

Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	19 JULY 2024
Report Title:	SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY
Responsible Officer:	ALEX RAWLIN POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The Performance Framework (of which self-assessment is part) forms part of the Policy Framework.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report seeks the Governance and Audit Committee’s view on the Council’s self-assessment 2023/24. Key points are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the first year judging performance against the Council’s new Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives (WBOs). • All WBO scores are yellow (good) and amber (adequate). • Use of resources score is amber (adequate). • Governance score is yellow (good). • The draft report summarises the views of others expressed throughout the year, rather than trying to consult on the self-assessment report itself.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Governance and Audit Committee’s (GAC’s) view on the draft self-assessment for 2023/24.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which received royal assent in January 2021, set out a new local government improvement regime. One of the requirements of the Act is for the council to make and publish a self-assessment report once each financial year. The self-assessment report has to set out conclusions on whether the council met the ‘performance requirements’ during that financial year, and actions needed to improve. The ‘performance requirements’, focus on -

- Is the council exercising its functions effectively;
- Is the council using resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- Is the council’s governance strong.

- 2.2 The Council published its first self-assessment in October 2022 based on performance in 2021/22. The process was new, but the self-assessment was based on existing data, reports and meeting fora where possible. The Council published its second self-assessment in December 2023 based on performance in 2022/23. Reflecting on the first self-assessment some improvements were made. Many parts of the self-assessment process have been embedded into the council's regular performance management process, for example the regulatory tracker, inclusion of consultation, engagement and involvement exercises in the quarterly dashboard, and reporting performance against wellbeing objectives rather than directorates.
- 2.3 The first performance requirement is about how council services are performing. Existing end of year performance processes and timelines have been used to capture Directorate performance information to satisfy the first performance requirement (as in 2022/23). Through end of year performance dashboards directorates were asked to provide realistic Blue, Red, Amber Yellow, Green (BRAYG) ratings for commitments and performance indicators and use plain English to outline their performance challenges and achievements. The performance team have used this information to develop clear judgements for each aim and each wellbeing objective and a short narrative for each aim.
- 2.4 The second performance requirement, on use of resources, also followed a similar process to previous years. The 7 use of resources templates were reviewed and updated by the lead officers. All of the 7 areas have been included in the work of Audit Wales in the past two to three years, and in many cases reviewed and discussed by the Governance and Audit Committee, or Scrutiny Committees, so there is significant additional evidence to draw on. These 7 were then collated by the Performance Team for scrutiny and challenge.
- 2.5 The third performance requirement, on governance, is largely covered by the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is scrutinised and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. This document was summarised and used to inform the self-assessment.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 This third self-assessment is the first that will review performance against the Council's new Corporate Plan 2023-28, so a new process for the performance element of self-assessment was required. The main changes made were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on 18 April 2024 and are –
- Presenting a performance summary section which uses summary graphs to show performance against each wellbeing objective at a glance.
 - Using a more objective methodology (as outlined to CMB in March and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee in April) for scoring aims / wellbeing objectives based on progress on commitments and performance targets, then moderating these scores with Heads of Service,

Corporate Management Board (CMB) and Cabinet / Corporate Management Board (CCMB).

- Summarising the views of others that have been gathered and used throughout the year within in the report, rather than trying to consult on the self-assessment report itself.

3.2 The draft findings from each of the three performance requirements were pulled together into a single presentation where the narrative and judgements were tested at Heads of Service Board (26 June), CMB (3 July) and CCMB (9 July). Comments and changes from these fora have been used to inform the draft self-assessment report included at **Appendix 1**.

