

Meeting of:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	24 JUNE 2026
Report Title:	PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RESPONSE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
Responsible Officer:	KATE PASK CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The Corporate Plan and Performance Framework (on which Self-Assessment and Panel Performance Assessments (PPA) are based) form part of the Policy Framework.
Executive Summary:	This report seeks Council approval for the Council’s draft response to the recommendations of the Panel Performance Assessment that took place between 16-19 September 2025, and publication and circulation of this response and the Panel Performance Assessment Report September 2025

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Council with the Council’s draft response to the recommendations of the Panel Performance Assessment that took place between 16-19 September 2025 for consideration and approval, before it can be formally published and circulated to the statutory recipients detailed in paragraph 3.4.

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 undertake a Panel Performance Assessment, or PPA, between each local government election. The PPA 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 In addition to the three statutory areas, Cabinet and Corporate Management Team (CCMT) agreed three further areas for the panel's consideration which were –

- **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 the Council 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 it become more citizen focused.

2.3 The panel were on site between 16-19 September 2025 and undertook interviews with a range of elected members, council officers and partners. They also held focus groups with users of council services and community representatives, including Trade Unions, Town & Community Councils, the business community, Youth Council, older people, citizens and headteachers.

2.4 The panel's final report was received in October 2025 and is attached as **Appendix 1**. The headline findings of the PPA were that –

- Bridgend is a good Council with untapped potential.
- There is a political and managerial leadership that is ambitious for Bridgend.
- The workforce is enthusiastic, committed, and cares deeply about the Council and the communities it serves.
- The Council has high levels of self-awareness - clear and shared assessment of strengths and the challenges ahead.
- The Council is ready for change and positive about the future.

Despite these positives it describes the Council as now being at 'a crossroads in terms of its development and now is the time to act at pace. By making the necessary changes now, the council can make sure it can sustain services and continues to deliver for its communities for years to come.' This description aligns strongly with most officers and elected members' assessment of the Council, its services and the imperative and desire to change. For each of the three performance requirements and the three areas raised by the Council, the panel outlined strengths and areas for improvement. The panel also provided eight recommendations.

2.5 It is the responsibility of the Council, not the panel, to:-

- make the report available to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee; and
- publish the report.

- 2.6 Since receiving the final report, two reports have been considered by full Council, firstly in October 2025, presenting the PPA findings and recommendations and secondly, in November 2025, proposing a range of actions to address those recommendations. These actions included changes to the structure of the council and recruiting a number of additional Heads of Service to build the strategic capacity of the Council. The panel report and an outline of the next steps and role of the Committee in completing them was presented to Governance and Audit Committee in October 2025.
- 2.7 Under the legislation the Council is required to prepare and publish a formal response outlining the extent to which it accepts the conclusions of the report, the extent to which it intends to follow any recommendations contained in the report, and any actions it proposes to take to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements. The intention is that the conclusions and recommendations from the assessment should be used to guide the Council in identifying actions it will take to increase the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Corporate Management Team and Cabinet have worked together to develop a draft response, which accepts all eight of the PPA recommendations in full and sets out the work completed to date to address them, and further work planned to address them in coming months and years.
- 3.2 In January 2026 this draft response was tested through Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) who have a statutory role to play in the Panel Performance Assessment process. The Committee considered and noted the draft response and highlighted no concerns in the planned actions outlined and made no formal recommendations to amend the response.
- 3.3 The draft response has been updated to account for progress made since January 2026 and is provided as **Appendix 2**.

Next steps

- 3.4 Following approval by Council, the Council is required to publish the PPA Report (**Appendix 1**) and Response to PPA Report (**Appendix 2**) on its website, and send a copy to the statutory recipients below:
- The members of the panel
 - The Auditor General for Wales
 - His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
 - The Welsh Ministers

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 Delivery Plan 2025/26:-

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

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.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no specific implications of this report on safeguarding or corporate parenting.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, financial implications of any agreed actions following the PPA will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Council:-

- Approve the draft Response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report **(Appendix 2)**.
- Approve publication of the Panel Performance Assessment Report September 2025 **(Appendix 1)** and Response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report **(Appendix 2)** and circulation to the recipients detailed in paragraph 3.4.

Background documents

None