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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.
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich
dewis iaith.*

*We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please
let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



Annwyl Cyngorydd,

Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services/ Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Dydd Gwener, 3 Tachwedd 2023

PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHU AC ARCHWILIO

Cynhelir Cyfarfod Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio Hybrid yn Siambr y Cyngor - Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr, CF31 4WB / O Bell Trwy Timau Microsoft ar **Dydd Iau, 9 Tachwedd 2023 am 10:00.**

AGENDA

- Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb
Derbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb gan Aelodau.
- Datganiadau o fuddiant
Derbyn datganiadau o ddiddordeb 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.
- Cymeradwyaeth Cofnodion 3 - 10
I dderbyn am gymeradwyaeth y Cofnodion cyfarfod y 28/09/23.
- Cofnod Gweithredu'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio 11 - 14
- Adroddiadau Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio Cymru 15 - 56
- Adolygiad Hanner Blwyddyn o'r Datganiad Llywodraethu Blynnyddol 57 - 96
- Adroddiad Hanner Blwyddyn ar Reoli'r Trysorlys 2023-24 97 - 120
- Hunanasesiad - 2022/23 121 - 158
- Adroddiad Monitro - Cwynion Corfforaethol 159 - 194
- Adroddiad Blynnyddol y Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio 2022/23 195 - 210
- Rhaglen Gwaith Cychwynnol 2023-24 211 - 216

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Cyfnwedd testun: Rhowch 18001 o flaen unrhyw un o'n rhifau ffon ar gyfer y gwasanaeth trosglwyddo testun

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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg. Rhowch wybod i ni os yw eich dewis iaith yw'r Gymraeg

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh

12. 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 643147 / 643148.

Yn ddiffuant

K Watson

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

Dosbarthiad:

Cynghorwyr

C Davies
S J Bletsoe
RM Granville
S J Griffiths

Cynghorwyr

E Richards
M L Hughes
A Williams
MJ Williams

Aelodau Lleyg:

G Chapman
A Bagley
B Olorunnisola

PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHU AC ARCHWILIO - DYDD IAU, 28 MEDI 2023

COFNODION CYFARFOD Y PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHU AC ARCHWILIO A
GYNHALIWYD YN HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL
STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB DYDD IAU, 28 MEDI 2023, AM 10:00

Presennol

G Chapman – Cadeirydd (aelod lleyg)

S J Bletsoe
MJ Williams

A Williams
RM Granville

C Davies
S J Griffiths

M L Hughes

Aelodau Lleyg:

B Olorunnisola

Swyddogion:

Carys Lord	Prif Swyddog - Cyllid, Perfformiad a Newid
Deborah Exton	Dirprwy Bennaeth Cyllid
Nigel Smith	Rheolwr Grŵp – Prif Gyfrifydd
Rachel Freitag	Archwilio Cymru (allanol)
Rachel Keepins	Rheolwr Gwasanaethau Democrataidd
Simon Roberts	Uwch Ymchwilydd Twyll
Joan Davies	Dirprwy Pennaeth Gwasanaeth Archwilio Rhanbarthol
Alex Rawlin	Rheolwr Polisi Corfforaethol a Materion Cyhoeddus
Andrew Wathan	Pennaeth Gwasanaeth Archwilio Rhanbarthol
Michael Pitman	Swyddog Cymorth Technegol - Pwyllgorau
Stephen Griffiths	Swyddog Gwasanaethau Democrataidd – Pwyllgorau
Oscar Roberts	Prentis Gweinyddol Busnes – Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

99. YMDDIHEURIADAU AM ABSENOLDEB

A Bagley

100. DATGANIADAU O FUDDIANNAU

Dim

101. CYMERADWYO COFNODION

PENDERFYNWYD:

Cymeradwyo Cofnodion cyfarfod 26 Gorffennaf 2023 fel cofnod gwir a chywir.

102. COFNOD GWEITHREDU'R PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHU AC ARCHWILIO

Cyflwynodd Uwch Swyddog y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd – Pwyllgorau - yr adroddiad hwn, a'i ddiben oedd rhoi diweddariad i'r Aelodau am Gofnod Gweithredu'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio.

Mewn ymateb i nifer o ddiweddariadau ar gamau gweithredu o'r cyfarfod diwethaf a roddwyd gan y Prif Swyddog Cyllid, Perfformiad a Newid cyn y cyfarfod, nododd aelod na welai ef unrhyw ddiben defnyddiol mewn mynd ar ôl talu'r Fenter Cyllid Preifat gysylltiedig ag Ysgol Gyfun Maesteg yn ôl yn gynnar.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Nododd y Pwyllgor y Cofnod Gweithredu a rhoddodd sylwadau ar hyn, fel oedd yn briodol.

103. ADRODDIAD AR Y PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHU AC ARCHWILIO GAN ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Cyflwynwyd yr adroddiad hwn gan Reolwr Archwilio o Archwilio Cymru (AC).

Nododd nad oedd cydweithwyr archwilio perfformiad wedi gallu ymuno â'r cyfarfod. Roeddent wedi rhoi nodiadau iddi, a byddai'n ceisio ateb cwestiynau. Pe bai angen, efallai y byddai'n rhaid iddi gyfeirio'n ôl at gydweithwyr i roi atebion i gwestiynau penodol gan yr Aelodau.

Dywedodd mai diweddariad chwarterol o 30 Mehefin oedd yr adroddiad atodedig ac y câi diweddariad mis Medi ei gyhoeddi'n fuan.

O ran y gwaith archwilio ariannol, roedd archwiliad o ddatganiad cyfrifon y Cyngor yn mynd rhagddo a'r gobaith oedd y byddai wedi ei gwblhau erbyn diwedd Ionawr.

O ran ffurflenni grant, mae'r rhain yn barhaus ac nid ydynt wedi cael eu cwblhau. Nodwyd gwallau, gan gynnwys Trethi Annomestig (NDR) a phensiwn athrawon. Roedd y gwaith hwnnw'n mynd yn ei flaen ac nid oedd wedi ei gwblhau, a byddai'r gwaith budd-dal tai yn dilyn. Nid oedd hi'n meddwl eu bod yn mynd i gwrdd â dyddiad cau arferol yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau, ac mae AC yn gohebu â hwy'n ganolog i roi gwybod iddynt am hynny, felly ni ddylai fod unrhyw fath o oblygiadau o ran atal cymhorthdal.

Gyda golwg ar archwiliadau perfformiad, nododd, o ran gwaith rheoli'r rhaglen gyfalaf, eu bod wedi gwneud y gwaith hwn mewn un awdurdod lleol ond eu bod bellach wedi penderfynu peidio â gwneud hyn fel rhan o'u gwaith eleni. Byddent yn ei ohirio tan y flwyddyn nesaf neu'r flwyddyn wedyn.

O ran gwybodaeth perfformiad, roeddent wedi gorffen gwaith ar hyn ac wedi cyflwyno'r adroddiad terfynol i'r Cyngor yn ddiweddar. Ymgwymerwyd â'r darn hwn o waith ym mhob awdurdod lleol, felly câi adroddiad cryno cenedlaethol ei gyhoeddi.

Gyda golwg ar y gwaith ar gyfer 2023-24, bwriad Archwilio Cymru oedd cynnal dau adolygiad thematig. Byddai'r rhain yn cynnwys pob awdurdod lleol, felly byddai'n bosibl meincnodi perfformiad. Roedd y gwaith hwn yn cael ei gwmpasu ac ni chadarnhawyd yr amserlenni. Roeddent hefyd yn cwmpasu darn lleol o waith.

Mewn perthynas â gwaith astudiaethau llywodraeth leol, cyhoeddwyd adroddiad ganddynt yn ddiweddar: *'Craciau yn y Sylfeini' – Diogelwch Adeiladau yng Nghymru*.

O ran y Cyd-Bwyllgorau Corfforaethol, roeddynt wedi anfon llythyrau ar wahân at bob un ohonynt, a châi adroddiad cryno ei gyhoeddi ym mis Hydref.

Nododd yr aelodau a thynasant sylw at nifer o faterion mewn ymateb i'r adroddiad:

- Amseroldeb ac argaeledd adroddiadau ac a fyddai modd eu darparu i aelodau wrth iddynt gael eu cyhoeddi fel na fyddai rhaid disgwyl iddynt gael eu cyflwyno yn y cyfarfod pwyllgor nesaf fyddai ar gael.
- Yn benodol, o ystyried mater diogelwch adeiladau yn ymwneud â Marchnad y Rhiw, byddai adroddiad AC wedi bod yn hynod ddefnyddiol. Tynnodd y Cadeirydd sylw pellach at hyn drwy ofyn a oedd y mater o Goncrit Awyredig

Awtoclaf Atgyfnerthedig (RAAC) wedi cael ei godi yn yr adroddiad ar ddiogelwch adeiladau. Credai y byddai'n ddefnyddiol cael diweddariad yng nghyfarfod mis Tachwedd ar sut y mae AC yn mynd i'r afael â'r mater hwn.

- Mater twristiaeth yn y sir. Dywedodd cynrychiolydd AC y byddai'n cyfeirio hyn yn ôl at ei chydweithwyr am ddiweddariad.
- Adolygiad llywodraethu Gwasanaethau Tân ac Achub yng Nghymru a phwysigrwydd i CBS Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr gadw golwg ar y ffordd y penodir Aelodau.
- Defnyddioldeb blogiau AC a'r ffaith eu bod wedi dod i ben yn ddiweddar.
- O ran y gwaith ar reoli rhaglen gyfalaf, holodd aelod ynghylch y cwrmpas gan awgrymu bod cyfle i ddylanwadu a fyddai modd edrych y tu hwnt i'r sector i gyfleustodau neu sectorau rheoledig eraill.

Gorffennodd y Cadeirydd yr eitem hon ar yr agenda drwy dynnu sylw at ddau fater:

- Mynegodd ei bryder na fyddai'r farn archwilio ar gyfer y cyfrifon yn dod allan tan ddiwedd Ionawr.
- Nododd y gwaith archwilio perfformiad gyda golwg ar yr adolygiad thematig o sefydlogrwydd ariannol yr awdurdod. Roedd yn meddwl tybed beth oedd safbwynt yr Archwilydd Cyffredinol ynghylch nifer yr awdurdodau yn Lloegr oedd yn cael eu datgan yn fethdalwyr a'r arwydd bod nifer o Awdurdodau yng Nghymru yn wynebu pwysau ariannol sylweddol yn y blynyddoedd i ddod. Mewn ymateb, bu'r aelodau'n trafod y penderfyniadau anodd iawn y bydd angen eu gwneud i lunio cyllideb gytbwys eleni, y cynnydd yn y pwysau ar ofal cymdeithasol a'r cyfrifoldebau ychwanegol, yn enwedig yn Lloegr, y mae'r llywodraeth wedi eu gosod ar awdurdodau lleol, a'r risgiau sy'n gysylltiedig â setliadau cyflog cyfartal ar gyfer gwahaniaethu, fel yr un yn Birmingham. Gofynnodd aelod a fyddai'n bosibl derbyn, yn ysgrifenedig, ddadansoddiad o faint y risg y gallai CBS Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr fod yn ei chario mewn perthynas â'r math hwnnw o farn.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Nododd y Pwyllgor Adroddiad Archwilio Cymru ar y Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio yn Atodiad A.

104. COD YMARFER CORFFORAETHOL

Pwrpas yr adroddiad oedd cyflwyno Cod Llywodraethu Corfforaethol y Cyngor i'w gymeradwyo, fel yn Atodiad A.

Cododd a thrafododd yr aelodau faterion megis ap Mod.Gov a phryd y byddai'n cael ei gyflwyno'n llawn, mater bod yn agored a'r defnydd o gronfeydd wrth gefn a chynlluniau wrth gefn, ansawdd data, a'r angen i fod yn fwy eglur yn y ddogfen ynghylch argyfwng yr hinsawdd a'r strategaeth sero net.

Cododd aelod llewyg fater a oedd a) y ddogfen atodedig yn ddrafft cyntaf ac os nad oedd, yna byddai'n ddefnyddiol cynnwys datganiad o newidiadau pan gâi ei hadolygu; b) byddai'r Cod yn destun canllawiau pa mor aml y ceid newid [nodwyd bod y ddogfen yn destun adolygiad blynyddol]; ac c) gellid aralleirio'r cyfeiriad ar dudalen 66 at 'reolaeth gyhoeddus gref' i 'reolaeth ariannol gyhoeddus gref'.

Nododd y Cadeirydd y gellid gwneud rhai mân newidiadau i'r ddogfen, yn enwedig o ran sero net a data.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Bu'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio yn ystyried Cod Ymarfer Corfforaethol y Cyngor ac, yn amodol ar rai newidiadau bychain, cafodd ei gymeradwyo.

105. POLISI BUDDSODDI MOESEGOL

Pwrpas yr adroddiad oedd cyflwyno'r Polisi Buddsoddi Moesegol yn **Atodiad A**, i'w ystyried. Cynigiwyd y byddai'r Polisi Buddsoddi Moesegol yn cael ei ymgorffori yn Strategaeth Rheoli'r Trysorlys 2024-25, a gâi ei chyflwyno i'r Cyngor i'w chymeradwyo ym mis Chwefror/Mawrth 2024.

Croesawodd Aelod y ddogfen gan nodi ei bod yn dangos gymaint o wahaniaeth cadarnhaol y gellid ei wneud pan fyddai cynghorwyr yn dod at ei gilydd, gan lunio polisïau a chydweithio â swyddogion er lles yr awdurdod hwn. Gofynnodd a fyddai'n ddogfen fyw ac fe'i sicrhawyd mai dyna oedd y sefyllfa.

Diolchodd a llongyfarchodd Aelod arall y tîm a ddrafftiodd y ddogfen. Roedd o'r farn bod sero net wedi cael ei drin mewn ffordd gytbwys: nid oedd yn diystyru ffactorau eraill ond roedd yn rhan o ddull gweithredu'r Cyngor.

Croesawodd Aelod arall y ffaith na chafodd rhai categorïau o fuddsoddiad eu heithrio o'r polisi.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Rhoddodd y Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio ystyriaeth i'r Polisi Buddsoddi Moesegol a chytunwyd i'w gynnwys yn Strategaethau Rheoli'r Trysorlys yn y dyfodol.

106. CYNNYDD YN ERBYN CYNLLUN SEILIEDIG AR RISG ARCHWILIO MEWNOL 2023-24

Pwrpas yr adroddiad hwn oedd rhoi datganiad sefyllfa i Aelodau'r Pwyllgor ar y cynnydd a wnaed yn erbyn y gwaith archwilio oedd wedi ei gynnwys ac a gymeradwywyd yng Nghynllun Seiliedig ar Risg Archwilio Mewnol 2023-24.

Gofynnodd Aelod i ragor o'r wybodaeth gael ei chyflwyno yn ffurf graff, a fyddai'n cael ei ystyried wrth i ddata mwy cronus gael ei gyflwyno.

Tynnodd y Cadeirydd sylw at adran 3.6 o'r adroddiad ar gerbydau ysgol. Nododd fod yr archwiliad, a oedd yn cynnwys 7 ysgol, wedi canfod nad oedd pwysau'r cerbyd yn hysbys mewn un achos ac felly na ellid gwirio cydymffurfiaeth â'r canllawiau. Yn ogystal, methodd rhai o'r ysgolion ag adolygu trwyddedau gyrru staff yn rheolaidd i sicrhau dilysrwydd ac roedd rhai cerbydau wedi cael eu gyrru gan staff nad oedd y categori cerbyd cywir ganddynt ar eu trwydded yrru, neu roedd y drwydded wedi dyddio a hynny'n gwneud yr yswiriant yn annilys. Roedd yn meddwl bod hwn yn fater o bryder difrifol ac y gallai beri i'r awdurdod fod yn agored i hawliad enfawr pe bai unrhyw un o'r materion hyn yn codi pe digwyddai damwain.

Awgrymodd aros am yr adroddiad terfynol cyn penderfynu pa gamau y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu cymryd.

Diolchodd Aelod i'r Cadeirydd am godi'r mater hwn a gofynnodd a oedd hyn yn ymwneud ag ysgolion, awdurdodau lleol, a gwasanaethau wedi eu contractio.

Atebodd y Cadeirydd drwy nodi y dylai'r awdurdod, fel rhan o'u cyfrifoldeb cytundebol, fod yn gwirio'r bysiau a sicrhau eu bod yn addas i'r diben: dylai fod ganddynt yr MOTs perthnasol, eu bod yn cael eu gyrru gan y bobl gywir, a bod ganddynt y nifer cywir o hebryngwyr pe bai eu hangen.

Eglurodd y Cadeirydd, unwaith y byddai'r adroddiad llawn wedi cael ei ddosbarthu i'r Cyfarwyddwr a'r ysgolion, a bod y cynllun gweithredu wedi cael ei gytuno, yna os oedd y Pwyllgor yn fodlon bod y problemau wedi derbyn sylw, felly y byddai. Fodd bynnag, roedd yn bosibl bod darn o waith yr oedd angen i'r Cyfarwyddwr Addysg ei wneud mewn perthynas â phob ysgol er mwyn tawelu meddwl yr Aelodau ynghylch statws eu cerbydau a'u gyrrwyr.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Bod Aelodau'r Pwyllgor yn nodi cynnwys yr adroddiad a'r cynnydd a wnaed yn erbyn Cynllun Seiliedig ar Risg Archwilio Mewnol 2023-24.

107. MONITRO ARGYMHELLION ARCHWILIO MEWNOL

Pwrpas yr adroddiad hwn oedd rhoi datganiad sefyllfa i'r Aelodau ynglŷn ag argymhellion archwilio mewnol a wnaed er mwyn nodi'r rhai oedd wedi cael eu gweithredu a'r rhai oedd yn weddill.

Gofynnodd Aelod beth oedd y canlyniadau am gamau gweithredu hwyr.

Mewn ymateb, nododd Pennaeth y Gwasanaeth Archwilio Mewnol Rhanbarthol (RIAS) o ran y canlyniadau, yr adroddid am gamau gweithredu hwyr wrth y Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio yn ogystal â'r Bwrdd Rheoli Corfforaethol (CMB), ac felly yr adroddid amdanynt ar lefel y Cyfarwyddwyr. Pe bai'r Pwyllgor yn dymuno, gellid galw Cyfarwyddwyr neu Benaethiaid Gwasanaeth i gyfrif am eu gweithredoedd, yn enwedig lle mae risg i'r awdurdod os na chaiff argymhelliad ei weithredu.

Cynigiodd y Cadeirydd fod y camau gweithredu hwyr yn cael eu cyfeirio at y CMB fel mater o frys a bod pob cyfarwyddwr yn cael ei ddal yn atebol am y camau gweithredu oedd heb eu cyflawni. Nododd fod rhai camau gweithredu yn dal heb eu cymryd ers 2021.

Gofynnodd am adroddiad yn ôl i gyfarfod mis Tachwedd o'r Pwyllgor, ac os oedd yna faterion mawr na allent roi cyfrif amdanynt, yna cynigiodd y dylent gael eu galw i mewn i'w holi gan yr Aelodau maes o law.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Nododd Aelodau'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio gynnwys yr adroddiad ac ystyried y wybodaeth a ddarparwyd mewn perthynas â statws yr argymhellion blaenoriaeth uchel a chanolig a wnaed gan y Gwasanaeth Archwilio Mewnol Rhanbarthol.

Cytunodd Aelodau'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio y dylid cyfeirio Atodiad B at y Bwrdd Rheoli Corfforaethol fel mater o frys a bod adroddiad am y canlyniad yn cael ei gyflwyno i gyfarfod mis Tachwedd o'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio.

108. SAFONAU ARCHWILIO MEWNOL Y SECTOR CYHOEDDUS (PSIAS) - ASESIAD CYMHEIRIAID ALLANOL O'R GWASANAETH ARCHWILIO MEWNOL RHANBARTHOL

Pwrpas yr adroddiad oedd darparu Asesiad Cymheiriaid Allanol Safonau Archwilio Mewnol y Sector Cyhoeddus o RIAS i'r Aelodau.

Roedd 305 o linellau arfer gorau o fewn y PSIAS; mae'r Gwasanaeth Archwilio Mewnol Rhanbarthol ar hyn o bryd yn cydymffurfio â 305 o'r gofynion, heb unrhyw feysydd cydymffurfio rhannol neu ddiffyg cydymffurfio.

Llongyfarchodd y Cadeirydd RIAS ar eu perfformiad.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Nododd Aelodau'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio Asesiad Cymheiriaid Allanol Safonau Archwilio Mewnol y Sector Cyhoeddus o'r Gwasanaeth Archwilio Mewnol Rhanbarthol yn Atodiad A a chydabod a chadarnhau ei fod yn cydymffurfio'n llawn â'r Safonau hynny.

109. ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL Y PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHU AC ARCHWILIO 2022/23 - DRAFFT

Cyflwynwyd yr adroddiad hwn gan Bennaeth RIAS.

Mae'n ofynnol i'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio gymeradwyo Adroddiad Blynyddol i'w gyflwyno i'r Cyngor.

Dangosai'r adroddiad sut roedd y Pwyllgor wedi cyflawni ei gylch gorchwyl yn unol â Chyfansoddiad y Cyngor fel y'i nodir ym Mesur Llywodraeth Leol 2011 a Deddf Llywodraeth Leol ac Etholiadau (Cymru) 2021.

Cyflawnodd y Pwyllgor hyn drwy ganolbwyntio ar ei gyfrifoldebau craidd yn ystod 2022-23.

Dangosai canlyniad proses hunanasesu 2022-23, fel mewn blynyddoedd blaenorol, fod gan y Cyngor drefniadau cadarn ar waith o ran ei Bwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio, a nodwyd bod lefel gwybodaeth a phrofiad yr aelodau yn dda neu'n foddhaol.

Nododd aelod nad ymddangosai fod unrhyw welliannau cryf yn cael eu hargymell fel rhan o'r adroddiad a gofynnodd tybed a ellid cael adran yn ymwneud â sut y gallai Aelodau wneud yn well y flwyddyn nesaf.

Cynigiodd y Cadeirydd fod yr aelodau'n cytuno â'r adroddiad mewn egwyddor, yn amodol ar unrhyw aelod o'r pwyllgor oedd yn dymuno gwneud sylwadau oedd ganddo ar yr adroddiad drafft o fewn 21 diwrnod. Câi'r drafft terfynol ei gyflwyno i'r pwyllgor yn ei gyfarfod nesaf ar 9 Tachwedd.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Cymeradwyodd yr Aelodau Adroddiad Blynyddol y Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio mewn egwyddor, yn amodol ar anfon sylwadau at Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Archwilio Mewnol Rhanbarthol (RIAS) o fewn 21 diwrnod. Caiff fersiwn derfynol ei chyflwyno i gyfarfod y Pwyllgor Llywodraethu ac Archwilio ym mis Tachwedd.

110. **BLAENRAGLEN WAITH 2023-24**

Cyflwynwyd yr adroddiad hwn gan y Dirprwy Bennaeth Cyllid.

Yn ogystal â'r adroddiadau y manylir arnynt yn Atodiad A, gwnaed nifer o benderfyniadau yn ystod y cyfarfod a gâi eu cynnwys yn y Flaenraglen Waith.

O ran y cyfarfod nesaf ym mis Tachwedd, amlinellwyd eitemau arfaethedig yr agenda ym mharagraff 3.2 yr adroddiad. Gofynnwyd i'r aelodau nodi yr ychwanegid yr adroddiad ar Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl, a oedd i fod i ddod i gyfarfod mis Medi, at agenda'r cyfarfod nesaf.

Yn ogystal, câi drafft terfynol Adroddiad Blynnyddol y Pwyllgor ei ychwanegu at yr agenda.

Roedd yn bosibl y byddai angen canslo'r cyfarfod arbennig a drefnwyd ar gyfer mis Rhagfyr i lofnodi datganiad y cyfrifon.

Gofynnodd y Cadeirydd am gyflwyniad posibl gan yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau (DWP) a chadarnhawyd eu bod yn fodlon dod i roi briff cyffredinol a fyddai'n cynnwys y materion a drafodwyd yn y cyfarfod diwethaf. Teimlwyd y dylai'r briff fod yn agored i bob Aelod.

Cododd aelod fater ynghylch amllder dau adroddiad, nad oedd amllder yn eu herbyn.

Mewn ymateb, awgrymodd y Dirprwy Bennaeth Cyllid y gellid eu hadolygu a'u dwyn yn ôl i'r Pwyllgor yn flynyddol.

Gofynnodd aelod arall, gan adeiladu ar y trafodaethau cynharach am ddiogelwch adeiladau a fflyd, a oedd y pwyllgor yn hyderus bod materion iechyd a diogelwch yn cael sylw digonol yn eu gwaith. Atebodd y Cadeirydd drwy nodi bod gan y Pwyllgor rôl benodol iawn ac y dylai rhai o'r materion a godwyd gael eu codi gan bwyllgor craffu. Gofynnodd a allai'r Prif Swyddog Cyllid, Perfformiad a Newid ystyried y materion a godwyd.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Bu'r Pwyllgor yn ystyried y Flaenraglen Waith wedi ei diweddarau ar gyfer 2023-24, a chymeradwywyd hi yn amodol ar dai diwygiadau i gymryd penderfyniadau a wnaed yn y cyfarfod i ystyriaeth.

111. **EITEMAU BRYD**

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Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ACTION RECORD
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY
Responsible Officer:	MARK GALVIN – SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER - COMMITTEES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	This report seeks to update Members of the Governance and Audit Committee on follow-up actions or further information requested on reports considered by Members and/or requested by Committee, including any other related information in relation to previous agenda items.

1. Purpose of Report

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

2. Background

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

3. Current situation / proposal

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

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 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 arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

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

9. Recommendation

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

Background documents

None.

