



Annual Governance Statement

Foreword

“One Council working together to improve lives”

This is the Council’s vision as stated in the [Corporate Plan](#) for 2018-2022 reviewed for 2019-20, which also sets out what our long-term Well-being objectives are so that amongst all of the complexity of increased demand and reduced resources we can keep a clear focus on what is really important for our communities.

We want to contribute to a place where people love to live, work, study and do business, where people are qualified with the skills they need to improve their life chances and enjoy good health and independence.

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 the way we provide our services are effectively and efficiently delivered on a consistent basis, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for; and that decisions are taken transparently and lawfully.

The Council also has a duty to set well-being objectives under the Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in delivering its functions in terms of strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation.

Our governance arrangements operate effectively in supporting the Council in meeting its challenges and responsibilities. Improvements are continually being made and opportunities to do so have been identified. These are being monitored during 2019-20 to ensure that the necessary improvements are made.



Mark Shepherd
Chief Executive



Cllr Huw David
Leader of the Council



Pencoed Primary 2018

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 those objectives 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, for the year ended 31 March 2019.

It also sets out how the Council has responded to governance issues identified during 2017-18 and actions to be undertaken during 2019-20 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)

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.

It also has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions in terms of strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation¹.

The Council must consider the longer term impact of any decisions it makes, and should work collaboratively with other public bodies to improve wellbeing in Wales.²

As a public body the Council has to ensure it delivers sustainable economic, societal and environmental 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](#) is on the Council's website or can be obtained from the Section 151 Officer.

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance sets out the seven principles in line with the CIPFA Code.

Bridgend County Borough Council Code of Governance (2017)	
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 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009

² Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

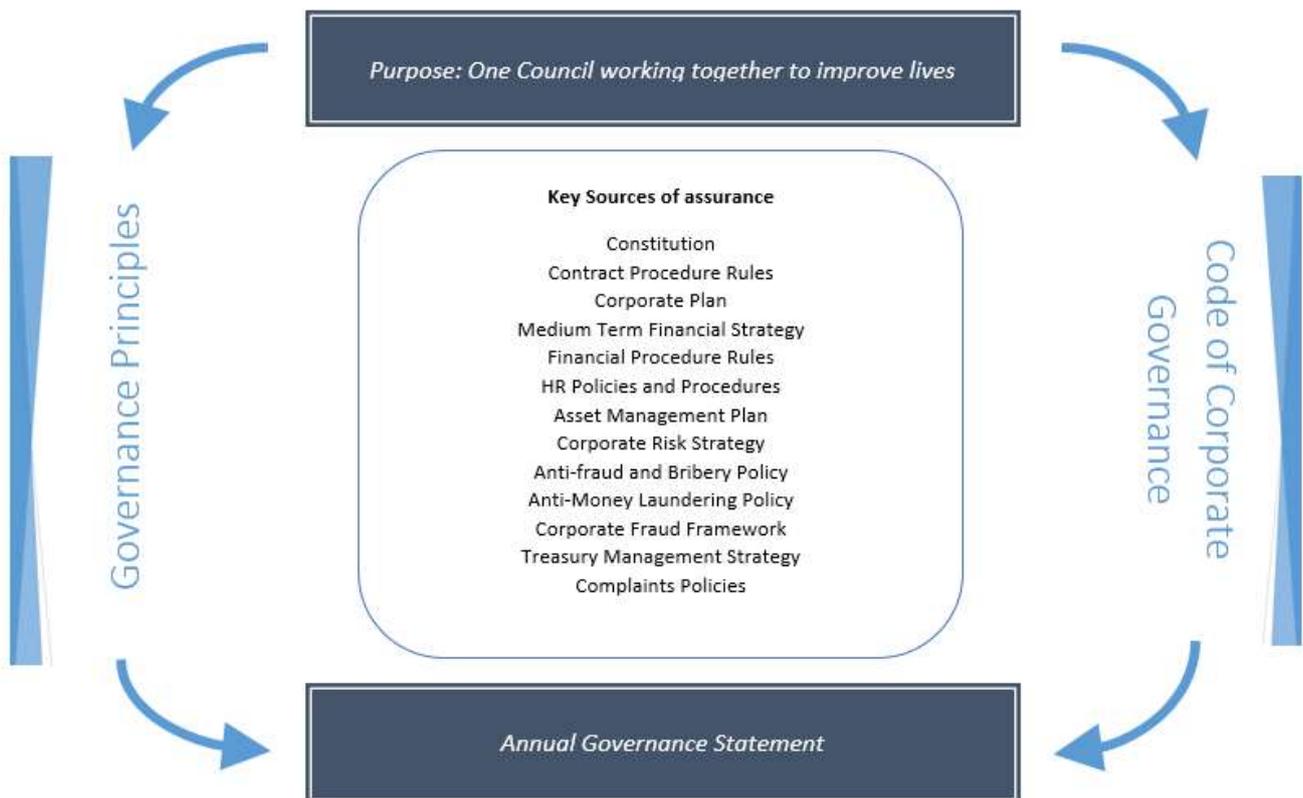
The Governance Framework

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 Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committees, Council, Cabinet and Corporate Management Board as appropriate. In addition the Section 151 Officer promotes and delivers good financial management and the Monitoring Officer legal and ethical assurance.

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



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.

In March 2018 a Welsh Government consultation on health boundary changes for people in the area of Bridgend County Borough Council ended. The result of the consultation was that from 1st April 2019, local authority and Health Services in Bridgend and a number of local authority regional partnership arrangements would be moved from the Western Bay Region/Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU) to the Cwm Taf Region.

During 2018-19 the Council has adopted a structured approach to the disaggregation of regional services, which has required close working with a range of partners to ensure that where regional funding supports integrated services, such services are accounted for between Western Bay, ABMU Health Board and Bridgend County Borough Council. In planning for the changes to regional boundaries a Transition Programme was established including, at various levels, officers from the two Health Boards, the Council and the third sector. The overarching Board and associated work streams set the governance structure that supported the Transition Programme. The Council's representation is as follows:

- Joint Transition Board: the Leader/Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing and the Chief Executive/Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing
- Joint Transition Programme Group: Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing
- Work Streams: all relevant service areas within Bridgend County Borough Council are linked in to their counterparts in the various work streams

From 1st April 2019 the governance structure for the new partnership arrangements will be through the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Programme Board.



The Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan 2018-22, agreed in February 2018, sets out the Council's vision: **'One Council working together to improve lives'**. The Plan defines the Council's three priorities – also known as our Well-being objectives – that sets out how the Council intends to deliver them. The Council defines its purpose to 'contribute to a place where people love to live, work, study and do business, where people are qualified with the skills they need to improve their life chances and enjoy good health and independence'.



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.

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

Prevention: stop problems arising – don't create new problems.

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.

Welsh language – Wales has two official languages, Welsh and English, and services and information should be equally available in both. 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.



Bridgend Council's Well-being objectives	
Supporting a successful economy Helping people to become more self-reliant Smarter use of resources	
Key Principles	Values
<p>Where ever possible the Council will support communities and people to create their own solutions and reduce dependency on the Council</p> <p>The Council will focus diminishing resources on communities and individuals with the greatest need</p> <p>The Council will use good information from service users and communities to inform its decisions</p> <p>The Council will encourage and develop capacity amongst the third sector to identify and respond to local needs</p> <p>The Council will not let uncertainty over the future of public services prevent meaningful and pragmatic collaboration with other public sector bodies</p> <p>The Council will work as one Council and discourage different parts of the organisation from developing multiple processes or unnecessarily different approaches</p> <p>The Council will transform the organisation and many of its services and in so doing will deliver financial budget reductions as well as improvements</p>	<p>Fair – taking into account everyone's needs and situations</p> <p>Ambitious – always trying to improve what we do and aiming for excellence</p> <p>Citizen-focused – remembering that we are here to serve our local community</p> <p>Efficient – delivering services that are value for money</p>

Assessing Performance

The Councils' performance is reported in its Annual Report, its annual self-evaluation of progress against the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Wales Audit Office, our External Auditor, assesses the Council's arrangements for delivering continuous improvement and subsequent performance, the results of which are published in their Annual Improvement Report. For 2017-18 they reported that 'the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2018-19'. Whilst there will always be areas where improvements can be made, the Auditor General made no formal recommendations, which demonstrates the commitment of the Council to continuous improvement.



External Assessments of Performance

The Council is also inspected by other organisations, including the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Estyn. Early in the year CIW reported on its review of the Joint Adoption Service, shared with Swansea and NeathPortTalbot Councils. Whilst some recommendations for improvement were made, and an action plan has been put in place to address these, the overall assessment of this review was that adopters and people receiving adoption support receive a good service.

