- 54% of respondents think the judgement of 'Good' is about right

The main issues raised in the open questions about this wellbeing objective were –

- The council doesn't listen to residents
- The council doesn't keep residents informed or provide evidence of what it is doing

- There is not enough focus on universal or visible services – litter, fly tipping, maintenance of roads and pavements, grass cutting etc

### **What will we do to improve?**

Some of the main improvements we will make in our governance are -

- Development of the council's strategic workforce plan
- Making improvements to strategic asset management
- Develop a contractors' framework for Disabled Facilities Grants to provide the Council with end-to-end ownership of the process from referral to completion
- Implement our Decarbonisation 2030 plans
- Improve long term financial management
- Providing training on Capital Strategy, Earmarked Reserves and Statement of Accounts for all members.
- Implementing our performance management improvement plan.
- Improving our approach to regular and ongoing engagement and involvement
- Implementing our new participation and engagement strategy for the council
- Improving the council's communication and place narrative and providing additional evidence about actions the council is taking

### **5. 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 old Strategic Equality Plan and action plan to see how we have done;
- Developed a consultation toolkit to improve the way we engage 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.
- Started the process for developing a new Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28

### **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 to understand the characteristics of our service users;
- 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.
- Welsh language standards annual report

**How effective are 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 does this tell us about 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](#).

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# Agenda Item 8

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS POLICY REVIEW</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER, LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>RACHEL KEEPINS DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER AND HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>If approved, the policy will be published on the council's website.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities are required to put in place, and publish, arrangements for multi-location meetings, that is, formal meetings where meeting participants may not all be in the same physical place.</b></p> <p><b>The Authority's Multi-location Meetings Policy was approved by Council in June 2022 with the proposal that this be reviewed in 12 months' time.</b></p> <p><b>This report presents suggested amendments to the policy for consideration and approval by Council, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Removing reference to the pandemic and the requirement for any social distancing;</b></li> <li>• <b>The request for all participants of meetings to keep cameras on for the full duration of the meeting;</b></li> <li>• <b>Clarification on the Chair's responsibility for any voting process during multi-location meetings;</b></li> <li>• <b>Clarification on the process for Members declaring prejudicial interests during multi-location meetings;</b></li> <li>• <b>Clarification of officer support arrangements;</b></li> <li>• <b>Updated guidance for participants joining a remote meeting; and</b></li> <li>• <b>Updated guidance for Chairs.</b></li> </ul>

	<b>It also asks Members to consider whether a more flexible approach would be acceptable when considering which meetings should be entirely remote in line with the policy itself.</b>
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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide full Council with proposed amendments to the Multi-Location Meetings Policy for approval as part of a policy review.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 makes provision to allow for “remote meetings”. At the outset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in March 2020 the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 enabled local authorities to convene meetings by remote means.
- 2.2 Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities are required to put in place, and publish, arrangements for multi-location meetings, that is, formal meetings where meeting participants may not all be in the same physical place. The meeting arrangements are comprised of the rules and procedures adopted by the local authority in accordance with the statutory requirements, and should be reflected in the Council’s Constitution.
- 2.3 Alongside the legally mandated arrangements that authorities must make for multi-location meetings, authorities should develop a wider policy setting out the detailed systems chosen by the authority for the operation of its multi-location meetings.
- 2.4 At its meeting on 15 June 2022, a Multi-location Meetings Policy was approved by Council that took account of interim statutory guidance issued by Welsh Government (WG), which set out a number of guiding principles to be considered in developing multi-location meeting arrangements, as well as practical considerations. The guidance also listed suggested issues to be included in the policy but indicated that the exact contents of the policy will be agreed at local level.
- 2.5 The report also proposed a review be undertaken after 12 months from the implementation of the policy.

## **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 The WG guidance says: ‘*A multi-location meetings policy may make provision that different kinds of meeting be convened, by default, with all participants joining through remote means, or with some arrangement being made for people to attend and participate and observe in person. Policies should recognise that the Act requires participants to be able to join meetings through remote means for all formal meetings. It will not be permitted for relevant authorities to decide that all meetings will be held entirely physically. Physical meetings should not be seen as representing the “gold standard” with multi-location meetings being second best. Physical meetings may be convenient and effective for those most familiar with and comfortable with how they work – but they may also be inaccessible and impractical to many.*’