3.3 The Council's proposed self-assessment judgements for 2023/24 are –

1	Protecting our most vulnerable.	GOOD
2	Fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns.	GOOD
3	Thriving valleys communities.	GOOD
4	Helping people to meet their potential.	ADEQUATE
5	Responding to the climate and nature emergency.	GOOD
6	Helping people feel valued, heard & part of their community.	ADEQUATE
7	Supporting people to be healthy and happy.	GOOD

3.4 The Use of Resources judgement remains at 'Adequate'.

3.5 The Governance judgement remains at 'Good'.

3.6 GAC may want to reflect on the main changes since the 2022/23 self-assessment which are -

- 7 separate judgements for individual wellbeing objectives (based on the BRAYG status of the commitments and performance indicators that support them, tested and moderated by Heads of Service, CMB and CCMB).
- All 7 judgements being made are yellow (good) or amber (satisfactory). This reflects the cross directorate range of commitments and Performance Indicators (PIs) being measured across the Council.
- Change to the financial management judgement (beneath the overall use of resources judgement) from good to adequate based on the Council's challenging financial position and the associated risk to financial sustainability. This does not affect the overall use of resources judgement of adequate.

Moderation process

3.7 To test the judgements generated by the new scoring system, each of the 44 individual aims were discussed by Heads of Service, CMB and CCMB. Each

aim was subjected to a second test, comparing actions, progress against commitments and PI performance to the BRAYG key in the council's agreed and published performance framework, outlined below.

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

3.8 Heads of Service, CMB and CCMB have proposed the following changes to 3 specific aims or 6.8% of the aims (worsening or downgrading the scores) -

Aim		System score	HoS proposal
1.1	Providing high-quality children's and adults social services and early help services to people who need them	Excellent	Good
1.4	Supporting children with additional learning needs to get the best from their education	Excellent	Adequate
4.2	Improving employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities	Excellent	Adequate

3.9 They proposed the following changes to 3 specific aims or 6.8% of the aims (improving or upgrading the scores) -

Aim		System score	HoS proposal
1.5	Safeguarding and protecting people who are at risk of harm	Adequate	Good
2.3	Improving town centres, making them safer and more attractive	Unsatisfactory	Adequate
7.1	Improving active travel routes and facilities so people can walk and cycle	Unsatisfactory	Adequate

3.10 The main reasons for the proposed changes are;

- some of the aims are currently insufficiently measured by the Commitments / PIs that underpin them. This means that the judgements are being skewed when compared with a more subjective, broader service view. So, for example, in relation to the aim, 'Supporting children with

additional learning needs to get the best from their education', the system score is 'excellent' based on one performance indicator (PI) and one commitment. The actual range of services is much broader than this would suggest, and there are issues with waiting times and availability of services. For this reason, it is proposed to reduce the judgement from excellent to good.

- Some of the aims are significantly affected by use of resource issues e.g. significant overspends. It is felt that these issues should be taken into account when determining a judgement. So, for example, in relation to the aim, 'Providing high-quality children's and adults social services and early help services to people who need them', due to the significant overspend in this area, it is proposed to reduce the judgment from excellent to good.
- For consistency in reporting e.g. what we report to regulators and other council governance forums. So, for example, in relation to the aim, 'Safeguarding and protecting people who are at risk of harm' we should come to the same broad conclusions and judgements as in the annual director of social services' annual report.

Next Steps

3.11 Following its consideration at the Governance and Audit Committee, the Council will discuss the draft document with –

- Trade unions through the Council's regular meeting programme.
- Town and Community Councils at the Town and Community Council Forum (TCCF).
- Partners and neighbouring local authorities at the Public Services Board (PSB).

3.12 Following discussions at the Governance and Audit Committee (19 July), and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee (25 July), the performance team will make improvements over the summer, translate and design the document and present the final draft self-assessment 2023/24 to Cabinet and Council in September 2024.

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

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Wellbeing of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Wellbeing Objectives

5.1 This report reviews the Council's progress against the following corporate well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that form part of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-28:-

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

5.2 The 5 ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act have also contributed to the Council developing its own five ways of working. Progress on these 5 ways of working is also summarised in the draft self-assessment.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no specific implications of this report on climate change. However, the self-assessment helps the Council to assess performance on areas including climate change.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no specific implications of this report on safeguarding or corporate parenting. However, the self-assessment will help the Council assess performance on areas including safeguarding and corporate parenting.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee -

- Review the draft self-assessment at **Appendix 1** and provide comments, feedback and improvements.
- Consider the proposed alterations to scores at paragraph 3.8 and 3.9.

Background documents

None