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CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024/2025



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

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Introduction



From the Neath
Port Talbot
Council Leader,
Councillor Steve
Hunt and Chief
Executive,
Frances O'Brien

This report sets out Neath Port Talbot Council's Self-Assessment for 2024/2025. As an integral part of our corporate governance framework, this reflective report enables us to critically evaluate our performance and progress towards achieving the long-term ambitions outlined in our Corporate Plan 2024/2027.

In accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, all councils in Wales are required to conduct a corporate self-assessment to determine the extent to which they are meeting their performance requirements.

This self-assessment process requires councils to consider if they are:

- exercising its functions effectively (*how well are we doing?*)
- using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively (*how do we know?*)
- ensuring its governance is effective for securing the above (*what and how can we do better?*)

To deliver a comprehensive and honest self-assessment, we have evaluated a wide range of performance data and insights from our annual planning, performance monitoring, governance arrangements, and regulators' reports.

This evidence through corporate self-assessment has enabled us to draw informed conclusions on how well our resources and governance arrangements have supported the achievement of key objectives. Additionally, we have assessed the effectiveness of these arrangements, identified lessons learned, and pinpointed areas for improvement.

NPT Council’s approach to self-assessment

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 sets out the requirements for all councils in Wales to conduct a self-assessment. This assessment evaluates corporate, financial, governance and service performance against strategic, and operational objectives. It also helps identify improvements and risks, facilitating effective service management, corporate strategic planning and performance management.

Previous corporate self-assessments have shown that a critical and honest approach empowers both officers and members to foster a culture of continuous improvement. This culture encourages the council to challenge existing practices, ask pertinent questions about its operations, and learn from best practice.

Through self-assessment, officers have achieved a transparent evaluation, considering internal and external factors affecting local government and its services. These factors include ongoing budget pressures, resource demands, and persistent inequalities faced by those in or at risk of poverty. The cost of living crisis continues to impact many residents and local businesses, causing financial hardship.

These changes significantly affect the council's ability to perform its functions effectively and utilise resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.

Whilst we have maintained the basis of our initial approach, incorporating elements of the Local Government Assessment’s (LGA) Efficiency Monitoring Self-Assessment Toolkit, we have further developed the collection of information, including gaining additional feedback from the Corporate Leadership Team and including service self-assessment within 2025/2026 Head of Service Business Plans.

This toolkit, structured around seven key activities, aligns with the core activities common to the governance of public bodies as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By structuring the self-assessment around these core activities, we established a baseline in 2021/2022 and have since tracked year-on-year improvements.

The review recognised that the self-assessment process is becoming increasingly embedded in the organisation, the council’s confidence in using the process was growing and, crucially, that the council is learning more about its strengths, challenges and opportunities.



Senior Managers were asked to revisit their high-level critiques from the previous self-assessment and reflect on the changes that occurred during 2024/2025. They evaluated the improvements made and identified areas still requiring progress. Following this reflection, they reassessed the status of each core activity, scoring them as developing, developing moving into mature, mature, mature moving into leading, or leading, based on the evidence gathered to support their evaluations.

STEP 1

The critiques were used as a starting point for discussion sessions with Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. During these sessions, senior officers were asked to comment honestly and openly on these critiques and whether they thought the assessment was a true reflection of the position in 2024/2025. We also reviewed recommendations made by our regulators during the year.

STEP 2

From the completed high level critiques and the feedback obtained, opportunities for improvement (to increase the extent to which the council will meet their performance requirements in 2025/2026 onwards) were identified and are contained in the Improvement Action Plan in Appendix 1. This is in addition to a selection of improvements identified in previous years which are still ongoing due to the nature/scale of the work.

STEP 3

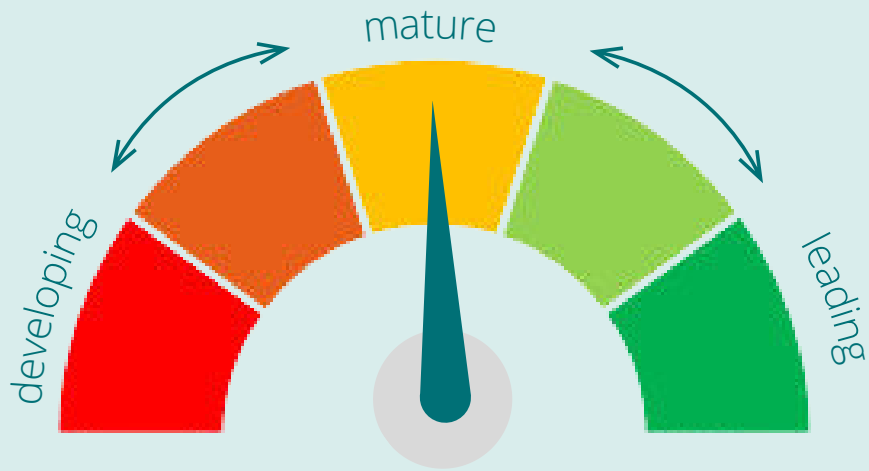
The draft self-assessment was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 9th September 2025. The Committee has a role to review the draft self-assessment and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions. No recommendations were made and the Corporate Self-Assessment 2024/2025 was presented to Cabinet on 29th October 2025.