- 3.2 Following the approval of the Multi-location Meetings Policy and new equipment and systems being introduced in the Council chamber, Multi-location, or 'Hybrid' meetings commenced in October 2022.
- 3.3 Overall these meetings have been successful and have allowed for Members, Officers and the public, to access Council and Cabinet meetings either in person, in the Council chamber, or remotely from various locations.
- 3.4 In light of the review, it was felt an opportune time to update the policy with slight amendments relating to both the changing circumstances of the Authority and the pandemic, as well as clarification for various circumstances.
- 3.5 The updated policy is attached at **Appendix A** with proposed changes incorporated. These include:
- Removing reference to the pandemic and the requirement for any social distancing;
  - The request for all participants of meetings to keep cameras on for the full duration of the meeting;
  - Clarification on the Chair's responsibility for any voting process during multi-location meetings;
  - Clarification on the process for Members declaring prejudicial interests during multi-location meetings;
  - Clarification of officer support arrangements;
  - Updated guidance for participants joining a remote meeting;
  - Updated guidance for Chairs.
- 3.6 The Democratic Services Committee met on 26 October 2023 to discuss the proposed amended policy. The Committee made the following comments and recommendation:
- Members were very supportive of keeping cameras on in meetings. This was particularly the case when it came to contributing to discussions and important meetings involving votes. This was an issue of transparency and accountability.*
- The Committee therefore recommended that in support of the policy, cameras remain on for all meetings with exception being given to circumstances where there are possibly network issues, with notification and agreement of this with the Chair. It was noted that where network issues were consistent for an individual Member, provision of additional ICT support would be considered.*
- 3.7 Within the policy and Welsh Government guidance it is referenced that there is no requirement for each meeting to be held in the same way every time it meets. The Council may decide to hold some meetings entirely remotely and others as multi-location meetings with a number of councillors (or most councillors) present in the Chamber.
- 3.8 Whilst attendance of Members in person for meetings was considerably high following the commencement of multi-location meetings in October 2022, and remains as such for meetings such as full Council and Development Control

Committee, there have been dwindling numbers since this time for many other committees and on numerous occasions there have been no more than 3 Members attending in person.

3.9 The policy states that: *'In determining which meetings may be held wholly through remote meetings and for which physical arrangements might be made available, the Council will consider:*

- *The general circumstances of participants. Participants' needs and preferences may change over time. This Policy allows for arrangements to change where this happens.*
- *The subject matter, and number of participants attending, certain meetings. This may relate to the general matters usually under discussion at a given committee (or other body) rather than the specific agenda for an individual meeting.*
- *The need to ensure that meetings are fully accessible to both active participants and to observers. Accessibility may under certain circumstances require physical provision. Connected to this, whether physical provision for a public gallery, or for the attendance of certain participants, is necessary if the majority of a meeting's participants are joining through remote means'.*

3.10 The Democratic Services Committee briefly discussed the flexible nature of hybrid meetings and whether some committees could go fully remote in some instances, broadly supporting the practice followed by Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, where Members were canvassed in advance about whether they would be attending a meeting in person or remotely. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to research other local authorities' approaches and report back to the Committee for consideration.

3.11 Given the resource intensive nature of supporting multi-location meetings, Democratic Services will continue to monitor the numbers of Members attending hybrid meetings in person over this municipal year with a view to reviewing this at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2024.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 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.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

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

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no Climate Change implications as a result of this report.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no Safeguarding or Corporate Parent implications as a result of this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are ongoing discussions and improvements that are being considered for the Council chamber to assist with hybrid meetings, the costs for which will be considered by the Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change and the Head of Partnership Services. The only potential cost arising directly out of this report and the proposed changes to the policy relate to the possible provision of additional ICT hardware that may have to be purchased should some Members persistently struggle with internet connection when keeping their cameras on. These will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis with a clear business case provided by the Democratic Services Manager, approved by the relevant Business Manager and Finance Officer, and funded from within the existing Democratic Services Budget.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that Council:

- a) Note the comments and recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee at paragraph 3.6.
- b) Approve the proposed amended Council's Multi-location Meetings Policy attached at Appendix A;

## **Background documents**

None

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## Multi-location meetings policy

### Background

Formal meetings of the Council or its committees are convened in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements for those meetings. These meetings are usually held to make formal decisions and are often held in public. Notice of these meetings is published in advance on the Council's website and includes information about the location, timing and business to be conducted. Previously these meetings would have been held with all participants being in physical attendance at a single venue.

