

Draft BCBC scoping document

Introduction

We are now two years into the implementation of our Corporate Plan and there is a consensus that the time is right to undertake our first Panel Performance Assessment. This assessment will play a key role in shaping our delivery and prioritisation with the benefit of external peer experience. It is timely, with a new Chief Executive starting in July to help us be clear about areas of success, improvement and to be challenged to think differently to meet today and tomorrow's challenges.

We are an ambitious Council with a track record of delivering high-quality and innovative services but face significant challenges in parts of our services.

Local Government has changed radically since the pandemic and this has impacted the way we work. The cost-of-living crisis things difficult for residents and businesses, and makes it harder for the Council to manage too. Some of our key challenges are –

- The ongoing cost-of-living crisis causing increased energy costs, changes to the cost and availability of goods and services, and impacts on residents that add demand to our services. Long term council funding is not increasing at the same rate, so our funding struggles to keep up with demand in key areas.
- Political changes at home and abroad means a changing financial situation and changing priorities / expectations of the council, for example increases to employer National Insurance Contributions likely to add significant costs for councils and our partners.
- New and far-reaching legislation from UK and Welsh Governments on issues including social partnerships, immigration, elimination of profit from social care, employment rights and procurement that affect large parts of our organisation.
- Exceptional demands across some of our key service areas including support for children with Additional Learning Needs, older people's care, complex children's placements and homelessness. Changing patterns of need in other service areas, for example behaviour in schools and attendance. Some services have worked hard to meet expectations but have limited capacity due to capacity / resilience following years of budget cuts.

Our self-assessments over the last 3 years have highlighted areas for improvement, and we would welcome the peers' support on the following priority areas that encompass the whole council and involve all directorates –

1. Transformation – Development of a transformation strategy that meets political and key stakeholder aspirations that is underpinned by effective arrangements for delivery, performance management and a culture of constructive challenge. A clear need to focus on mechanisms and capacity for transformation that will improve citizens experience and create an organisation that is sustainable in the medium and long term.

2. Addressing workforce challenges – Building on strengthened workforce planning, address challenges in recruitment in key areas, and improve succession planning, to help us create a long-term workforce strategy.

3. Improving engagement – Building on improvements to strategic communication, improve our engagement and relationships internally with councillors and externally with local communities and town and community councils to help us become more citizen focused.

We extend a warm welcome to the Panel and look forward to working with them. This document provides an overview of the Council and the County Borough, which we hope will serve as a useful starting point for the Panel Performance Assessment.

Where and Who We Are

Bridgend County Borough covers around 110 square miles, stretching from the Ogmore, Garw, and Llynfi valleys in the north to the Bristol Channel coastline in the south.

The main commercial centres are Bridgend, Maesteg, and the seaside resort of Porthcawl.

The county borough is divided by the M4 and boasts main-line rail links going east to London and west to Swansea.

Population and Community Demographics

Bridgend had a population of 145,760 at the 2021 census, a 4.5% increase from 2011. The population is projected to grow by 7.5% in the next 20 years. In our population –

- 50.6% are female and 49.4% are male.
- 96.78% identify as white. 1.48% of people identify as Asian. 1.16% identify as mixed race. 0.29% identify as black. 0.29% identify as other ethnic group
- 22.64% have disabilities that limit their day-to-day activities a little or a lot.

Like the rest of Wales, the county borough has an aging population with the fastest growing age category being over 65 which increased by 21.5% between 2011 and 2021. During the same time, under 15s only increased by 2.6%. This can present challenges to our council services including health, social care and housing.

Health and Deprivation

In 2021, 46.3% of residents described their health as “very good,” up from 45.1% in 2011. However, there are significant health disparities.

Bridgend has 7 areas identified as having ‘Deep Rooted Deprivation’. These are areas that have remained within the top 50 most deprived areas in Wales for the last five publications of Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks.

In Bridgend 70% of people aged 16+ are in “good or very good” general health, which is the national average. Physical activity uptake and healthy eating rates are below the national average and Bridgend is home to some of the most materially deprived places in Wales. Bridgend has an obesity rate above the national average. Our healthy weight in under 25s is also slightly below the Wales average. 18% of adults in Bridgend smoke, slightly above the national average (17%). Mental wellbeing is slightly better than the Wales average.