STEP 4

Self-Assessment Scoring

When developing our approach to self-assessment, we adapted a ‘developing, mature, leading’ matrix.

Following early conversations, it was decided there was scope to expand the matrix to demonstrate where we were transitioning from one score to the next, but realise there is more work required to get us to the next assessment.



DEVELOPING	A new priority, a change in direction or we have faced challenges / barriers in this area. There are still some weakness which need to be improved.
DEVELOPING MOVING TOWARDS MATURE	Changes have been easily implemented and/or there have been lessons learnt, but there is still more to do to progress.
MATURE	The council has implemented change, there is evidence of stability and success, but there is still room for improvement.
MATURE MOVING TOWARDS LEADING	Consistently good performance has been demonstrated, with strengths outweighing challenges.
LEADING	There is strong evidence of success, demonstrating evidence of better outcomes and added value. A learning council, which is continuously aiming to improve



Evidence Base 2024/2025

In addition to the completion of the high level critiques which assessed how the council performed during 2024/2025 across the 8 core activities, we have also considered a wide variety of evidence in assessing our performance during the year. Some of the evidence has been used to inform other annual reports, including the Corporate Plan Annual Report 2024/2025 and the Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025.

The evidence is set out across three categories which has supplemented the conclusions drawn for the high level critiques.



Category 1 Internal Evidence

The evidence in this category provides an internal view of how the council performed during 2024/2025:

- Corporate Plan Annual Report
- NPT Public Service Board Wellbeing Plan - Annual Report
- Statement of Accounts
- Annual Governance Statement
- Director of Social Services Annual Report
- Performance Reports
- Strategic/Directorate/Service Risk Registers
- Compliments, Comments and Complaints
- Head of Service Delivery Plans
- Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports
- Internal Audit Reports



Category 2 Regulators Reports

The evidence in this category provides the regulatory or external view of performance from independent bodies.

- Audit Wales Annual Summary
- Audit Wales Reports
- Care Inspectorate Wales Reports
- Estyn Inspection Reports
- Public Service Ombudsman Wales
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation



Category 3 Consultation & Engagement

Engagement has developed significantly and continues to evolve. The evidence in this category is via listening to staff, residents and businesses talk about their experiences of services and working within the authority. This engagement is paramount in how the council improves, and how it effectively and efficiently delivers services. The council's consultations, Youth Council, Citizen's Panel and Community of Practice re-enforce the commitment to listen and to be accountable to act on feedback. Some examples of consultation and engagement undertaken in 2023/2024 include:

- Budget consultation 2023/2024
- Trade Union meetings
- Social Partnership meetings
- Youth Council
- Citizen's Panel
- Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement)
- Service Leaders Network Workshops
- Employee Engagement Survey



IMPROVEMENT AREA

Customers Voice (Service User Feedback)

Engagement from stakeholders is an integral part of how we operate on an ongoing basis - enabling the delivery of good quality services and supporting improvement. During 2023/2024, Audit Wales undertook a thematic review of 'Service User Perspective' across all 22 councils in Wales. Each council received an individual report with recommendations, with an overall report being published from an all Wales perspective.

For Neath Port Talbot Council, three recommendations were made, which were all accepted, and these continue to be progressed:

- R1** The council should ensure that the information provided to its senior leaders enables them to understand the service user perspective on a broader range of services and policies. The council should ensure this information is drawn from the diversity of service users.
- R2** The council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes
- R3** The council needs to assure itself that it has robust arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of the information it provides to senior leaders relating to service user perspective and outcomes.

There are pockets of strong service user feedback collected across the council. As an improvement area for 2025/2026 we will look to collect more of our customers feedback to inform planning and decision making.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

2023-2027



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Public Participation Strategy

The Council's public participation efforts in 2024/2025 focused on embedding inclusive, accessible, and responsive engagement practices across its governance structures, in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The strategy is structured around six statutory requirements and supported by a detailed action plan.

