

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Pen-y-Bont ar Ogwr

Bridgend County Borough Council

Asesiad Perfformiad Panel 2025

Panel Performance Assessment 2025

Adborth o'r Panel 19^{eg} Medi 2025

Feedback from the Panel 19th September 2025

Purpose and Scope

The Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) has been undertaken in accordance with the statutory performance duties within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The purpose: To provide an independent and objective assessment of the extent to which Bridgend County Borough Council is meeting the performance requirements:

- exercising its functions effectively;
- using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- effective governance in place for securing the above.

Additional areas identified by the council:

- Transformation
- Addressing workforce challenges
- Improving engagement

Purpose and Scope continued...

Additional local areas identified by the council:

Transformation – The 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.

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

Improving engagement – Building on improvements to strategic communication, improve the Council's engagement and relationships internally with councillors and externally with local communities and Town and Community Councils to help the Council to become more citizen focused.

Overview of Approach

- Desktop review of council documentation.
- Observation of council meetings.
- Introductory online meetings.
- 240 hours plus spent on site speaking to members, officers, strategic partners, residents, businesses, to get a feel of what it's like in Bridgend.
- 1-2-1 meetings.
- Review of regulator findings.
- Focus groups.

Panel Membership

Independent Chair: Sally Loudon

Former Chief Executive of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), former Chief Executive of Argyll and Bute Council.

Senior Member Peer: Cllr. Andrew Stevens

Serving Councillor and Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure at Swansea Council.

Serving Local Government Senior Officer: Gareth Newell

Head of Performance and Partnerships, Cardiff Council.

Peer from the wider public, private, voluntary sector: Anne-Louise Clark

Executive Director – Communication and Change for Audit Wales & Chair of the Board of Trustees for Platform for Change Ltd.

Panel overall findings and conclusions

Bridgend is a good Council with untapped potential.

A political and managerial leadership that is ambitious for Bridgend.

Workforce that is enthusiastic, committed, cares deeply about the Council and the communities it serves.

High levels of self-awareness - clear and shared assessment of strengths and what needs to happen next.

Good performing services with an impressive turn-around in Children's Services.

Ready for change and positive about the future.

Bridgend is a Council at a cross-roads.

The Council understands the change needed and should act now to make sure it can sustain services now and continue to deliver for its communities over the years ahead.

Strengths and Areas of Innovation

**Alignment of ambition for BCBC and it's communities
Positive, welcoming, friendly culture.**

**Enthusiastic, committed and caring staff, who are
positive about the future.**

**Tangible appetite for change from all parts of the
Council.**

**Children's Services turn-around shows strong
leadership and resilience – there are lessons to be
learnt and shared.**

**High levels of self-awareness – clear and shared
assessment of strengths and areas of improvement**

New budget working group.

Effective exercise of functions

Good performance in services and consistent performance narrative across members and officers.

Dedicated and committed members and staff.

A real eagerness for change.

Some examples of cross-Council working, but not evident across the whole authority.

Areas for Improvement:

Corporate and strategic capacity required.

Unnecessary bureaucracy and procedures are stifling empowerment and delaying decision making.

Economic, efficient and effective use of resources

Good financial management and monitoring.

Wider member involvement in the budget setting process.

Good relationships with partners and wider stakeholders, who are eager to be more strategically involved.

Areas for Improvement:

Looking forward, ensure the budget and MTFS is closely aligned with the new vision and change programme.

The Council should, as a whole, increase its appetite for innovation.

An opportunity for greater cross-service and partner working and culture – 'Team Bridgend.'

Whole Council approach to communications needed.

Effective Governance

Overall, the Council has good governance arrangements and systems in place.

Good performance management framework in place.

Good engagement and relationships with Trade Unions.

Good scrutiny arrangements which are valued by members.

Areas for Improvement:

Continuing to build a cohesive leadership team and culture.

Performance management framework needs to be embedded across the Council and culture needs to be developed to ensure ownership and accountability.

Responsiveness to members, scrutiny, stakeholders and citizens is not consistent across the Council.

Scrutiny papers could be more concise, with greater evidence of impact of scrutiny also needed.

Additional local area(s) for consideration

Transformation

Alignment of ambition for change.

Excitement and appetite for change.

It's the right thing to do at the right time.

Evidence of innovation in some areas.

Areas for Improvement:

Develop and agree a new transformation plan, involving staff, members, partners and communities.

Strategic and corporate capacity required to deliver change.

Transformation programme needs to be based on data and insight.

Review approach to digital and data to support the emerging Transformation Plan including funding, systems, skills and culture.

Additional local area(s) for consideration

Addressing Workforce Challenges

**Staff feel appreciated – it's a good and caring culture.
Proud of Bridgend County and the impact the Council has.
Good relationships with Trade Unions.**

Areas of Improvement:

Move to a more strategic and future focussed workforce plan, linked to new vision and transformation plan – including succession planning, workforce of the future, digital and data.

**Consider a corporate grow your own programme, developing links with local higher and further education.
Consider approach to staff celebration/appreciation.**

Additional local area(s) for consideration

Improving Engagement

Strong desire and commitment from Cabinet to hear and listen to citizens and communities.

Evidence of engagement with stakeholders across the organisation.

Town and Community Council liaison officer now in place.

Citizen panel in place and innovative plan to use citizen focus groups

Corporate communications in place.

Areas for Improvement:

The Council should consider a whole-Council approach to promoting the work of the Council and the county of Bridgend.

Responsiveness to members, scrutiny, town and community councils and citizens is not consistent across the Council.

Improve consultation and engagement practice, including greater use of local members, community groups and infrastructure to promote engagement and closing 'the feedback loop'.

Forward-looking corporate communications needed which reaches all staff – especially at a time of change.

Opportunities for improvement - Recommendations

The Council has appointed a Chief Executive to lead and deliver change. The Council should now support him to develop an inspiring vision, a transformation strategy, underpinning corporate strategies and the cultural shift required to produce both sustainability of services, greater cross-Council working and innovation – which involves staff, communities and partners.

The Council should put in place leadership development for senior staff and Members to support this change.

The Council should, as a whole, increase its appetite for innovation with a focus on the future and delivery of outcomes; supporting staff and Members to do that. This should involve reducing unnecessary bureaucracy to release capacity and empower managers.

Opportunities for improvement - Recommendations

The Council should rapidly review corporate and strategic capacity to ensure both sustainability of service delivery and supporting the overall emerging change programme. In addition, the Council should consider bringing together key corporate enablers to unlock the potential of the organisation: e.g. Human Resources, performance and communications.

The Council should review and refresh its approach to digital and data to support the emerging Transformation Plan including:

- **Funding**
- **Systems**
- **Skills**
- **Culture**

Opportunities for improvement - Recommendations

The Council should consider a whole Council approach to promoting the work of the Council and the county of Bridgend – with pride.

The Council should consider building on its good relations with partners in the public, private, community and voluntary sector in order to deliver Bridgend's vision and priorities.

As an immediate priority, the Council should improve its responsiveness to Members, stakeholders and citizens as part of building a culture of mutual respect for all.

Next steps

Initial feedback from the council on findings, conclusions and opportunities for improvement.

Draft and agree the report with the panel.

Draft report shared with the council for comment on factual accuracy.

Agree the final report, WLGA on behalf of the Panel to submit to the council, the Auditor General for Wales, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales; the Welsh Ministers (including Care Inspectorate Wales).

Council to respond to the panel assessment report in accordance with the statutory guidelines.

Diolch – Thank you!

Any questions?