In November 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) were joined by colleague inspectors from Police, Health, Social Care and Education and undertook a two-week inspection of Youth Offending Service (YOS) in Western Bay. The report has now been received and the overall rating of the Western Bay YOS was deemed inadequate. There are twelve domains within the inspection framework and nine of the twelve were rated as inadequate. One was rated as needing improvement, one was good with joint working rated as outstanding. Bridgend YOS was already planning to disaggregate from Western Bay before the inspection, due to the Council's migration to Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, which became effective on 1st April 2019. Bridgend has therefore produced an individual post-inspection action plan for improvement. This will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the YOS Strategic Lead and Operational Manager, who will meet with the Youth Justice Board.

An Estyn inspection of Education took place at the end of March 2019, the outcome of which is due at the end of May. The Council will respond to any recommendations within a Post Inspection Action Plan. This will be monitored by the School Improvement Group.

Decision Making and Responsibilities

The Council consists of 54 elected 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.

All Council and Committee meetings' agendas, papers and minutes can be viewed on-line and all meetings are open to the public unless exempt or confidential matters are being discussed. 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 on a range of formats to maximise the opportunity for information sharing and residents communicating with the Council.

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 risk and the mitigating actions it will put in place to reduce them. It is regularly reviewed and challenged by both senior management and the Audit Committee. A strategic review of the management control framework, or 'health' of the Council, identified more than one risk scoring mechanism was being used, the Council has implemented a consistent risk matrix across all services.

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.

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 and Contract Procedure Rules, and the scheme of delegation 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 further Government plans to cut public spending and significant uncertainty as a result of Brexit and the impacts this might have on Council services. The Council estimates that it will need to generate approximately £35 million of savings over the period 2019-20 to 2022-23. The Medium Term Financial Strategy has taken account of cost pressures and priority areas in line with the Corporate Plan, and involved extensive consultation to ensure a robust process. Given the single-year funding provided by the Welsh Government, the Council has developed detailed budgets for year on of the Strategy with indicative budgets thereafter based on a range of funding scenarios.



Consultation overview

Over the past four years, we have made budgetary savings of more than £30 million. Some of the ways we have done this include:

- cutting senior management and reducing our workforce by more than 400 employees
- transferring cultural services to Awen Cultural Trust
- reducing provision of some services like public conveniences and street cleaning

Also, we have made a wide range of investments including state-of-the-art new schools, new sea defences, and new highways improvements.

Despite the changes made to date, we still have to make a further £35 million saving by 2023, which is currently 13.5% of our net budget.

In this consultation, some of the areas we are asking you about include:

- council tax
- leisure and cultural services
- schools and education
- transport
- recycling and waste
- social services

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. This includes 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.



Audit and Audit Assurances

The Council is audited externally by the Auditor General for Wales, supported by the Wales Audit Office. 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 2018 the External Auditor gave an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements 2017-18.

The Wales Audit Office also audit a number of grant claims and in the year completed 11 audits of grants and returns. The audit confirmed that there were generally sound working papers and all claims were certified ahead of the audit deadlines in place. One recommendation was made in relation to Housing Benefits, to continue to review the strength of the Council's arrangements for processing housing benefit claims, which the Council is in the process of doing.

The Internal Audit Service is a key means of assurance. During 2018-19 Bridgend had a joint service with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the service operated to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The Audit Committee approved the Internal Audit Charter for Bridgend and the Vale Audit Shared Service in April 2018. The Audit Committee also approve the Internal Audit Annual Plan and receives progress updates at every Audit Committee. The Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion as to the effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment for 2018-19 was:

'I am able to give assurance to the Audit Committee and management that the Council's control environment is generally effective in achieving the organisation's objectives'

The opinion states that, based on the work completed by the Internal Audit Shared Service for the financial year and the contribution to the Audit Plan made by the South West Audit Partnership, no significant cross-cutting control issues have been identified (other than that reported in the outturn report) that would impact on the Council's overall control environment. The weaknesses that have been identified are service specific.

The recommendations made to improve the overall control environment have been accepted and are being/will be implemented.

The Audit Committee provides independent assurance on the Council's internal control environment. It is a statutory requirement and consists of 11 Councillors and 1 Lay Member. Its main functions are:

- Review & scrutinise reports and recommendations in relation to the Council's Financial Affairs
- Review & 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, Whistleblowing Policy and Anti-Money Laundering 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

Of significant issue for the Internal Audit Shared Service is the continuing lack of resources and the impact this has had on delivering the 2018-19 Audit Risk Based Plan. During the whole of the year, the Shared Service has carried a high level of vacancies and as a consequence the services of the South West Audit Partnership were commissioned to help address the shortfall. 2018-19 has continued to be a challenging year for the Shared Service and as predicted, South West Audit Partnership have once again assisted with the delivery of the 2018-19 Risk Based Plan. From 1st April 2019 a new Regional Audit Shared Service was established with two more Councils joining the partnership – Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. There will still need to be some latitude required during 2019-20 to facilitate this transitional period from all parties concerned.

