

Performance Management Review – Bridgend County Borough Council

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Summary report

Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 We reviewed the Council's performance management arrangements to establish how well they inform the Council of progress in meeting its priorities.
- 2 At the time of the review the Council acknowledged that their performance management process needed to be improved.
- 3 For the purposes of the review, performance management arrangements will include the Council's strategic approach to setting and delivering its corporate priorities and wellbeing objectives. We will also consider the Council's performance management framework, meaning the structures and mechanisms the Council has put in place to monitor its progress towards meeting its objectives. We will not consider the performance management of individuals.
- 4 We recognise that the Council is continuing to deal with significant issues arising from the Pandemic giving rise to increased demand for services, the cost-of-living crisis and difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff. All impacting on the Council's capacity to operate effectively across service areas.
- 5 Why performance management is important.
 - effective performance management involves monitoring progress against key objectives and service performance standards and successfully intervening where performance is falling below the objectives or standards that the Council has set itself.
 - an effective performance management system should help the Council to identify performance issues as they emerge and help the Council to intervene to improve performance.
 - without an effective performance management system, there is a significant risk that the Council will not be able to measure and monitor its performance against its objectives and take action where they are not being met, and therefore achieve its objectives.
- 6 What we looked for
 - performance management arrangements are aligned to corporate objectives and integrated into its business planning arrangements.
 - the Council uses a wide range of performance information that reflect the Council's priorities and the needs of service users, including benchmarking its performance and processes.
 - the performance measures are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.
 - performance data is accurate measuring the right things and where appropriate outcome focussed.

- arrangements enable the Council to recognise good performance and tackle poor performance. They should provide feedback to help the Council understand and learn from the reasons for good or poor performance.
- performance reports are easily accessible to the public and other external stakeholders.

7 We undertook the review during the period August 2022 to September 2022.

What we found

8 The review sought to answer the question: Do the Council's performance management arrangements support robust and effective decision-making and improvement?

9 Overall, we found that: The Council's performance management arrangements do not consistently enable it to effectively evaluate and manage its performance.

10 We reached this conclusion because:

- weaknesses in performance information are limiting the Council's awareness of its own performance and its ability to manage its performance effectively.
- the Council's focus on collecting, rather than analysing data and ensuring its accuracy, limits the impact of its performance management arrangements.

Recommendations

Exhibit 1: recommendations.

The table below sets out the recommendations that we have identified following this review.

Recommendations	
R1	Ensure that service level business plans are complete, having a full range of performance indicators to support its wellbeing objectives.
R2	Ensure that all performance indicators are meaningful, outcome focused and have clear links to the Council's wellbeing objectives.
R3	Put robust and consistent verification processes in place to ensure that performance information is accurate.

Recommendations

- R4 Make better use of the performance information collected by prioritising more data analysis and a broader range of information to help understand performance.

Detailed report

We found that the Council's performance management arrangements do not consistently enable it to effectively evaluate and manage its performance

Weaknesses in performance information are limiting the Council's awareness of its own performance and its ability to manage its performance effectively.

11 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment does provide the Council with the opportunity to recognise good and tackle poor performance. This should help the Council understand and learn from the reasons for good or poor performance. However, this is undermined by weaknesses in performance information.
- the performance indicators selected are not always outcome focused nor clearly linked to the Council's wellbeing objectives. For example, in Communities business plan 2022-23 commitment 1.2.5 – improve visitor experience. This has two components both enhancing the natural environment and to act as host for the Valleys Regional Park Programme team and to complete Cosy Corner. There is one milestone, which relates to Cosy Corner and one PI measuring annual expenditure by tourists. These measures will not tell the Council how they have enhanced the natural environment in a way that will improve visitor experience.
- there are examples of missing performance indicators in service business plans. For example, in Education and Family Services business plan 2022-23 commitment 3.2.4- build on technological progress. The milestone is to implement Capita One. There are no performance indicators in place to measure success in achieving this commitment. The Council's own internal arrangements did not address this.
- there are performance indicators which do help to measure progress towards corporate priorities. These tend to be where relatively straightforward metrics are possible to measure progress. For example, in Social Services and Wellbeing business plan commitment 2.2.1 – 'continue the safe reduction of care experienced children, and support care experienced children to achieve the best possible outcomes by: ensuring care experienced children are supported to live with their families and where this is not possible identify alternative permanence options at the earliest opportunity and ensuring care experienced children enjoy the same life chances as other children'. There are seven performance indicators, about

the numbers in care, but also about whether assessments are completed on time, how many placements children have had, and what is happening to them (employment/ homelessness) after leaving care. These complex issues are supported by a range of PIs which are both qualitative and quantitative.

- the Council regularly reports its performance information to both internal and public meetings. The information is presented in a way that is accessible and easy to understand.
- the Council does not always consider a range of performance information together in reports such as the implications of budget workforce and performance.
- there is limited benchmarking of data and processes to explore how the Council can learn and strengthen its arrangements and demonstrate value for money. This is an issue we have raised with a number of councils.

The Council's focus on collecting, rather than analysing data and ensuring its accuracy, limits the impact of its performance management arrangements.

12 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- considerable officer time is spent collecting and presenting performance information. However, less priority is given to analysing performance information to help the Council understand its performance and where and how it can improve value for money.
- the Council does not have robust and consistent arrangements to ensure the quality of its data. There is a risk that senior officers and councillors may be acting and/or making decisions based on inaccurate information.
- the Council has not reviewed its performance management arrangements to consider if they provide value for money.



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