Number	Date of Committee	Item	Lead	Target Date	Action	Date for action to be brought to GAC	Completed Date
1.	13 Oct 2022/ 1 Jun 23	Corporate Complaints	Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy	Nov 23	<p>To prepare and submit a report on Corporate Complaints to GAC bi-annually.</p> <p>The next report will be prepared for the meeting in November 2023.</p> <p>The report will include consideration of ways to enrich the data set, to include such matters as the location of the complainant, under-reporting, and complaints made to Councillors (and noted in the referral system).</p>	Nov 23	
2.	26 Jul 23	Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (Wales) Regulations 2013	Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change	Sep 23	To contact the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to see whether any discussions are going on with regards to the low threshold of fines and suggest they should be reviewed.	Sep 23	Sep 23
3.	26 Jul 23	Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee	Head of RIAS		<p>To present the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report.</p> <p>A first draft was submitted to the September meeting. Members were asked to provide feedback within 21 days so that a final draft could be completed.</p>	Sep 23	Nov 23
4.	26 July 23	Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2022-23	Department for Work and Pensions		That members receive a presentation, to include local issues, from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).	To be confirmed	
5.	1 Jun 23	Capital Programme – Governance Issues	The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change/ Head of RIAS	Jul 23	<p>A Capital Board has been established. Its first meeting will be held on 6 November.</p> <p>RIAS to carry out an audit of governance issues around the Capital Programme, commencing in Q4.</p>	April 24	
6.	28 Sep 23	Progress Against the Internal Audit Risk Based Plan 2023-24 (School Vehicles)	Head of RIAS/ Director of Education	Oct 23	<p>The audit report and action plan are complete.</p> <p>The Director of Education has written to schools about the issues raised about school vehicles.</p>	Nov 23	Oct 23
7.	28 Sep 23	Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring	The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change	Oct 23	<p>Appendix B of the report was referred to CMB for action.</p> <p>An update on how outstanding actions have been addressed will be submitted to GAC in the next Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring report in Jan 24.</p>	Nov 23	Oct 23

8.	28 Sep 23	Audit Wales	Audit Wales Officers	Nov 23	<div><div>A number of queries were raised by Members at the September meeting:</div><div><div><div><div><div></div></div><div>The timeliness and availability of reports.</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Building safety issues.</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Tourism in the county.</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Review of the governance of the Fire and Rescue Services in Wales</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Audit Wales blogs.</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Capital Programme Management.</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Audit opinion for the accounts.</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Thematic review of the financial stability of local authorities.</div></div></div></div><div>All these issues were addressed in a submission from Audit Wales. This was distributed to Members on 18 October.</div></div>	Oct 23	Oct 23
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Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	AUDIT WALES GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORTS
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	DEBORAH EXTON DEPUTY HEAD OF FINANCE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's external auditors, Audit Wales, undertake a range of financial and performance audit work during the financial year. • They publish a number of reports in respect of the audit work undertaken. • Some of the reports are national across all local authorities and others are local and specific to Bridgend. • Audit Wales also present a quarterly work programme and timetable to the Governance and Audit Committee to outline work completed, audits in progress and those still due to be undertaken. • The report provides details of the quarterly update on the Work Programme and Timetable along with a detailed Audit Plan for the Council for 2023.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit to the Committee reports from Audit Wales.

2. Background

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

- 2.2 Part 2 of the 2004 Act sets out the powers and duties of the Auditor General to undertake studies in relation to local government bodies in Wales. The most widely used of these provisions is section 41, which requires the Auditor General to undertake studies designed to enable him to make recommendations for, among other things, improving the value for money in the provision of services.
- 2.3 In accordance with Section 89 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Authority is required to keep under review the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and ensuring its governance is effective for securing these performance requirements.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Audit Wales has produced two reports for the Governance and Audit Committee to consider. They are:
- **The Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable - (Appendix A)** - under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Auditor General is required to produce a work programme update for each financial year for each principal council covering both his functions and those of 'relevant regulators' (Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn). At the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2021, Audit Wales reported that they will provide an updated version of this report to the Council on a quarterly basis. **Appendix A** is an updated position as at 30th September 2023.
 - **Bridgend County Borough Council Detailed Audit Plan 2023 - (Appendix B)** - The Detailed Audit Plan specifies the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities as the Council's external auditor and to fulfil his obligations under the Code of Audit Practice. It also sets out details of the audit team and key dates for delivering the audit team's activities and planned outputs, along with the estimated audit fee.

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 arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

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

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Committee notes the Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports at **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

Background documents

None

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Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – Bridgend County Borough Council

Quarterly Update: 30 September 2023

Annual Audit Summary

Description	Timetable	Status
A report summarising completed audit work since the last Annual Audit Summary, which was issued in April 2023	Spring 2024	Planning

Financial Audit work

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
Audit of the Council's 2022-23 statement of accounts	To confirm whether the statement of accounts provide a true and fair view.	Audit Opinion by 31 January 2024.	Draft Accounts received and audit work ongoing.
Audit of the Council's 2022-23 grant returns	Audit of five claims as required by the terms and conditions of the grants.	In line with the individual deadlines for each grant claim.	Audit work ongoing
Audit of the 2022-23 Returns for Porthcawl Harbour Authority and Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee	To confirm that the returns have been completed correctly.	Audit Opinion by 31 January 2024.	Work to be completed alongside audit of the Council's 2022-23 statement of accounts.

Performance Audit work

2022-23 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial position 	Ongoing monitoring of financial position	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital programme management 	September – December 2023	AW will not undertake detailed work at all councils as part of our 2022-23 work programme. We are currently exploring our options for undertaking a detailed piece of work on this topic either in 2023-24 or future years.

2022-23 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of performance information – with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes 	February – September 2023	Complete Final report issued 22 nd September 2023
Thematic Review – Unscheduled Care	A cross-sector review focusing on the flow of patients out of hospital. This review will consider how the Council is working with its partners to address the risks associated with the provision of social care to support hospital discharge, as well as prevent hospital admission. The work will also consider what steps are being taken to provide medium to longer-term solutions.	August 2022 – July 2023	Fieldwork nearing completion, reporting from September 2023 onward.
Thematic review – Digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of councils' strategic approach to digital, and the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle; and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of councils' resources. 	January – September.	Drafting
Local project – Review of performance management arrangements	We will review the Council's performance management arrangements and establish how well they inform the Council of progress in meeting its priorities.	July to October 2022	Complete

2023-24 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	2023-24	Ongoing
	Setting of well-being objectives	Nov/Dec 2023	Not yet started
Thematic review – Financial Sustainability	A review of councils' financial sustainability including a focus on the actions, plans and arrangements to bridge funding gaps and address financial pressures over the medium term.	March – June 2024	Scoping
Thematic review – commissioning and contract management	A review focusing on how councils' arrangements for commissioning, and contract management apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle.	January – July 2024	Scoping
Local project	Highways/Transport – currently scoping this piece of work	2023-24	Scoping

Local government national studies planned/in progress.

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Bridgend County Borough Council
Planning for sustainable development – Brownfield regeneration	Review of how local authorities are promoting and enabling better use of vacant non-domestic dwellings and brownfield sites	October 2022 – September 2023	Report drafting – publication due November/December 2023	Yes – interview with nominated officer at seven councils and survey.
Governance of special purpose authorities – National Parks	Review of systems and effectiveness of governance	November 2022 – September 2023	Report drafting – publication due November/December 2023.	No
Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs)	Assessing CJCs' progress in developing their arrangements to meet their statutory obligations and the Welsh Government's aim of strengthening regional collaboration.	September 2022 – August 2023	individual letters have been issued to the four CJCs. National summary report due for publication October/November 2023.	Yes – We explored the Council's perspective via our routine liaison meetings. Fieldwork included interviews with the chief executive, director of finance and chair of each of the four CJCs.

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Bridgend County Borough Council
Governance in Fire and Rescue Authorities	Review of systems and effectiveness of governance	September 2023 – March 2024	Project brief issued	No
Homelessness	Examining how services are working together to progress the response to homelessness.	tbc	Scoping	tbc

Estyn

Our link inspectors are continuing to work with Torfaen as part of our follow-up process for an authority causing significant concern. Wrexham local authority was removed from the causing significant concern category following a monitoring visit in July. We inspected Gwynedd in the week beginning 26 June and Carmarthenshire in the week beginning 10 July. Both reports have been published on our website. We will be inspecting Conwy local government education service on the week beginning 6 November.

Field work being carried out across local authorities during the autumn term includes a focus on attendance, school improvement and the work of the local authority to mitigate the impact of poverty on learners' attainment.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
Thematic reviews			
CLDT	Working with HIW we will complete a small sample of joint CLDT inspections in 2024. We will use this approach to evaluate and consider our approach to joint inspection.	2024-25	Planning
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards – 10 years on	We are working in partnership with HIW to consider our approach and follow up on the report: <u>A National Review of the use of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) in Wales</u> (hiw.org.uk) undertaken in 2014.	2024-25	Scoping
Stoke pathway	Working in collaboration with HIW a <u>National Review of Patient Flow: a journey through the stroke pathway</u> (hiw.org.uk) has recently been published.	Complete	Published

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
National review of Care Planning for children and young people subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings	<p>Purpose of the review</p> <p>To provide external scrutiny, assurance and to promote improvement regarding the quality of practice in relation to the care planning for children and young people subject to the public law outline pre-proceedings.</p> <p>To consider the extent to which practice has progressed since the publication of both the CIW 'National Review of care planning for children and young people subject to public law outline pre-proceedings' and the publication of the PLO working group report 2021 including best practice guidance.</p>	In progress	Publication November 2023
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Annual Monitoring Report for Health and Social Care 2022-23	<p>The <u>2020-21 report</u> was published on 7 February 2021</p> <p>The 2021-2022 report is underway</p>	<p>Published</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>	<p>Published</p> <p>Preparing</p>

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
Joint Inspection Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA)	<p>We will complete a further two multi-agency joint inspections in total.</p> <p>The findings following Denbighshire County Council have been published - Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Denbighshire 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>The findings following Bridgend County Borough Council have been published - Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Bridgend 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>We will publish a national report in late spring 2024.</p>	April 2023 – April 2024	Delivery
Performance review of Local Authorities	<p>We continue to inspect Local Authorities in line with our updated Code of Practice for our local authority inspection activity Care Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>How we inspect local authority services and CAFCASS Cymru</p>	Ongoing	Ongoing

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs published since September 2022

Report title	Publication date and link to report
NHS workforce – data briefing	September 2023
Income Diversification for National Park Authorities in Wales	September 2023
Approaches to achieving net zero across the UK	September 2023
Springing Forward: Lessons learnt from our work on workforce and assets (in local government)	September 2023
Local Government Financial Sustainability Data tool update (further update planned autumn 2023)	September 2023
NHS finances data tool – to 31 March 2023	September 2023
Public interest reports – Ammanford Town Council and Llanferres Community Council	September 2023
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board - Quality Governance Arrangements Joint Review Follow-up	August 2023
'Cracks in the Foundations' – Building Safety in Wales	August 2023
Maximising EU funding – the Structural Funds Programme and the Rural Development Programme	June 2023
Digital inclusion in Wales (including key questions for public bodies)	March 2023

Report title	Publication date and link to report
Orthopaedic Services in Wales – Tackling the Waiting List Backlog	March 2023
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board – Review of Board Effectiveness	February 2023
Welsh Government purchase of Gilestone Farm	January 2023
Together we can – Community resilience and self-reliance	January 2023
A Picture of Flood Risk Management	December 2022
‘A missed opportunity’ – Social Enterprises	December 2022
Poverty Data Tool	November 2022
‘Time for change’ – Poverty in Wales	November 2022
Learning from cyber-attacks	October 2022 (distributed privately to audited bodies)
National Fraud Initiative 2020-21	October 2022
COVID-19 business support in 2020-21 – Memorandum for the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee	October 2022
Payment to the Welsh Government’s Former Permanent Secretary on Termination of Employment	September 2022

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

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs (work in progress / planned)^{1, 2}

Title	Indicative publication date
Covering teachers' absence – follow-up (letter to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee)	October 2023
NHS quality governance	October/December 2023
A465 Section 2 – update	November/December 2023
Ukrainian refugee services	December 2023/January 2024

¹ We will continue to keep our plans under constant review, taking account of the evolving external environment, our audit priorities, the context of our own resourcing and the capacity of audited bodies to engage with us. Follow up work could also lead to other outputs, as may other local audit work where we consider there is merit in a national summary output of some kind.

² We have also published to our website a paper – [Our work programme for 2023-2026](#) – that provides additional detail about our national work (including local thematic reviews). In addition to new work that we will be taking forward in 2023-24, the paper includes details about indicative topics for work to start in 2024-24 or 2025-26.

Title	Indicative publication date
Local government digital strategy review – national summary	January 2024
Local government use of performance information, outcomes and service user perspective – national summary	November/December 2023
Affordable housing	February/March 2024
Active travel	Spring 2024
Cancer services	To be confirmed (scoping)
Velindre Cancer Centre	To be confirmed (scoping)
Welsh Government capital and infrastructure investment	To be confirmed (scoping)
Addressing biodiversity decline (pan-public sector and at Natural Resources Wales)	R&D work underway September to December 2023. Data gathering with representative groups. Outputs will inform any further audit work.
Further and higher education funding and oversight – Commission for Tertiary Education and Research	To be confirmed (scoping)
The senior public service	To be confirmed (scoping early 2024)
Challenges for the cultural sector	To be confirmed (starting in 2023-24)
Rebalancing care and support	To be confirmed (starting in 2023-24)

Title	Indicative publication date
Tackling NHS waiting lists	To be confirmed (starting in 2023-24)
Access to education for children with Additional Learning Needs	To be confirmed (starting in 2023-24)
Audit Committees. 'What does good look like?'. R&D work to understand the broad audit committee landscape across all sectors in Wales. Outputs to support Good Practice Exchange events and potential future audit work.	R&D work Sept – Dec 2023 Good Practice Event Spring 2024

Good Practice Exchange events and resources

Title	Link to resource
<p>Strategy to Action: How digital makes a difference to everyday lives</p> <p>This event will take a practical and honest view at the digital landscape in Wales and will offer practical ideas for public and third sector organisations which will help them achieve the best value for money.</p>	<p>27 September 2023 09:00 – 13:00 – North Wales – To register for North Wales</p> <p>5 October 2023 09:00 – 13:00 – Cardiff – To register for Cardiff</p>
<p>Working in partnership to improve wellbeing</p> <p>This event will bring together the North Wales Insight Partnership, the Public Service Boards and the C4C community to share wellbeing plans across the North Wales region, as well as sharing the innovative work being undertaken by a range of sectors around wellbeing in our communities. The event will provide opportunities to discuss how we can connect all of this work to deliver real change.</p>	<p>24 October 2023 09:30 – 16:30 To register for North Wales Cardiff date TBC</p>

Title	Link to resource
Integrity in the Public Sector ‘Trust is built and maintained through competence, reliability, and honesty, as well as the building of genuine and sound relationships between the public sector and the public it serves. That means the public sector must be accountable for the management and delivery of public services and outcomes, for the direction and control of the work it does, the resources it manages, and for its behaviour and ethics.’ This event will look at how public services can promote a culture of integrity.	5 December 2023 10:00 – 12:00 Online To register
Podcast: Auditing Community Resilience In this edition of The Exchange, our Local Government team discuss some of the factors that cause poverty in Wales, as well as the value provided by social enterprises, and the importance of keeping wealth in communities.	To listen

Recent Audit Wales blogs

Title	Publication date
Building Safety – Have we learnt from Grenfell?	1 August 2023
Helping people to help themselves	15 February 2023
A perfect storm – the cost of living crisis and domestic abuse	21 November 2022
Tackling poverty means tackling poverty data	11 November 2022
Cost of living and putting away the bayonet	21 September 2022
Heat is on to tackle Climate Change	18 August 2022
Direct Payments in Wales	15 June 2022

Title	Publication date
<u>Unscheduled Care in Wales – a system under real pressure</u>	21 April 2022

Bridgend County Borough Council – Detailed Audit Plan 2023

Audit year: 2023-24

Date issued: October 2023

Document reference: 3789A2923



This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions. Further information can be found in our [Statement of Responsibilities](#).

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

About Audit Wales

Our aims and ambitions

Assure



the people of
Wales that public
money is well
managed

Explain



how public
money is being
used to meet
people's needs

Inspire



and empower
the Welsh
public sector to
improve



Fully exploit
our unique
perspective,
expertise and
depth of insight



Strengthen our
position as an
authoritative,
trusted and
independent
voice



Increase our
visibility,
influence and
relevance



Be a model
organisation for
the public sector
in Wales and
beyond

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Introduction

I have now largely completed my planning work.

This Detailed Audit Plan specifies my statutory responsibilities as your external auditor and to fulfil my obligations under the Code of Audit Practice.

It sets out the work my team intends undertaking to address the audit risks identified and other key areas of focus during 2023.

It also sets out my estimated audit fee, details of my audit team and key dates for delivering my audit team's activities and planned outputs.



Adrian Crompton

Auditor General for
Wales

My audit responsibilities

I complete work each year to meet the following duties:

- I audit the Council's financial statements to make sure that public money is being properly accounted for.
- The Council has to put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and I have to be satisfied that it has done this.
- The Council needs to comply with the sustainable development principle when setting and taking steps to meet their well-being objectives. The Auditor General must assess the extent to which they are doing this.

Audit of financial statements

I am required to issue a certificate and report on your financial statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness' and an assessment as to whether the Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement is prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance and is consistent with your financial statements and my knowledge of the Authority.

In addition to my responsibilities for auditing the Council's financial statements, I also have responsibility for:

- certifying a return to the Welsh Government which provides information about Bridgend County Borough Council to support preparation of Whole of Government Accounts;
- responding to questions and objections about the accounts from local electors (additional fees will be charged for this work, if necessary);
- the audit of annual returns for Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee and Porthcawl Harbour Authority; and
- the certification of a number of grant claims and returns as agreed with the funding bodies.

I do not seek to obtain absolute assurance on the truth and fairness of the financial statements and related notes but adopt a concept of materiality. My aim is to identify material misstatements, that is, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled. The levels at which I judge such misstatements to be material is set out later in this plan.

I will also report by exception on a number of matters which are set out in more detail in our [Statement of Responsibilities](#).

There have been no limitations imposed on me in planning the scope of this audit.

Performance audit work


I carry out a programme of performance audit work to discharge my duties¹ as Auditor General in relation to value for money and sustainable development.

My local performance audit programme will continue to be delivered through a combination of an Assurance and Risk Assessment Project, bespoke local projects and thematic projects examining risks common to all councils.

The majority of my performance audit work is conducted using INTOSAI auditing standards. The International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions is a global umbrella organisation for the performance audit community. It is a non-governmental organisation with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

¹ When we undertake audit work under our statutory powers and duties we may collect information from public bodies that contains some personal data. Our general audit fair processing notice, explains what we do with personal data, and how you can contact our Data Protection Officer.

Financial statements materiality



My financial statements audit will concentrate on your risks and other areas of focus

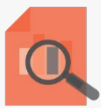
My audit planning has identified the following risks:

Significant financial statement risk

- Management override of controls


Other areas of audit focus

- Valuation of land and buildings
- Valuation of the pension fund net liability
- Related Parties and Senior Officer Remuneration



My performance audit will include:

- Assurance and Risk Assessment
- Thematic review – commissioning and contract management
- Thematic review – financial sustainability in local government
- Local work - Highways and Transport



Materiality

Materiality	£5.461 million
Reporting threshold	£0.273 million



Materiality £5.461 million

My aim is to identify and correct material misstatements, that is, those that might otherwise cause the user of the accounts to be misled.

Materiality is calculated using:

- 2022-23 gross expenditure of £546.1 million
- Materiality percentage of 1%

I report to those charged with governance any misstatements above a trivial level (set at 5% of materiality).



Areas of specific interest

There are some areas of the accounts that may be of more importance to the user of the accounts and we have set a lower materiality level for these:

- Remuneration report £1,000
- Related party disclosures £10,000 for individuals' interests

Significant financial statements risks

Significant risks are identified risks of material misstatement for which the assessment of inherent risk is close to the upper end of the spectrum of inherent risk or those which are to be treated as a significant risk in accordance with the requirements of other ISAs. The ISAs require us to focus more attention on these significant risks.

Exhibit 1: significant financial statement risks

Significant risk	Our planned response
Management Override The risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is viewed as a significant risk [ISA 240.32-33].	The audit team will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• test the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements;• review accounting estimates for bias; and• evaluate the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of business.

Other areas of focus

I set out other identified risks of material misstatement which, whilst not determined to be significant risks as above, I would like to bring to your attention.

Exhibit 2: other areas of focus

Audit risk	Our planned response
<p>Valuation of land and buildings</p> <p>The value of land and buildings reflected in the balance sheet and notes to the accounts represent material estimates. Land and buildings are required to be held on a valuation basis which is dependent on the nature and use of the assets. This estimate is subject to a high degree of subjectivity depending on the specialist and management assumptions adopted and changes in these can result in material changes to valuations.</p> <p>Assets are required to be revalued every five years, but values may also change year on year and there is a risk that the carrying value of assets reflected in the accounts could be materially different to the current value of assets as at 31 March 2023.</p> <p>Given continued high levels of inflation, the Authority are intending to uplift asset values to ensure carrying values remain materially correct.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• review the information provided to the valuer to assess for completeness;• evaluate the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the professional valuer;• test a sample of assets revalued in the year to ensure the valuation basis, key data and assumptions used in the valuation process are reasonable, and the revaluations have been correctly reflected in the financial statements;• evaluate the assumptions made by management as to why it considers that land and buildings not revalued in 2022/23 are not materially misstated; and• test the reconciliation between the financial ledger and the asset register.
<p>Valuation of pension fund net liability</p> <p>The Local Government Pension scheme (LGPS) pension fund liability as reflected in the financial statements represents a material estimate.</p> <p>The nature of this estimate means that it is subject to a high degree of estimation uncertainty as it is sensitive to small adjustments in the assumptions used in its calculation.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluate the instructions issued by management to their management experts (actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary's work;• assess the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the valuations;• assess the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Council/Authority

	<p>to the actuary to estimate the liability;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test the accuracy of the pension fund net liability and disclosures in the financial statements with the actuarial report from the actuary; and • assess the reasonableness of the assumptions made by the actuary by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (auditor's expert) and undertaking any additional procedures required.
<p>Related Parties and Senior Officer Remuneration</p> <p>I judge some of the disclosures in the financial statements, such as related parties and the remuneration of senior officers and councillors, to be material by nature, with a far lower level of materiality. These disclosures are therefore inherently prone to material misstatement.</p>	<p>As for past audits, I will enhance my examination of all areas that I determine to be material by nature, to ensure that they are complete and accurate.</p>

Financial statements audit timetable

I set out below key dates for delivery of my accounts audit work and planned outputs.

Exhibit 3: key dates for delivery of planned outputs

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
2023 Outline Audit Plan	February – May 2023	June 2023
2023 Detailed Audit Plan	February – July 2023	August 2023
Audit of financial statements work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit of Financial Statements Report• Opinion on the Financial Statements	November – January 2023	January 2024

Planned performance audit work

I set out below details of my performance audit work and key dates for delivery of planned outputs.

Exhibit 4: key dates for delivery of planned outputs

Planned output	Work undertaken	Dates
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	Ongoing
Thematic review – Financial Sustainability	A review of councils' financial sustainability including a focus on the actions, plans and arrangements to bridge funding gaps and address financial pressures over the medium term.	TBC
Thematic review – commissioning and contract management	A review focusing on how councils' arrangements for commissioning, and contract management apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle.	TBC
Local project - Highways and Transport	To be scoped.	Autumn 2023

We will provide updates on the performance audit programme through our regular updates to the Governance & Audit Committee

Certification of grant claims and returns, and statutory audit functions

Certification of grant claims and returns

I have also been requested to undertake certification work on the Council's grant claims, which I anticipate will include Housing Benefits, Teachers Pension, NDR and pooled budget returns.

Statutory audit functions

In addition to the audit of the accounts, I have statutory responsibilities to receive questions and objections to the accounts from local electors. These responsibilities are set out in the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004:

- Section 30 Inspection of documents and questions at audit; and
- Section 31 Right to make objections at audit.

As this work is reactive, I have made no allowance in the fee table below. If I do receive questions or objections, I will discuss potential audit fees at the time.

Fee and audit team

In January 2023 I published the [fee scheme](#) for the 2023-24 year as approved by the Senedd Finance Committee. My fee rates for 2023-24 have increased by 4.8% for inflationary pressures. In addition, my financial audit fee has a further increase of 10.2% for the impact of the revised auditing standard ISA 315 on my financial audit approach. More details of the revised auditing standard and what it means for the audit I undertake is set out in **Appendix 1**.

I estimate your total audit fee will be £361,516

Exhibit 5: audit fee

This table sets out the proposed audit fee for 2023, by area of audit work, alongside the audit fee for last year.

Audit area	Proposed fee (£) ²	Actual/estimate fee last year (£)
Audit of accounts ³	216,874	188,552
Performance audit work ⁴	105,686	100,660 ⁵
Grant certification work ⁶	37,400	35,691
Other financial audit work ⁷	1,556	1,485
Total fee	361,516	326,388

Planning will be ongoing, and changes to my programme of audit work, and therefore my fee, may be required if any key new risks emerge. I shall make no changes without first discussing them with the Council.

² Notes: The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is not charged to you.

³ Payable November 2022 to October 2023.

⁴ Payable April 2023 to March 2024.

⁵ This is an estimated fee as we have not completed the work yet.

⁶ Payable as work is undertaken.

⁷ The audit of annual returns for Coychurch Crematorium Joint Committee and Porthcawl Harbour Authority

Our financial audit fee is based on the following assumptions:

- The agreed audit deliverables sets out the expected working paper requirements to support the financial statements and includes timescales and responsibilities.
- No matters of significance, other than as summarised in this plan, are identified during the audit.

The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in **Exhibit 6**.

Exhibit 6: my local audit team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Anthony Veale	Engagement Director (Financial Audit)	07896 271 873	anthony.veale@audit.wales
Steve Wyndham	Audit Manager (Financial Audit)	02920 320664	steve.wyndham@audit.wales
Sara-Jane Byrne	Audit Manager (Performance Audit)	02920 677822	sara-jane.byrne@audit.wales
David Williams	Audit Lead (Financial Audit)	02920 829326	david.williams@audit.wales
Samantha Clements	Audit Lead (Performance Audit)	02920 320163	samantha.clements@audit.wales

I can confirm that my team members are all independent of the Council and your officers.

Audit quality

Our commitment to audit quality in Audit Wales is absolute. We believe that audit quality is about getting things right first time.