Multi-location meetings offer the Council the potential to update and transform the way it does business. It provides opportunities for the Council to become more flexible and efficient and also raise its profile in the local community and to bring its work directly into people's homes. Public access to multi-location meetings is likely to be significantly higher than the level of audiences of formal meetings when all were held physically. This heightened public awareness and involvement is to be welcomed and further encouraged. While these meetings are still "meetings in public" rather than "public meetings" by and large the public will be able to observe but not participate they provide a crucial opportunity for accountability and transparency, and an accessible shop window for many public bodies.

Arrangements were first made in legislation to allow for "remote meetings" in Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. At the outset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, the Welsh Government produced the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020. These established a framework within which all relevant authorities convened meetings by remote means throughout 2020 and part of 2021. Experience of operating meetings under these Regulations has provided relevant authorities with significant expertise in understanding and managing multi-location meetings, now they have been placed on a new statutory footing. The provisions in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021("the 2021Act") can be seen as an evolution of these prior arrangements.

Under the 2021 Act Welsh Government has provided local authorities the power and freedom to convene multi-location meetings which will enable greater accessibility and public participation in local government decision making. When considering arrangements for remote attendance or 'multi-location meetings', authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers. Local Authorities are required to:

- a. Broadcast full Council meetings.
- b. Make and publish arrangements to ensure that all Council, Committee and Cabinet meetings may be attended remotely (i.e. enabling persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting) – also referred to as 'multi-location meetings'.
  - Meetings must be capable of being held virtually, but each authority must decide whether their meetings will be held fully virtually, partially virtually (where some participants are in the same physical location, whilst others join the meeting virtually, also referred to as 'hybrid meetings') or as physical meetings (although authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings).
  - Meeting participants must be able to speak to and hear each other; and for meetings which are required to be broadcast (i.e. full Council meetings), participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other.

- c. Publish all meeting documents on the Council's website, including notices, summonses, agendas, reports and background papers
- A note of the meeting, including Members in attendance and decisions made, must be published within seven working days of the meeting.
  - Notice of meetings is no longer required to be posted at the Council's offices. However, copies of agendas and reports must be made available for the public if meetings are held physically.
  - The Council is also required to make public access provision for Members of the public who cannot access electronic documents, for example, by providing access to computers, copies of documents, or making documents available for inspection.

#### Definitions of words used in this Policy

Generally, the words used in this Policy have the same meaning as they do in the 2021 Act.

A **“relevant authority”** is an organisation which is required to put in place arrangements for multi-location meetings. This covers principal councils, fire and rescue authorities, National parks authorities and port health authorities. It also includes joint committees of these bodies. The obligations of corporate joint committees (CJCs) and of community and town councils are covered in separate guidance.

A **“meeting”** is a formal meeting of a relevant authority convened in accordance with whatever the legal requirements are for such meetings. Formal meetings are usually those where formal decisions can be made; these meetings may need to be held in public and that notice is published beforehand that they are being held. This is not always the case as some meetings, or parts of meetings, are held in private due to confidentiality or exempt issues being discussed. When we talk about these meetings being “convened”, we mean the process involved in organising the meeting and setting and distributing an agenda and reports.

A **“multi-location meeting”** is a meeting of a relevant authority whose participants are not all in the same physical place. In some places these are colloquially described as “remote” meetings. The 2021 Act does not refer to these meetings as “remote”, but that they are attended by “persons who are not in the same place”. At least one participant may be joining the meeting by remote means. For example, this includes meetings of the type described below:

- Meetings of a committee where all participants are in the same physical location except one individual who joins from another location, with a physical public gallery being provided;
- Meetings of a committee where a roughly equal number of Members are present in a physical space and joining through remote means; those joining through remote means may include the Chair;
- Meetings of a committee where all Members are joining through remote means but nonetheless a physical public gallery has been made available in authority premises;
- Meetings of a committee taking place wholly through remote means where no physical arrangements have been made.

Some have described the kinds of meetings described above as “hybrid meetings”.



The statutory guidance and the 2021 Act makes no distinction between meetings where some participants join by remote means and those where all participants do so, but the Council will need to account for the practical differences that different forms of meetings will take, and make plans accordingly.

**“Joining a meeting by remote means”** is being in a different physical location to that of other participants, and participating through an online meeting platform. Where participants are present in a committee room or other physical space which is publicised (through a formal notice) as being the location of the meeting, those participants are present physically.