Employment and Skills

Bridgend has around 3,770 enterprises, with a significant number of micro-enterprises (up to nine employees). Key employers include Bridgend County Borough Council, which employs around 6,000 people, and major private sector employers in manufacturing and medical device engineering.

The employment rate (ages 16 to 64) is 67.1% and employment in Bridgend has decreased compared with the previous year. Bridgend's employment rate was lower than Wales as a whole in the year ending December 2023.

Skills and Unemployment Welfare

As of May 2024, Bridgend now has an unemployment rate of 3.5%, though people looking for work has risen since a year earlier. The most recent unemployment rate for Bridgend was lower than Wales as a whole. Economic inactivity has increased since the previous year; these are people who are neither employed nor seeking work. The Claimant Count measures the number of people who are claiming unemployment-related benefits between the ages of 16-64 is 2.8%. Claimant Count was lower in March 2024 compared with a year earlier.

Infrastructure and Transport Links

The county benefits from excellent transport infrastructure, including the M4 motorway, which provides quick access to Cardiff and Swansea. There are also high-speed rail services and proximity to Cardiff Airport. Active travel routes are being developed to improve walking and cycling infrastructure. The council has recently adopted a new [Local Development Plan \(LDP\)](#), which will shape development up to 2033.

Housing and Affordability

The average house price in Bridgend is approximately £187,812. 71% of households in Bridgend County either own their home outright or via a mortgage. A further 15% rented privately, while 14% rented socially. Porthcawl has the highest levels of home ownership and the Pyle/Kenfig Hill area the lowest. The Ogmore Valley had the highest proportion of private tenants (21%). The council manages a common housing register to allocate social housing and offers various support services to prevent homelessness. Our [Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26](#) sets out six new priorities and associated objectives.

The proportion of properties liable for council tax that are second homes (0.1%) is well below the all-Wales average (1.8%).

Local Climate Challenges

Bridgend has committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The Council has a comprehensive [strategy](#) to address climate change, including decarbonising our operations and promoting sustainable practices. Achievements to date include LED street lighting, retrofit programme for energy efficiency, the expansion of local nature reserves, tree planting and a sustainable procurement strategy.

Our Council

Political Leadership

At the last local elections in May 2022, there were 51 seats contested in the election, 3 fewer than in 2017. The next Bridgend County Borough Council elections are likely to take place in May 2027.

The current administration is a Labour majority with 26 councillors, 23 independents (13 Bridgend County Independents, 8 Democratic alliance and 2 Independent), 1 Conservative and 1 Reform.