We use a three lines of assurance model to demonstrate how we achieve this. We have established an Audit Quality Committee to co-ordinate and oversee those arrangements. We subject our work to independent scrutiny by QAD* and our Chair, acts as a link to our Board on audit quality. For more information see our [Audit Quality Report 2022](#).

Our People



The first line of assurance is formed by our staff and management who are individually and collectively responsible for achieving the standards of audit quality to which we aspire.

- Selection of right team
- Use of specialists
- Supervisions and review

Arrangements for achieving audit quality



The second line of assurance is formed by the policies, tools, learning & development, guidance, and leadership we provide to our staff to support them in achieving those standards of audit quality.

- Audit platform
- Ethics
- Guidance
- Culture
- Learning and development
- Leadership
- Technical support

Independent assurance



The third line of assurance is formed by those activities that provide independent assurance over the effectiveness of the first two lines of assurance.

- EQCRs
- Themed reviews
- Cold reviews
- Root cause analysis
- Peer review
- Audit Quality Committee
- External monitoring

* QAD is the quality monitoring arm of ICAEW.

Appendix 1

The key changes to ISA315 and the potential impact on your organisation

Key change	Potential impact on your organisation
More detailed and extensive risk identification and assessment procedures	<p>Your finance team and others in your organisation may receive a greater number of enquiries from our audit teams at the planning stage of the audit. Requests for information may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• information on your organisation's business model and how it integrates the use of information technology (IT);• information about your organisation's risk assessment process and how your organisation monitors the system of internal control;• more detailed information on how transactions are initiated, recorded, processed, and reported. This may include access to supporting documentation such as policy and procedure manuals; and• more detailed discussions with your organisation to support the audit team's assessment of inherent risk.
Obtaining an enhanced understanding of your organisation's environment, particularly in relation to IT	<p>Your organisation may receive more enquiries to assist the audit team in understanding the IT environment. This may include information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT applications relevant to financial reporting;• the supporting IT infrastructure (e.g. the network, databases);• IT processes (e.g. managing program changes, IT operations); and• the IT personnel involved in the IT processes. <p>Audit teams may need to test the general IT controls and this may require obtaining more detailed audit evidence on the operation of IT controls within your organisation.</p> <p>On some audits, our audit teams may involve IT audit specialists to assist with their work. Our IT auditors may need to engage with members of your IT team who have not previously been involved in the audit process.</p>

Key change	Potential impact on your organisation
Enhanced requirements relating to exercising professional scepticism	Our audit teams may make additional inquiries if they identify information which appears to contradict what they have already learned in the audit.
Risk assessments are scalable depending on the nature and complexity of the audited body	The audit team's expectations regarding the formality of your organisation's policies, procedures, processes, and systems will depend on the complexity of your organisation.
Audit teams may make greater use of technology in the performance of their audit	Our audit teams may make use of automated tools and techniques such as data analytics when performing their audit. Our teams may request different information or information in a different format from previous audits so that they can perform their audit procedures.

Through our Good Practice work we share emerging practice and insights from our audit work in support of our objectives to assure, to explain and to inspire.

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Sign up to our newsletter [here](#).



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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.

Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	HALF YEAR REVIEW OF ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	NIGEL SMITH, GROUP MANAGER – CHIEF ACCOUNTANT
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	Regulation 5 (2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires an authority to undertake, as part of its arrangements for corporate governance, an annual review of governance and report on internal control.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Governance Statement provides an overall assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the controls in place to manage the Council's key risks and identifies where improvements need to be made. • The key risks and improvements are incorporated into an annual Action Plan, which is monitored during the year and progress on actions at the half-year review is reported to the Governance & Audit Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Action Plan that accompanied the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 (AGS) against the significant issues identified and how they are being addressed in 2023-24.

2. Background

- 2.1 Regulation 5 (2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires an authority to undertake, as part of its arrangements for corporate governance, an annual review of governance and report on internal control.
- 2.2 The Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 26 July 2023.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Good corporate governance requires the active participation of Members and Officers across the Council. These arrangements are reviewed on an annual basis and the findings used to update the AGS. This helps to ensure the continuous improvement of the Council's corporate governance culture.
- 3.2 The AGS provides an overall assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the controls in place to manage the Council's key risks and identifies where improvements need to be made. The AGS 2022-23 is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 Local authorities are required to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year. A review of the Action Plan for the year provides a basis for reviewing progress against each significant governance issue identified. The Action Plan is included at **Appendix B** together with an update on progress against each significant governance issue.

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 because of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The Climate Change implications were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the environment because of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting implications were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon Safeguarding and Corporate parenting because of this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- Consider the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24 Action Plan and progress on the actions to 30 September 2023.

Background documents

None

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Annual Governance Statement



Contents

1	Foreword
2	Governance Framework
3	Assessing Performance
4	Audit Assurance
5	Improving Governance
6	Assurance Statement

1 Foreword

“Delivering together”

The Council’s [Corporate Plan 2023-28](#), approved by Council in March 2023, sets out what the Council’s long-term well-being objectives are so that amongst all of the complexity of increased demand and reduced resources the Council can keep a clear focus on what is really important for our communities.

The plan is about the people of Bridgend. The Council worked with residents, staff, trade unions, elected members and businesses to shape our ambitions for everyone over the next 5 years. The plan responds to the short- and medium-term issues, like the financial crisis, while protecting the natural environment and helping young people meet their potential for the long-term. Sustainability is at the centre of all we do, including our commitment to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030.

The Corporate Plan sets out the Council’s 7 Wellbeing Objectives:

- A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable
- A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns
- A County Borough with thriving valleys communities
- A County Borough where we help people meet their potential
- A County Borough that is responding to the climate and natural emergency
- A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community
- A County Borough where we support people to live healthy and happy lives

It is necessary to ensure that our communities and those that use and pay for our services, those who deliver our services, and our partners and suppliers, have confidence in our governance arrangements. They must be assured that our services are provided effectively and efficiently and delivered on a consistent basis, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and that decisions are taken transparently and lawfully. This is especially the case given the challenges arising from the cost-of-living crisis and the ramifications arising from the current conflict in Ukraine.

The Council has a duty to set well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to make arrangements and keep under review the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and to ensure its governance is effective for securing these performance requirements. Our governance arrangements operate effectively in supporting the Council in meeting its challenges and responsibilities and have continued to do so in the current uncertain times. Improvements are continually being made and opportunities to do so going forward have been identified. These will be monitored during 2023-24 to ensure that the necessary improvements are made.



Cllr Huw David
Leader of the Council



Mark Shephard
Chief Executive

2 Governance Framework

What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled, led and held to account, and how it engages with stakeholders. It is also about the way that Councillors and employees think and act.

The Governance Framework enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether they have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

What this Statement tells you

This Statement describes the extent to which the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance and the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 for the year ended 31 March 2023.

It also sets out how the Council has responded to governance issues identified during 2022-23 and actions to be undertaken during 2023-24 following an annual review of the Governance Framework.

The Statement has been prepared in accordance with the 2016 guidance: '[Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework](#)' produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE).



Bridgend Market

The Council's Governance Responsibilities

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council must consider the longer-term impact of any decisions it makes, and should work collaboratively with other public bodies to improve well-being in Wales.¹

As a public body the Council has to ensure it delivers sustainable social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes as a key focus of its governance process and structures. This is achieved by:

- behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
- ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance sets out its commitment to, and responsibility for, ensuring that there is a sound system of governance in place. The [Code of Corporate Governance](#) is on the Council's website.

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance sets out the seven principles of good governance in line with CIPFA's 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework'.

	Bridgend County Borough Council Code of Governance The Council's Governance Principles are based on the following:
A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
B	Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
F	Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
G	Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability



¹ Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

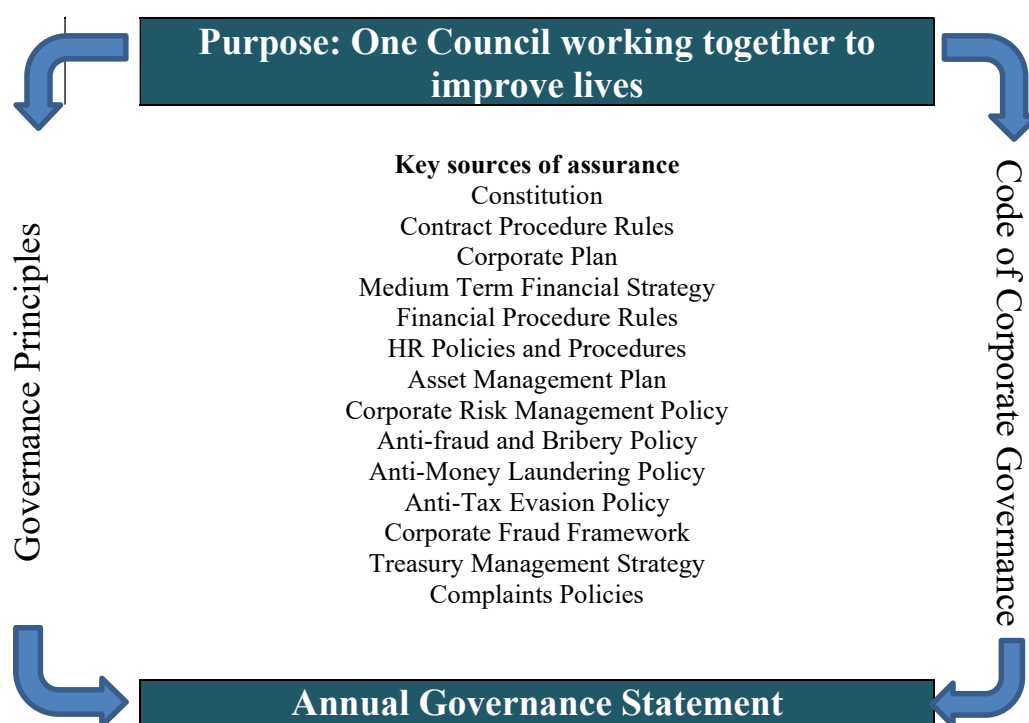
The Council's Governance Framework

The Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes and values by which the Council is directed and controlled and the means by which it accounts to, engages with and leads the local community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to make appropriate use and prevent loss of public funds. It also assists with managing the risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It does not eliminate all the risk; the system of internal control is designed to identify and prioritise risks, evaluate the likelihood of those risks materialising and manage their impact.

In order to review the effectiveness of the governance framework, assurances are provided to, and challenged by, the Governance and Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committees, Standards Committee, Council, Cabinet and Corporate Management Board as appropriate. In addition the Section 151 Officer promotes and delivers good financial management and the Monitoring Officer promotes and delivers legal and ethical assurance.

Some of the key elements of the governance framework are highlighted below.



More widely, as part of its partnership and joint working arrangements, the Council is involved in bespoke external governance arrangements driven by the different partnership and delivery arrangements in place. Examples of these include the following:

- The Council is one of ten Councils jointly delivering the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD), which has in place joint Scrutiny and Cabinet to ensure governance in its implementation. The CCRCD aims to raise economic prosperity, job prospects and improve digital and transport connectivity and is a significant investment into the South Wales economy. The Council is

committed to contributing to the delivery of these objectives across the region to ensure that the community and business within the Borough can benefit from this investment

- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act provides Ministers with the powers to establish Corporate Joint Committees covering the four functions of economic wellbeing, transport, strategic planning and school improvement. The Welsh Government's South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee Regulations 2021 established a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for the Cardiff City Deal region (CCRCD) and provided that the three core functions (economic well-being, transport and strategic planning) would be conferred on the South East Wales CJC. A transition plan has been developed and regular updates on progress are presented to the Cabinet of the CCRCD and to the Corporate Joint Committee.
- The Council works closely with Health and there is in place regional arrangements managed by the Cwm Taf Regional Partnership Board. The Regional Safeguarding Board and Regional Partnership Board provide leadership across the region for safeguarding and integrated planning of health and social care services though the Adoption Service continues to operate on the previous 'Western Bay' footprint.
- The Council is a participant in a number of shared services, with other local authorities, such as the Shared Regulatory Services with Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils, and Central South Consortium, a joint education service for five local authorities. These are governed by joint committees which comprise elected members from each of the local authorities. The Council also is a partner in the Regional Internal Audit Shared Services with Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Decision Making and Responsibilities

The Council consists of 51 elected Members (a reduction of 3 members), with an elected Leader and Cabinet who are supported and held to account by Scrutiny Committees. The Council's constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures for ensuring that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. It contains the basic rules governing the Council's business and sets out a list of functions and decisions exercisable by officers. It also contains the rules and protocols by which the Council, Members and officers operate.



Through the [Constitution](#), 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. The Constitution has been updated 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 on the website, which will enable a better understanding of the Constitution for members of the public.

All Council and Committee meetings' agendas, papers and minutes can be viewed on-line and pre-pandemic all meetings were open to the public unless exempt or confidential matters were being discussed. Since the pandemic meetings are held virtually and recorded and placed on the Council's website for the public to access. The Council's forward work programme contains information about all matters that are likely to be the subject of a decision taken by full Council or Cabinet during the forthcoming period. They also include information regarding Scrutiny Committees. To further enhance

openness and **comprehensive stakeholder engagement** the Council has a Citizen's Panel, which takes part in surveys on a range of issues. The Council also uses social media to promote services and engage with the public and makes information available in a range of formats to maximise the opportunity for information sharing and to enable residents to communicate with the Council.

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act received Royal Assent on 20 January 2021. The Act is a substantial piece of legislation covering electoral reform, public participation, governance and performance and regional working. There are many reforms within the Act, however, in summary the Act introduces:

- Reform of electoral arrangements for local government, including extending the voting franchise to 16- and 17-year olds;
- Introduction of a general power of competence;
- Reforming public participation in local government;
- Reforms around democratic governance and leadership;
- Collaborative working;
- Reform of the performance and governance regime;
- Powers to facilitate voluntary mergers of principal councils.

In order to provide local authorities with certainty as to what legislative changes are being implemented when, and ensure the required preparations can be made, Welsh Government has made three Commencement Orders, which will be accompanied by other relevant subordinate legislation, which brought the relevant provisions into force on a series of dates between March 2021 and 5 May 2022.

The Act will continue to have a wide-ranging impact on the organisation, powers, performance measurement and governance of the Council. From May 2022 the composition of the Governance and Audit Committee has changed, and one-third of its members are required to be lay members, including the Chair of the Committee. For the Council the Governance and Audit Committee now comprises 8 elected members and 4 lay members. New responsibilities, some of which the Committee has already started to assume, include:

- a role in reviewing the Council's self-assessment report and making any recommendations for change;
- consideration of the outcome and response to a panel performance assessment of the Council, and;
- responsibility for making reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

Role of the Governance and Audit Committee

The **Governance and Audit Committee** provides independent assurance on the Council's internal control environment. It is a statutory Committee for the duration of 2021-22 consisted of 11 Councillors and 1 Lay Member. Following implantation of the Local Government and Elections Act, from 2022-23 it consists of 8 Councillors and 4 Lay Members. Its main functions are:

- Review and scrutinise reports and recommendations in relation to the Council's Financial Affairs
- Review and scrutinise reports and recommendations on the appropriateness of the Council's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements
- Oversee the Council's internal and external audit arrangements
- To be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and Policies
- To monitor the Council's Anti-Fraud and Bribery Strategy, Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Anti-Tax Evasion Policy
- To review and approve the Council's Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Statement of Accounts
- To review and consider reports from the External Auditor and Inspectors
- To review and assess the Council's ability to handle complaints effectively and make recommendations in this respect
- To review the Council's draft self assessment report on its performance and, if deemed necessary, make recommendations for changes to the conclusions



Tremains Wood

3 Assessing Performance

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Council has a duty to report on its performance through an [annual self-assessment report](#). This is a wider assessment than the previous [Annual Report](#), which was an annual self-evaluation of progress against the Council's Corporate Plan. The Annual Report looked back on the progress made during the year on the steps to meet the well-being objectives. The self-assessment report is much wider and must set out the Council's conclusions on the extent to which it met the performance requirements during that financial year, and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements. The duty includes a requirement for Governance and Audit Committee to review the draft report, which they did in June 2022, and for the final report to be submitted to at least the Auditor General for Wales, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales and Welsh Ministers.

The Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan 2023-28, approved in March 2023 sets out the Council's ambition: '**Delivering Together**'. The Plan defines the Council's seven well-being objectives and its organisational values and principles that underpin how it will work to deliver its priorities. Over the next 5 years the Council wants to invest in the right things, the things that make the biggest difference and are most valued by its customers. However, the Council faces difficult choices in how it prioritises spending and will not be able to do everything for everyone. The Plan sets out how the Council will work.



Your Council's Wellbeing Objectives							
National Wellbeing Goal	Protecting our most vulnerable	Fair work, skilled jobs and thriving towns	Creating thriving valleys communities	Helping people meet their potential	Responding to the climate and nature emergency	Making people feel valued, heard and part of their community	Supporting people to be healthy and happy
		●	●	●	●	●	●
	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	●		●		●	●	●
	●	●	●	●		●	●
	●		●			●	
		●	●	●			●
		●	●		●	●	●

Underpinning the Council's Corporate Plan and throughout its decisions-making process, the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are applied. The table shows how the Council's well-being objectives contribute to the seven well-being goals.

























In addition to the seven well-being goals, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts in place the sustainable development principle and defines the five ways of working that public bodies must adopt to demonstrate they have applied the sustainable development principle. The five ways of working are:

Long-term: thinking of future generations and of our natural resources.

Prevention: this is the step before any issues arise and is aimed at making sure that solutions and interventions are targeted and available to stop statutory services being required.

Integration and Collaboration: with colleagues and partners. Ensure decisions are joined up across services and work more closely with partners in the public, private and third sectors.

Involvement: consult and involved local people in planning and delivering services.

5 Ways of Working	Long term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement
Our Principles					
To support communities and people to create their own solutions and reduce dependency on the Council.					
To focus diminishing resources on communities and individuals with the greatest need.					
To use good information from service users and communities to inform its decisions.					
To encourage and develop capacity amongst the third sector to identify and respond to local needs.					
To not let uncertainty over the future of public services prevent meaningful and pragmatic collaboration with other public sector bodies.					
To work as one Council and discourage different parts of the organisation from developing multiple processes or unnecessarily different approaches.					
To transform the organisation and many of its services to deliver financial budget reductions as well as improvements.					

Welsh language – Wales has two official languages, Welsh and English, and services and information should be equally available in both. The Council has a statutory duty under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely within the Borough. The Council has a [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2021 to 2026](#) as required under the Measure. The Council's internal business language is English, but all the services and information we provide for local people will be equally available in either language.

The Corporate Plan identifies a number of key principles which underpin its Well-being objectives and has adopted a set of values that represent what the Council stands for and influences how it works. The key principles are set out below.

- Wherever possible the Council will support communities and people to create their own solutions and reduce dependency on the Council
- The Council will focus diminishing resources on communities and individuals with the greatest need
- The Council will use good information from service users and communities to inform its decisions
- The Council will encourage and develop capacity amongst the third sector to identify and respond to local needs
- The Council will not let uncertainty over the future of public services prevent meaningful and pragmatic collaboration with other public sector bodies
- The Council will work as one Council and discourage different parts of the organisation from developing multiple processes or unnecessarily different approaches
- The Council will transform the organisation and many of its services and in so doing will deliver financial budget reductions as well as improvements

Future Service Delivery

The UK has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic and although the virus still is in circulation, its impacts are much reduced. A Future Service Delivery Model for the Council has been developed, which outlines plans for future service delivery going forward. The Council has introduced a Hybrid Working Policy for many staff, which offers a blended approach that can take account of the wide range of services delivered by the Council. The application of hybrid working is dependent on the demands and needs of the role undertaken by the employee and the service within which the role is based. It also offers employees greater flexibility in their work practices, promoting a better work-life balance. The Council has also implemented a new Flexitime Working Hours Scheme which works alongside the Hybrid Working Policy and enables employees to have an element of flexibility in relation to working hours where this meets the operational requirements and needs of the service.

Cost of Living crisis

The rising costs of fuel, food and other essentials and inflation at the highest levels in many years, households in the Borough and across the UK are facing significant financial pressures. On 15 February 2022 the Welsh Government announced a package of measure to help people with support towards the increased cost of living. This included a £150 cost-of-living payment which would be provided to those living in council tax bands A-D and all households who were recipients of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in properties in council tax bands A-I. Welsh Government also announced a discretionary support scheme would be available to be used by each local authority to support other households who were outside the criteria for the main scheme that it considered to be in need of assistance with their living costs. The discretionary scheme included £60 payments to households in council tax bands E to F and £50 vouchers for each pupil entitled to free school meals. A total of £1,260,415 was paid out including £729,390 for Council Tax, £499,440 for free school meals and £31,585 for homelessness and food banks/warm banks. The Council and its partners have also actively worked to provide support to residents in need. This includes the provision of food support, warm spaces and financial support. All Awen libraries in the county borough are taking part in Awen's Warm Welcome Programme with free tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cup-a-soup and an enhanced activity programme. Financial support from the Council includes the Council Tax Reduction benefit for people on low incomes; various grants for education support including free school meals; and supporting the delivery of the Welsh Government's Fuel Support Scheme and HM Government Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding and Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Fund schemes.

The rate of inflation increases has also had a significant effect. The annual rate of inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high, before easing in subsequent months. It rose again however from 10.1% in January 2023 to 10.4% in February. Not only is this impact felt by households, but it is also affecting businesses as they struggle with increasing costs and the pressures that places on businesses.

Decarbonisation 2030

Welsh Government declared a [Climate Emergency](#) in April 2019. Following this the Welsh Government committed to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. In June 2020 Bridgend County Borough Council Cabinet

approved a report that set out the crucial roles that the Council has to play through the management of its own resources, organisations and businesses to respond to the challenges set out in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) October 2018 report.

The Council declared its own climate emergency in June 2020 and set up its [Climate Emergency Response programme](#), which has a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 across its operations. The Council developed its [2030 Net Zero Carbon Strategy](#) over the period April 2021 to August 2022. The Council undertook a series of officer workshops to contribute to the draft strategy, and a 12-week public consultation during June to August 2022. The final strategy was approved by Cabinet on 13 December 2022. It is recognised that the resource challenge faced by all public bodies in Wales to achieve net zero carbon by 2030 is significant. The delivery of the Strategy is a corporate responsibility and all Directorates will have a role to play in achieving net zero. Delivery will also require an on-going partnership with external stakeholders and a wide range of funders. Council agreed a specific annual 2030 Decarbonisation capital budget of £0.4 million each year to 2030-31 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27, however the level of resources to deliver 2030 Net Zero will be substantially more than this. Schemes to deliver 2030 Net Zero will require feasibility funding to finalise detailed costs and delivery profiles, and proposals will be submitted wherever possible to funding sources to secure external resources to fund initiatives. There are existing schemes that contribute to the 2030 Net Zero targets including the provision of electric vehicle charging points; energy efficient lighting and LED street lighting; and installed roof-mounted solar panels. The Council has undertaken coastal protection, extended areas of local nature reserves and tree-planting and approved a socially responsible [Procurement Strategy](#).

Inspections

Care Inspectorate Wales carry out regulatory inspections of the Council's registered care provision. The Council is a significant provider of adult and children's regulated care services. In the last year leadership has been strengthened through the appointment of dedicated Responsible Individuals for children's and adults social care registered provision. Responsible Individuals have legal responsibilities in accordance with the Regulation and Inspection of Care (Wales) Act (2018). There have been a number of regulatory inspections in 2022-23. There have been regular meetings between senior officers and Care Inspectorate Wales during 2020-21 to provide assurance in respect of the safety and wellbeing of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. An assurance check was carried out by Care Inspectorate Wales in April 2021, this was followed by a Performance Evaluation Inspection of Children's Services in May 2022 and an improvement check in November 2022. The Cabinet has approved a 3 year strategic plan to improve outcomes in children's social care, and the improvements in this plan, and the Care Inspectorate Wales inspection, are being overseen by a board chaired by the Chief Executive and advised by an independent expert in children's social care. There is also a Social Services Member Improvement Panel which is chaired by the Deputy Leader, which is also advised by an independent advisor.

The findings of the performance evaluation inspection and follow up check are set out below:

Principle	Areas of improvement identified from PEI – May 2022	Progress identified from improvement check – November 2022
People	Seeking, hearing (including the use of direct work) and recording the voice of the child	Significant improvements made and must be sustained
People	People consistently feel listened to and treated with dignity and respect	Some improvements made; further action is required
People	Workforce recruitment and retention	Some improvements made; further action is required

People	Management oversight	Significant improvements made; further action is required
People	Staff support, supervision and training	Some improvements made; further action is required
Prevention	Provision of information, advice, and assistance. People receive the right support at the right time	Some improvements made; further action is required
Partnerships	Thresholds for early help and statutory services	Some improvements made; further action is required
Partnerships	Learning from reviews and audits	Some improvements made; further action is required
Well-being	Compliance with statutory responsibilities	Some improvements made; further action is required
Well-being	Arrangements for supervised contact between children and their families	Some improvements made; further action is required
Well-being	Identification and response to child exploitation	Some improvements made; further action is required

The Inspection noted that many of the pressures experienced by the Council's Children's Services reflected recovery from the Covid pandemic, including high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs. Critical defects in the number of social workers, because of recruitment and retention issues, along with staff absences and a highly competitive market, had resulted in the loss of experienced staff and a reliance on newly qualified and agency social workers. Recruitment and retention remain a significant pressure point for the service. The inspection noted that the workforce position remains fragile.

As part of the response to the inspection, the Council set up the Improving Outcomes for Children Board, which was set up in March 2022 and is chaired by the Chief Executive. Care Inspectorate Wales noted that this Board has made a positive impact through improved oversight of Children's Services and early help services, ensuring there is sufficient information about, and scrutiny of, performance.

There continues to be a strong focus and considerable work to make improvements. The Council has commissioned external expertise to support with identifying how well services are working, and how they can be improved or refined to maximise their impact and outcomes for children and families.

On 24 November 2022 the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board published the Child Practice Review in relation to the tragic death of Logan Mwangi. The Board has accepted in full the findings of the Child Practice Review and the Safeguarding Board and the Council will implement the review recommendations. Care Inspectorate Wales will monitor the Council's progress through their ongoing review of performance.

