

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Purpose of report

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

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

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

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

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

3. Background

- 3.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act which received royal assent in January 2021 set out a new local government improvement regime, which puts more onus on the Council to demonstrate improvement rather than on Audit Wales and other regulators. One of these requirements in the Act is for the Council to make and publish a self-assessment report once each financial year, starting from the 2021-22 financial year.

3.2 The self-assessment report has to set out conclusions on whether the Council met the 'performance requirements' during that financial year, and actions needed to improve. The 'performance requirements', focus on :-

1. exercising functions effectively;
2. using resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
3. strong governance g.

3.3 To do this, the Welsh Government (WG) statutory guidance and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) guidance stipulates that the Council should use evidence; internal evidence (performance and financial data collected from around different parts of the Council); external evidence (including audit and inspection reports, ombudsman / Health and Safety Executive reviews); and the views of stakeholders (through engagement with local people, businesses, council staff and trade unions).

3.4 The self-assessment process has now been completed for 2021-22. The report, which is attached as Appendix 1, sets out conclusions on how well the Council met the 'performance requirements' during the financial year 2021-22, and actions needed to improve.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The Governance and Audit Committee agreed the process outlined for developing the self-assessment in June. The process utilised existing performance management and governance processes within the Council as much as possible, including the use of corporate performance assessment (CPA).

4.2 The process was followed as agreed, and draft findings were presented to CPA members in June and July. The findings and judgements have now been collated into a single, simple, accessible report. In line with WG and WLGA guidance, the self-assessment report and annual well-being assessment have been merged into a single document..

4.3 Welsh Government provided updates on already published reports and their evolving thinking about self-assessment reports at a meeting with the Council on 12 August 2022. WG asked that reports provide clarity on the real, high-level issues around performance in the Authority e.g. in Bridgend they would expect to reference to the inspection work underway around social services.

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

4.5 Finally, Welsh Government added that there is minimal value in conducting formal consultation / engagement on the self-assessment report. The preference would be a summary of key engagement / consultation work over the year, relating to the wellbeing objectives. This feedback has been integrated into the draft report.

4.6 One self-assessment report has already been published – the report for Powys County Council. There are lots of strong points in the Powys report for the Council to learn from. Their section on the local government context in Wales is good. Their performance section covering each wellbeing objective is strong, it summarises all

of their performance indicators and commitments simply, and includes a list of engagements and auditors judgements. This is reflected in the Council's draft self-assessment report.

4.6 The draft self-assessment report was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 13 October 2022 for consideration and Cabinet on 18 October 2022. Verbal feedback following these meetings will be given at Council on 19 October 2022.

4.7 Following approval by Council, the report will be translated and designed and published in late October.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equalities Act 2010 Implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.

6.2 It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

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

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

8. Financial implications

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

9. Recommendation

9.1 Council is recommended to approve the corporate self-assessment report 2021-22 attached as Appendix 1.

M Shephard
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
13 October 2022

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Background documents

None.

Appendix 1 – Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Assessment

1. The purpose of this report

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

2. The changing world for local government

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

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

3. How is the council performing?

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Each part of the council pulls this information together for their services. They present it to councillors who look at the data, check it and ask questions. This was done for the year

2021-22 in June and July 2022. We use this information to come to a judgement on each priority using this scale -

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

Priority One – Supporting a successful, sustainable economy

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

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

What is our judgement?

Supporting a successful, sustainable economy	Good
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- **Learner outcomes** – exam result data is not available for 2021/22 due to the pandemic and Welsh Government guidance. Instead, we have provided information on our work to support schools dealing with effects of the pandemic.
- **School support** - We have supported schools to reduce the pandemic’s impact on teaching and learning. Guidance and risk assessments for schools were updated each time national guidance changed. Schools have blended learning to support self-isolating pupils and for homework. We have worked with the education consortium to support two primary schools to be removed from the Estyn category of ‘special measures’. Schools in Estyn review or monitoring categories has fallen from 12 to 1, with 4 schools getting ‘enhanced’ support.
- **Welsh Language Education** – We have completed the actions in our last Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). We have developed, and recently agreed with the Minister our new WESP plan 2022-32. The number of Year 1 learners in Welsh-medium primary schools has increased from 119 to 122. The total number of places was 162, so there is still a surplus of Year 1 places. We are enlarging Ysgol Y Ferch O’r Sgêr and the consultation on enlarging Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr is done. Welsh-medium childcare will be built at Bettws and Ogmores Valley.
- **Safeguarding** - the Education Engagement Team helped schools to audit their safeguarding. Many strengths were identified and some areas for improvement e.g. how effectively they communicate about safeguarding, how clear governing bodies are on their roles and responsibilities and increasing the voice of children, parents and carers. One school identified a lot of issues and has been supported to address them. Safeguarding audits will continue annually.