A **“participant”** of a multi-location meeting is a person who takes an active part in that meeting. They might be a Member, a person giving evidence to a committee as a witness, an appellant or claimant on a regulatory matter, someone presenting a petition, or taking part formally in another way.

An **“observer”** of a multi-location meeting is a member of an audience, or otherwise spectating, a multi-location meeting. They might be in the same room that a meeting is taking place or they might be observing by remote means.

**“Meeting arrangements”** are the rules and procedures that relevant authorities adopt to act on their statutory requirements relating to multi-location meetings, and to act on the recommendations in this guidance.

#### The benefits of multi-location meetings

The Council convened all its meetings by remote means throughout 2020 and 2021 and has subsequently been operating hybrid arrangements. Whilst this has been challenging it also resulted in a number of benefits

- Enhancing and supporting local democracy. Having the flexibility to convene meetings in this way will reduce the barriers that might previously have been in place for explaining and demonstrating how relevant authorities do business.
- Working more productively. When participants come together by remote means, they have often been able to get more done. Multi-location meetings have also resulted in a dramatic reduction in the amount of paper needed and produced.
- Making it easier for the public to observe meetings.
- Making the Council more resilient and sustainable in how it carries out its work. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires relevant authorities to think about, and act on, long term needs in the way that policy is developed and made. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings (although digital activity is not of course carbon-neutral). They can also help relevant authorities to reduce the risk of future unexpected events, such as extreme weather, which could in future present a challenge to in-person meetings. Issues of sustainability are explored in more detail below.
- Reducing the need for travel. Significant time and cost savings for councillors, officers and other participants have arisen. In turn, this makes it easier for participants to take part if they have professional and caring commitments potentially removing some significant barriers to standing for public office.
- Better support for Members from diverse backgrounds, including support that recognises the social model of disability. Just as barriers are being removed to public participation, multi-location meetings have made it easier for care providers, or disabled people, or people with other protected characteristics, to engage on an equal footing. In some cases, participants

have found the formality of physical meetings to be off putting, and multi-location meetings have removed this factor.

### General Principles

The Council will be guided by the following principles when making arrangements for multi-location meetings:

#### **Transparency**

Formal meetings of the Council will be spaces in which democratic debate and decision-making happen. It is fundamental that these meetings are held in public (subject to the specific exceptions available), and that the public are able to access and engage with them.

#### **Accessibility**

Meeting arrangements will need to have regard for the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including ensuring that accessibility is considered in the context of the social model of disability, and for ensuring that the impact of its decisions on democratic arrangements are understood from these perspectives.

#### **Good conduct**

In line with the Nolan Principles, multi-location meetings, as with any other public meeting, should demonstrate high standards of conduct. The Council will have regard to the Model Code of Conduct when making meeting arrangements. Meeting arrangements shall account for the need to entrench more positive behaviours, particularly where these meetings involve a number of people together in a single physical location, where different dynamics may arise.

#### **Use of English and Welsh Languages**

Adherence to legal requirements relating to the use of the English and Welsh languages is a legal requirement. It is a fundamental element of the obligations attached to public bodies in Wales – separate legislation and guidance exists. The Council will take account of its individual Welsh Language Standards and ensure that English and Welsh are treated equally and the Welsh Language is supported and promoted.

#### **Local Needs**

The Council is a democratic institution. Decisions about local democracy and the best approaches to promote and encourage engagement in local democratic systems are best made at a local level. The Council's approach to meeting arrangements will be aligned with its plans for ensuring public participation in accordance with the 2021 Act and understanding the specific needs of a wide range of local people will be part of this.

#### **Future generations**

In agreeing arrangements for meetings, the Council will have regard to the well-being goals and ways of working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and ensure that the principles under the Act are actively embedded in arrangements for meetings. Digitisation has the potential to significantly reduce the Council's carbon footprint and the reduction in travel will also add to the reduction in the carbon footprint.

## Meeting Environment in the Council

The Council's Chamber at Civic Offices, Angel Street will have the ability to fully support multi-location meetings. Any multi-location Committee meeting will be facilitated by the Democratic Services Team who will use the control systems to ensure that the full range of meeting facilities and functionality can be co-ordinated and integrated for all participants and observers to deliver effective meeting support. The control systems will provide and co-ordinate cameras, audio inputs and outputs, simultaneous translation (where requested), speaker queues, electronic voting, integration with the Council webcasting provider and to support participants and observers.