Annual Improvement

Audit Wales², our External Auditor, assesses the Council's arrangements for delivering continuous improvement and subsequent performance, the results of which are published in their [Annual Audit Summary 2022](#). In March 2023 they reported that the 'Auditor General certified that the Council had met its remaining Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 duties for the financial year 2021-22, as served by an order made under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021'. The auditor also noted as part of its Springing forward review that the Council made positive progress in delivering

² Since 1 April 2020 the Wales Audit Office and Auditor General are branded as Audit Wales. The statutory names remain Wales Audit Office and Auditor General for Wales.

its previous asset management strategy and needs to ensure future strategic asset plans are fully shaped by the sustainable development principle. The review did identify, however, that workforce challenges are impacting on the Council's ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory safety requirements. The review identified that the Council needs to develop a corporate workforce plan shaped by the sustainable development principle, to address these workforce challenges and strengthen its resilience.

To ensure that the outcomes of all audits, reviews and inspections, and the specific recommendations for the Council are recorded, a regulatory tracker has been developed. This includes the outcome of inspections by Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and HM Inspectorates for Probation and Prisons as well as Audit Wales work. The purpose of the tracker will be to ensure that relevant recommendations and actions therefrom are reported and monitored, including by elected members, and then reviewed by the relevant Scrutiny committees. Actions are considered and scrutinised at Directorate Management Teams and considered by the Corporate Management Board and Cabinet on a regular basis to ensure corporate and political oversight. Governance and Audit Committee will receive 6-monthly updates each January and July.

Audit Wales have undertaken and reported on a number of reviews during the year, the key outcomes of which are set out below.

Report	Key outcomes
<u>Direct Payments for Adult Social Care</u> (April 2022)	<p>Whilst not specific to Bridgend, this review looked at how local authorities provide Direct Payment services to adults, examining their impact and value for money.</p> <p>The overall conclusion was that Direct Payments support people's independence and are highly valued by service users and carers, but inconsistencies in the way they are promoted and managed by local authorities mean services are not always equitable and it is difficult to assess overall value for money.</p>
<u>Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management – Bridgend County Borough Council</u> (October 2022)	<p>Audit Wales reviewed the Council's arrangements for managing its workforce with a primary focus on how well the Council strategically plans the use of its workforce, how it monitors the use of its workforce assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements. The review noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like many other councils, Bridgend is experiencing significant workforce challenges, and years of continued service restructures and staffing cuts to deliver savings are impacting on its ability to plan and maintain service performance. • The Council is taking action to respond to its significant workforce issues, but needs to develop a corporate workforce plan shaped by the sustainable development principle and needs capacity to effectively shape solutions for its significant workforce challenges in the medium to long term • The Council has focussed on addressing short term critical workforce pressures particularly in Social Services, but in the absence of a strategic Workforce Plan to guide and inform approaches to managing these challenges we have emerging concerns about the Council's resilience to continue to respond to critical issues. • The Council has arrangements to monitor workforce issues and it has not yet developed a framework to effectively benchmark, measure success and affordability of its future services delivery model but has acted on lessons learnt. <p>A number of recommendations were identified:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council needs to urgently develop its strategic workforce approach, embedding the sustainable development principle at its core, to enable it to address the significant workforce issues it faces. • The Council should develop a suite of strategic quantitative and qualitative measure to enhance its ability to understand the impacts and affordability of its workforce plans and actions • The Council should also explore opportunities to benchmark its own performance over time and its arrangements with other bodies to provide a different dimension to its performance management data. Whilst also offering an insight to how other bodies are performing and discovering notable practice elsewhere. <p>The Council has progressed the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Strategic Workforce Plan has been shared with Cabinet & Corporate Management Board, Heads of Service and the Trade Unions. • Strategic Workforce Planning training for Senior Leadership Teams is due to be delivered by the LGA to HR Managers (in August) and Corporate Management Board (in September), before considering wider training across the organisation. • Delivery plans will be developed in response to the workforce themes, which will identify what the Council has done and what it plans to do next. • Service workforce planning will also be developed and will be taken forward through close collaboration between Directorate managers and the respective HR Business Partners.
<p><u>Springing Forward – Strategic Asset Management – Bridgend County Borough Council</u> (October 2022)</p>	<p>Audit Wales reviewed the Council's arrangements for managing its assets with a primary focus on office accommodation and buildings from which the Council delivers services to its residents. Audit Wales looked at how the Council strategically plans the use of its assets, how it monitors the use of its assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements. Overall, the review found that the Council made positive progress in delivering its previous asset management strategy and now needs to ensure future strategic asset plans are fully shaped by the sustainable development principle. However, workforce challenges are impacting on its ability to plan more strategically and critically, to ensure its buildings meet statutory safety requirements.</p>
<p><u>Assurance and Risk Assessment Review – Bridgend County Borough Council</u> (October 2022)</p>	<p>This work was to find the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. It also helped in assessing the extent to which the Council is applying the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives. The work focussed on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial position • Implications of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 • Carbon reduction plan • Disabled Facility Grants • Statutory Building Compliance <p>The key findings were:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council continues to be well placed to maintain its financial resilience. However, this will be tested by challenges being posed by the current economic climate. The Council is developing and implementing aspects of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act The Council has a draft carbon reduction strategy but has not yet fully determined the resources needed to deliver it nor how others will contribute to its delivery The Council has been slow to respond to Audit Wales proposals for improvement in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants and performance remains poor, worsened by the pandemic. The Council is developing a new operating model for 2023-24 which is intended to be simpler, better co-ordinated and more responsive to service user needs. The Council has improved its statutory building compliance targets in asbestos surveys and fire risk assessments where compliance remains at higher levels. However, it is not meeting its targets for gas servicing and legionella testing and therefore not mitigating all the significant risks associated with non-compliance. <p>The Council has progressed the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is nearing completion on the development of a contractor framework for Disabled Facilities Grants to improve the time taken to procure agreed works Staff vacancies have been an issue for this service. Posts are now covered with agency staff but the service will continued to seek permanent staff Time taken to complete Disabled Facilities Grants for children has increased in the last year
<u>Transformational Leadership Programme Board – Baseline Governance Review – Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board</u> (January 2023)	<p>The review sought to gain assurance that the health board [Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board] and the three councils [Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Bridgend County Borough Council] are working together effectively through the aegis of the Transformation Leadership Programme Board to support regional integrated working across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. The review sought to answer the question: ‘Are the Transformation Leadership Programme Board arrangements supporting the four bodies to develop effective and sustainable approaches to regional workings?’ Overall Audit Wales found that the Transformation Leadership Programme Board is well-placed to develop stronger regional working building on the productive relationships over the past 18 months. However, it needs to ensure its planning is more integrated and longer term, strengthen aspects of its governance arrangements and be more ambitious in using its combined core resources to have a greater impact on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.</p>
<u>Performance Management Review – Bridgend County Borough Council</u> (February 2023)	<p>The review sought establish how well the Council’s performance management arrangements inform the Council of progress in meeting its priorities. The review found that the Council’s performance management arrangements do not consistently enable it to effectively evaluate and manage its performance. The report noted that weaknesses in performance information are limiting the Council’s awareness of its own performance and its ability to manage its performance effectively. The Council’s focus on collecting, rather than analysing data and ensuring its accuracy, limits the impact of its performance management arrangements.</p>

Managing Risk

The Council faces a range of risks as would be expected from the broad range of services it delivers and activities it is engaged with. On a day-to-day basis operational risk arises from the challenge of ensuring sufficient capacity and capability to advise on, and to deliver, the key policy objectives of the Council.

The Council has developed a robust approach to the management of risk. The Corporate Risk Management Policy is aligned with Directorate Plans and the Council's performance management framework. The Council defines risk as: 'Any potential development or occurrence which, if it came to fruition, would jeopardise the Council's ability to:

- achieve its well-being objectives
- provide services as planned
- fulfil its statutory duties, including the duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.'

Risks are viewed from both a Service and Council-wide perspective which ensures the key risks are distilled in the [Corporate Risk Assessment](#). The Risk Assessment sets out how the Council is addressing these risks and the mitigating actions it will put in place to reduce them. It is regularly reviewed and challenged by both senior management and the Governance and Audit Committee. It is not possible to eliminate all risk of failure to meet the targets in the Council's policies, aims and objectives and cannot therefore provide absolute assurance of effectiveness, but one of reasonable assurance.

During 2021-22 detailed Risk Management Guidance was developed for use by all departments across the Council. It enables staff to identify risks, prioritise them and implement actions to mitigate them, in a consistent and timely manner. Training was rolled out to all directorate management teams and the roles and responsibilities at each stage of the process outlined. Directorate Business Plans were revised to ensure that processes and actions are aligned with the corporate risk management process.

In early 2023 the Council purchased risk management software to improve the monitoring and reporting of risk. This software will enable a single point of storage for all compliance and risk related records, with a simple to use interface and is aligned to Enterprise Risk Management standards. It will enable the Council to monitor progress and provide easy to understand risk reports for users and Committees in the role in managing and assessing risks. It is in the early stages of implementation and roll-out will take place through 2023.

Financial Management

The financial management of the Council is conducted in accordance with all relevant legislation and the Constitution. The Council has in place Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procedure Rules, a specific Financial Scheme for Schools, and the scheme of delegation also provides the framework for financial control. The Section 151 Officer is responsible for establishing a clear framework for the management of the Council's financial affairs and for ensuring that arrangements are made for their proper administration.

The Council's ability to deliver savings and contain its expenditure within its overall budget is well established. However, the Council faces significant challenges in the future in the face of uncertain

funding levels and cost pressures, the impact of Cost-of-Living crisis and the current conflict in the Ukraine. The Council estimates that it will need to generate approximately £17 million of savings over the period 2023-24 to 2026-27. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy has taken account of known cost pressures and priority areas in line with the Corporate Plan and undertaken extensive consultation to ensure a robust process. To ensure greater involvement of stakeholders in the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy a five week consultation 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' was undertaken between 19 December 2022 and 22 January 2023, the emphasis of which was to seek views on the priority areas for residents, in order to enable us to review and prioritise the budget and make Bridgend 'Fit for the Future'. It was recognised that budget planning for 2023-24 is more uncertain than ever before, and that the Council is facing even more cost pressures than experienced in previous years, as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, conflict in Ukraine and worsening economic circumstances. We needed to know what has worked well, and where we need to continue to make changes or improvements to ensure that the Council is able to deliver sustainable and effective services for the next five to ten years. The consultation included an online survey, attendance at engagement events, a social media / web campaign and via the Authority's Citizens' Panel and targeted a range of stakeholders. The results were collated and presented to Cabinet on 7 February 2023 in order to further inform decisions on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Medium Term Financial Strategy can be found on the Council's website [here](#). Welsh Government has given all-Wales indicative funding level for the 2024-25 financial year, but no indication of likely funding for Bridgend and no indication of funding levels for future years. Given this uncertainty, the Council has developed detailed budgets for year one of the Strategy with indicative budgets thereafter based on a range of funding scenarios.

The Council has in place robust arrangements for effective financial control through the Council's accounting procedures, key financial systems and the Financial Procedure Rules. The Financial Procedure Rules were reviewed during 2021-22 to better reflect current working practices and were approved by Cabinet in November 2021. Arrangements in place to demonstrate good financial control include established budget planning procedures and regular budget monitoring reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee, as well as detailed information to budget holders. The Council prepares its Annual Accounts as required by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations and in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

The Council follows the CIPFA Code on Treasury Management and Welsh Government's Guidance on Local Authority Investments to ensure that funds invested are secure, accessible when necessary and attract an appropriate return and any borrowings needed are in line with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, as approved by Council. As a number of local authorities in England have faced financial concerns and following a number of members' concerns regarding some investments this Council had made, the duration and limit of investments the Council can make to other local authorities was reviewed during the year and revised for the Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24. The revised limits are 2 years and £10 million. The Council has been able to invest monies across its wider investment options in line with the Council's [Treasury Management Strategy](#) and enable it to reduce its reliance on the Debt Management Office, though this remains a key investment option for the Council.

CIPFA issued a revised Treasury Management Code of Practice in December 2021, with full implementation from 2023-24. CIPFA also issued a new edition of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities in December 2021. The Code requires local authorities to determine a Capital Strategy, to be approved by Council, which demonstrates that the authority takes capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with service objectives and properly takes account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability. A significant change in the Code is that, to comply with the Code, an authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. The Code does not require existing commercial investments, including property, to be sold. However, it does set out that authorities that have a need to borrow should review options for exiting their financial investments for commercial purposes. The Council is unlikely to invest for commercial purposes but will focus on delivering schemes that meet its service objectives. New indicators have been included on

affordability, and a 'Liability Benchmark' replaces the prudential indicators on gross debt and the capital financing requirement. The [Capital Strategy 2022-23](#) has been revised to reflect the changes in the Prudential Code. The Strategy continues to evolve to provide a robust, medium to long term capital plan for the Council.

Compliance with the CIFPA Financial Management Code of Practice

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) launched the Financial Management Code of Practice (FM Code) in November 2019. The FM Code was developed in the context of increasing concerns about the financial resilience and sustainability of local authorities.

The FM Code sets out the principles by which authorities should be guided in managing their finances and the specific standards that they should, as a minimum, seek to achieve. It clarifies how Chief Finance Officers should satisfy their statutory responsibility for good financial administration as required in section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and emphasises the collective financial responsibility of the whole leadership including the relevant elected members.

By complying with the principles and standards within the code authorities will be able to demonstrate their financial sustainability. Whilst the Code is designed to be flexible to the nature, needs and circumstances of individual authorities, it is up to each authority to determine the extent to which it complies with the FM Code and to identify what action it may wish to take to better meet the standards that the FM Code sets out. The first full year of compliance with the Code was 2021-22 but the Council has demonstrated its compliance with the Code since the 2020-21 financial year. In its Guidance Bulletin 06 (*Application of the Good Governance Framework 2020/21*) CIPFA stated that the Annual Governance Statement should include the overall conclusion of an assessment of the organisation's compliance with the principles of the FM Code. Also, that where there are outstanding matters or areas for improvement, these should be included in the action plan.

The Council's assessment of its compliance with the 19 Standards outlined in the FM Code for 2022-23 identified that the Council could demonstrate compliance with all of the Standards, but that further actions could be taken to enhance compliance during 2023-24. These actions were included in the Action Plan for 2022-23 and were to:

- Provide additional training to full Council on Capital Strategy and Earmarked Reserves
- Provide Finance Training to Schools on Closing of Accounts procedures and requirements
- Rationalisation of Earmarked Reserves and develop timescales for usage
- Continue to review consistent under and overspends and re-align budgets accordingly
- Continue to develop budget reduction proposals for the full life of the MTFS

Progress against these are included in Section 5 – Improving Governance.

4 Audit Assurance

Audit and Audit Assurances

The Council is audited externally by the Auditor General for Wales, supported by Audit Wales. The objectives of this are to obtain assurance on whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom; and to issue an opinion thereon. They also assess our arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

In 2022 the External Auditor gave an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements 2021-22.

Audit Wales also audit a number of grant claims and in the year completed 5 audits of grants and returns. One claim – Housing Benefits - was qualified, due to a number of errors but these were not significant and no changes to the claim were made.

In addition Audit Wales undertake reviews of various services and also performance reviews throughout the year, the outcome of which are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control for 2022-23 is:

“Reasonable Assurance”

The opinion states that, based on the work completed by the Regional Internal Audit Shared Service for the financial year, no significant cross-cutting control issues have been identified that would impact on the Council's overall control environment. The weaknesses that have been identified are service specific.

Many council staff are continuing to work remotely, and systems and processes have had to be adjusted to cater for the new ways of working. Similarly, Internal Audit has worked remotely, conducting audits and obtaining evidence digitally as well as face to face where appropriate. Each audit has considered the potential impact of remote working to ensure adequate controls and governance arrangements remained in place.

Of the 9 audits that were deferred from 2021-22, 5 have been completed, 2 areas were covered within other audits whilst 2 have been deferred to 2023-24. Although in total 10 audits have been deferred into 2023-24 the successful recruitment into six posts during 2022-23 should assist in improving this moving forward.

The recommendations made to improve governance, risk management and control have been accepted and are at various stages of implementation.

Bridgend Bus Station

5 Improving Governance

A number of significant issues were identified in the Council's 2021-22 Annual Governance Statement. The progress made on the significant issues is shown below:

Issue	Governance Principle	Action	Update
Self-Assessment	F	The requirement to introduce a comprehensive 'self-assessment' of the Council's performance is progressing satisfactorily. The first Corporate Performance reporting and meeting of 2022/23, reflecting on quarter 4 performance of 2021/22, introduced self-assessment across all Directorates on Key question one, 'performance and outcomes'. It is anticipated that the process will evolve and continue to improve, additionally focussing on key question 2, 'use of resources', and also utilising the Annual Governance Statement to demonstrate effective reporting and assessment of governance. A series of workshops are planned in June and July 2022 to progress this, with the aim of reporting comprehensively on the Council's performance based on a process of consistent self-assessment, in September 2022.	The Council's first self-assessment was published in October 2022. Work is now underway to develop a self-assessment for 2022-23, with draft findings expected to be reported to Corporate Performance Assessment in June 2023, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Governance and Audit Committee in July 2023, and Cabinet in September 2023. The Corporate Self-Assessment is available on the Council's website.
Corporate Joint Committees (CJs)	A	The interim arrangements to establish a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for these areas of service has been progressed by the Cardiff Capital Region and reported to Cabinet.	The Cardiff Capital Regional Cabinet approved the transfer of its existing functions, which are principally in respect of the City Deal agreement to the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee on 28 February 2022. Since this time a Transition Plan has been developed and is being progressed.
Financial Sustainability	F	Assumptions for future years' budgets will continue to be reviewed and amended to reflect the changing circumstances. Earmarked reserves will be reviewed and maintained to support specific pressures. Benefits and support payments, such as council tax support, winter fuel payments and cost of living	The MTFS was updated as part of the budget setting process for 2023-24 and was based on the financial information available at that time, to reflect the current position. The financial position for the Council was shared with members as part of the budget setting Council

		payments will be publicised widely and paid promptly.	meeting on 1 March 2023. The impact in the current year is being reported to Scrutiny (revenue monitoring), Cabinet and/or Council via the revenue and capital monitoring reports. A review of Earmarked Reserves is ongoing. The Council completed a second tranche of winter fuel payment and the discretionary Cost of Living Scheme to support residents. Information regarding the support available for residents is being publicised via the Council's website and social media accounts
Commissioned / Contracted Services	F	There is increasing evidence that both our existing contractors and those tendering for work are reflecting significantly increased costs in their submissions. The Council will need to respond to this proportionately and responsibly, recognising the very real pressures but managing the impact on the Council's contractual position and resources effectively, but at the same time ensuring that essential Council services are maintained. Additionally, the significant workforce issues impacting on our ability to recruit and retain staff in many parts of the Council are compromising our ability to deliver services effectively and reducing our capacity and resilience. A whole series of initiatives are being implemented to help mitigate the impact and address the most acute issues.	A key part of ensuring management of these cost risks within contracts has been the implementation of robust risk and contingency elements into the contract sum of new contracts. Where existing contracts are experiencing cost increases, an element of value engineering is taking place to deliver the project within the envelope. Where this is not possible additional financial resources will be required and prioritised dependent on the stage the project has reached. Where tender submissions are substantially above expected levels or capital allocations, then decisions are now being taken as to the priority and urgency of work against the backdrop of ensuring that essential Council services are maintained. All changes to the Capital Programme are submitted to Council for approval.
Review of Code of Corporate Governance and associated schedule	A	Last updated in 2017, needs review to ensure it reflects current governance framework. Work commenced on this during 2021-22 but this will be completed and ratified in 2022-23.	The updated Code of Corporate Governance was approved by Cabinet 7 February 2023.

Member Development	E	<p>The Member Induction Programme 2022-23 to support new and returning elected members was presented to Council on 9 February 2022. In addition to the ongoing Elected Members Learning and Development Programme, a Training Needs Analysis Questionnaire will be compiled and distributed during December 2022 – January 2023. All Members' responses will be analysed and, from this, the ongoing Programme will be developed and presented to the Democratic Services Committee.</p>	<p>The full Member Induction Programme has taken place following the election in May, and a number of additional events & training sessions have been held. This includes the Members Marketplace on the 5 September 2022, which provided the opportunity for Members to meet key officers from across the Council.</p> <p>Drop in events have been arranged by individual Directorates to give Members the opportunity to meet officers and discuss key issues.</p> <p>Member Development remains a regular agenda item of the Democratic Services Committee.</p> <p>Members will be invited to undertake a Personal Development Review which will identify any training needs for the next 12 month period.</p>
Impact on the Social care sector of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ending of the hardship funding to the sector	C	<p>A market stability plan has been developed to ensure that there are clear plans to deliver sufficiency of quantity and quality of provision in Bridgend.</p>	<p>The Market Stability Report was approved by Council in July 2022. It identified a significant number of actions to address sufficiency and sustainability of social care provision across a range of different sectors.</p> <p>A new planning group structure is being implemented to take forward the recommendations from the market stability work.</p> <p>In addition there are specific priority pieces of work progressing in the areas of children residential provision, foster care sufficiency, cost of care of adult care home provision and adult community care capacity.</p>
GDPR issues with new ways of working	A	<p>As the Hybrid Policy is implemented additional guidance will be developed on issues such as</p>	<p>The Information Governance Board meets quarterly to ensure that the Authority</p>

		<p>communicating securely, keeping software updated, safeguarding personal data and the need to use the Council's approved technology.</p> <p>The Council has strict ICT and Data Protection Act (DPA) policies and the Information Governance Board (with representation from each Directorate) continues to meet quarterly ensuring information security remains a top priority during this time.</p> <p>All staff and Elected Members are also required to undertake the mandatory DPA e-learning module.</p>	<p>remains compliant with data protection laws.</p> <p>A Bridgend was circulated to all staff providing guidance on data protection whilst working from home.</p> <p>The new Hybrid Working policy set out responsibilities relating to ICT and equipment and the need for compliance with the ICT Code of Conduct. It also covers GDPR, confidentiality and data security in relation to working at home as well as in the office.</p>
Hybrid Meetings	A	A Multi-location Meetings Policy will be presented to Council for approval.	The Multi-locations Meetings Policy was approved by Council on 15 June 2022.

Based on a review of the governance framework, and an assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, the following significant issues identified in 2022-23 will be addressed in 2023-24 with the links to the [Governance Principles](#) on page 5:

Issue	Governance Principle	What the issue is	Proposed Actions to address issue
Workforce Development	E	Like many other Councils Bridgend is experiencing significant workforce challenges particularly in Social Services. Audit Wales identified that the Council did not have in place a strategic Workforce Plan to guide and inform approaches to managing short term critical workforce pressures and ensuring future resilience within the workforce.	The Council's Strategic Workforce Plan is being developed and will embed sustainable development principles, to enable the Council to address the significant workforce issues it faces. The Plan will be considered by Corporate Management Board/Cabinet Corporate Management Board and the Trade Unions before implementation.
Strategic Asset Management	E	An Audit Wales review identified workforce challenges are impacting on the Council's ability to plan strategically and to ensure the Council's buildings meet statutory safety requirements.	Whilst not all workforce issues have been resolved, additional staff have been appointed, including a dedicated Legionella Officer. The statutory compliance figures are now significantly improved, with the 5 major areas (gas, electricity, fire,

			asbestos and legionella) now showing compliance in the 90% level.
Disabled Facility Grants (see AW report referred above)	F	The Council has been slow to respond to Audit Wales proposals for improvement in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants and performance remains poor. The council is developing a new operating model for 2023-24 which is intended to be simpler, better coordinated and more responsive to service user needs.	The Council will implement a contractors' framework during 2023-23, which will provide the Council with end-to-end ownership of the process from referral to completion.
Decarbonisation 2030	D	Whilst the Council has in place a Decarbonisation 2030 strategy, it has not fully identified the resources needed to implement the strategy nor how partners may help to deliver the strategy ambitions.	A detailed 2030 Action Plan is being prepared, which will set out the resources required to deliver the expected carbon reductions. This will be approved by Cabinet and will include details of partners and projects of mutual benefit that will contribute to the Councils Net Zero Ambitions.
Long to medium term financial management	F	<p>The Council has robust financial management process in place, but there are some areas where improvements can be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide additional training to full Council on Capital Strategy and Earmarked Reserves • provide finance training to schools on closing of accounts procedures and requirements • rationalisation of earmarked reserves and developing timescales for usage • continue to review consistently under and overspends and realign budgets accordingly • continue to develop budget reduction proposals for the full life of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 	<p>Treasury Management training was provided to members on 10 February 2023.</p> <p>Training with regards to the Capital Strategy is being provided to Councillors on 18 May 2023.</p> <p>A briefing note was shared with elected members in relation to reserves and how they have been built up and how they can be utilised.</p> <p>Earmarked reserves were reviewed throughout the year. A larger scale review has commenced in 2023-24.</p> <p>The budget was reported to Cabinet on a regular basis through the year with explanations included in the reports in relation to variances.</p> <p>The MTFS is reviewed during the financial year. Work has commenced early in 2023-24 to identify further areas for</p>

			possible budget reductions going forward.
Additional Training for Members to support their role in ensuring proper financial management of the Council	E	As new members have joined the Council it is crucial that they develop the skills and knowledge to undertake their role competently. There may be knowledge gaps in some areas particularly in relation to the Capital Strategy, Earmarked Reserves and Statement of Accounts.	Training to be provided on Capital Strategy, Earmarked Reserves and Statement of Accounts for all members.
Performance Management Arrangements	F	A review of the Council's performance management arrangements have identified that they do not consistently enable it to effectively manage its performance.	A performance management improvement plan has been developed and discussed with Corporate Management Board, Cabinet/Corporate Management Board and Governance and Audit Committee in May 2023. The plan covers the performance management framework, data quality and accuracy, culture, roles and responsibilities, performance management capacity and the performance management system. Many of the issues in the report will be addressed by the new Corporate Plan Delivery Plan to be approved by Council in July.

These issues will be monitored via a detailed action plan during 2023-24, with the responsible officer and deadline for implementation identified for each action and reported to Cabinet/Corporate Management Board and to the Governance and Audit Committee.