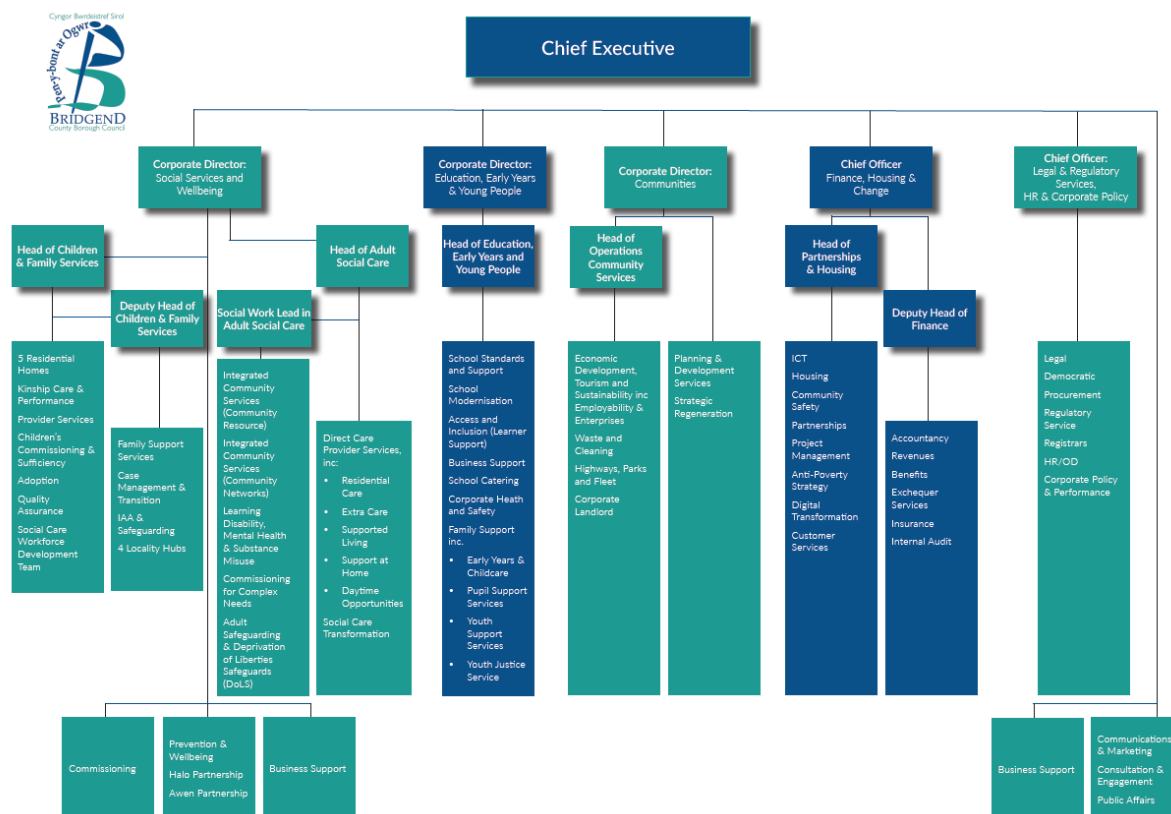
The Leader of the Council is Councillor John Spanswick and Councillor Jane Gebbie is the Deputy Leader.

The Cabinet	
Member	Portfolio
Councillor John Spanswick 	Leader Became an elected member 1999. Cabinet member since 2022, and Leader since 2024.
Councillor Jane Gebbie 	Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Became an elected member in 2017 and cabinet member in 2021 Current Portfolio - Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Fostering & Adoption, AWEN, Edge of Care, Early Help & Family Support, Community Co-ordinators, Third Sector, Learning Disabilities, Libraries, HALO, Improvement & Innovation Board, Stakeholder Reference Group, Integrated Leadership Board
Councillor Hywel Williams 	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance Became an elected member in 2004 and cabinet member in 2016 Current Portfolio - Medium Term Financial Strategy, Revenues & Benefits, Capital Programme, Customer Services, Performance Management, Democratic Services, Legal Services, Shared Regulatory Services, Registrars, Corporate Landlord, Property & Facilities Management
Councillor Martyn Jones 	Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services Became an elected member in 2012 by-election, and cabinet member in 2024 Current Portfolio - Schools, Further Education, Central Education Functions, Youth Services, Youth Justice Board, School Improvement Services, Flying Start, Food Sustainability, Catering Services, Early Years

Councillor Paul Davies 	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment Became an elected member in 2017 and cabinet member in 2024 Current Portfolio - Waste Services, Street Cleansing, Highway Services, Parks & Green Spaces, Countryside & Biodiversity, Decarbonisation, Bereavement Services, CAT Programme, Parking Services, Flood Defence & Drainage, Street Lighting, Net Zero, Energy Efficiency, Fleet Services
Councillor Eugene Caparros  Councillor Melanie Evans 	Cabinet Member for Resources (Job Share) Became elected members in 2022 and cabinet members in 2024 Current Portfolio - Consultation & Engagement, Communications & Media, Town & Community Councils, Base Budgeting, Human Resources, Trade Unions, Task & Finish Projects, Apprenticeships, Procurement & Circular Economy, Health & Safety, I.C.T., Workforce Planning.
Councillor Neelo Farr 	Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Housing Became an elected member in 2015 and re-elected in 2022, and cabinet member in 2022 Current Portfolio - Regeneration, Economic Development, Housing & Homelessness, Employability, Planning & Transportation, Active Travel, Rural Development, Community Safety, VAWDASV, Equalities

Senior Management

The council's senior management comprises the Chief Executive, who started in post in July 2025. He is supported by three Corporate Directors with responsibility for a group of services each. There are two Chief Officers responsible for the remaining directorates, and a Head of Internal Audit.