### Multi-location meeting platform

The Council's technology platform has been arranged in line with ICT and Procurement policies and provides for the following:

- The ability for participants to be able to see and hear each other, and the facility for outbound and inbound video and audio to be switched on and off either by a participant themselves or potentially also for a meeting organiser.
- The ability for participants to be named / labelled so that others can easily identify them.
- The ability for participants and observers to be able to join via mobile, or tablet, without losing significant functionality.
- The ability to provide for simultaneous translation (upon request).
- The ability to both record and broadcast the meeting and for participants and observers to know when recording and broadcasting is taking place.
- The ability to caption or subtitle, either live (which may be partially or fully automated) or through editing after the meeting has taken place.
- A "chat" facility visible only to meeting participants, and which can be turned off by the meeting organiser if necessary.
- Sufficient security measures to ensure that the meeting cannot be accessed by unauthorised persons, and to ensure that unauthorised persons can be ejected from the meeting where necessary.

The Council will continue to use Microsoft Teams as its primary remote meeting platform. This will be used by Elected Members from their Council provided devices to ensure effective security. Non-Council devices may be used although the functionality available when using these "guest" devices may differ from that provided by the Council. Other participants are able to join meetings using links provided by the Council contained within the meeting invitation.

### Determining the type of Meeting

The Statutory Guidance identifies that the needs of local democracy and the needs of the public in engaging with multi-location meetings are a paramount consideration in deciding where and when meetings will be convened partially or wholly by remote means. The intention of the 2021 Act is to help the public to be able to access and engage with local democratic systems. The convenience of participants and the efficient operation of the

Council is important but the needs of the public will come first when these decisions are being made.

The Council has the following committees which support its statutory, regulatory and governance arrangements and all meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings to ensure that participants are able to attend remotely:

- Appeals Panel
- Appointments Committee
- Cabinet, Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting, Cabinet Committee -Equalities
- Council
- Democratic Services Committee
- Development Control Committee
- Governance and Audit Committee
- Licensing Act 2003 Committee, Licensing Act 2003 Sub Committees A & B
- Licensing Committee, Licensing Sub Committees A & B
- Rights of Way Sub Committee
- Standards Committee
- Town and Community Council Forum
- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees 1, 2 and 3
- Public Service Board

There are also joint committees administered by the Council.

There is no requirement for each meeting to be held in the same way every time it meets. The Council may decide to hold some meetings entirely remotely and others as multi-location meetings with a number of councillors (or most councillors) present in the Chamber. In determining which meetings may be held wholly through remote meetings and for which physical arrangements might be made available, the Council will consider:

- The general circumstances of participants. Participants' needs and preferences may change over time. This Policy allows for arrangements to change where this happens.
- The subject matter, and number of participants attending, certain meetings. This may relate to the general matters usually under discussion at a given committee (or other body) rather than the specific agenda for an individual meeting.
- The need to ensure that meetings are fully accessible to both active participants and to observers. Accessibility may under certain circumstances require physical provision. Connected to this, whether physical provision for a public gallery, or for the attendance of certain participants, is necessary if the majority of a meeting's participants are joining through remote means.

Physical meetings should not be seen as representing the "gold standard" with multi-location meetings being second best. Physical meetings may be convenient and effective for those most familiar with and comfortable with how they work but they may also be inaccessible and impractical to many. All meetings that meet the required communication and quorate arrangements have equal status under the law.

#### Notice of meetings

Public notice of all meetings is published on the Council's website with the agendas and reports published at least three clear days before the meeting. The notice will include details of how to access the meeting if it is being held by remote means only and the place in which the meeting is being held if it is partly or wholly taking place physically. The requirement of

hard copy material being on public deposit has now been removed however the Council will put in place facilities for members of the public who are not able to access the documents electronically.

The names of those who attended the public meeting alongside apologies, declarations of interest and decisions made will be published on the Council's website within seven days of the meeting taking place.

### Attendance

The attendance of Members and participants will be recorded by Democratic Services. This will be by recording their attendance on a sign in sheet at a physical meeting or using the attendance record from the software to confirm remote attendance. These records will be combined and added into the minutes of the committee meeting.

Participants attending the meeting remotely should ensure that they have appropriate internet connectivity to join and maintain their attendance throughout. Guidance for joining a remote meeting is available at Appendix 1. The Monitoring Officer will provide consistent advice to the Chair over whether a Member should or should not be regarded as "present". This will be particularly important for the taking of votes but is also relevant for participation in meetings more generally. It will have relevance for determining whether a Member has attended a council meeting in the past six months in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972. All Elected Members are encouraged to physically attend at least one meeting every six months for each committee to which they are appointed.