6 Assurance Statement

The Council reacted quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic to put in place controls to ensure that a record was maintained of decisions made to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements were in place. Given these arrangements no significant internal control or governance issues have arisen, and the Council continues to have in place appropriate internal control and governance arrangements.

Subject to the above issues being resolved, we can provide an overall reasonable assurance that Bridgend County Borough Council's governance arrangements remain fit for purpose.

Steps to address the matters referred to above will be taken to further enhance our governance arrangements.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Leader)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chief Executive)

Picture back cover: Bryngarw Country Park



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APPENDIX B

Annual Governance Statement – half-year review of progress against significant issues identified during 2022-23, to be addressed in 2023-24

Issue	What the issue is	Proposed Actions	Responsible Officer	Update 30 September 2023
Workforce Development	Like many other Councils Bridgend is experiencing significant workforce challenges particularly in Social Services. Audit Wales identified that the Council did not have in place a strategic Workforce Plan to guide and inform approaches to managing short term critical workforce pressures and ensuring future resilience within the workforce.	The Council's Strategic Workforce Plan is being developed and will embed sustainable development principles, to enable the Council to address the significant workforce issues it faces. The Plan will be considered by Corporate Management Board/Cabinet Corporate Management Board and the Trade Unions before implementation.	Group Manager – Human Resources and Organisational Development	<p>The Strategic Workforce Plan was approved at Cabinet on the 19 September 2023.</p> <p>Strategic Workforce Planning training for Corporate Management Board (CMB) and HR officers has been undertaken with the Local Government Association (LGA).</p> <p>In addition to the workforce planning already underway, training options are being explored for the wider organisation</p>
Strategic Asset Management	An Audit Wales review identified workforce challenges are impacting on the Council's ability to plan strategically and to ensure the Council's buildings meet statutory safety requirements.	Whilst not all workforce issues have been resolved, additional staff have been appointed, including a dedicated Legionella Officer. The statutory compliance figures are now significantly improved, with the 5 major areas (gas, electricity, fire, asbestos and legionella) now	Corporate Director - Communities	The position remains that, whilst not all workforce issues have been resolved, additional staff have been appointed, including a dedicated Legionella Officer. The statutory compliance figures are now significantly improved, with the 5 major areas (gas, electricity, fire, asbestos and legionella) now

		showing compliance in the 90% level.		showing compliance in the 90% level.
Disabled Facility Grants (see AW report referred above)	The Council has been slow to respond to Audit Wales proposals for improvement in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants and performance remains poor. The council is developing a new operating model for 2023-24 which is intended to be simpler, better coordinated and more responsive to service user needs.	The Council will implement a contractors' framework during 2023-23, which will provide the Council with end-to-end ownership of the process from referral to completion.	Head of Partnership Services	There has been delays with the contractor's framework due to capacity related issues, external solicitors have drafted the agreement and it is in readiness to be approved by Cabinet to go out to tender before the end of the year. An implementation date will be determined following the necessary standstill period which is anticipated will be the middle of 2024.
Decarbonisation 2030	Whilst the Council has in place a Decarbonisation 2030 strategy, it has not fully identified the resources needed to implement the strategy nor how partners may help to deliver the strategy ambitions.	A detailed 2030 Action Plan is being prepared, which will set out the resources required to deliver the expected carbon reductions. This will be approved by Cabinet and will include details of partners and projects of mutual benefit that will contribute to the Councils Net Zero Ambitions.	Corporate Director – Communities/ Group Manager – Economy, Natural Resources and Sustainability	<p>The 2030 Decarbonisation Action Plan for 2023-24 was finalised in June within the budget constraints facing the Council, with activity reported to the 2030 Programme Board every quarter. Activity is underway to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar PV and battery storage at Bryncethin Depot • Rooftop solar PV where possible on Council buildings through private/third sector investment

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued roll-out of EV charging infrastructure across the estate • Carbon literacy training • A multi-year plan to install LED lighting • A tool to capture emissions levels from the Council's supply chain and then work with suppliers to reduce their carbon impact • Options to deliver the Bridgend Town Heat network with a private sector partner • Audits of energy management practices to optimise system performance and reduce building energy consumption • A review of data management to improve the emissions reporting process • A low carbon heat project funded by Welsh Government <p>The Council's financial position continues to be challenging and additional internal funding has not been secured. Options for external</p>
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				funding will continue to be sought to deliver against the 2030 Action Plan.
Long to medium term financial management	<p>The Council has robust financial management process in place, but there are some areas where improvements can be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide additional training to full Council on Capital Strategy and Earmarked Reserves • provide finance training to schools on closing of accounts procedures and requirements • rationalisation of earmarked reserves and developing timescales for usage • continue to review consistently under and overspends and realign budgets accordingly 	<p>Treasury Management training was provided to members on 10 February 2023.</p> <p>Training with regards to the Capital Strategy is being provided to Councillors on 18 May 2023.</p> <p>A briefing note was shared with elected members in relation to reserves and how they have been built up and how they can be utilised.</p> <p>Earmarked reserves were reviewed throughout the year. A larger scale review has commenced in 2023-24.</p> <p>The budget was reported to Cabinet on a regular basis through the year with explanations included in the reports in relation to variances.</p> <p>The MTFS is reviewed during the financial year. Work has commenced early in 2023-24 to</p>	Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change	<p>Training has been provided for members during the year including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Strategy 18 May 2023 • Statement of Accounts 13 July 2023 <p>The budget position has been reported to Cabinet and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee and all member briefings on the budget position have been provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 July 2023 • 25 October 2023 <p>The Council faces unprecedented in-year budget pressures and actions have been taken to reduce the growth in the overspend.</p> <p>The EMR's have been reviewed in year which enabled the Council to support the budget position in Children Services. A further review will be undertaken in the Autumn.</p> <p>The MTFS is being updated to reflect the ongoing pressures across all Directorates and this is being</p>

	continue to develop budget reduction proposals for the full life of the Medium Term Financial Strategy	identify further areas for possible budget reductions going forward.		used to inform the budget planning process for 2024.2025 which is underway. Work has been undertaken to benchmark spend against other similar local authorities across all service areas.
Additional Training for Members to support their role in ensuring proper financial management of the Council	As new members have joined the Council it is crucial that they develop the skills and knowledge to undertake their role competently. There may be knowledge gaps in some areas particularly in relation to the Capital Strategy, Earmarked Reserves and Statement of Accounts.	Training to be provided on Capital Strategy, Earmarked Reserves and Statement of Accounts for all members.	Group Manager – Chief Accountant	Training provided to members as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management – 10 February 2023 • Capital Strategy – 18 May 2023 • Statement of Accounts – 13 July 2023
Performance Management Arrangements	A review of the Council's performance management arrangements have identified that they do not consistently enable it to effectively manage its performance	A performance management improvement plan has been developed and discussed with Corporate Management Board, Cabinet/Corporate Management Board and Governance and Audit Committee in May 2023. The plan covers the performance management framework, data quality and accuracy, culture, roles and responsibilities, performance	Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager	Corporate Plan, Delivery Plan and updated Performance Framework have now been agreed by Council. A Performance Management Improvement Plan agreed by Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) in June 2023, with updates to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) in October 2023, demonstrating the significant progress that has been

		<p>management capacity and the performance management system. Many of the issues in the report will be addressed by the new Corporate Plan Delivery Plan to be approved by Council in July.</p>		<p>made on the performance framework, capacity, roles and responsibilities and data quality and accuracy mechanisms.</p> <p>Updated performance analysis, reporting and presentation arrangements are being developed for part-implementation in quarter 2 (to CPA and COSC in December) with full implementation for quarter 4 (Summer 2024)</p>
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Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEAR REPORT 2023-24
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	NIGEL SMITH, GROUP MANAGER – CHIEF ACCOUNTANT
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	Paragraph 22.8 of the Financial Procedure Rules notes that the Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management policies and practice. This report supports this scrutiny function.
Executive Summary:	<p>The report provides an update on Treasury Management activity for the half year 1 April – 30 September 2023.</p> <p>As at 30 September 2023 the Council had £99.79 million of long term debt, £13.36 million of other long term liabilities and £85.50 million of short term investments, an overall net debt position of £27.65 million.</p> <p>The average interest rate for debt was 4.69% (excluding Salix borrowing which is interest free) and for investments it was 4.42%.</p> <p>The Council has a manageable maturity structure of borrowing, with its current debt repayable at various points over the next 30 years.</p> <p>The Council has complied with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management Code and Welsh Government Investment Guidance.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Governance and Audit Committee on the mid-year review and half-year position for treasury management activities and treasury management indicators for 2023-24.

2. Background

- 2.1 Treasury Management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council is exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.
- 2.2 Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 edition (the CIPFA Code), which requires the Council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy before the start of each financial year, and, as a minimum, a semi-annual and annual treasury outturn report. The CIPFA Code also requires the Council to set a number of Treasury Management Indicators, which are forward looking parameters, and enable the Council to measure and manage its exposure to treasury management risks, and these are included throughout this report. Welsh Government (WG) guidance issued in November 2019 on Local Authority Investments requires the Council to approve an Investment Strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the Welsh Government Guidance.
- 2.3 In 2021 CIPFA published an updated version of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code). The Prudential Code includes a requirement for Local Authorities to provide a Capital Strategy, which is a summary document approved by full Council covering capital expenditure and financing, treasury management and non-treasury investments. The definition of investments in the revised 2021 CIPFA Code covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the authority holds primarily for financial return. The Council's Capital Strategy 2023-24 complied with CIPFA's requirement and included the Prudential Indicators along with the details regarding the Council's non-treasury investments. The Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy should be read in conjunction with each other as they are interlinked, as borrowing and investments are directly impacted upon by capital plans, and both were approved together by Council on 1 March 2023.
- 2.4 The Council's treasury management advisors are Arlingclose. The current services provided to the Council include:
- advice and guidance on relevant policies, strategies and reports
 - advice on investment decisions
 - notification of credit ratings and changes
 - other information on credit quality
 - advice on debt management decisions
 - accounting advice
 - reports on treasury performance
 - forecasts of interest rates
 - training courses

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 External Context – Economic Background

- 3.1.1 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation dropped to 6.7% in August from 6.8% in July, which was below the forecasted level. This drop was driven by factors beyond energy prices, with core CPI inflation (excluding energy, food, beverages, and tobacco) at 6.2%. The rate in September remained at 6.7%.
- 3.1.2 In quarter 2 2023, UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of the size and health of the economy, increased by 0.2%, slightly better than expected in the August Monetary Policy Report. Household consumption and business investment exceeded expectations, growing by 0.6% and 3.4% respectively. However, housing investment continued to decline, falling by 2.3% in the quarter and 7.7% compared to the previous year. July saw a 0.5% decrease in monthly GDP, in contrast to a 0.5% rise in June.
- 3.1.3 On 20th September 2023 the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee voted by a majority of 5-4 to maintain the official Bank Rate at 5.25% and did not increase them again as anticipated.

3.2 Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) Lending Facility Advice, Revised CIPFA Codes

- 3.2.1 The Council continues to undertake its duties in line with the current guidance for the PWLB lending facility which was significantly revised by HM Treasury in August 2021. Authorities that are purchasing or intending to purchase investment assets primarily for yield, or financial return, will not be able to access funding from the PWLB except to refinance existing loans or externalise internal borrowing. Acceptable use of PWLB borrowing includes service delivery, housing, regeneration, preventative action, refinancing and treasury management.
- 3.2.2 The Council's treasury management activities are undertaken in line with CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance and CIPFA's Treasury Management Code. To comply with the Prudential Code authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. The Prudential Code also states it is not prudent for local authorities to make investment or spending decisions that will increase the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority. Existing commercial investments are not required to be sold, however, authorities with existing commercial investments who expect to need to borrow should review the options for exiting these investments. The Council has complied with the full requirements of both codes during the first half of 2023-24.

3.3 Treasury Management half-year 2023-24

- 3.3.1 The Council has complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements during the period 1 April to 30 September 2023. The Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24 was approved by Council on 1 March 2023. The quarter 1 report was presented to Cabinet on 18 July 2023.

3.3.2 A summary of the treasury management activities is shown in the Treasury Management Half Year Report to 30 September 2023 at **Appendix A**. The Council's external debt and investment position at 30 September 2023 is shown in Table 1 below, and more detail is provided within the appendix within Section 3: External Debt and Investment Position, Section 4: Borrowing and Section 5 Treasury Investments. As with the previous year, no long-term borrowing has been taken out in 2023-24 and no debt rescheduling has been undertaken as there has been no opportunity to make significant savings. However, should the opportunity arise to reschedule any loans at a preferential rate, this would be done.

Favourable cash flows continue to provide surplus funds for investment and the balance on investments held at 30 September 2023 was £85.5 million, with an average interest rate of 4.42%. The total balance of investments has increased compared to those at 31 March 2023, when the balance held was £74.50 million, at an average interest rate of 2.55%.

Table 1: Council's external debt and investment position as of 30 September 2023

Investments for Treasury Purposes	Principal as at 31/03/2023 £m	Principal as at 30/09/2023 £m	Average Rate 30/09/2023 %
External Long Term Borrowing			
Public Works Loan Board	77.62	77.62	4.70
Lender's Option Borrower's Option	19.25	19.25	4.65
Salix Loans (interest Free)	3.06	2.92	NIL
Total External Long Term Borrowing	99.93	99.79	4.69*
Other Long Term Liabilities			
Private Finance Initiative**	13.90	13.23	
Other Long Term Liabilities	0.23	0.13	
Total Other Long Term Liabilities	14.13	13.36	
Total Gross Debt	114.06	113.15	
Investments for treasury management purposes			
Debt Management Office	7.50	12.00	5.22
Local Authorities	53.00	43.00	4.16
Money Market Funds (instant access)	NIL	18.50	5.32
Banks	14.00	12.00	3.19
Total Treasury Investments	74.50	85.50	4.42
Net Debt	39.56	27.65	

* Excluding Salix loans which are interest free

** (PFI) arrangement for the provision of a Secondary School in Maesteg 10.50 years remaining term

3.3.3 The £19.25 million in Table 1 above relates to Lender's Option Borrower's Option (LOBO) loans which have a maturity date of 2054 though these may be rescheduled in advance of this maturity date. The LOBO rate and term may vary in the future depending on the prevailing rates at one of the bi-annual trigger points (these being July and January) and, therefore, the Council being given the option to accept the increase or repay the loan without incurring a penalty. There have been significant interest rate rises recently, with an expectation that they may rise further, thus the lender could still exercise this option in the future.

- 3.3.4 The Total Other Long Term Liabilities figure of £13.36 million at 30 September 2023 includes £13.23 million for the Council's Private Finance initiative (PFI) arrangement for the provision of a Secondary School in Maesteg. The Other Long-Term Liabilities are for the Innovation Centre and Waste Contract.
- 3.3.5 Both the CIPFA Code and Welsh Government Guidance require the Council to invest its funds prudently and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return. Investment decisions are made by reference to the lowest published long-term credit rating from Fitch, Moody's or Standard and Poor's to ensure that this lies within the Councils' agreed minimum credit rating.
- 3.3.6 The Council defines high credit quality as organisations and securities having a credit rating of A- (A3 for Moody's) or higher and the Council does not invest in any organisation below this level. **Schedule A** in **Appendix A** shows the equivalence table for credit ratings for Fitch, Moody's, and Standard and Poor's and explains the different investment grades.
- 3.3.7 There is one long-term investment (original duration of 12 months or more) outstanding as at 30 September 2023 of £5 million with Medway Council. This is repayable within the next 12 months. All other investments at 30 September 2023 are short term deposits including instant access and notice accounts.
- 3.3.8 The Treasury Management Code requires the Council to set and report on a number of Treasury Management Indicators. The indicators either summarise the expected activity or introduce limits upon the activity. Details of the estimates for 2023-24 set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy compared to the actual at 30 September 2023 are shown in **Appendix A** and these show that the Council operated within the approved limits throughout the period.

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 because of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The Climate Change implications were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the environment because of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting implications were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon Safeguarding and Corporate parenting because of this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The financial implications are reflected within the report and attached at **Appendix A**.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Governance and Audit Committee note the treasury management activities for 2023-24 for the half year period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 and the projected Treasury Management Indicators for 2023-24.

Background documents

None



Treasury Management Half Year Report to 30 September 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Treasury Management is the management of the Council's cash flows on a day-to-day basis, and is carried out in accordance with legislation and Codes of Practice.
- The Treasury Management Strategy was approved by Council 1 March 2023.
- Inflation has continued to fall from a peak of 11.1% in October 2022, to 6.7% in the 12 months to August 2023.
- The Bank of England base rate was increased by 0.25% in August to a rate of 5.25% as at 30 September 2023. Whilst there were some expectations of a further increase during September, the Monetary Policy Committee voted to maintain the base rate at 5.25% at its September meeting.
- No new long-term debt was taken out during the year, and no debt was rescheduled during the year. Interest rates on long-term debt remain unchanged at an average of 4.69%.
- Total external borrowing at 30 September 2023 - £99.79 million, reduction of £0.14 million from 1 April 2023 due to scheduled repayment of Salix loans.
- Total investments as at 30 September 2023 was £85.5 million, an increase from £74.5 million as at 1 April 2023.
- Average interest rates on investments received 4.42%, an increase from the average rate at 31 March 2023 of 2.55% as new investments are made at higher rates than those in the preceding 12-18 months.
- Investments are made on the basis of security, liquidity and, only then, return, commensurate with the security and liquidity of the investment.
- Due to the current level of reserves, the Council is able to use short-term resources to fund capital programme borrowing need in lieu of external borrowing. However, this is only a short-term position, and, whilst the liability benchmark (Chart 1) suggests that the Council may not need new long-term borrowing at present, it is dependent on the Capital Programme expenditure profile, any new debt-funded schemes being added to the Programme and the use of reserves currently held.
- The Council may use short-term borrowing (less than 12 months) to manage day-to-day operational cash flow.
- The Council has operated within the approved limits as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Treasury management activities are the *'management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.'* (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (2021) (CIPFA Code).

The definition of 'Investments' includes:

- Treasury Management investments (held for the prudent management of financial affairs), and
- non-Treasury Investments, undertaken as part of a Capital Strategy either in the course of provision of services; or made for commercial reasons purely to make a financial gain. These are managed outside of normal treasury management activity.

The Council carries out its treasury management function in accordance with the CIPFA Code and the legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and Welsh Government Guidance.

The Council has an integrated Treasury Management Strategy where borrowing and investments are managed in accordance with best professional practice, which is assessed either from internal expertise or consultation with our external advisers. The Council will look to borrow money if needed to either meet short term cash flow needs or to fund the capital programme. Therefore, any actual loans taken are not generally associated with particular items of expenditure or assets.

The Council delegates responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices to Cabinet, and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Section 151 Officer. The Governance and Audit Committee are responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and policies and regular reports will be presented to the Committee for their consideration.

2.0 ECONOMIC CONTEXT

UK inflation remained stubbornly high over much of the period compared to the US and euro zone, keeping expectations elevated around how much further the Bank of England would increase bank rate. However, inflation data published in the latter part of the period undershot expectations, causing financial markets to reassess interest rate increases. This was followed by the Bank of England deciding to keep the Bank Rate at 5.25% in September, against an expectation of another 0.25% rise.

Economic growth in the UK remained relatively weak over the period. In calendar quarter 2 2023 (April – June), the economy expanded by 0.2%. . However, monthly

Gross Domestic Product data, a measure of the size and health of the economy, showed a 0.5% contraction in July, the largest fall to date in 2023 and worse than the 0.2% decline predicted, which could be an indication the monetary tightening cycle is starting to cause recessionary or at the very least stagnating economic conditions.

July data showed the unemployment rate increased to 4.3% (3mth/year) while the employment rate rose to 75.5%. Pay growth was 8.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 7.8% for regular pay, which for the latter was the highest recorded annual growth rate. Adjusting for inflation, pay growth in real terms was positive at 1.2% and 0.6% for total pay and regular pay respectively.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) showed inflation at 6.7% in the 12 months to August 2023, down from 6.8% in July. On a monthly basis CPI rose 0.3% in August, compared with a rise of 0.5% in August 2022.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee continued tightening monetary policy over most of the period, taking the official Bank Rate to 5.25% in August. Against expectations of a further hike in September, the Committee voted 5-4 to maintain the Bank Rate at 5.25%. Those who voted against were in favour of another 0.25% increase.

Financial market Bank Rate expectations moderated over the period as falling inflation and weakening data gave some indication that higher interest rates were working. Expectations fell from predicting a peak of over 6% in June to 5.5% just ahead of the September Monetary Policy Committee meeting, and to then expecting 5.25% to be the peak by the end of the period.

Following the September Monetary Policy Committee meeting, Arlingclose, the authority's treasury adviser, modestly revised its interest forecast to reflect the central view that 5.25% will now be the peak in Bank Rate. In the short term the risks are to the upside if inflation increases again, but over the remaining part of the time horizon the risks are to the downside from economic activity weakening more than expected.

The lagged effect of monetary policy together with the staggered fixed term mortgage maturities over the next 12-24 months means the full impact from Bank Rate rises are still yet to be felt by households. Higher rates will also impact business and according to Standards & Poor (S&P) / Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) survey data, the UK manufacturing and services sector contracted during the quarter with all measures scoring under 50, indicating contraction in the sectors.

3.0 EXTERNAL DEBT AND INVESTMENT POSITION

The Council's external debt and investments at 30 September 2023 is set out in Table 1 below. The Council held £99.79 million of Long Term Borrowing comprising:

- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB - central government) at fixed rates and duration
- Lender's Option Borrower's Option (LOBO) which may be rescheduled ahead of their maturity of 22 January 2054
- £2.92 million of Salix interest-free loans

In addition, the Council had £85.5 million of investments for treasury management purposes and £5.845 million of investments for commercial purposes (see Table 11):-

Table 1: Council's external debt and investment position as of 30 September 2023

Investments for Treasury Purposes	Principal as at 31/03/2023 £m	Principal as at 30/09/2023 £m	Average Rate 30/09/2023 %
External Long Term Borrowing			
Public Works Loan Board	77.62	77.62	4.70
Lender's Option Borrower's Option	19.25	19.25	4.65
Salix Loans (interest Free)	3.06	2.92	NIL
Total External Long Term Borrowing	99.93	99.79	4.69*
Other Long Term Liabilities			
Private Finance Initiative**	13.90	13.23	
Other Long Term Liabilities	0.23	0.13	
Total Other Long Term Liabilities	14.13	13.36	
Total Gross Debt	114.06	113.15	
Investments for treasury management purposes			
Debt Management Office	7.50	12.00	5.22
Local Authorities	53.00	43.00	4.16
Money Market Funds (instant access)	NIL	18.50	5.32
Banks	14.00	12.00	3.19
Total Treasury Investments	74.50	85.50	4.42
Net Debt	39.56	27.65	

* Excluding Salix loans which are interest free

** (PFI) arrangement for the provision of a Secondary School in Maesteg 10.75 years remaining term

Investments for Commercial Purposes	Fair Value as at 31/03/2023 £m	Anticipated annual return £m
Investments	5.845	0.46

The current profile of repayment of the Council's long-term debt is set out in the Liability Benchmark chart below. The table assumes that the Public Works Loan Board and Lender's Option Borrower's Option loans will be repayable on their maturity date. However, although shown as maturing in 2054 the £19.25 million of Lender's Option Borrower's Option loans may be rescheduled ahead of their maturity date of 22 January 2054.

PWLB lending criteria requires that the Council does not invest purely for financial return if it wishes to access any new PWLB borrowing. The CIPFA Code sets out that it is not prudent for local authorities to invest for financial return.

All borrowing by the Council is as a single pool of debt rather than having loans specific to individual schemes. Where a Council finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside revenue to repay that debt in later years, known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The forecast MRP that will need to be set aside for 2023-24 is £6.191 million, which is provided for in the revenue budget and includes any additional MRP as a result of prudential borrowing and MRP on the PFI. MRP is budgeted within central budgets with additional MRP funded from Directorate budgets.

Liability benchmark

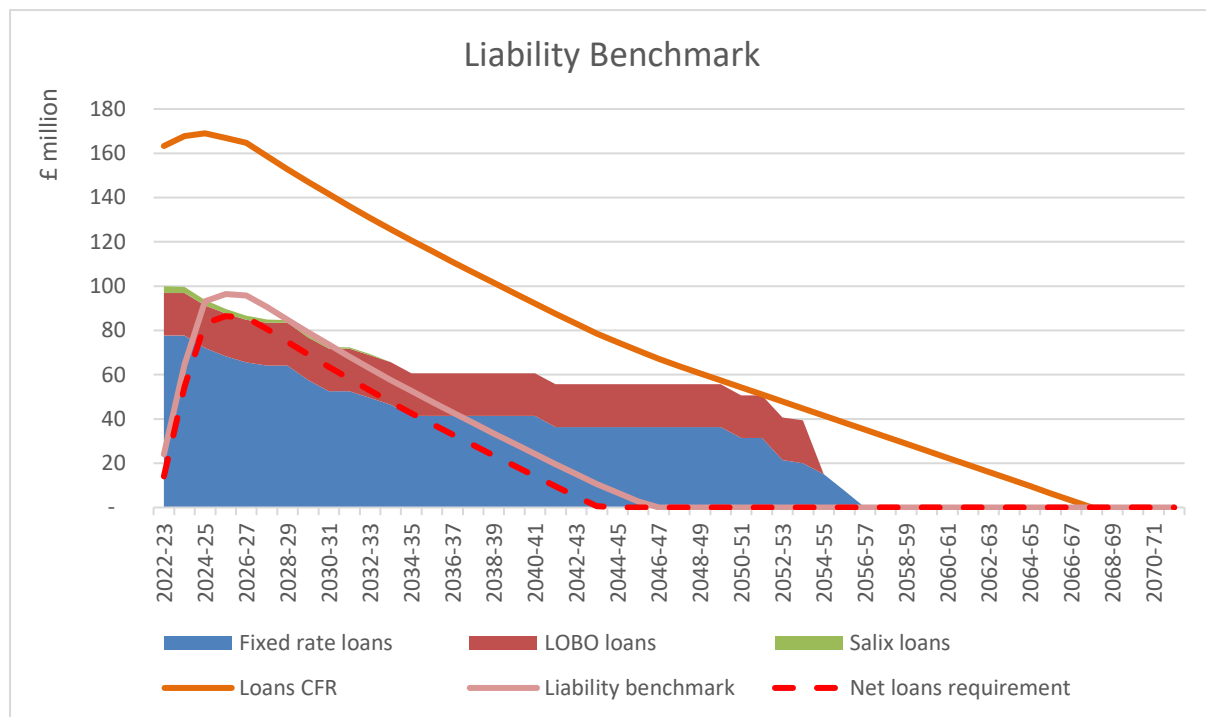
The liability benchmark is a tool which helps to assess the lowest level of borrowing the Council needs, taking into account available cash resources to fund capital expenditure in the short term. A minimum level of liquidity is factored into the calculation, set at £10 million, to ensure the Council has available cash resources to meet day-to-day cash flow requirements. Forecast borrowing needs are based on capital expenditure estimates and available useable reserves. The underlying need to borrow to fund capital expenditure (known as the Capital Financing Requirement or CFR) is the amount of capital expenditure which is not funded via grants, capital receipts or contributions from revenue and earmarked reserves.

