

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	22 JULY 2024
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:	<p>The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet 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. The proposal is for onsite PPA work the week of 15 September 2025. The report seeks decisions on the:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, decision making and roles of Cabinet and Governance and Audit Committee (GAC); • Membership of the peer panel; and • The issues and priorities for PPA as set out in the draft Scoping Document

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet 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 seeks decisions on governance and the Scoping Document.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act ('The Act') 2021 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 and respond to a corporate, organisational level assessment, of the extent to which the Council is meeting its performance requirements. 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 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.
- 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, with meetings commencing on Tuesday 16 September and concluding early afternoon on Friday 19 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, a response from the Council to the report and for it to be made available to the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC). GAC may make recommendations for changes, but if those changes are not made by Cabinet, the 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Corporate and Service Planning • Risk and assurance. • Performance management.

working in, identifying issues and making improvements.	
Performance Requirement 2: The extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively, 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"> • Digital and data • Financial planning • Workforce • 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 As well as the scoping document the Council is required to prepare (setting out its own priorities for scrutiny and challenge based on the most recent self-assessment), the evidence for PPA which will be provided in the form of a document request.
- 3.5 The panel will consist of the following (as a minimum) –
- 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 WLGA will be on site alongside the peers in September. They will ensure the assessment is consistent with those in other authorities in Wales. WLGA have put forward the following peers for the panel –
- Sally Loudon (Chair)
 - Gareth Newall (Senior Leadership Team Peer)
 - Councillor Andrew Stevens (Member Peer)
 - Anne Louise Clark (Wider Peer)
- 3.7 When onsite, the peers would wish to meet a selection of individual 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.
- 3.8 The Council requested and received two scoping documents, from Denbighshire and Ceredigion Councils. The Ceredigion Council example has a similar format to BCBC's Corporate Plan and Self-Assessment, so it is

proposed to use a similar format. A similar template has been populated with existing information from the Corporate Plan 2023-28 and Self-Assessment 2023/24. This includes a number of potential priority areas for the panel to consider, to help the Council improve. These are taken from the Self-Assessment 2023/24 and the developing Self-Assessment for 2024/25. This draft scoping document is included at **Appendix 1**.

3.9 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.

3.10 WLGA advise that there are likely to be large numbers of smaller and more operational decisions to be made around the PPA before the onsite work in September, often with short deadlines. It is proposed that Cabinet delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, to make these decisions.

3.11 There are also specific requirements on 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
- Testing whether GAC require any changes to the Council's response
- Making those changes

3.12 The main points for decision making are –

What	When	Who
Agree scoping document and priorities for panel scrutiny and support	July 25	Cabinet
Agree panel membership and chair	July 25	Cabinet
Agree response to the Panel Report (including actions to address the panel recommendations)	October / November 25	Cabinet / Corporate Management Board, GAC and then Cabinet

If Cabinet support the governance proposals, the relevant decision points will be added to the Cabinet and GAC forward work programmes.

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 and nature. However, the PPA will assess the Council's performance on areas including climate change and nature.

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 as a result of this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- Notes the date of the onsite work for the PPA in paragraph 3.1.
- Considers and agrees governance proposals for PPA in paragraphs 3.9 - 3.12.
- Considers and agrees the membership of the panel in paragraph 3.6.
- Reviews and agrees the draft scoping document, with its proposed areas for focus in **Appendix 1**.

Background documents

None