- **Attendance and exclusions**– During the pandemic attendance levels have worsened. In primary schools, attendance has reduced by 4.7% from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022 and by 7.6% in secondary schools. We have done lots of work to address attendance, including supporting schools on attendance, a task and finish group revising our attendance strategy, and attendance audits have been done to show good practise and areas for development. Behaviour is becoming more of a problem, so the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions is increasing. We are working with schools to make sure they follow the graduated response, use behaviour tools and access local authority support when they need it. The Communication and Relationships Team are speaking to schools to share ways to improve behaviour.
- **Regeneration** - We have made progress on the Town Centre Masterplan for Bridgend, including plans for redeveloping the Railway station. Our placemaking Strategy for Porthcawl has been approved. Work starts soon on the ALDI site and work to secure sea defences will soon be complete at Eastern Promenade. The relocation of Bridgend College to the town centre is progressing, and we are working with housing providers to invest in housing in the Town Centre. Maesteg Town Hall is progressing well. We are investing in town centres and working with partners to redevelop sites and buildings. The regeneration programme delivered over £600k of improvements grants for business premises after covid. There are more vacant properties in some town centres.
- **Business support** - We have provided business rates relief to 1028 businesses and £50 million business grants. We have received funding to deliver the Bridgend Elevate and Prosper Project (EAP) to support start-ups and micro-business. Our new, socially responsible 3 year procurement strategy and delivery plan aims to make our spending more accessible to local small businesses and the third sector. Business start-ups have increased by 14% to 550 in 2021-22.
- **Support for employment** - Employability Bridgend provides support to residents and council employees, including unemployed people, and those in work but struggling with low skills or in-work poverty. Even during the pandemic we reached job outcome targets, but we have not worked with as many people as we expected. The end of EU funding and strength of the job market may have an impact on work in the coming year. The number of people from the Employability Scheme who have gone into jobs has increased by 27% to 556 in 2021-22.
- **Tourism** – We have worked with partners to put on events to increase tourism in Porthcawl, including giving advice on the Porthcawl Triathlon, Porthcawl Truck Gathering, Forest Feastival and the Between the Trees festival and funding a road closure for the Porthcawl Elvis Festival. Cosy Corner will provide new community facilities following a £2.1m investment and will be complete in Spring 2023. More people are visiting Porthcawl - around pre-pandemic levels. Tourism expenditure data will tell us more at the end of the year.

Regulators assurances

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

- **Literacy** - All schools with a school improvement priority linked to literacy are on track to meet their target and getting the support they need

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

HM Inspectorate of Probation, did an [inspection of youth offending services](#) in Bridgend, published in June 2022. The rating of the service was 'Requires improvement'. The service used to be part of a Western Bay service that got an 'Inadequate' rating in 2018 and was disbanded. Since the 2018 inspection there has been real improvement. Staff have a passion for their work and are trying to deter children from crime. But they still face significant challenges, including lack of mental health support for children in Bridgend. The report made six recommendations.

Consultations and engagement activities

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

What will we do to improve?

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

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

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

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

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

What is our judgement?

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

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

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

Regulators assurances

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

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

Consultations and engagement activities

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

What will we do to improve?

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

Priority Three – Smarter use of resources

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

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

What is our judgement?

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

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

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

Regulators assurances

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

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

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

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

Consultations and engagement activities

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

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

What will we do to improve?

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

4. How is the council using its resources?

We have always had to report how well we are using our resources. For example, we must tell Audit Wales about our spending, our workforce and our buildings. Until recently, we didn't have a common process 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 workshops with staff from all around the council to look at –

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

To come to our judgements, we used

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

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

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

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

What are our judgements?

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

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

What will we do to improve?

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

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

5. How good is the council's governance?

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

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

To come to our judgements, we used –

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

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

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

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

What is our judgement?

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

Decision making

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consultation, engagement and involvement

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

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

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

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

What will we do to improve?

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

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

6. Our Strategic Equality Plan

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

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

How do we identify and collect relevant information?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every year, we report our 'equalities in the workforce' report to councillors. This tells us about our numbers of employees with protected characteristics. It also tells us about pay, recruitment and training of employees with protected characteristics. This is all put together and included in the strategic equality plan. Areas for improvement are included in the [strategic equality plan action plan](#).

7. Review of our self-assessment process

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

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

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

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

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

What will we do to improve?

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