Table 2 below shows the Capital Financing Requirement and the calculation of the liability benchmark. It is important to note that the graph is based on the current approved capital programme and the borrowing associated therewith. Any new schemes which require debt financing will increase the CFR and loans requirement.

Table 2: Liability benchmark

	31 March 2023 actual £m	31 March 2024 estimate (TMS) £m	31 March 2024 forecast £m	31 March 2025 forecast £m	31 March 2026 forecast £m
Capital Financing Requirement	177.12	184.81	180.77	180.98	177.74
Less: Other debt liabilities	(13.90)	(12.97)	(12.97)	(11.97)	(10.90)
Loans Capital Financing Requirement	163.22	171.83	167.80	169.01	166.85
Less: Balance Sheet Resources	(149.16)	(84.14)	(113.27)	(93.71)	(80.43)
Plus: Liquidity allowance	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Liability Benchmark	24.06	97.69	64.53	85.30	96.42

The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its **current** capital plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level to manage day-to-day cash flow.



Currently it is forecast that the Council has sufficient reserves to not need any new borrowing in the immediate future, however this is based on a number of assumptions including the forecast capital programme expenditure and the level and use of reserves. The current financial climate and the pressure on reserves, and any new schemes that may be brought forward in the Capital Programme which are debt-funded, will require the need to borrow, the timing of which is difficult to predict.

The Section 151 Officer will monitor and update the liability benchmark assumptions on an on-going basis and report any significant changes within the treasury management monitoring reports to Cabinet, Governance and Audit Committee and Council as appropriate. This could be as a result of changes in the level of usable reserves at year end, slippage within the Capital Programme or changes within the working capital assumptions which may affect the Council's need for new long-term borrowing.

4.0 BORROWING

As at 30 September 2023 the Council held £99.79 million of Long-Term Borrowing, £96.87 million of which is fixed long term loans as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. Based on the forecast capital programme and current assumptions regarding the use of reserves, it is anticipated that the Council will not need to raise new long term borrowing in the foreseeable future. This is subject to the use of reserves and progression of the capital programme and whether any new schemes are added that require borrowing.

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). This was the source of funding the last time the Council took long-term borrowing of £5 million in March 2012. The Council will however consider long term loans from other sources including banks, pension funds and other local authorities if appropriate. The Council will also investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code.

The Council has loans from PWLB maturing within the next 3 financial years that it will need to repay. Whilst at present it is anticipated that the Council will have resources to repay these loans, it will be dependent on the level of cash resources available. The value of the loans due to be repaid over the next 3 years is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Value of PWLB maturing debt

	2023-24 £ million	2024-25 £ million	2025-26 £ million
Value of maturing debt	Nil	5.580	3.709

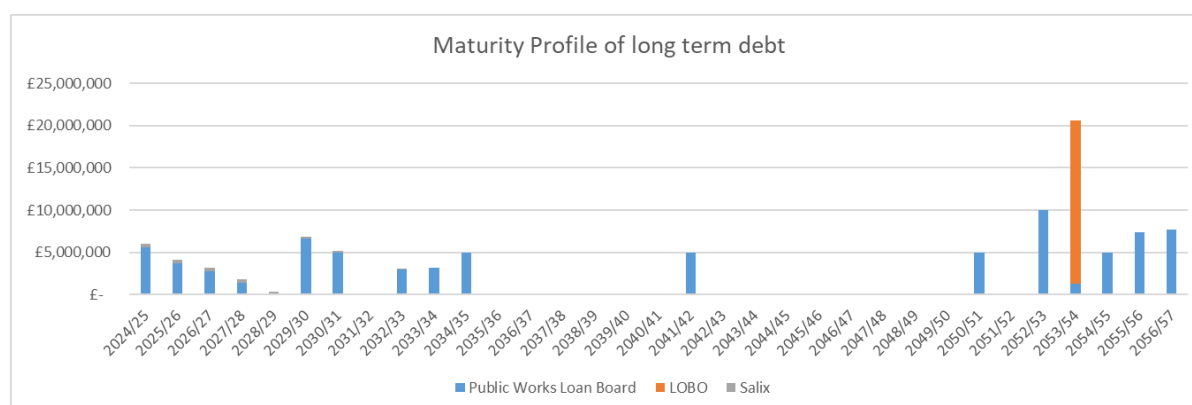
Maturity structure of borrowing

The maturity structure of borrowing indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk with respect to the maturity of the Council's external borrowing. The limits are set to avoid having large amounts of debt maturing in a short space of time, and is the amount of projected borrowing maturing in each period as a percentage of total projected borrowing. Where the maturity date of borrowing is unknown, as in the case of LOBO loans, the maturity should normally be determined by reference to the earliest date at which the lender can require repayment. The £19.25 million of LOBO loans has therefore been included in the 'Under 12 months' category.

Table 4: Maturity Structure of Borrowing 2023-24

Maturity structure of borrowing	Upper limit	lower limit	£ million	As at 30 Sept 2023
Under 12 months	50%	0%	19.65	19.69%
12 months and within 24 months	25%	0%	8.75	8.77%
24 months and within 5 years	25%	0%	6.23	6.24%
5 years and within 10 years	40%	0%	15.63	15.66%
10 years and within 20 years	50%	0%	13.14	13.17%
20 years and above	60%	25%	36.39	36.47%

As can be seen from the table the maturity structure remains within the limits approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24. The following chart provides the maturity profile of the Council's long term debt.



None of the LOBO loans have had to be repaid during the first half of the 2023-24 year. All the LOBO loans are subject to the lender having the right to change the rate of interest payable during the financial year at either of two trigger points in January and July, with the Council having the right to refuse the change, triggering early repayment and the need to re-finance. This is a manageable risk should repayment be needed during the **current** financial year as the Council has sufficient funds available in the short term. However, the Council would need to take out new borrowing in the short-medium term to replace any LOBO loans repaid.

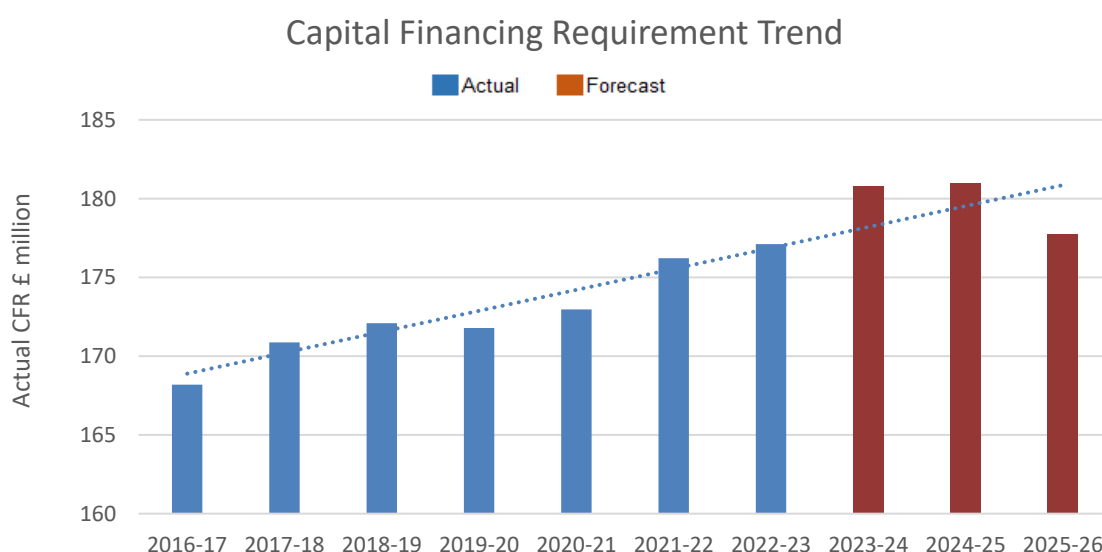
Table 5: LOBO loans

Commencement date	Loan value £m	Potential repayment date	Option frequency	Full term maturity
22 January 2004	4.00	22 Jan 2024	6 months	22 January 2054
22 January 2004	5.00	22 Jan 2024	6 months	22 January 2054
22 January 2004	10.25	22 Jan 2024	6 months	22 January 2054

In accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy, the Council is internally borrowing, which is when it uses temporary cash balances it holds in the short term instead of undertaking external borrowing. The current level of internal borrowing is £68.19 million as at 30 September 2023. This is shown by the Council's Capital

Financing Requirement (CFR) net of its external level of debt including other long term debt liabilities. The Council's 2023-24 CFR is forecast to be £180.77 million, external borrowing is forecast to be £99.61 and other long term debt liabilities forecast to be £12.97 million, which is the PFI Maesteg School scheme.

The chart below shows the trend in the CFR based on **current** capital commitments within the approved capital programme. The CFR is anticipated to increase in the current year assuming capital expenditure is incurred as currently anticipated. The CFR in future years shows a reduction, however, this is on the assumption of no new schemes which require debt financing. If new schemes requiring debt financing are added, the CFR will continue to increase.



5.0 TREASURY INVESTMENTS

The Council holds treasury investments as a result of temporary cash balances arising from its day-to-day activities. The management of the day-to-day cash requirements of the Council is undertaken in-house with advice from Arlingclose, the Council's Treasury Management advisors. This may involve temporary borrowing to meet cash-flow needs or temporary lending of surplus funds. Investment balances can fluctuate daily and arise as a result of a range of circumstances, including timing differences of revenue and capital cash flows, reserves and other balances held for future use.

Investments are made in institutions approved by Council as part of its Treasury Management Strategy and in accordance with investment guidelines issued by the Welsh Government. As part of the Markets and Financial Instruments Directive II, the Council elected for 'professional' status, which covers national and regional governments and public bodies. The categories of investments the Council can invest in can be changed, any proposed changes being presented to Council for approval.

Treasury investments are made primarily on the basis of ensuring security of the funds invested, whilst managing liquidity, and only then considering a commensurate return on the investment. As at 30 September 2023 the Council held £85.50 million of investments, with an average return of 4.42% (£74.50 million at 2.55% as at 31 March 2023). Table 6 below shows the investment profile as at 30 September 2023.

Table 6: Investments by counterparty type

Investment Category	Balance 1 April 2023 £m	Investments made in period £m	Investments repaid in period £m	Balance 30 Sept 2023 £m	Weighted interest rate 1 April 2023 to 30 Sept 2023 %
Government DMO	7.50	266.50	(262.00)	12.00	4.76
Local Authorities	53.00	14.00	(24.00)	43.00	3.53
Money Market Funds	-	36.60	(18.10)	18.50	4.75
Banks (fixed maturity dates)	3.00	18.00	(18.00)	3.00	3.58
Banks (instant access/notice accounts)	11.00	33.45	(35.45)	9.00	4.73
TOTAL	74.50	368.55	(357.55)	85.50	4.08

The following should be noted:

- During the period to 30 September 2023 all investments made were in line with the approved counterparties within the Treasury Management Strategy.
- Investments are diversified over a number of organisations across different sectors, demonstrating a diversified investment portfolio.
- All investments are in sterling and are rated A- and above as per the approved criteria or with a public body.
- The weighted average rates are for all investments made during 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023

The overall interest receivable from treasury investments for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 was £1.861 million. As interest rates rise so will the returns on new investments made, however there will be a time lag on the overall average rates for existing investments until historic investments mature and monies are reinvested at higher rates. The Council will continue to take a cautious approach to investing to ensure as its primary concern the security of any investments made. The risk of default for investments held is considered negligible.

All investments longer than 364 days will be made with a cautious approach to cash flow requirements and advice from the Council's Treasury Management advisors will be sought as necessary. The Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24 reduced the maximum duration for new investments to local authorities from 25 years (as grouped with other government agencies) to 2 years. The Treasury Management report for the

first quarter to 30 June 2023 showed an investment which was agreed for a period of 2 years with Medway Council repayable in July 2024, at the time the repayment of which was over 12 months. At the 30 September 2023 the investment is due to be repaid within 12 months. All other investments as at 30 September 2023 were short term of less than one year duration.

Table 7: Sums invested for periods longer than a year

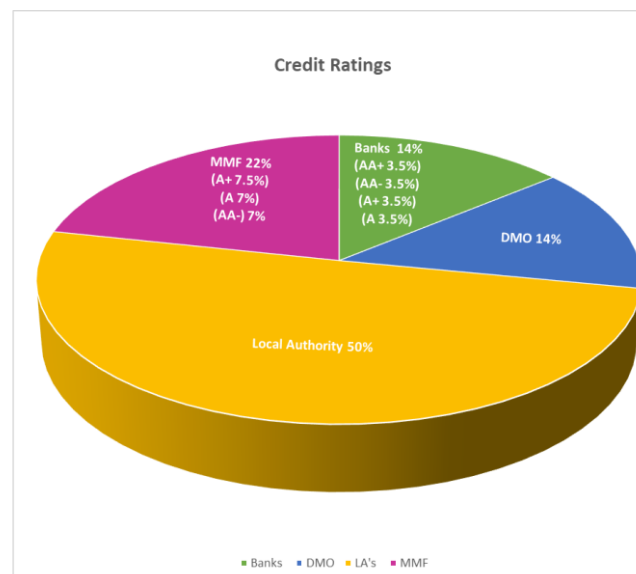
Price risk indicator	TMS 2023-24 £m	Actual £m	Full term maturity
Limit on principal invested beyond 12 months	15	5	

The below table details the Council's investments by counterparty and maturity profile as at 30 September 2023.

Table 8: Investments by maturity

Counterparty Category	Instant Access £m	Deposits maturing within 1 month £m	Deposits maturing within 2-3 months £m	Deposits maturing within 4-12 months £m	TOTAL £m
Government DMO	-	12.00	-	-	12.00
Local Authorities	-	5.00	5.00	33.00	43.00
Money Market Funds	18.50	-	-	-	18.50
Banks	6.00	6.00	-	-	12.00
Total	24.50	23.00	5.00	33.00	85.50

The pie chart below summarises the distribution of the Council's investments by credit ratings. Most local authorities do not have credit ratings but are considered secure investment counterparties. The DMO is the UK government and rated AA.



6.0 INTEREST RATE EXPOSURES

The Council is exposed to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments. Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on the Council, depending on how variable and fixed interest rates move across differing financial instrument periods. Short term and variable rate loans expose the Council to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the Treasury Management indicator below.

The following Table is based on investments at 30 September 2023.

Table 9: Interest Rate Exposure

Interest rate risk indicator	£ million
One year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	(0.637)
One year revenue impact of a 1% fall in interest rates	0.830

It is important to note that this is an indicator not a limit. It is calculated at a point in time on the assumption that maturing loans and investments would be replaced at rates 1% higher or lower than they are currently, and that the treasury investment and borrowing portfolios remain unchanged over the next 12 months, which in practice is not the case. The figure for the 1% fall in interest rates indicator is not the same figure as the 1% increase (but reversed) as the borrowing relates to variable LOBO loans where it is assumed that the lender would only exercise their option if there was an increase in interest rates. All other borrowing does not have a rate reset in the next year and is with the PWLB at fixed rates.

A comparison of interest expenditure and income due for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 is shown below.

Table 10: Interest

	01 April 2023 – 30 September 2023 £ million
Interest expenditure payable on long term borrowing	2.269
Interest income received in period	(1.861)
Net interest cost	0.408

7.0 NON-TREASURY INVESTMENTS

The Council recognises that investment in other financial assets and property primarily for financial return, taken for non-treasury management purposes, requires careful investment management. Such activities include investments in subsidiaries and investments in property. A schedule of the Council's existing non-treasury investments (currently limited to owned property) is set out in Table 11 below. Recent PWLB guidance requires that local authorities should review their investment portfolio if they wish to secure PWLB borrowing but does not require the local authority to sell existing investment assets. This category covers non-financial assets held primarily or partially to generate a profit, primarily investment property. These assets are valued on an annual basis, which provides security of their value and continued benefit to the Council.

Table 11: Non-treasury investments

Non-treasury investments	£ million
Bridgend Science Park - Units 1 & 2	3.985
Waterton Cross Land	0.600
Brynmenyn Industrial Estate Plot 53	0.675
Village Farm Plots 32,119 & 120	0.385
Tyrewise Bridgend	0.200
Total at Fair Value	5.845
Anticipated annual return 2023-24	0.460

The Council considers that the scale of its investment properties is proportionate to the resources of the Council as the investment represents less than 1% of its total long-term assets. In addition, the value of these investments has increased from the previous year.

In accordance with Welsh Government Investment Guidance, these are to be classified as non-treasury investments.

Schedule A – Credit Rating Equivalence Table

Credit Rating Equivalence Table

	Description	Fitch		Moody's		Standard & Poor's	
		Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short
INVESTMENT GRADE	Extremely strong	AAA	F1+	Aaa	P-1	AAA	A-1+
	Very strong	AA+		Aa1		AA+	
		AA		Aa2		AA	
		AA-		Aa3		AA-	
	Strong	A+	F1	A1	P-2	A+	A-1
		A		A2		A	
		A-	F2	A3		A-	A-2
	Adequate	BBB+		Baa1	P-3	BBB+	
		BBB		Baa2		BBB	A-3
		BBB-	F3	Baa3		BBB-	
SPECULATIVE GRADE	Speculative	BB+	B	Ba1	Not Prime (NP)	BB+	B
		BB		Ba2		BB	
		BB-		Ba3		BB-	
	Very speculative	B+		B1		B+	
		B		B2		B	
		B-		B3		B-	C
	Vulnerable	CCC+	C	Caa1		CCC+	
		CCC		Caa2		CCC	
		CCC-		Caa3		CCC-	
		CC		Ca		CC	
		C				C	
	Defaulting	D	D	C		D	D

Schedule B – Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast – Sept 2023

Underlying assumptions:

- UK inflation and wage growth remain elevated, but the August CPI data suggested that inflation was falling more rapidly. In a narrow 5-4 vote, the MPC took the opportunity to hold rates at 5.25%, a level we see as the peak. Near-term rate cuts are unlikely, although downside risks will increase as the UK economy inevitably slides into recession.
- While the MPC vote was close, and the minutes contained the warning about the need for further tightening if inflationary pressures persist, both the decline in closely watched inflation measures and confidence that wage growth had peaked, clearly allowed policymakers to focus on the weaker activity data.
- The UK economy has so far been resilient. However, recent data indicates a further deceleration in business and household activity growth as higher interest rates start to bite. Global demand will be soft, so offer little assistance in offsetting weakening domestic demand. A recession remains a likely outcome.
- Employment demand has weakened and unemployment has increased, although the tight labour market has resulted in higher nominal wage growth. Anecdotal evidence suggests slowing recruitment and wage growth, and we expect unemployment to rise.
- Consumer confidence has improved due to signs of real wage growth amid strength in the labour market, but household spending will remain weak as mortgaged households suffer higher interest payments and unemployment rises. Business investment/spending will fall back due to higher borrowing costs and weaker demand.
- Inflation will fall continue to fall over the next 12 months, albeit with upside risk. The MPC's attention will remain on underlying inflation measures and wage data. Policy rates will remain at the peak for another 10-12 months, until the MPC is comfortable the risk of further second round effects have diminished.
- Maintaining monetary policy in restrictive territory for so long, when the economy is already struggling (as the recent PMI data indicate), will require significant policy loosening in the future to boost demand and inflation.
- Global bond yields remain volatile. Like the UK, the Federal Reserve and other central banks see persistently higher policy rates through 2023/2024 as key to dampening domestic inflationary pressure. Data points will therefore prompt changes in bond yields as global interest rate expectations shift.

Forecast:

- The MPC held Bank Rate at 5.25% in September. We believe this is the peak for Bank Rate.
- The MPC will cut rates in the medium term to stimulate the UK economy but will be reluctant to do so until it is sure there will be no lingering second round effects. We see rate cuts from Q3 2024 to a low of around 3% by early2026.
- The immediate risks around Bank Rate lie to the upside, but these diminish over the next few quarters and shift to the downside before balancing out, due to the weakening UK economy and dampening effects on inflation.
- Arlingclose expects long-term gilt yields to eventually fall from current levels reflecting the lower medium-term path for Bank Rate. However, yields will remain relatively higher than in the past, partly due to quantitative tightening, with continued elevated volatility.

	Current	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.75	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.00	3.00
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
3-month money market rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.40	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.15	4.80	4.30	4.10	3.80	3.50	3.25	3.05	3.05
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
5yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.50	0.70	0.70	0.85	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	4.38	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.35
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.70	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
10yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.50	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Central Case	4.27	4.40	4.35	4.30	4.25	4.15	4.00	3.80	3.75	3.65	3.60	3.65	3.70
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.70	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
20yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.50	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Central Case	4.67	4.65	4.60	4.55	4.45	4.35	4.25	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.70	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
50yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.50	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Central Case	4.25	4.25	4.20	4.15	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.70	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00

PWLB Standard Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 1.00%; PWLB Certainty Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.80%
PWLB HRA Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.40%; UKIB Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.60%

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Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY
Responsible Officer:	ALEX RAWLIN POLICY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	Council priorities arising from the self-assessment inform Service Plans and the Annual Improvement Plan which form part of the Policy Framework.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on the Council's self-assessment 2022/23 took place in August and September 2023. The level of responses was – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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) • For all of the questions asked, responses were very close to 50/50 between yes and no. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 it was clear what more we have planned (again, this should not come as a surprise given almost half had not read the report). ○ A slightly higher proportion (54 - 58%) agreed that each judgement was about right. • As over half of respondents were satisfied with the contents of the consultation report, it is proposed that the judgements remain as they were in the July 2023 report to Governance and Audit Committee. However, as the results were so close, it is proposed that some changes are made to the broader content and context of the self-assessment report.

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, following formal consultation and to seek comments on the changes made to the draft report in **Appendix 1**.

2 Background

- 2.1 On 26 July 2023, Governance and Audit Committee received a report on the Council's self-assessment 2022/23. The Committee asked that they receive a further report in due course if there were any changes following consultation.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Council developed a detailed 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.

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

- For all of the questions, responses were very close to 50/50 for yes and no.
- 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.

3.3 Large numbers of comments and responses were made to 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 doing / what it has planned
- 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.

3.4 As over half of respondents were satisfied with the contents of the consultation report, it is proposed that the judgements remain as they were in the report to Governance and Audit Committee on 26 July 2023.

3.5 As the results were relatively close in terms of those satisfied or dissatisfied with the contents of the consultation report, it is proposed that some changes are made to the broader content and context of the report, to include –

- A new section specifically focusing on our progress on last year's report's areas for improvement.
- Providing additional general information on the consultation we have undertaken on the self-assessment and responses received.
- Providing information on consultation responses to each separate section, within that section.
- A summary of the key issues raised for each separate section, within that section.

3.6 An updated self-assessment, with the above changes made (and highlighted grey), is included in **Appendix 1**.

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 Governance and Audit Committee is recommended to: -

- Consider and approve the changes to the corporate self-assessment report 2022/23 at **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	✓	✓	✓
A more equal 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 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 -

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

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	GOOD
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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 opened 13 July. 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.

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 th and 14 th December 2022 these were followed up with a post consultation feedback public information event on the 9 th 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.

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, 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 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 Ogmere 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.
- **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"> the Director's Annual Reports. recruitment and selection for a variety of Children Services posts. media clips for Member training The Corporate Parenting brand / strategy name of a new Childrens Residential home consultation on the Saving Policy and evaluation of Foster Carer Reviews

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 Olympage 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	GOOD
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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
Heronsbridge 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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Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	MONITORING REPORT – CORPORATE COMPLAINTS
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY
Responsible Officer:	CHARLOTTE BRANFORD INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>The purpose of this report is to note the Authority's corporate complaints process and determine whether the Committee wishes to make any recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.</p> <p>The report also provides the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter for the Authority for 2022/23 which must be presented to the Committee.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to note the Authority's corporate complaints process and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter and determine whether the Committee wishes to make any recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle corporate complaints effectively.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Authority's Concerns and Complaints Policy is designed to deal with corporate complaints. There are separate processes for dealing with social services complaints, Elected Member conduct concerns and school based complaints. The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 outlines the procedure for handling complaints from persons receiving a service from social services. School based complaints are dealt with separately by the relevant school and Governing Body. Complaints from members of the public about Elected Members are within the remit of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). In addition, Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations appeals and complaints about data protection are within the remit of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

- 2.2 In 2019 the PSOW gained new powers under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 in relation to complaints handling procedures. The Ombudsman published a Statement of Principles concerning complaints handling procedures and a model complaints handling policy together with associated guidance on the implementation of a new model Concerns and Complaints Policy.
- 2.3 The PSOW wrote to all 22 local authorities in September 2020 explaining how the Ombudsman's Complaints Standards Authority created within the PSOW had engaged with representatives from all local authorities to put in place a raft of measures designed to support and enhance complaint handling. These measures included bespoke training and support which has been taken up by officers at Bridgend CBC and a process for all local authorities to report complaints statistics to the PSOW on a quarterly basis. The Ombudsman encouraged all local authorities to reflect on how their current practices and procedures comply with the Statement of Principles, model complaint handling process and guidance published on the PSOW website.
- 2.4 The Concerns and Complaints Policy attached as **Appendix 1** was reviewed and revised in line with the PSOW model policy and subsequently approved by Cabinet on 17 November 2020. The Policy incorporates the PSOW Statement of Principles namely that the complaints process should be: (1) complainant focussed (2) fair and objective (3) simple (4) timely and effective (5) accountable (6) committed to continuous improvement. There is no change to the current approach (informal and formal stage) which will remain with the right to then escalate a complaint to the PSOW should the complainant be dissatisfied with the Authority's response. The Policy is published on the Council's website and internally on the intranet.
- 2.5 The Authority also has a separate Unreasonable or Vexatious Behaviour Complaints Policy which is rarely utilised but provides officers and Elected Members with support and advice on managing situations when someone's actions are considered unreasonable. Most of the contact that the Authority has with customers is positive. However, there may be occasions when customers act in an unreasonable or unacceptable manner. In some cases the frequency and the nature of their contact with the Authority can hinder the consideration of their own or other people's enquiries. In some instances the sheer number or nature of their inquiries lead them to be considered as 'persistent' or 'vexatious' in their dealings with staff. A copy of the policy is attached as **Appendix 2** for information and sits alongside the Concerns and Complaints Policy. There are currently 2 individuals classed as vexatious.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Information Team is responsible for the management of the Authority's corporate complaints process. **Appendix 3** sets out performance data in relation to corporate complaints for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.
- 3.2 The PSOW also reports annually on the number of complaints against public bodies received by its office. The Ombudsman's Annual Letter for BCBC for 2022/23 is attached at **Appendix 4** and must be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet for noting.