Where a Member is in the "waiting room" on an online platform they will not be considered as "present" as they cannot be seen and heard by others, cannot see and hear others and can play no active part in the meeting.

External participants (invitees, officers, members of the public asking questions in accordance with the Constitution and Rules of Procedure) will be contacted by Democratic Services to confirm their attendance and will be advised how they join the meeting either as a physical or remote participant and the meeting procedures. If they are joining the meeting remotely an electronic meeting invitation will be sent.

Members of the public will be able to attend the physical element of multi-location meetings from the public gallery.

### Webcasting

Webcasting provides transparency, governance and accountability by giving members of the public, Elected Members, officers and other parties the opportunity to observe meetings without having to attend in person and for the Council to have an official audio and visual record of its decision making process.

All of the formal committees outlined above will be either streamed live or recorded for subsequent upload onto the Council's website after the meeting.

### Use of cameras during remote meetings

The Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 stipulates that participants of meetings that are broadcast must be able to "speak to and be heard by each other" and "to see and to be seen by each other". Members attending remotely are required to keep their cameras on for the duration of the meeting in order to maintain the integrity of the decision making process.

There may however be occasions when a remote participant may need to disable their camera in order to stabilise their connection to the meeting due to internet issues or because they have been temporarily interrupted by events at their location. If this occurs the participant should inform the Chair and Democratic Services via the hands up function.

### The taking of votes

The voting arrangements will reflect the requirements in the Council's Constitution.

Immediately before the vote the Chair will need to determine that all Members continue to be "present".

To negate the need for a formal vote, the Chair may seek a consensus from the meeting participants. In person, the Chair is able to get a sense of whether consensus exists.

Special care will be taken

where participants are joining through remote means to ensure that consent is present to move on without a vote. If however, there are objections the Chair will instigate a vote.

The Council will ensure that all voters have the same opportunity to vote through the same process whether attending remotely or physically.

There are a number of different options when it comes to recording votes:

- A verbal roll call of those Members entitled to vote. The Democratic Services Officer will ask each Member individually if they are for or against the recommendation or if they wish to abstain from the vote. If a Member cannot be contacted to provide their vote, the Officer will continue with the roll call vote and return to those participants who have not responded. If the Member cannot be contacted after a second attempt and there is a quorum in attendance at the meeting the participant will be considered as not in attendance. When all of the Members in attendance have given their vote, the Democratic Services Officer will collate all of the responses and inform the Chair of the outcome of the vote and in way that it is understandable to those who may be observing the meeting.
- Dedicated voting software incorporated into the Council's platform.

### Exempt matters

The Council will need to consider exempt matters in private. This may be for a range of reasons which are set out in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. When such information is to be considered at a formal meeting, the agenda will schedule those items at the end of the meeting so as to minimise any inconvenience to observers who will be required to leave the meeting.

The meeting recording and webcasting will be paused and in the physical part of the meeting any observers will be requested to leave the room whilst the exempt information is being considered.

When consideration of the information has been completed and there are further public items to be considered, the recording and webcast will resume and observers or participants attending the physical meeting will be invited to return into the meeting venue by Democratic Services.

Elected Members who are attending the meeting remotely must activate their cameras for any exempt items. Those members must ensure they are at a location where they can participate in the meeting privately and that the meeting cannot be overheard.

## Prejudicial Interests

Where a participant has declared a prejudicial interest in an item they will be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the relevant item. If the participant is physically present they will leave the room entirely while the discussion is underway.

If the participant is joining by remote means and has declared a prejudicial interest, they should leave or be removed for the duration of consideration of that item. Participants with prejudicial interests are required to not observe the broadcast of the meeting while outside.

Once the matter has been concluded, Democratic Services should immediately notify the participant so that they can re-join the meeting, and the meeting should not continue until they have re-joined (otherwise they shall be marked as not present for any further items).

## Training

All Members will be provided with an appropriate induction to enable them to actively participate in meetings. This will include the use of the software for joining and participating in physical and remote meetings, meeting procedures and any committee specific procedures.

A guide to joining formal meetings remotely is available at Appendix 1.

## Officer support arrangements

Different meetings will require different kinds of support from Democratic Services, and others. Primary support for multi-location committee meetings will be provided by Democratic Services and technical support may be provided by ICT Officers to ensure that the technology used during meetings operates effectively and that the meeting can be progressed as planned.

