Meeting of:	**GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**
Date of Meeting:	**17 JULY 2025**
Report Title:	**SELF-ASSESSMENT 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 Corporate Plan and Performance Framework (on which Self-Assessment is based) form part of the Policy Framework.**
Executive Summary:	**This report seeks the Governance and Audit Committee's views on the Council's self-assessment 2024/25, particularly the draft scores and narrative. Key points are –** • **This is the second year judging performance against the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-28.** • **Judgements / scores are developed based on the objective methodology agreed by Cabinet / Corporate Management Board and the Governance and Audit Committee in 2024.** • **All Wellbeing Objective scores are yellow (good) and amber (adequate).** • **Use of resources score is amber (adequate).** • **Governance score is yellow (good).**

1. Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Governance and Audit Committee's views on the draft self-assessment for 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 self-assessment reviewed performance against the Council's new Corporate Plan 2023-28. Reflecting on the second self-assessment, further 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 an objective and agreed process;
- Including a section on how well the Council 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 senior officers and members.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 For 2024/25, the performance section of the self-assessment report followed the same process as in 2023/24. This section includes –

- A performance overview summarising performance against the whole corporate plan, using two graphs showing how are we doing on our commitments / projects and how are we doing on our performance indicators.
- A performance section for each wellbeing objective to include a graph showing performance, a summary of performance against each aim with a Red Amber Yellow Green (RAYG) rating for each and a short narrative section, what we will we do to improve and a case study.

3.2 The same methodology was also used for developing a RAYG rating for each of the wellbeing objectives and aims. This means that the RAYG is objective and based on performance on the commitments and performance indicators (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 to be reported to Welsh Government as soon as is possible after the end of financial year, explaining action to comply with the duty in the preceding 12 months. This information has also been included 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 has therefore been extended 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 The Council's assessment of progress against the second performance requirement on use of resources follows the same process as last year. Firstly, 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 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 are then collated by the performance team for scrutiny and challenge.

3.6 The third performance requirement, on governance, is covered by the annual governance statement (AGS) which is scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee. This document has been summarised by the performance team as in previous years.

3.7 The draft findings from each of the three performance requirements has been brought together into a single presentation for officer scrutiny and challenge in the first instance. This was discussed and moderated by Heads of Service at their meeting on 17 June 2025 and CMB on 18 June 2025. It was then considered by CMB / Cabinet (CCMB) on 24 June 2025.

Judgements for 2024/25

3.8 The Council's proposed self-assessment judgements for 2024/25 are –

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

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

3.10 The Governance judgement remains at 'Good'.

Moderation process

3.11 To test the judgements generated by the new scoring system, each of the 41 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 RAYG 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.

3.12 Heads of Service, CMB and CCMB have proposed the following changes to 3 specific aims or 7% of the aims (worsening or downgrading the scores) -

Aim		**System score**	**HoS / CMB proposal**
2.3	Improving our town centres, making them safer and more attractive	**Excellent**	**Good**
5.5	Improving flood defences and schemes to reduce flooding of our homes and businesses	**Excellent**	**Good**
7.1	Improving active travel routes and facilities so people can walk and cycle	**Excellent**	**Good**

3.13 They proposed the following changes to 3 specific aims or 7% of the aims (improving or upgrading the scores) –

Aim		System score	HoS / CMB proposal
1.4	Supporting children with additional learning needs to get the best from their education	**Unsatisfactory**	**Adequate**
3.5	Investing in our parks and green spaces and supporting tourism to the valleys	**Adequate**	**Good**
5.3	Improve the quality of the public ream and built environment through good placemaking principles	**Unsatisfactory**	**Adequate**

3.14 The main reasons for the proposed changes are;

- For our proposed upgrades, 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 aim 3.5 'Investing in our parks and green spaces and supporting tourism to the valleys' the score is 'adequate' based on 1 commitment and no performance indicators. The actual range of investment (as well as business as usual work) is much broader than this would suggest. For this reason, it is proposed to increase the judgement from 'adequate' to 'good'. The same principal applies to aim 5.3 Placemaking.
- For our proposed downgrades, some of our aim scores feel out of sync with officer (and likely member / public) opinions. Again, this points to issues with the commitments / PIs under those aims, as well as a lack of service user perspective measures which is a longstanding and challenging issue we are tackling with councils across Wales. This particularly applies to aims 2.3 Town Centres, 5.5 Flooding and 7.1 Active Travel.

Next steps

3.15 The moderated findings have been brought together into a single draft self-assessment (included at **Appendix 1**).

3.16 The performance information that supports the self-assessment is included at **Appendix 2.** 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 the Governance and Audit Committee additional reassurance about the fairness and accuracy of the process.

3.17 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).

3.18 Following discussions at the Governance and Audit Committee, and later Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee, the performance team will make improvements over the summer, translate and design the document and present the final draft self-assessment 2024/25 to Cabinet and Council in September 2025.

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 following corporate wellbeing 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 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. However, the self-assessment considers 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 considers 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 and provide views on the draft Self-assessment 2024/25 report in **Appendix 1** supported by performance information in **Appendix 2.**

Background documents

None