- 3.3 As outlined in the Annual Letter, the number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2022–2023 was 55 compared with 55 in 2021-2022 and 31 in 2020-2021. The figure for 2022-23 represents 0.38 complaints received per 1000 residents. Childrens Social Services and Planning / Building Control attracted the largest number of complaints. 10 cases were out of jurisdiction, 17 were premature, 25 were closed after initial consideration, 4 were settled by working with the Ombudsman for early resolution. One complaint proceeded to investigation and was upheld. In this period the Ombudsman closed a total of 57 complaints against the Authority some of which will have been opened in the previous reporting period.
- 3.4 6 Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority’s Councillors were received by the Ombudsman’s Office in this period, 5 of which was discontinued, one was referred to the Standards Committee. 25 Code of Conduct complaints were received against Town and Community Councils in Bridgend County none of which were referred to the Standards Committee, 23 of which a decision was taken not to investigate, and in 2 cases no action was necessary.
- 3.5 The Complaints Standards Authority publishes datasets on complaints handled by local authorities. These datasets are published on the Ombudsman’s website and on the Council’s website. This data shows that last year, 21% of the Council’s complaints were referred to PSOW.
- 3.6 In terms of complaints handling roles, Section 115 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 sets out a provision that came into force in April 2021 for the Governance and Audit Committee to *“review and assess the authority’s ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority’s ability to handle complaints effectively”*. It is proposed that the Committee receives an Annual Report on complaints under its Terms of Reference. Cabinet will also consider responses to complaints at least twice a year in addition to its current Corporate Complaints Annual Report and the Corporate Management Board (CMB) will receive quarterly updates on complaints and outcomes to establish any wider lessons and to improve processes and procedures. Anonymised data will also be shared quarterly with the PSOW Complaints Standards Authority as part of the Authority’s commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.
- 3.7 The Authority takes complaints and concerns seriously and will try to learn from any mistakes made. The Information Team will be developing a process to monitor both the effectiveness of the complaints process and how complaints data is being used to improve services and delivery of care. It is proposed that Services then consider any emerging themes and identify any service improvements required as a result of concerns raised. The information identified will then be used to contribute to service development which could include additional training, changes to internal procedures, increased monitoring etc.
- 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 will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of wellbeing goals/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 or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.
- 8.2 The PSOW has the legal power to require authorities to make payments to complainants where they have suffered financial loss or in compensation for distress and inconvenience. The PSOW has not required the Authority to make any payments within this reporting period.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 The Committee is recommended to note the report and determine whether it wishes to make any recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

Background documents

None.

Bridgend County Borough Council Concerns and Complaints Policy

Bridgend County Borough Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we'll apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal e.g. against a refusal to grant you planning permission or the decision not to give your child a place in a particular school so, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not covered by this policy e.g. when a legal framework applies and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

This policy does not apply to 'Freedom of Information' or data access issues. Please contact the Data Protection Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, Bridgend County Borough Council, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend CF31 4WB, tel: 01656 643565 or foi@bridgend.gov.uk

Complaints Officers can advise on the type and scope of complaints they can consider.

We have a separate policy for [Social Services complaints](#).

Welsh Language Standards

Bridgend County Borough Council embraces the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Welsh Language Standards with which it is expected to comply positively and will strive to ensure that the use of the Welsh language in Bridgend is developed and promoted.

How we will deal with complaints relating to our compliance with the Welsh Language Standards

The public is able to raise complaints with the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards under this Complaints Procedure using the process described. All complaints related to the standards (or any other service provided in Welsh) will be taken seriously and will be fully investigated to establish the validity of the complaint. If the Council has failed in its compliance with the Welsh Language Standards, it will apologise to the complainant and will consider any shortfall in compliance when reviewing any relevant internal processes or practices.

Staff training and awareness raising

We will raise awareness amongst all relevant Council employees of the requirement to deal with any complaints regarding the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards to ensure that such complaints are investigated fully and impartially. Employees will also be made aware of the need for records of all written complaints, investigations and outcomes, against the council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards to be retained and to be included and published in the Council's Annual Welsh Language Reporting process. This will be provided for each financial year.

This policy is also available in Welsh at our public buildings and on our website.

Asking us to provide a service?

If you are approaching us to request a service, e.g. reporting a faulty street light, or requesting an appointment this policy doesn't apply. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away. If you have a concern, please raise it with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern, the member of staff will draw them to our attention.

If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the following ways:

- Ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.
- Get in touch with our central complaint contact point on 01656 643565 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- Use the form on our website at <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/customer-services/formal-complaints/>
- Email us at complaints@bridgend.gov.uk
- Write to us at: Complaints, Bridgend County Borough Council, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you need documents in large type.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to explain why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the

issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body e.g. Housing Association or NHS we will usually work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf e.g. specialist health providers you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we'll usually ask somebody from the relevant service area to look into it and respond to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the Council or, in certain cases including those concerning social services where a statutory procedure applies, we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we are right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.

- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we made a mistake, we'll tell you what happened and why.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.

Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide you with a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now, if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd done things properly.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, or if you were entitled to funding you did not receive we will try to refund the cost.

The Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- Phone: 0300 790 0203
- Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
- The website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office deals with complaints about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. Our Senior Management Team considers a summary of all complaints quarterly and is made aware of all serious complaints. Our Cabinet also considers our response to complaints at least twice a year. We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact e.g. advocacy services, Age Cymru, Shelter etc. who may be able to assist you.

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline:

- Phone 0808 802 3456
- Website www.meiccymru.org

or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

- Phone 0808 801 1000
- Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
- Website www.childcom.org.uk

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

Date:	November 2020
Author/s:	Information and Data Protection Officer
Consultee/s:	

Approved by:	Cabinet
Review frequency:	Every 2 years
Next review date:	November 2022

Bridgend County Borough Council



Unreasonable Behaviour or Vexatious Complainant Policy

Unreasonable Behaviour or Vexatious Complainant Policy

1. Policy objective

- 1.1** This policy and procedure sets out an agreed understanding of what is considered unacceptable customer complaint behaviour or vexatious complainants when dealing with officers and Elected Members of Bridgend County Borough Council. It applies to all members of the public (customers) in their interaction with the Council.
- 1.2** The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to making our services of a high quality and as accessible as possible.
- 1.3** Most of the contact that the Council has with customers is positive. However, there may be occasions when customers act in an unreasonable or unacceptable manner. In some cases the frequency and the nature of their contact with the Council can hinder the consideration of their own or other people's enquiries. In some instances the sheer number or nature of their inquiries lead them to be considered as 'persistent' or 'vexatious' in their dealings with staff.
- 1.4** This policy explains the Councils:
- Definition of unreasonable customer behaviour
 - Definition of vexatious request
 - Process for dealing with customers who behave in an unreasonable way
 - Process for dealing with vexatious requests
- 1.5** This policy should only be used in exceptional circumstances after all reasonable measures have been taken to try to resolve the complaints under the council's corporate complaints procedures.

2. Definitions

Unreasonable Customer Conduct

- 2.1** It is difficult to produce a comprehensive list of the actions that would be deemed unreasonable customer conduct. Ultimately it will be a matter for the Council's Complaints Officer and Monitoring Officer to decide whether a particular customer's actions or behaviour are inappropriate, having regard to the circumstances of each case. Examples of conduct which may be considered unreasonable are listed below but the list is not exhaustive:
- Acts or threats of violence or aggression by an individual toward staff, Elected Members or any third party. Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff the Council may report the matter to the police or consider taking legal action. In such cases, the Council may not give the complainant prior warning;
 - Persistent failure to show respect in dealings with staff or Elected Members, or acting in a threatening or abusive way. Examples of such behaviour include

shouting, verbal abuse, unsubstantiated allegations, derogatory remarks, inflammatory statements;

- Malicious, unwarranted or defamatory comments or making remarks which are related to any protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010;
- Hindering objective consideration of an enquiry or operation of a service by the nature or frequency of contact with the Authority;
- Attempting to pursue any matter, having exhausted all stages of the corporate or other statutory complaints procedure. This will include where the substance of a complaint is the same as that originally made;
- Contacting the Council through different routes about the same issue in a persistent manner. This may include other parties, such as Elected Members or the Ombudsman;
- Excessive demands on the time and resources of officers with the expectation of an immediate response;
- Being unable to identify the precise issue a customer wants the Council to deal with or investigate despite the Council having taken reasonable steps to assist the Customer with this task;
- Focusing on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point. It is recognised that determining what is 'trivial' can be subjective and careful judgments will be used in applying this criteria;
- Changing the substance of a complaint or continually raising new issues or seeking to prolong contact;

Vexatious requests

2.2 The Council defines this as any request which is likely to cause distress or disruption, without any proper or justified cause. Examples would include:

- High volume of correspondence, or combining requests with accusations and complaints;
- Requests for information that has already been provided, or to reconsider issues that have already been dealt with;
- When compliance with the request would impose significant burden on the Council in terms of expense and negatively impact on the Council's ability to provide service to others.

3. Strategy for dealing with Unreasonable behaviour or vexatious requests

3.1 If an officer of the Council is of the opinion that a customer's actions or behaviour are unreasonable or to classify a request as vexatious, they shall, in the first instance discuss this with their line manager in order to consider any informal steps that can be followed to resolve the concerns. Every effort will be made to satisfy the request or resolve the issue that has been made. For complaints, this will include exhausting both stages of the Council's complaints procedure.

3.2 In the event that no informal steps are appropriate or informal attempts to resolve the concerns do not work, the Directorate will note the comments, and a decision to

classify a customer's behaviour as unreasonable or a request as vexatious, will be considered by an Appropriate Officer (as defined in 3.3 below) on an individual basis in consultation with the Monitoring Officer. Each case will be viewed individually and decided on its merits. However, a customer may be deemed to have unreasonable behaviour or be vexatious if previous or current contact with them shows that they meet the criteria, dependent upon degree.

3.3 The "Appropriate Officer" to determine the action to be taken will depend upon the circumstances of each case provided that no officer may undertake the role of "Authorising Officer" if he/she has had an involvement in the complaint. This may be a Group Manager, Head of Service or Complaints Officer acting on behalf of the Chief Executive.

3.4 The Appropriate Officer in consultation with the Monitoring Officer will determine what action to take including:

- (a) Restricting the manner in which the customer may contact the Council;
- (b) The times at which the customer may contact the Council;
- (c) Restrict contact through a designated officer;
- (d) Notify the customer that the Council has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact will serve no useful purpose and advise them to contact the Ombudsman;
- (e) Withdraw contact with the customer either in person, by telephone, by email or any combination of these, provided at least one form of contact is maintained. The Council shall not, without the consent of the Monitoring Officer, withdraw or not provide any services to which the customer or his/her family are entitled to receive;
- (f) Inform the customer that the Council reserves the right to pass the matter to the Council's legal services which may result in legal action against the customer;
- (g) Removal from the Council offices by a senior manager or the police if the behaviour is considered to be a public nuisance offence; and
- (h) Other suitable options will be considered in light of the customer's circumstances.

3.5 The Appropriate Officer will write to the customer to:

- (a) Detail the action that will be taken and why as outlined at paragraph 3.4;
- (b) Explain what this means in terms of contact with the Council;
- (c) Advise how long any restrictions will be in place and when they will be reviewed;
- (d) Enclose a copy of this policy.

3.6 The Monitoring Officer shall maintain a central register of decisions relating to the above.

4. Review

4.1 Any restriction imposed shall be subject to a regular review and the timing of such reviews will be notified to the customer. Reviews will be based on the individual circumstances of the case but could typically be for a period of 6 months, dependent on the severity of the situation.

5. Social Media

- 5.1** The Council will remove, without notice, offensive or abusive posts from its social media channels. Additionally, the Council reserves the right to take any action it considers necessary where derogatory comments are made about officers of the Council.

6. New complaints

- 6.1** New complaints from individuals whose behaviour has previously been deemed unreasonable or their complaints vexatious will be treated on their merits. Restrictions imposed in respect of an earlier complaint will not automatically apply to a new matter. An Appropriate Officer will decide if any restrictions which have been applied before are still appropriate and if necessary in relation to the new complaint or request.
- 6.2** However, persistent unreasonable behaviour, or exceptionally unreasonable behaviour may result in a refusal of future contact on any matter.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1** Information will be presented quarterly to the Cabinet and Corporate Management Board with details of customers who have been categorised as vexatious or have unreasonable behaviour.

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1. Background

The Information Team based in Legal, & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy is responsible for processing all formal complaints in line with the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Complaints

The Complaints and Concerns Policy was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 17 November 2020, to take effect from 23 November 2020.

The Policy sets out a two stage process as follows:

- **Informal Complaint Stage**
- **Formal Complaint Stage**

This Policy replaces the previous policy which was approved in 2013. The policy is a national policy required by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

2. Informal Complaints (Stage 1)

- 2.1 The Policy recognises that complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible and where possible informally as part of the normal working of the Authority. It advises customers to contact the office or officer responsible for the service to provide an opportunity to solve the problem. All informal complaints should be logged in the Corporate Complaints office as the Council is now required to report on these every quarter to the Public Services Ombudsman.
- 2.2 The Public Services Ombudsman now sets criteria for complaint types to be logged. For the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, the number of informal complaints received against each category together with the numbers of those complaints closed against each outcome was as follows:

	Total number of informal complaints received	Number resolved by frontline staff/not upheld	Number Upheld	Number where investigation discontinued /investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn	Still Ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	6	5	0	1	0
Children's Social Services	0	0	0	0	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	11	8	0	2	1
Complaints handling	3	2	1	0	0
Education	14	12	0	2	0
Environment & Environmental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	25	23	0	2	0
Housing	13	13	0	0	0
Planning & Building Control	7	6	0	0	1
Roads & Transport	1	1	0	0	0
Various/Other	32	22	4	2	4
Waste & Refuse	28	26	1	0	1

2.3 The Corporate Complaints team have only recently commenced the collation of Bridgend County borough Council Ward for informal complaints. It is therefore intended to provide this to the Governance & Audit Committee going forward.

3. Formal Complaints (Stage 2)

- 3.1 Formal complaints are received by email, telephone, letter or online complaint form. All formal corporate complaints with the exception of schools and social services (which have their own statutory procedures) are received, logged and acknowledged centrally by the Information Team within 5 working days. These complaints are sent to the relevant Head of Service who appoints a senior officer within the service to investigate the complaint and respond directly within 20 working days. The Information Team is provided with a copy of the response. If an investigation is more complex and more time may be needed, the complainant is advised of the likely timescale and kept informed of progress.
- 3.2 The Information Team has received, logged, acknowledged and referred a total of 29 formal complaints for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. The breakdown for the period is as follows:

	1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023
No. of Complaints Received	29
No. acknowledged in 5 working days	26
No. acknowledged outside 5 working days	3

- 3.3 The table below sets out the number of formal complaints the Council has received the financial half year 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 and the previous two financial half years:

Financial Half Year	Number of Complaints Received
1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022	26
1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023	27
1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023	29

- 3.4 The Information Team endeavour to ensure that all complaints (both informal and formal) are acknowledged within 5 working days. However in some circumstances and for a variety of reasons this is not always possible. The reason for the delay in the these cases was as follows:

- i) there was a delay in the Corporate Complaints team of 1 acknowledgement being sent.

ii) In 2 instances, the request for a Stage 2 was received directly by the responsible department who notified Corporate Complaints of the Stage 2 at the time of their response. Therefore, no acknowledgement had been sent for those complaints.

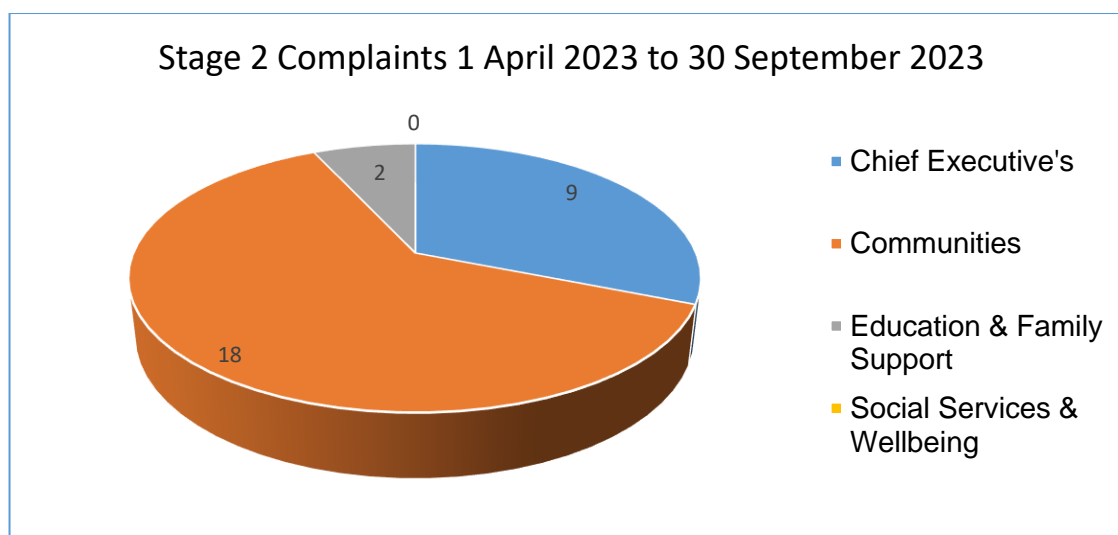
3.5 For the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, the number of formal complaints received against each of the Public Services Ombudman criteria together with the numbers of those complaints closed against each outcome was as follows:

	Total number of formal complaints received	Number resolved by frontline staff/not upheld	Number Upheld	Number where investigation discontinued/investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn	Still ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	1	1	0	0	0
Children's Social Services	0	0	0	0	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	3	1	2	0	0
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0	0
Education	2	2	0	0	0
Environment & Environmental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	3	3	0	0	0
Housing	4	4	0	0	0
Planning & Building Control	6	5	0	0	1
Roads & Transport	4	4	0	0	0
Various/Other	4	2	1	0	1
Waste & Refuse	2	2	0	0	0

- 3.6 The following information sets out the breakdown of formal complaints received by County Borough Council Ward:

Ward	No. of complaints
Bridgend Central	3
Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr	1
Cornelly	1
Garw Valley	1
Maesteg East	1
Maesteg West	2
Porthcawl West Central	1
St Bride's Minor & Ynsawdre	1
Unknown/By e-mail	18

- 3.7 For the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, the number of formal complaints received by each Directorate was as follows:

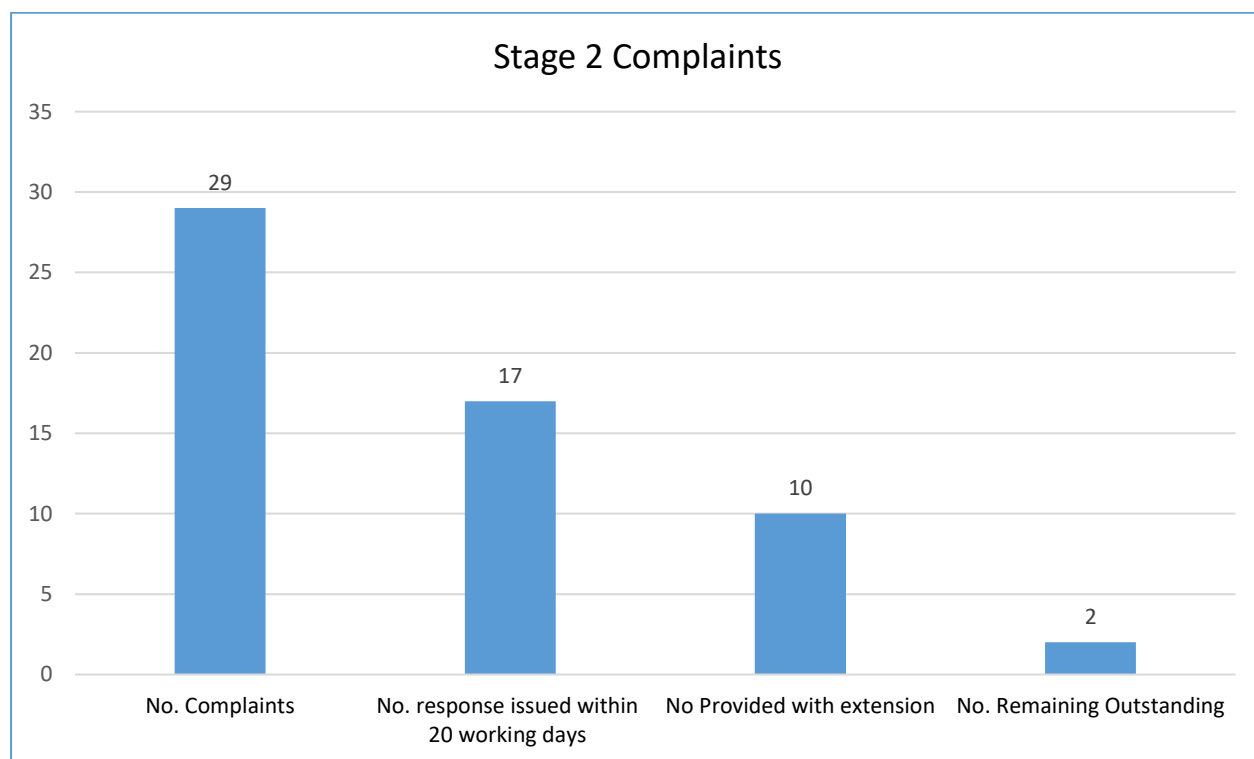


- 3.8 For the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 one complaint was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner about a service provided by the Authority; the complaint related to Council Tax bills not being available in “My Account” on the Welsh language side of the Council’s website. However, as the Commissioner was already investigating the Council’s compliance with standards 52 and 56, the Commissioner chose not to investigate the complaint. The Commissioner has since received written confirmation that the complaint had

been resolved and that council tax bills can now be viewed and read on Bridgend Council's website in Welsh.

3.9 As required by the Equalities Strategy, a voluntary equalities monitoring questionnaire has been developed to accompany the Corporate Complaints Form. The information collected informs the Strategic Equality Plan.

3.10 The chart below provides a breakdown of the number of formal Complaints received, those responded to within 20 working days, those for which it was necessary to request an extension to the response deadline, those that remain outstanding and those complaints currently under investigation within the respective 20 working days.



3.11 So that the Committee can be provided with a Lessons Learned Section going forward, the Corporate Complaints team are now requesting departments to provide them with a note of any system or process changes the service has made as a result of a complaint.

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**Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman**
Cymru • Wales

Ask for: Communications



01656 641150

Date: 17 August 2023



Communications
@ombudsman.wales

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

Annual Letter 2022/23

Dear Councillor David

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2022/23) for Bridgend County Borough Council which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the actions being taken to improve public services.

This letter coincides with my Annual Report – “[A year of change – a year of challenge](#)” – a sentiment which will no doubt resonate with public bodies across Wales. My office has seen another increase in the number of people asking for our help – up 3% overall compared to the previous year, and my office now receives double the number of cases we received a decade ago.

In the last year, I have met with public bodies across Wales – speaking about our casework, our recommendations, and our proactive powers. The current climate will continue to provide challenges for public services, but I am grateful for the positive and productive way in which local authorities continue to engage with my office.

1,020 complaints were referred to us regarding local authorities last year - a reduction of 11% compared to the previous year. During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) 13% of local authority complaints.

We received fewer Code of Conduct complaints in 22/23 compared to the previous year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. My role is such that I do not make final findings about breaches of the Code of Conduct. Instead, where investigations find the most serious concerns, these are referred to the Standards Committee of the relevant local authority, or the

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Adjudication Panel for Wales. In 2022/23, the Ombudsman made 12 such referrals – a welcome reduction from 20 last year.

Supporting improvement of public services

Despite the challenges of last year, we have pushed forward with our proactive improvement work and launched a new Service Quality process to ensure we deliver the standards we expect.

Last year, we began work on our second wider Own Initiative investigation – this time looking into carers assessments within local authorities. This investigation will take place throughout the coming year, and we look forward to sharing our findings with all local authorities – not just those involved in the investigation.

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year, with more than 50 public bodies now operating our model policy. We've also now provided more than 400 training sessions since we started, with local authorities, in September 2020.

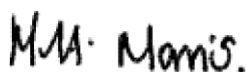
We continued our work to publish complaints statistics into a second year, with data now published twice a year. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, last year 21% of Bridgend County Borough Council's complaints were referred to PSOW.

I would encourage Bridgend County Borough Council, and specifically your Audit and Governance Committee, to use this data to better understand your performance on complaints and consider how well good complaints handling is embedded throughout the Authority.