During the year there were interim arrangements in place in relation to two of the key statutory officers of the Council and members of the Corporate Management Board. However, in May 2019 the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, has been confirmed in post following a competitive process. This is the former Corporate Director – Communities who had been appointed on an interim basis as Chief Executive in December 2018. Also during the year there have been continued interim arrangements in place to cover the statutory position of the Council's Section 151 Officer/Head of Finance, which does cause some concern from a continuity and capacity perspective. Whilst there is little or no risk in the short term as the Statutory Officer is extremely experienced and more than capable to fulfil the role, it is important that the interim position is permanently addressed as soon as possible to ensure that the Council's corporate governance arrangements are not affected in the medium- to long-term. To help strengthen the resilience of the Finance function, a temporary Deputy Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer post was appointed in May 2019.

A strategic review of the Council was undertaken by the South West Audit Partnership with a final report issued in April 2018, which can be accessed [here](#). Five themes were reviewed:

- Governance
- Risk Management
- Commissioning and Procurement
- Programme & Project Management
- Information Management

For each of the corporate themes the strength of the management control framework in place was assessed against a benchmark model by identifying the presence or otherwise of key controls. This included the use of assurance from other sources, such as external audit, as well as internal audit reports. The overall assurance received from the strategic review with the exception of its Information Management indicated an overall **High Assurance** opinion. A follow-up audit on Information Management identified a number of areas for improvement which the Council has addressed, and provided a **Medium** assurance.

Improving Governance

The progress made on the significant issues identified in the Council's 2017-18 Annual Governance Statement is shown below:

The Council should resolve how it will embed the sustainable development principle into decision-making	Whilst elected Members undertook an interactive workshop in November 2017 they have requested further training to be arranged in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to ensure they apply sustainable development principles in all decisions they make. An e-learning package has also been developed so that officers can undertake training to support the decision-making process
The Council should clearly set out how the impact of service changes will be monitored at the point of decision, with a clear set of criteria and a detailed options appraisal process considered when producing Council's decision reports	The Council has put in place a 'Well-being of Future Generations Assessment Form' that ensures the five ways of working and the seven Well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are considered as part of any decision making process. Use of the form will ensure that potential impacts of service changes are identified and proposals to maximise any positive impacts, or minimise any negative impacts, are provided as appropriate
The Scrutiny Forward Work Programme is not easily accessible on the website and that the website search function for officer and member decisions was not working properly. There were no links to items pre-2014. This limits transparency and access arrangements	The Council's web-pages have been redesigned and were launched in April 2018. The website is much more focussed and easy to navigate and search. The Forward Work Programme for the Scrutiny Committees can be found under the Scrutiny Committee pages accessible from the Council's website
Concern at the vacancy rate of 50% within the Internal Audit service. Audit Committee to consider a review of resources in internal audit at a future meeting as part of setting the Internal Audit Plan	2018-19 has continued to be a challenging year for the Shared Service and as predicted, South West Audit Partnership have once again assisted with the delivery of the 2018-19 Risk Based Plan. From 1 st April 2019 a new Regional Internal Audit Shared Service was established with two more councils joining the partnership – Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. There will still need to be some latitude required during 2019-20 to facilitate this transitional period from all parties concerned.
Concern of the ability of Internal Audit to deliver on its Audit Plan due to the lack of resources	As noted above, the Audit Plan has been substantially completed. Areas of work not undertaken during the year included: Asset Management and Youth Offending Service (which is undergoing an external inspection). The Asset Management review will be rolled forward into 2019-20
Corporate website has received 1 star rating. Work needed to upgrade and redesign website	The Corporate website has been redeveloped and was relaunched in April 2018. The development is ongoing including reviewing of 'micro-sites' that link from the Corporate website, and ensuring that all information is available bilingually to comply with the Welsh Language Act
Need to ensure that key policies and procedures are subject to a regular review process and/or in line with statutory timescales	Key policies and documents are reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis, including the Constitution, Corporate Plan, Annual Governance Statement, Treasury Management Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy. A number have been updated during the year including the Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy and the Anti Money-Laundering Policy. A number of other key documents are updated on cyclical basis including the Strategic Equality Plan and Corporate Health & Safety Policy (4-yearly). However there are a number of policies that need updating in order to ensure that they are effective and relevant. These will be reviewed over the forthcoming period