Corporate Management Board (CMB)

					
Jake Morgan – Chief Executive	Claire Marchant - Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing	Lindsay Harvey - Corporate Director, Education, Early Years and Young People	Janine Nightingale – Corporate Director, Communities	Carys Lord - Chief Officer, Finance, Housing and Change	Kelly Watson - Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Our Strengths and Recent Successes

- **Strong financial management** - In our last financial sustainability review by Audit Wales which covered the year 2023/24 they stated *“Overall, we found that the Council understands its financial position with good arrangements to support its financial sustainability which it flexes and adapts”*.
- **Transformation of the way we support children and families in Bridgend** After an extremely challenging period Children’s Services has been transformed. There have been significant reductions in the number agency social workers, the number of children subject to child protection registration and the number of care experienced children. Our international recruitment programme won a Social Care Wales Accolade for developing and inspiring the workforce. These significant improvements have been recognised by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the service is now performing well after a period of monitoring and intervention by the CIW.
- **High quality integrated health and social care community services which support adults with disabilities and health challenges to live independently and well as long as possible** - We have transformed the way we supported people to retain or regain their independence following a period of ill health. More people have benefited from our care and support at home assessment services, which means they are living without a need for long term care and support. Less Bridgend residents are delayed in leaving hospital. Our council care and support and residential services have consistently been assessed as providing high-quality, person-centred services by Care Inspectorate Wales.
- **High quality and innovative prevention and wellbeing services** - Our health living partnership with Halo leisure continues to deliver excellent outcomes for Bridgend citizens. The partnership received an excellent quality grading which is the highest awarded by Quest – the UK Quality Scheme for Sport and Leisure in 2024.
- **Excellent provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN)** - Specialist provision for pupils with ALN in Bridgend is consistently rated as excellent by Estyn. In 2023, Heronsbridge School became the first special school in Wales to receive no recommendations following an Estyn inspection, and in 2025 The Bridge Pupil Referral Unit was recognised by Estyn as having an *“exceptional level of care, support, and guidance for all learners”*.
- **Excellent educational outcomes** - 40% of Bridgend schools have received either an interim or core Estyn inspection visit since September 2021. Currently, only one Bridgend school is in any form of Estyn statutory category. Pupils in Bridgend schools perform better than the all-Wales average in literacy, numeracy and science at GCSE level, despite having the 5th highest number of learners eligible for free school meals in Wales.
- **Excellent outcomes for vulnerable young people** - In 2023, following a joint inspection review of child protection arrangements in Bridgend, the work of the local authority’s Education Engagement Team, which supports vulnerable children and young people in schools, was judged by regulators as ‘exemplary’. For 16 to 18-year-olds in Bridgend who are NEET (not in education, employment or training), the average over the last year is 1.4%

compared to an all-Wales average of 2.3%, placing Bridgend as the second-best performing local authority in Wales.

- **Successful regeneration projects** – We have recently completed the £8.5m refurbishment of Maesteg Town Hall in the Llynfi Valley, by restoring, extending and protecting this Grade II Listed building for the community for future generations. Work is ongoing to redevelop Porthcawl Grand Pavilion using Levelling Up Funding, to increase the use of the new facilities and extend social and leisure facilities, in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust.
- **Leading in Wales on recycling** – We currently have the highest recycling rate of all Local Authorities in Wales at 73% and also the lowest cost waste services in Wales as validated by the WLGA.

Our Key Challenges

- Demographic growth in the number of older people who will need services
- The cost of children's placements and demand in Children's Services
- A digital strategy is being developed with the potential to support service transformation
- Recruitment and retention challenges in the Communities Directorate
- Managing behaviour in schools and demand for services for children with Additional Learning Needs
- There is limited corporate change management capacity to deliver transformation projects
- Housing - Demand for homelessness continues to rise
- There is growing urgency to deliver a master plan and vision for Bridgend Town Centre
- Building capacity to successfully deliver the political decision to insource waste and recycling.