Council Officers who support committee meetings, such as Legal, Planning, Licensing will be provided with technical training to ensure they can support the meeting Chair if necessary.

## Chairing Meetings

Chairing a multi-location meeting is very different to chairing a face-to-face meeting. Chairs will need to be supported to carry out their role in specific ways. The role will be particularly challenging where a meeting is being carried out in a physical space with only some participants joining through remote means.

Guidance for Chairs is available at Appendix 2.

**Appendix 1 - Guidance for participants joining a remote meeting**

- ✓ Make sure that you set up your device in an area which is secure so that no disturbance occurs during the course of the meeting as it is important to ensure a degree of formality in the proceedings. . Remember that you should be the only person able to hear any confidential or exempt items being discussed and this includes any verbal contribution you make to the debate or vote.
- ✓ Ensure that your internet connection is sufficiently strong in that location to join and remain connected for the full duration of the meeting. If your broadband signal is weak you may wish to consider attending the physical meeting location. The legislation requires that you are able to be seen and heard.
- ✓ Ensure that you have the Council's Corporate background and there is nothing that can be seen when you are on camera which may compromise your privacy or challenge your professionalism.
- ✓ If you are joining a meeting from your car, you must not be driving and must be stopped in a safe environment where you can concentrate on the call. Pulling over does not reduce the risk unless you are in a safe place. You should decline the meeting and follow up with the Democratic Services Team if you don't feel safe.
- ✓ Turn your microphone off, but be ready to activate it if you are called to speak. You should deactivate it when you have finished speaking to lessen background noise/interference for others.
- ✓ Turn off any noisy gadgets which may be distracting to yourself or other participants.
- ✓ Ensure that your device is connected to the Council's Network between meetings to enable you to receive and manage the latest software and security updates.
- ✓ Check that Microsoft Teams is installed and you are able to connect to others.
- ✓ Check that your microphone is working and that the settings are correct. Too loud and there may be some feedback - too quiet and you and the observers won't be able to hear you. Consider using headphones or earphones (with a microphone).
- ✓ Ensure that the camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of your face. If your camera is active during a meeting the "observers" may still be able to see you when you are using other applications on the same screen and you can't see them.
- ✓ Fully charge your equipment and ensure that you have easy access to charging facilities as remote meetings have a higher than normal power consumption.
- ✓ Ensure you know how to mute/unmute your microphone and to switch your camera on and off.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the Democratic Services contact details should you have any difficulties during the meeting.



- ✓ When reading the reports consider whether you have any “Declarations of Interest” that you will need to be made at the meeting. Inform Democratic Services of any declarations that you need to make (as these will be read out at the start of a remote meeting) or contact the Monitoring Officer well in advance of the meeting if you need advice. Do not wait until just before a meeting as this will be problematic to provide you with the appropriate advice. Once you have received any advice please ensure you let Democratic Services know if you will be declaring an interest.

## **Appendix 2 - Guidance for Chairs**

Chairs have a particular responsibility to prepare for the meeting, probably in a more planned and directed way than might be necessary for a physical meeting. The following principles are reproduced from the Statutory Guidance on multi-location meetings and incorporates Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Guidance.

### **Prior to the meeting the Chair should:**

- confirm the purpose and outcomes for each item on the agenda.
- ensure that any information essential for consideration at the meeting, is made available to participants.
- identify where participants may wish to contribute in the meeting.
- ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to support effective participation.
- confirm that all participants (which may include external participants and Members of the public or others) fully understand their role and how they can actively contribute to the meeting.
- ensure that they are aware of which participants are joining remotely.
- consider the accessibility of the meeting to the public, ensuring that observers are welcomed and that the business of the meeting is explained in a way that is understandable, including the operation of the multilocation meeting itself.
- ensure that they are prepared for the meeting in a logistical sense by being aware of which Members and other participants may be joining by remote means.
- provide a reminder of meeting arrangements and policies, particularly relating to conduct and behaviour, and any advice on voting arrangements.
- introduce themselves, the committee, officers present and other participants to ensure that those watching or listening to a broadcast are aware who is in attendance at the meeting.
- identify how a support officer or other Member may bring their attention someone wishing to make a comment through remote means or in the committee room.
- occasionally confirm throughout the meeting that no one has been ‘lost’ due to technical issues and provide support to Members experiencing challenges although additional support may be needed from supporting officers.