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

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Continue to engage with our Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing accurate and timely complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Morris
Public Services Ombudsman

cc. Mark Shephard, Chief Executive, Bridgend County Borough Council.
By Email only: mark.shephard@bridgend.gov.uk



Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	16	0.24
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.38
Caerphilly County Borough Council	49	0.28
Cardiff Council*	142	0.39
Carmarthenshire County Council	53	0.28
Ceredigion County Council	35	0.49
Conwy County Borough Council	31	0.27
Denbighshire County Council	32	0.33
Flintshire County Council	65	0.42
Cyngor Gwynedd	36	0.31
Isle of Anglesey County Council	25	0.36
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	0.29
Monmouthshire County Council	23	0.25
Neath Port Talbot Council	39	0.27
Newport City Council	42	0.26
Pembrokeshire County Council	44	0.36
Powys County Council	38	0.29
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**	54	0.23
Swansea Council	94	0.39
Torfaen County Borough Council	16	0.17
Vale of Glamorgan Council	49	0.37
Wrexham County Borough Council	65	0.48
Total	1020	0.33
* inc 9 Rent Smart Wales		
** inc 2 South Wales Parking Group		

Appendix B - Received by Subject

Bridgend County Borough Council	Complaints Received	% share
Adult Social Services	2	4%
Benefits Administration	0	0%
Children's Social Services	14	25%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	2%
Complaints Handling	7	13%
Covid19	1	2%
Education	5	9%
Environment and Environmental Health	4	7%
Finance and Taxation	0	0%
Housing	5	9%
Licensing	0	0%
Planning and Building Control	11	20%
Roads and Transport	3	5%
Various Other	2	4%
Total	55	

Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes (* denotes intervention)

Bridgend County Borough Council			% Share
Out of Jurisdiction	10		18%
Premature	17		30%
Other cases closed after initial consideration	25		44%
Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	4		7%
Discontinued	0		0%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	0		0%
Other Reports Upheld*	1		2%
Public Interest Reports*	0		0%
Special Interest Reports*	0		0%
Total	57		

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Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	16	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	5	57	9%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	6	52	12%
Cardiff Council	25	145	17%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	1	9	11%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	60	12%
Ceredigion County Council	13	44	30%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	35	14%
Denbighshire County Council	2	33	6%
Flintshire County Council	5	70	7%
Cyngor Gwynedd	5	33	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	5	25	20%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	18	6%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	22	5%
Neath Port Talbot Council	7	38	18%
Newport City Council	8	48	17%
Pembrokeshire County Council	3	45	7%
Powys County Council	8	44	18%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	2	54	4%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - South Wales Parking Group	0	2	0%
Swansea Council	10	99	10%
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	17	6%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	53	28%
Wrexham County Borough Council	6	67	9%
Total	141	1086	13%

Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

**Bridgend County Borough
Council**

Decision not to investigate	0
Discontinued	5
No evidence of breach	0
No action necessary	0
Refer to Adjudication Panel	0
Refer to Standards Committee	1
Total	6

Investigations

Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Decision not to investigate	Investigations					Refer to Standards Committee	Total
		Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel			
Brackla Community Council	3	0	0	0	0		0	3
Bridgend Town Council	5	0	0	1	0		0	6
Coity Higher Community Council	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Laleston Community Council	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Llangynwyd Middle Community Council	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Maesteg Town Council	9	0	0	0	0		0	9
Newcastle Higher Community Council	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Pencoed Town Council	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Porthcawl Town Council	4	0	0	1	0		0	5
Ynysawdre Community Council	2	0	0	0	0		0	2

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Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2022/23. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

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

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2022/23. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

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Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHAIR OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Responsible Officer:	ANDREW WATHAN HEAD OF REGIONAL INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governance and Audit Committee is required to approve an Annual Report for presentation to Council. • The draft report was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 28 September 2023. Following comments, a section outlining improvements that members of the Committee could make going forward will be incorporated into next year's report. No further comments were received. • This report demonstrates how the Committee has met its terms of reference in accordance with the Council's Constitution as set out by the Local Government Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. • The Committee has achieved this by concentrating on its core responsibilities during 2022-23. • The outcome of the 2022-23 self-assessment process, consistent with previous years, demonstrates that the Council has sound arrangements in place in respect of its Governance and Audit Committee, noting that the level of knowledge and experience of members was good or satisfactory.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report for the Committee to determine whether it forms a balanced summary of the work undertaken by the Committee during 2022-23 and to approve its presentation to full Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Governance and Audit Committee has responsibility for ensuring that there are procedures in place to guarantee the adequacy and effectiveness of financial control and corporate governance arrangements.
- 2.2 A key component of good governance for all organisations is to have in place a Governance and Audit Committee. Bridgend County Borough Council complies with this requirement; the Terms of Reference of the Committee, as included within the Council's Constitution, are set in line with the Local Government Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The responsibilities of the Governance and Audit Committee, as required by the above legislation, are included in **Appendix 1** of the Annual Report (**Appendix A**).
- 2.3 The Governance and Audit Committee and its Members are required to:
- Report to Council on the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.
 - Report to Council on an annual basis and to publish an annual report on the Committee's work, its performance in relation to its Terms of Reference and its effectiveness in meeting its purpose including a conclusion on compliance with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Position Statement on audit committees.
- 2.4 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 determined that former Audit Committees would be re-named Governance and Audit Committees and from May 2022 the chair of the Governance and Audit Committee had to be a lay member and that one third of its membership had to be lay members. Bridgend's Governance and Audit Committee had its full quota of 4 lay members and 8 elected councillors during 2022/23. The Committee held 6 meetings during the municipal year.
- 2.5 The Governance and Audit Committee focused on its core responsibilities:
- Reviewing the draft financial statements;
 - Scrutinising and being satisfied with the Council's Annual Governance Statement, to demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of objectives, and monitor management action in-year to further improve arrangements;
 - Monitoring the Council's internal audit function in terms of overseeing independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism, through the regular reporting of performance and finalised audit assignments;
 - Considering the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements;

- Considering reports and recommendations of external audit in respect of the Council;
- Supporting the ongoing development and effectiveness of Governance and Audit Committee; and
- Ensuring compliance with legal requirements, namely the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in respect of overseeing the Council's performance assessment and the arrangements for handling complaints.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 This report at **Appendix A**, sets out the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2022/23, how it has complied with its terms of reference, and outlines its performance during the year, together with a self-assessment against the CIPFA publication 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police 2022 Edition'.
- 3.2 The outcome of the 2022-23 self-assessment process, consistent with previous years, demonstrates that the Council has sound arrangements in place in respect of its Governance and Audit Committee, noting that the level of knowledge and experience of members was good or satisfactory.
- 3.3 The draft report was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 28 September 2023. A Member noted that there did not seem to be any strong improvements recommended as part of this report and wondered if there could be a section outlining what Members could do to improve; this will be incorporated in next year's report. Members were given the opportunity to feedback any further comments to the Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service; no further comments were received.

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 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 arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that the Governance and Audit Committee approve the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report 2022/23 and its presentation to full Council.

Background documents

Local Government Measure 2011

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

CIPFA publication 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police 2022 Edition'

Bridgend CBC Governance and Audit Committee agendas and minutes for 2022/23



Subject	Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23
Directorate:	Finance, Performance & Change
Meeting:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date:	9 November 2023
Division/Wards Affected	All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report for the Committee to determine whether it forms a balanced summary of the work undertaken by the Committee during 2022-23 and to approve its presentation to full Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 On behalf of the Governance and Audit Committee, the annual report for 2022/23 is submitted for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee. It shows that, over this period, the Committee has fulfilled its role as defined in its terms of reference.
- 2.2 The report shows that the workings of the Committee continue to be both valuable and productive and that it provides assurance to the Council regarding the Committee's activities in the effective governance of financial affairs and other matters by the Authority.
- 2.3 That Governance and Audit Committee endorse this report and recommend its presentation to Council.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The Council's Governance and Audit Committee has responsibility for ensuring that there are procedures in place to guarantee the adequacy and effectiveness of financial control and corporate governance arrangements.
- 3.2 A key component of good governance for all organisations is to have in place a Governance and Audit Committee. Bridgend County Borough Council complies with this requirement; the Terms and Reference of the Committee, as included within the Council's Constitution, are set in line with the Local Government Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The responsibilities of Governance and Audit Committee, as required by the above legislation, are included at **Appendix 1** of this report.
- 3.3 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 determined that former Audit Committees would be re-named Governance and Audit Committees and from May 2022 the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee had to be a lay member and that one third of its membership had to be lay members. Bridgend's Governance and Audit Committee had its full quota of 4 lay members and 8 elected councillors during 2022/23. The Committee held 6 meetings during the municipal year.
- 3.4 Changes to the way the Council is operating since Covid-19, including new risks as a result of different ways of working, remote and digital working and other service changes have continued to influence the delivery of Council services.

The Governance and Audit Committee was mindful of this in setting its workplan for the year and also of the need for robust and proportionate oversight of the Council's governance, internal control and risk managements to be in place. The Governance and Audit Committee focussed on its core responsibilities:

- Reviewing the draft financial statements;
- Scrutinising and being satisfied with the Council's Annual Governance Statement, to demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of objectives, and monitor management action in-year to further improve arrangements;
- Monitoring the Council's internal audit function in terms of overseeing independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism, through the regular reporting of performance and finalised audit assignments;
- Considering the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements;
- Considering reports and recommendations of external audit in respect of the Council;
- Supporting the ongoing development and effectiveness of Governance and Audit Committee; and
- Ensuring compliance with legal requirements, namely the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in respect of overseeing the Council's performance assessment and the arrangements for handling complaints.

3.5 All reports presented to the Governance and Audit Committee during 2022/23 are shown at **Appendix 2**.

4. WORK DELIVERED IN 2022/23

4.1 The CIPFA Guidance ('Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities & Police 2022 Edition') identifies 'Core Functions' of a Governance and Audit Committee along with what it refers to as possible 'wider functions' of a Governance and Audit Committee. The Committee undertook its role during 2022/23 by receiving a comprehensive suite of reports in line with its work programme for the year, as shown at **Appendix 2**.

4.2 *Be satisfied that the Council's assurance statements, including the annual governance statement (AGS), properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the Council's objectives.*

4.2.1 The Draft AGS for 2021/22 was reported to the Governance and Audit Committee; the Committee endorsed it and recommended its certification by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for inclusion within the Council's 2021/22 Statement of Accounts. As part of this process, the Review of Effectiveness and proposals for improvement have been reviewed and challenged by the Council's Corporate Management Board and Governance and Audit Committee.

4.2.2 For information, the draft AGS for 2022/23 was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2023.

4.3 *Internal Audit functions:*

- *oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism;*
- *support the effectiveness of the internal audit process;*
- *promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework.*

4.3.1 From the 1st April 2019 the Council's Internal Audit Service transferred to a Regional Internal Audit Service, hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and comprising four local authorities: Bridgend County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council.

4.3.2 The Covid-19 pandemic required Council Services to quickly adapt and implement changes to service delivery arrangements to ensure continued provision of essential frontline services. Although the situation settled during 2022/23, an assessment of key risks and changes in service delivery arrangements were taken into account as part of compiling the Internal Audit Annual Strategy and Risk Based Internal Audit Plan 2022/23.

4.3.3 The Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2022/23 was reported to and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. The Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service outlined that the proposed plan would need to continue to recognise particular risks and challenges arising from revised working arrangements, such as remote ways of working.

4.3.4 During the year, the Governance and Audit Committee received Internal Audit performance updates, details of all finalised audit assignments and progress on implementation of audit recommendations; this suite of information has enabled Members to consider the effectiveness of the Internal Audit process for 2022/23.

4.3.5 A key part of the Governance and Audit Committee's role is to support the Council's Internal Audit Service to remain independent, assess whether it has adequate resources available to it and to monitor the performance and quality of work delivered throughout the year. The Internal Audit Service fulfilled this requirement through its Internal Audit Charter, that was presented to and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee and provided the Committee with information to assess the independence of the Internal Audit Service.

4.4 *Monitor the effectiveness of the control environment, including arrangements for ensuring value for money, supporting standards and ethics and for managing the authority's exposure to the risks of fraud and corruption.*

4.4.1 Only 1 *Limited Assurance* audit report was issued in 2022/23 which was reported to the Governance and Audit Committee within Internal Audit's (IA) 'Progress against the IA Risk Based Plan 2022-23 reports during the year. The results of Internal Audit's work for the financial year is brought together in the form of the *Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report*, which for 2021/22 was reported to Committee in June 2022. For 2022/23 the *Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report* was reported in the first half of the 2023/24 financial year.

4.4.2 Based on the internal audit reviews completed during 2021/22, the overall opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control for 2021/22 was *Reasonable* - is 'Effective with a small number of areas identified for improvement'. In addition, no significant cross-cutting control issues have been identified that would impact on the Council's overall control environment and the weaknesses that have been identified are service specific.

4.4.3 1 audit assignment completed to final report stage during 2021/22 received an audit opinion of *Limited Assurance*, there were no *No Assurance* opinions. This audit was followed up during 2022/23 and was given a *Reasonable Assurance* audit opinion.

4.4.4 With regard to the risks of fraud and corruption:

- In July 2022 the Annual Corporate Fraud Report 2021/22 was presented. This update provided assurance on the Council's arrangements to tackle potential fraud and covered the internal control environment that supports this area.
- The Anti-tax Evasion Policy was reported to Committee prior to it being presented to Cabinet for approval.

4.5 *Consider the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements and the control environment, reviewing the risk profile of the organisation and assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues, including partnerships and collaborations with other organisations.*

4.5.1 Quarterly updates were presented to Committee throughout the year which enabled officers and Members to identify and assess trends and the crosscutting nature of risks with the ability to drill down to the detail of risks as and when required.

4.5.2 The draft AGS was presented prior to its inclusion with the Statement of Accounts.

- 4.5.3 In line with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Committee reviewed the Council's draft Self-Assessment for 2021/22 (incorporating the Council's Corporate Performance Report) in advance of consideration at a meeting of the full Council (noting that the self-assessment included information in respect of partnership / collaboration arrangements).
- 4.6 *Review the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit.*
- 4.6.1 Governance and Audit Committee were presented with the draft 2021/22 Statements of Account for the Council and Audit Wales provided a verbal update on the progress on the audit of those accounts; they informed the Committee that no significant matters had been identified to date although there were delays due to the issues around infrastructure assets.
- 4.6.2 Following review by Committee, the Council's 2021/22 audited Statement of Accounts were reported back through Cabinet and approved by full Council; an unqualified opinion was issued by Audit Wales (i.e. clean bill of health).
- 4.6.3 The Council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategy was updated and presented to Committee for review prior to it being reporting to full Council.
- 4.7 *Consider the reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control.*
- 4.7.1 At the first Governance and Audit Committee meeting of the 2022/23 Municipal Year, Audit Wales reported the 2022 Audit Plan for the Council, and thereafter provided quarterly Audit Wales Work Programme Updates during the year to enable the Committee to be kept up-to-date with the work of Audit Wales and providing opportunity to seek clarity / further information where deemed required.
- 4.7.2 Audit Wales presented finalised reports to the Governance and Audit Committee during the year (accompanied by Council progress updates on the implementation of recommendations / proposals for improvement contained within the reports):
- Direct Payments for Adult Social Care
 - Assurance and Risk Assessment Review for 2021/22
 - Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management – Bridgend County Borough Council
 - Springing Forward – Strategic Asset Management – Bridgend County Borough Council

- Transformational Leadership Programme Board – Baseline Governance Review – Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board
- Performance Management Review - Bridgend County Borough Council

5. **SELF-ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE CIPFA PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES & POLICE 2018 EDITION**

- 5.1 The self-assessment checklist based on the CIPFA Guidance was circulated to members of the Committee in order to assess the existing skills, knowledge and areas of expertise of members and to identify any gaps or training requirements.
- 5.2 88% of responses from members of this Committee indicated that their level of knowledge and experience across the 10 statements, as shown in **Appendix 3**, was good or satisfactory. The areas where little knowledge or experience was indicated as highest were Complaints Handling and Council Performance Self-Assessment.
- 5.3 The results indicate that Governance and Audit Committee members have an overall sound base of knowledge and experience in the areas of responsibility for this Committee.

6. **CURRENT SITUATION**

- 6.1 The draft report was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 28 September 2023. A Member noted that there did not seem to be any strong improvements recommended as part of this report and wondered if there could be a section to do with how Members could do better next year; this will be incorporated in next year's report. Members were given the opportunity to feedback any further comments to the Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service; no further comments were received.

7. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 During 2022/23 the Council's Governance and Audit Committee has reviewed and challenged a range of topic areas, including the work of Internal and External Audit, the Committee's responsibilities as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and its responsibility in respect of reviewing and scrutinising the Council's Treasury Management arrangements.
- 7.2 From a review of the coverage of Governance and Audit Committee's work and oversight during the year, as set out in Section 2, it is considered that the Committee has delivered its workplan and responsibilities in line with its Terms of Reference.

- 7.3 The Annual Report also sets out, in Section 5 / **Appendix 3**, the results of the self-assessment undertaken against the checklist included within the CIPFA Guidance. The outcome of the 2022/23 self-assessment process, consistent with previous years, demonstrates that the Council has sound arrangements in place in respect of its Governance and Audit Committee, noting that the level of knowledge and experience of members was good or satisfactory.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE IN LINE WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

Chapter 2, section 81 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (revised)

Local authorities to appoint governance and audit committees

A local authority must appoint a committee (a "Governance and Audit Committee") to—

- a) review and scrutinise the authority's financial affairs,*
- b) make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's financial affairs,*
- c) review and assess the risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements of the authority,*
- d) make reports and recommendations to the authority on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements,*
- (da) review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively,*
- (db) make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively*
- e) oversee the authority's internal and external audit arrangements, and*
- f) review the financial statements prepared by the authority.*

A local authority may confer on its Governance and Audit Committee such other functions as the authority considers suitable to be exercised by such a committee.

It is for a Governance and Audit Committee to determine how to exercise its functions.

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Council Performance Arrangements

- (i) To consider the Council's draft Annual Performance Self-Assessment report and if deemed necessary may make recommendations for changes to the Council.*
- (ii) To receive the Council's finalised Annual Self-Assessment report in respect of a financial year as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of that financial year.*
- (iii) At least once during the period between two consecutive ordinary elections of councillors to the Council, consider the independent Panel Performance Assessment report into which the Council is meeting its performance requirements.*
- (iv) To receive and review the Council's draft response to the report of the independent Panel Performance Assessment and if deemed necessary may make recommendations for changes to the statements made in the draft response to the Council.*

Complaints Handling

- (i) To review and assess the Council's ability to deal with complaints effectively.*
- (ii) To make reports and recommendations in relation to the Council's ability to deal with complaints effectively.*

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23	22-Jun-22	28-Jul-22	22-Sep-22	13-Oct-22	10-Nov-22	26-Jan-23	27-Apr-23
			CANCELLED				
Standing Items							
Governance and Audit Committee Action Record	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Updated Forward Work Programme	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual Accounts							
Statement of Accounts 2021-22 (unaudited)		✓					
Porthcawl Harbour Return 2021-22 (unaudited)		✓					
Audited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement						✓	
Porthcawl Harbour Return (audit letter)				✓			
Governance							
Annual Governance Statement 2021-22		✓					
Half Year Review of the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23					✓		
Self Assessment of the Governance and Audit Committee						✓	
Audit Wales Annual Audit Plan <i>(included in Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports item)</i>							✓
Regulatory Tracker						✓	
Annual Audit Summary <i>(included in Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports item)</i>						✓	
Internal Audit Reports							
Annual Internal Audit Report 2021-22	✓						
Internal Audit Shared Service Charter	✓						✓
Internal Audit Annual Strategy and Audit Plan 2022-23	✓						
Internal Audit Annual Strategy and Audit Plan 2023-24							✓
Internal Audit Progress Reports		✓			✓	✓	✓
Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring Report					✓	✓	✓

Treasury Management							
Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021-22		✓					
Treasury Management Half Year Report 2022-23					✓		
Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24						✓	
Risk Assurance							
Corporate Risk Assessment	✓				✓	✓	
Counter Fraud							
Corporate Fraud Report 2021-22		✓					
Anti Tax Evasion Policy							✓
Others							
Complaints Process							✓
Disabled Facilities Grants				✓			
Annual Self Assessment of the Council's Performance	✓			✓			

Self-assessment of Good Practice

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL - GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE - ANALYSIS OF THE KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

	Good Knowledge	Satisfactory Knowledge	Little Knowledge	Total	Any Comments
1. Organisational Knowledge	4	5	1	10	
2. Governance and Audit Committee Role and Functions	5	4	1	10	
3. Internal Audit	5	4	1	10	
4. Financial Management and Accounting	4	5	1	10	
5. External Audit	5	4	1	10	
6. Risk Management	4	4	2	10	
7. Counter Fraud	4	4	2	10	Further work to consider councils arrangements.
8. Values of Good Governance	5	4	1	10	
9. Council Performance Self-Assessment	4	5	1	10	
10. Complaints Handling	3	6	1	10	

All comments received

I have very limited knowledge in these areas and welcome any training opportunities.

Training and briefings provided so far have been most useful.

Keen to understand further the Council's specific arrangements across compliants handling, risk management (including fraud)

Training has provided a working knowledge to be supplemented over the coming months

I have the required support and glad the Council Team is available at all time to support.

Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	DEBORAH EXTON DEPUTY HEAD OF FINANCE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governance and Audit Committee has a number of core functions and responsibilities within its remit. • It receives a number of reports and presentations throughout the year to enable it to carry out those core functions and responsibilities effectively and to provide it with confidence in the financial governance of the Authority. • To enable the Committee to provide this assurance and to ensure it is covering its range of responsibilities, a Forward Work Programme is presented at each meeting, setting out the reports to be presented at future meetings, for approval or amendment, as necessary. • The updated Forward Work Programme (FWP) for 2023-24 is at Appendix A. • Committee is requested to approve the updated FWP or request changes for future meetings.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the updated Forward Work Programme for 2023-24.

2. Background

- 2.1 The core functions of an effective Governance and Audit Committee include the responsibility to:
- review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's financial affairs.

- consider the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting, governance processes, performance assessment and complaints arrangements.
- seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors.
- consider the effectiveness of the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements.
- be satisfied that the Council's assurance statements properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it.
- oversee the work of internal audit (including the annual plan and strategy) and monitor performance.
- review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary.
- receive the annual report of the Head of Internal Audit.
- consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies, where applicable.
- ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.
- review and approve the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to Members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit.
- review and make any recommendations for change to the Council's draft self-assessment report.
- consider panel performance assessment reports into how the Council is meeting its performance requirements.

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

3. **Current situation / proposal**

3.1 In order to assist the Committee in ensuring that due consideration is given to all aspects of their core functions the proposed Forward Work Programme for 2023-24 is attached at **Appendix A**. Committee Members are asked to endorse this schedule, confirm the list of people they would like to invite for each item (if appropriate), and indicate whether any additional information or research is required.

3.2 The provisional meeting scheduled for 15 December 2023 has been cancelled, as the audit of the Statement of Accounts will not be completed by that date. Shown below are the items scheduled to be presented at the next scheduled meeting, to be held on 25 January 2024. The update report on Disabled Facilities Grants has been postponed from the November meeting until the January meeting of Committee.

	Proposed Agenda Items – 25 January 2024
1	Governance and Audit Committee Action Record
2	Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports
3	Regulatory Tracker
4	Porthcawl Harbour Return (audit letter)
5	Audited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement
6	Self Assessment of the Governance and Audit Committee
7	Internal Audit Progress Reports
8	Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring Report
9	Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25
10	Corporate Risk Assessment
11	Disabled Facilities Grants
12	Updated Forward Work Programme 2023-24

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

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 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 arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

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

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Committee considers and approves the updated Forward Work Programme for 2023-24.

Background documents

None

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24	Frequency	01 June 2023	26 July 2023	28 September 2023	09 November 2023	25 January 2024	18 April 2024
Standing Items							
Governance and Audit Committee Action Record	Each meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports	Each meeting	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Updated Forward Work Programme	Each meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual Accounts							
Statement of Accounts 2022-23 (unaudited)	Annually		✓				
Porthcawl Harbour Return 2022-23 (unaudited)	Annually		✓				
Going Concern Assessment	Annually	✓					
Audit Enquiries Letter	Annually	✓					
Audit Wales Letter On Matters Arising From The 2021-22 Audit	Annually	✓					
Audited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement	Annually					✓	
Porthcawl Harbour Return (audit letter)	Annually					✓	
Governance							
Annual Governance Statement	Annually		✓				
Half Year Review of the Annual Governance Statement	Annually				✓		
Code of Corporate Governance				✓			
Audit Wales Annual Audit Plan <i>(included in Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports item)</i>	Annually						✓
Annual Audit Summary <i>(included in Audit Wales Governance and Audit Committee Reports item)</i>	Annually					✓	
Internal Audit Reports							
Annual Internal Audit Report 2022-23	Annually	✓					
Internal Audit Shared Service Charter	Annually						✓
Internal Audit Annual Strategy and Audit Plan 2023-24	Annually	✓					
Self Assessment of the Governance and Audit Committee	Annually					✓	
Internal Audit Progress Reports	Quarterly			✓		✓	✓
Internal Audit Recommendation Monitoring Report	Quarterly			✓		✓	✓
External Peer Assessment of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards for the Regional Internal Audit Service	Ad hoc			✓			
Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report	Annually (unless revised)			✓	✓		
Treasury Management							
Treasury Management Outturn Report 2022-23	Annually		✓				
Treasury Management Half Year Report 2023-24	Annually				✓		
Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25	Annually					✓	
Ethical Investment Policy (as part of Treasury Management Strategy from 2024)	Annually			✓			
Risk Assurance							
Corporate Risk Assessment	Biannually	✓				✓	
Counter Fraud							
Corporate Fraud Report 2022-23	Annually		✓				
Anti Tax Evasion Policy (previously considered April 2023, due April 2025)	Biennially						
Performance Related							
Complaints Process	6 monthly	✓			✓		✓
Regulatory Tracker	6 monthly		✓			✓	
Annual Self Assessment of the Council's Performance (Corporate Self-Assessment)	Generally once or twice a year	✓	✓		✓		

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