Our Vision for the Area and Wellbeing Objectives (WBOs)

Our [Corporate Plan](#) that was published in 2023, and subsequent [Delivery Plan](#) are strengthening economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing for the communities of the County Borough. Through research and public engagement, we identified the needs of our communities, our own shortcomings and the availability of resources. The wellbeing objectives we developed are aimed at maximising our contribution to our citizens as well as the national wellbeing goals and sustainable development principles. Our key priorities are broken down into 4 (recently streamlined and updated) Wellbeing Objectives:

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

We review our progress each year with a [Self-Assessment](#). This is in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Self-Assessment 2023-24

Our most recent self-assessment was published in October 2024 against our old set of 7 wellbeing objectives.

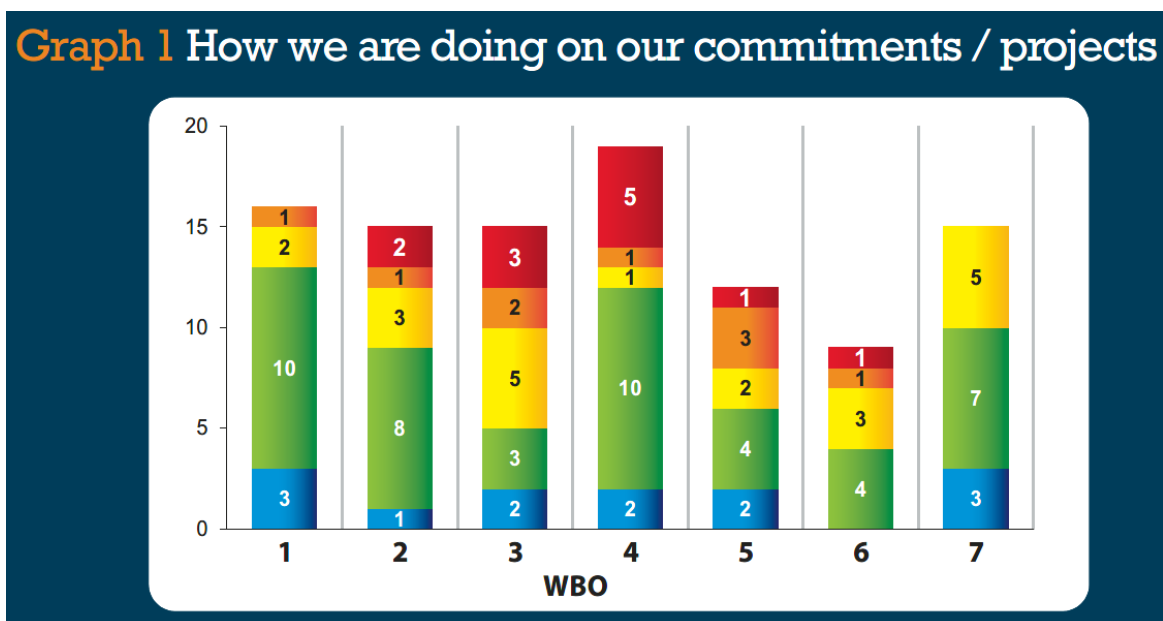
The Council's self-assessment judgements for 2023/24 were –

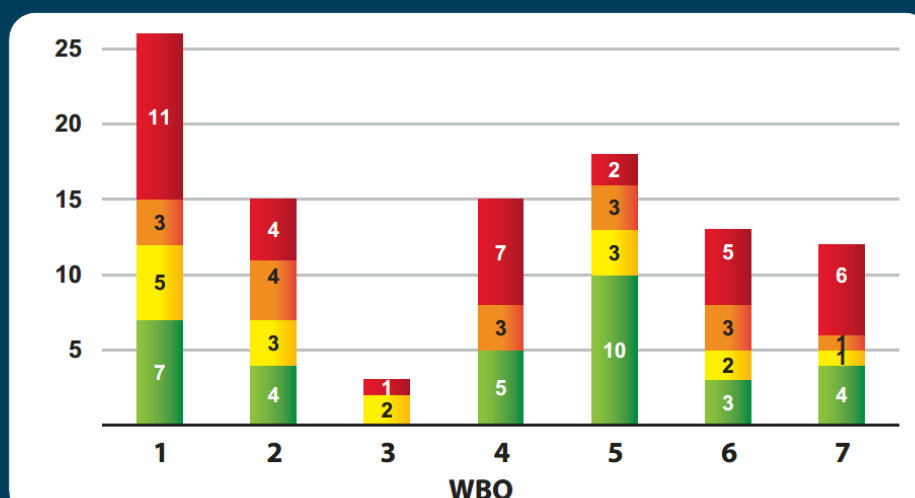
1	A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable	Good
2	A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns	Good
3	A County Borough with thriving valleys communities	Adequate
4	A County Borough where we help people meet their potential	Good
5	A County Borough that is 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

