

Meeting of:	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	17 JULY 2025
Report Title:	PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (PPA)
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 Corporate Plan and Performance Framework (on which PPA is based) form part of the Policy Framework.
Executive Summary:	The purpose of this report is to inform the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) of the requirement on the Council to commission and organise a panel performance assessment (PPA) before the next local government elections, and the role and responsibilities of GAC in this assessment.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) of the requirement on the Council to commission and organise a panel performance assessment (PPA) before the next local government elections, and the implications of this requirement. It provides information on governance and the role and responsibilities of GAC.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('The Act') set out a new local government improvement regime. One of the requirements of the Act is for the council to arrange for a panel to undertake a corporate, organisational level assessment of the extent to which the council is meeting its performance requirements, and to respond to the outcome of this assessment. This is called a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA). This must be done at least once during the period between two consecutive ordinary elections (May 2022 and anticipated May 2027) of councillors to the County Borough Council.
- 2.2 Councils can commission the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to coordinate and facilitate the PPA on their behalf, and the first set of PPAs will be paid for in full by the WLGA. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has requested a PPA from the WLGA in September 2025. This was to avoid undertaking the PPA with a brand new Corporate Plan and Self-

Assessment Process (if PPA took place in Summer 2024) but also avoiding being too close to the likely Local Election date (if it took place later than Early 2026).

- 2.3 A number of PPAs in Wales have now been completed, and officers have used their lessons learned to inform the development of the process and scoping document for the Council.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The PPA onsite work will take place in the week commencing 15 September 2025.

- 3.2 There are three stages for the PPA process, which are

- **Stage 1: Preparation** - This stage requires development of a scoping document, considering any challenges that have been highlighted in our Self-Assessment and / or in recent audit, inspection, or regulator reports. It should also be clear about the appointment of the PPA panel that would be needed (as determined by needs identified in the scoping document). This phase is led by the Council.
- **Stage 2: Assessment** – This stage starts with document reviews and then a hybrid of remote and onsite working, comprising of 1:1 interviews and focus groups. Following the format of historic corporate assessments by external regulators, this may typically take place over 4 days. Informal feedback would be provided at the end before a report is drafted. This phase is led by the panel.
- **Stage 3: Follow-up** - This stage requires a draft report to be checked for factual inaccuracies, the report to be made available to the Governance and Audit Committee, and a response made from the Council to the report. The Governance and Audit Committee may make recommendations for changes, but if those changes are not agreed by Cabinet, the Council's response must state the reasons why. The final response must be shared with the Panel. The report and Council's response must be published and shared with Audit Wales, ESTYN, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), and Welsh Ministers.

- 3.3 The scope of what the panel are expected to explore covers the same three performance requirements that are used in the Council's Corporate Self-Assessment:

Performance requirement	Areas of focus
Performance requirement 1: the extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively, focuses on self-awareness, understanding of context the council is working in, identifying issues and making improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Corporate and Service Planning • Risk and assurance. • Performance management.
Performance Requirement 2: The extent to which the council is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital and data • Financial planning • Workforce

focuses on whether resources are aligned to assist the council in delivering its objectives / statutory functions and provide value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement • Risk management • Assets
Performance Requirement 3: The extent to which the council has effective governance in place: focuses on whether there are clear and robust governance arrangements, a transparent culture that welcomes scrutiny / challenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Leadership • Organisational culture • Financial governance • Capacity to improve

- 3.4 The Council is required to produce a scoping document, setting out its own priorities for scrutiny and challenge based on the most recent self-assessment. This scoping document has been drafted and will be considered by Cabinet on 22 July 2025. Any further evidence for PPA will be requested by the peer panel in the form of a document request.
- 3.5 The panel will consist of the following (as a minimum – others may be invited)–
- An independent chair (i.e. not currently serving in an official or political capacity within local government)
 - A peer from the wider public, private, or voluntary sectors
 - A serving local government senior officer, likely to be equivalent to chief executive or director, from outside the council to be assessed
 - A senior elected member, from outside the council to be assessed
- 3.6 The WLGA will be on site alongside the peers in September. They will ensure the assessment is consistent with those in other authorities in Wales.
- 3.7 When onsite, the peers would wish to meet a selection of individuals and groups. For some it may be more efficient to hold remote sessions / phone calls (e.g. interviews with regulators and partners). The panel may use a combination of focus groups and web-based surveys / questionnaires to fulfil the consultation requirements. The council's self-assessment consultation process will be considered by the panel when determining their approach. The panel will interview the Chair of GAC and potentially other members of GAC.
- 3.8 Governance arrangements for the PPA are set out in The Act. Decisions can be made by Cabinet or Council on –
- The appointment of performance assessment panel,
 - The Council's response to the report of the panel performance assessment,
 - The Council's response to the recommendations of the panel.
- It is proposed that Cabinet make these decisions, and this will be considered by Cabinet on 22 July 2025.

- 3.10 There are also specific requirements on the Council working with the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC), including –
- Making the Panel's report available to GAC
 - Making a draft of the Council's response available to GAC
 - Determining whether GAC require any changes to the Council's response
 - Making those changes, or outlining why those changes have not been made
- 3.11 The Panel's report will be provided to GAC when it has been received by the Council. This is likely to be at the end of the year, likely at the November meeting. A response will then be drafted which should be considered by GAC and any changes or recommendations set out. This is likely to be in January 2026.

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 considers the work of the panel performance assessment which will assess 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 Delivery Plan 2025/26:-

1. A prosperous place with thriving communities
2. Creating modern, seamless public services
3. Enabling people to meet their potential
4. Supporting our most vulnerable

- 5.2 The 5 ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act have also been included in the Council's wellbeing objectives. The ways of driving and measuring them is also contained in the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific implications of this report on climate change or nature. However, the PPA will 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 PPA will 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:-
- Consider their role and responsibilities in the Panel Performance Assessment process set out in paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11.

Background documents

None