### **During the meeting the Chair should:**

- brief participants on expectations.
- frame the meeting with reminders of the purpose of each agenda item, summarise decisions and actions for each item and again at the end of the meeting.

- plan for the debate to be themed or otherwise structured rather than inviting comments generally, to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute.
- develop an understanding the motivations and objectives of individual participants on specific agendas items and a sense what they may want to say and ask.
- avoid people speaking over each other or long silences, ask each Member in turn for their contribution to an item, based on an understanding of what Members wish to contribute
- ensure that breaks are taken at least every 90 minutes. Breaks should be for a minimum of 10 minutes.
- check that all Members are content, that they have been able to contribute, and if necessary, provide a reminder of any voting arrangements.

# Agenda Item 9

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>INFORMATION REPORT FOR NOTING</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>MARK GALVIN – SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - COMMITTEES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To update Council with a report for Members information and noting on the appointment of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Standards Committee.</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the Information Report for noting that has been published since its last scheduled meeting.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 At a previous meeting of Council, it was resolved to approve a revised procedure for the presentation to Council of Information Reports for noting.

## 3. Current situation / proposal

### 3.1 Information Report

The following Information Report has been published since the last meeting of Council:-

Title

Date Published

Appointment of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Standards Committee

16 November 2023

### 3.2 Availability of Document

The document has been circulated to Elected Members electronically via

email and placed on the Bridgend County Borough Council website. The document is available from the above date of publication.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 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.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 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.

#### **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no Climate Change Implications from this report.

#### **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications from this report.

#### **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

#### **9. Recommendations**

9.1 That Council acknowledges the publication of the report referred to in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

#### **Background documents**

None

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To note the appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair for the Standards Committee.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To note the appointment of a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for the Standards Committee.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Under the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 the members of a Standards Committee shall elect a Chairperson from amongst the Independent Members of the Committee.
- 2.2 A Chairperson shall be elected for whichever is the shorter of the following periods: (a) a period of not less than four nor more than six years, (b) until the term of office of that person as an independent member of that standards committee comes to an end.
- 2.3 The Council's Standards Committee consists of five Independent Members, two County Borough Council Members and one Town and Community Council Member.
- 2.4 There is currently a vacancy of the post of Chairperson due to the recent resignation of Mr Clifford Jones OBE.

## **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 The Role Description for the Chair of the Standards Committee as set out within the Council's Constitution is as follows:

## Accountabilities

To Full Council.

### Role Purpose and Activity

- (a) *Providing Leadership and Direction*
  - (i) *To act within technical, legal and procedural requirements to oversee the functions of the committee fairly and correctly.*
  - (ii) *To ensure thoroughness and objectivity in the committee, receiving and responding to professional advice on the Code of Conduct.*
  - (iii) *To demonstrate independence, integrity and impartiality in decision making which accord with legal, constitutional and policy requirements.*
  - (iv) *To provide confident and effective management of meetings to facilitate inclusivity, participation and clear decision making.*
  - (v) *To lead the committee in its role in:*
    - (A) *promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members;*
    - (B) *assisting the Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (C) *advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (D) *monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (E) *advising, training or arranging to train Councillors, co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (F) *granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members on dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that officer by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales;*
    - (G) *the exercise of these functions in relation to community councils and the members of those community councils.*

### Values

*To be committed to the values of the council and the following values in public office:*

- (b) *openness and transparency;*
- (c) *honesty and integrity;*
- (d) *tolerance and respect;*
- (e) *equality and fairness;*
- (f) *appreciation of cultural differences;*
- (g) *sustainability.*

3.2 If the Chair is absent from a meeting, then the Vice-Chair shall preside, if present. If both the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent, the Standards Committee shall choose another Independent Member to preside.

3.3 A scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee took place on 16 November 2023 and the Committee elected Mr Shawn Cullen as the Chair and Ms Sue Maughan as the Vice-Chair and noted that the appointments would be reported to full Council for information.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, 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.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 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. This report also assists in the achievement of the following well-being objective under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

A county borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community.

5.2 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

#### **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change implications.

#### **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 Any appointments referred to in this report will be met from existing Democratic Services budgets.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 It is recommended that Council note the appointment of Mr Shawn Cullen as the Chair of the Standards Committee and Ms Sue Maughan as the Vice-Chair with immediate effect until a term to be determined.

### **Background documents:**

None