

Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	24 APRIL 2025
Report Title:	SELF-ASSESSMENT APPROACH FOR 2024 / 25
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:	This report outlines an approach to the development of the Council’s self-assessment 2024/25.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to reflect on the self-assessment 2023/24 and present the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) with a proposed approach to the development of the self-assessment 2024/25.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 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 -
- Are we exercising our functions effectively;
 - Are we using our resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
 - Is our 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 based on existing data, reports and meeting fora where possible. Feedback on the report was generally positive in terms of the honesty and transparency of ratings, length of the report and simplicity of the language. Some members felt that annual performance data should have been published alongside the self-assessment.

2.3 The Council published its second self-assessment in December 2023 based on performance in 2022/23. Reflecting on the first self-assessment, some changes were made, including –

- Using information from the newly developed regulatory tracker,
- Publishing performance information alongside the self-assessment,
- Adding case studies to the document.

2.4 The Council published its third self-assessment in October 2024, based on performance in 2023/24. This was the first time that the self-assessment reviewed performance against the Council's new Corporate Plan 2023-28. Reflecting on the second self-assessment, some changes were made, including –

- Including more comprehensive information on major consultation and engagement activity around the Council throughout the year;
- Scoring wellbeing objectives and aims using a more objective and agreed process;
- Including a section on how well we performed against improvement activities from the previous self-assessment;
- Embedding self-assessment in the quarterly performance process so that large parts of the report write themselves and are familiar to members.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 It is proposed that the performance section of the self-assessment report follow the same process as in 2023/24. This section would again include -

- A performance overview summarising performance against the whole corporate plan, using two graphs showing -
 - How are we doing on our commitments / projects?
 - How are we doing on our performance indicators?
- A performance section for each wellbeing objective to include -
 - A single graph that shows - How are we doing on our commitments / projects and our performance indicators (PIs)?
 - A summary of the aims with a Red Amber Yellow Green (RAYG) rating for each and a short narrative section
 - Regulators Assurances
 - Consultation and Engagement Activities (this year to include a more in-depth consideration of work alongside staff and trade unions to fulfil the Council's social partnership duty reporting requirement – see paragraph 3.4)
 - What will we do to improve?
 - Case Studies

3.2 It is proposed that the same methodology be used for developing a RAYG rating for each of the wellbeing objectives and aims. This means that the RAYG would be objective and based on performance on the commitments and PIs. This would provide useful information to the public about how we are doing at a strategic level (but beyond the Wellbeing Objective level).

- 3.3 The approach gives a score to each commitment and performance indicator based on their RAYG rating. The individual scores are then combined to give an overall score for the aim (as a proportion of the maximum), using the approach provided in the performance framework. This methodology worked well last year, and improvements have been made to ensure it is more accurate this year. After a score for each aim is developed, a narrative for each aim will be developed pulling information on commitments and PIs directly from the end of year performance dashboards and testing this with Heads of Service and Corporate Management Board (CMB).
- 3.4 Since 1 April 2024 the Council has been subject to the Social Partnership duty under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 (SPPP Act). The Council's first Social Partnership Annual Report is required as soon as is possible after the end of financial year, explaining action to comply with the duty in the preceding 12 months. It is proposed to include this information in the Corporate Self-Assessment as it is so closely aligned with existing content, particularly the consideration of consultation and engagement work completed in the year. This section would therefore be extended slightly to cover –
- Evidence of work with staff and Trade Unions on how the council will achieve its wellbeing objectives in the year (particularly budget setting)
 - Evidence of how the council worked with staff and Trade Unions to agree last year's self-assessment
 - How frequently the Council met with Trade Unions as part of its Social Partnership duty
 - Any training provided to employees / trade union representatives on how the Social Partnership Duty is being implemented; and
 - Any interesting case studies of work related to the Social Partnership Duty.
- 3.5 It is proposed that our assessment of progress against the second performance requirement on use of resources follows the same process as last year. Firstly, it is proposed that the 7 use of resources templates are reviewed and updated by the lead officers. All of the 7 areas have been included in the work of Audit Wales in the past three years, and in many cases reviewed, discussed and followed-up by the Governance and Audit Committee or Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, so there is significant additional evidence to draw on. These 7 will then be collated by the performance team for scrutiny and challenge.
- 3.6 The third performance requirement, on governance, is largely covered by the annual governance statement (AGS) which is scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee. We propose that this document will be summarised by the performance team as in previous years.
- 3.7 The draft findings from each of the three performance requirements will be brought together into a single presentation for officer scrutiny and challenge in the first instance. This will be discussed and moderated by Heads of Service at their meeting on 25 June 2025 and CMB on 2 July 2025.

- 3.8 The moderated findings will then be brought together into a single draft report for Cabinet and CMB (CCMB) on 8 July and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) on 24 July and considered alongside the detailed end of year performance dashboards and presentation, providing significant levels of challenge and scrutiny. Governance and Audit Committee members are able to observe this COSC meeting if they are keen to see how the detailed performance scrutiny role plays out in practice.
- 3.9 Comments and changes from CCMB will be used to inform the draft self-assessment report, which it is proposed will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 17 July as required by the Act. In July 2024, the short performance report that is published alongside the self-assessment report was not ready in time to form part of the GAC papers. That will be remedied for 2025 and the two papers will both form part of GAC papers for the meeting on 17 July 2025. This will give GAC a better understanding of the Council's performance against each Wellbeing Objective, Aim, PI and Commitment that underpins the self-assessment judgements. This should give GAC additional reassurance about the fairness and accuracy of the process.

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 proposes an approach to reviewing 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 2015 have also contributed to the Council developing its own five ways of

working. The ways of driving and measuring those ways of working is also contained in the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific implications of this report on climate change. However, the self-assessment will help us assess the Council's 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 us assess the Council's 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 Governance and Audit Committee:-
- Considers and agrees the proposed way forward for the self-assessment 2024/25.

Background documents

None