These seven wellbeing objectives were supported by 44 aims made up of:

- 101 commitments (projects) the council will do to help us achieve our aims.
- 99 performance indicators to measure our day-to-day activities

Each is given a rating to show whether they are completed, on target or if we are struggling to achieve them. The graphs below summarise these.



Graph 2 How we are doing on our performance indicators

The Use of Resources judgement remained at 'Adequate'. The more detailed judgements against each aspect of use of resources were –

Financial management	Adequate
Performance management	Adequate
Risk management	Good
Corporate Planning	Good
People management	Adequate
Commissioning and procurement	Adequate
Asset management	Adequate

The Governance judgement remained at 'Good'.

The self-assessment sets out performance against our wellbeing objectives in some detail, as well as how well we are using our resources, and a summary of our governance, decision making and how we listen to the opinions of others. We publish a separate, short performance document that details our progress against each Performance Indicator (PI) and commitment.

Working in Partnership

Public Service Board (PSB)

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB brings together public bodies to improve the area's social, environmental, economic and cultural well-being. This board was formed by merging the previous PSBs of Cwm Taf covering Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf that included Bridgend. This regional integration represents a shift from a local to a regional focus, allowing for more comprehensive and coordinated service delivery across the three areas. The PSB engages with local communities to gather input and ensure that the well-being plan reflects the needs and aspirations of residents.

The new [Public Service Board Well-Being Plan](#) outlines the key objectives for the area;

Objective One - Healthy local neighbourhoods, where our communities are inclusive and feel cohesive and people feel safe, supported, and valued.

Objective Two - Sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods, where we understand and respond to the risk of climate change to our communities. To do this we must value, manage and enjoy our green and blue spaces responsibly.

At the end of each year, an annual report is published to explain how we are doing against the plan, here is the latest Cwm Taf [Annual Report](#).

Our Corporate Plan was designed to reflect the priorities of the PSB and demonstrates BCBC's commitment to its objectives.

Managing Risk

The Council's Risk Register displays the extent of our challenges and how we will manage them. This information summarises the highest or 'red' risks in our Corporate Risk Register that was reported to the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2025.

Risk Number	Identified Risk	Residual Risk Score	Direction of travel
COR - 2019 – 01	The council is unable to deliver a balanced budget and sustain services into the medium term	25	↔
COR - 2019 – 02	The council is unable to deliver transformation and major service change, including projects and agreed financial savings	20	↔
CEX – 2019 – 01	The council is unable to identify and deliver infrastructure improvements required in the medium to longer term due to the cessation of external grants, the increased cost of borrowing and the increased costs of construction and building works	25	↔
SS – 2019 – 01	The council fails to meet statutory responsibilities to respond to situations where individuals are at risk of neglect or abuse. This would include children, adults in need of social care, homeless individuals	20	↔
COR-2019-03	The council is unable to plan for and recover from major threats to service continuity such as civil emergencies, school failure, cyber-attack and discontinuation of funding streams and major contracts	16	↔
COR-2019 – 04	The council is unable to attract, develop or retain a workforce with the necessary skills to meet the demands placed upon the authority and its services	20	↔
COR-2019-05	Important council services are compromised due to the failure of a key supplier	16	↔
COM - 2020 – 01	Invigorating the economy and economic recovery following the cost of living crisis, and local issues such as the closure of businesses in the area.	20	↔

SS- 2023- 01	Significant service pressures in the health and social care sectors could impact on the ability of services to support vulnerable individuals	25	↔
EDFS - 2024 – 01	There is an increase in the financial fragility of schools in the Borough	25	↔
COR -2024- 01	There is a threat to business continuity if the Council is unable to procure and implement major ICT systems which support critical services such as a replacement system for Care Director (WCCIS) and the Capita One system for education.	25	↑