Based on a review of the governance framework, the following significant issues identified in 2018-19 which will be addressed in 2019-20:

<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy – the economic uncertainty and increasing public expectations and demands facing public sector organisations continue to challenge and place pressures on the Council, impacting on its ability to deliver the required efficiencies.</p>	<p>The Council will continue to monitor external economic and fiscal information to ensure that it can respond quickly to unexpected events. This is particularly important in the post-Brexit era. Alongside this the Council will continue to transform how services are delivered and manage public expectations. All savings proposals will be closely monitored and mitigating action put in place to address any shortfalls</p>
<p>The findings from the HMIP report on Western Bay Youth Offending Service concluded that the overall rating was inadequate and that <i>‘The governance and leadership of the service are ineffective. There is no vision, understanding of purpose or the strategy to provide a high-quality personalised responsive service to children and young people.’</i></p>	<p>The Western Bay Youth Offending Service has been disaggregated and a Bridgend Youth Justice Management Board set up with senior multi-agency representation, including the Cabinet Member – Communities and the Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help to take forward services within Bridgend. The Council has produced a Post Inspection Action Plan in response to the full joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation. This further builds upon the list of priorities that were developed on receipt of the minutes from the Ratings Panel, which was held on 18th December 2018. The Action Plan will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the YOS Strategic Lead and Operational Manager, and the Youth Justice Board (YJB)</p>
<p>Outcome of the Estyn Inspection on Education Services</p>	<p>Once the report is published any recommendations will be incorporated within a Post Inspection Action Plan which will be monitored by the Schools Improvement Group</p>
<p>The role of the s.151 Officer is filled on an interim basis pending decisions on way forward with the post in light of the appointment of the Chief Executive</p>	<p>The Chief Executive post was appointed in May 2019 and the appointment of the s151 Officer will be sought to be filled on a permanent basis at the earliest opportunity. A temporary Deputy Head of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer has been appointed to strengthen resilience within the Finance function</p>
<p>The impact of Brexit on services and finances could place increased pressures on Council resources</p>	<p>The Council will develop a strategy and action plan to identify potential impacts to the communities it supports, and have in place preparations for any financial consequences. The Council has established an internal cross-Directorate Brexit Forum, chaired by the Chief Executive, to explore the potential impact of Brexit on service delivery along with actions to mitigate against risks. The Forum will also explore any potential opportunities that might arise from Brexit. A report was presented to Cabinet in March setting out a Brexit risk register, which will be actively monitored and updated as necessary.</p>

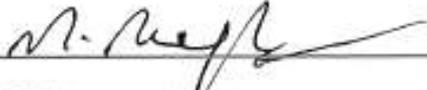
<p>The Council's scrutiny functions should seek ways to improve its focus and scrutiny activity to ensure that the Council makes the most effective use of the resources available and improve the impact of scrutiny activity³</p>	<p>Scrutiny Officers will maintain a record of the impact of scrutiny activity in order to both strengthen and learn from this in order to shape the future work of the scrutiny function. Following a recent 'Scrutiny Fit for Future?' review a report is being compiled detailing proposals to implement best practice and innovation used elsewhere. To ensure the Council's scrutiny function is as effective and comprehensive as possible the Scrutiny Chairs will meet quarterly to share learning and intelligence, identify areas of cross-over and discuss where there may be gaps in focus. Consideration is also being given to the skills and training that scrutiny members need to better prepare them for current and future challenges and to developing an appropriate training programme. Scrutiny continue to work effectively with external bodies such as WLGA, neighbouring authorities and third sectors to optimise the resources available to provide good scrutiny of council services</p>
<p>Digital Transformation and channel shift – the Council needs to continue to develop its online platforms to enable residents and businesses to interact with the Council digitally</p>	<p>The new responsive "Website" and the "Digital Platform" was launched in April 2018 and continues to mature and develop through the addition of new digital channels providing the Citizen the option to engage with the Council digitally alongside the traditional channels such as "face to face" and "telephony". The progress and success of the "Digital Platform" is dependent on the adoption of digital by the Council which will require cultural change to support transformation and efficiencies savings</p>

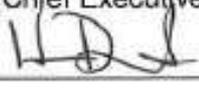
These issues will be monitored during 2019-20 and reported to Cabinet/Corporate Management Board and to the Audit Committee.

Assurance

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: 22.5.19
 (Chief Executive)

Signed:  Date: 22 5 19
 (Leader)

³ Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report 2017-18 – September 2018