Requirement 1: Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors

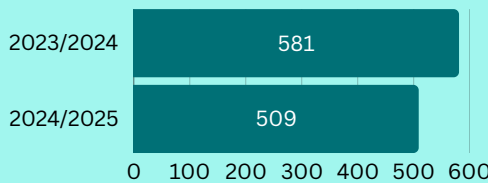
- The council is able to track the number of views of meetings and this is advertised on each meeting on our [Youtube channel](#) for members to view. Given the number of meetings, these figures are not replicated in this report but can be accessed via [Youtube](#).
- In respect of our Consultation pages, the council has received **4582 visits** in the last year.
- The user satisfactions score for the council website is **87.67%**

Requirement 2: Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member, or councillor, and what the role of the council involves

- Diversity data is collected during member induction with each Councillor.

Requirement 3: Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council

- The Citizens' Panel is a way for our residents to give us feedback on our work and contribute in our decision making at a very early stage. As at 2024/2025 there were **832** people taking part in the Citizen's Panel.
- In order to be consistent in our data analysis and year on year monitoring, consultations which are conducted annually will be used to provide data for this report. For 2024/25, only the budget consultation will be provided for benchmarking, however, the National Residents Survey will shortly begin and will be used in addition for future reports.



- **4582** have visited the council's 'Have your say' page.

Requirement 4: Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations

- Information on comments, compliment and complaints received can be found on page ??
- Participant rates in consultation and surveys*
 - Increase recycling performance - **3740**
 - Corporate Joint Committee Priorities - **16**
 - Part night lighting pilot survey - **121**
 - Budget consultation - **509**
 - Grandison Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme - **7**
 - Children's overnight and short stay - **10 (ongoing)**

** This data should be interpreted with caution as some consultations are either targeted consultations or specific geographical locations.*

- Number of views of meetings is available on the council's Youtube channel.

Requirement 6: Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

- Metrics have not been able to be gathered on this and work is ongoing to look at ways to collect this data retraining modules and work is ongoing with the WLGA to access this.
- Future training is to be facilitated in respect of the use of social media for elected members.

Requirement 5: Arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the council's duty of bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees

- No members of the public have attended scrutiny committees in the last year
- No members of the public have attended and made representations. A work programme will be commenced in Summer 2025 to seek public engagement
- Metrics have not been able to be gathered on this and work is ongoing to look at ways to collect this data.



IMPROVEMENT AREA - 2025/2026

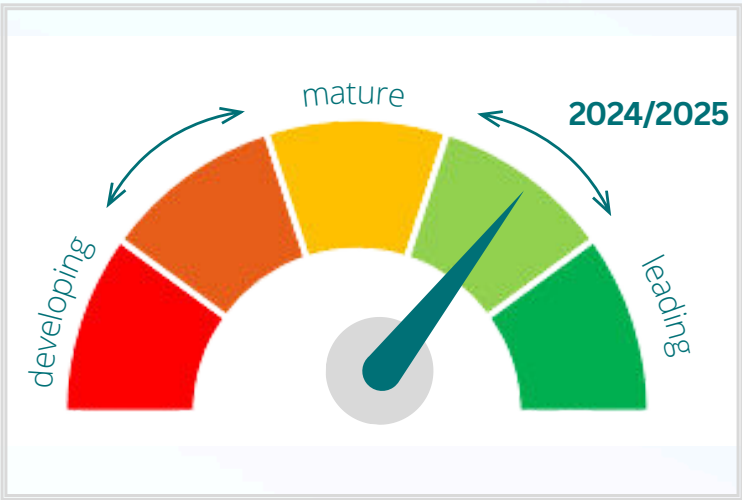
Within the National Residents Survey in Neath Port Talbot, which launched in June 2025, we ask the question 'please indicate the extent to which the Council generally takes residents' views into account when making a decision'. This will enable us to monitor the percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area and feed into our six statutory requirements.



Self-Assessment Overview

To conduct the 2024/2025 self-assessment, the council is actively working across the 8 core activity areas to evaluate the effectiveness of its functions and the economic, efficient and effective use of its resources. Additionally, an overall assessment has been made to reflect the council's current position .

Members and senior leaders acknowledge that, while the council self-assessment scoring remains at the **'mature moving into leading'** stage, significant progress has been made across the core activity areas. Over time, this progress will enable the council to firmly establish itself in the 'Leading' category.



Regarding the assessment of the council's governance effectiveness in securing functions and resources, additional improvements were identified following the self-assessment of the council's internal control system for the year ending 31st March 2025. This assessment is part of the development of the council's Annual Governance Statement for 2024/2025.

The self-assessment has identified 19 areas requiring improvement. The action plan in Appendix 1 addresses the previously identified improvement areas and will be closely monitored by the council's Corporate Governance Group, which comprises senior officers with governance-related responsibilities. In alignment with the revised Corporate Strategy, it is crucial that the council's approach to future self-assessments continues to evolve by integrating ongoing learning from within the council, partners, stakeholders, and best practices from other local authorities across Wales.

Building on this self-assessment, it is imperative to broaden our approach and develop an assessment process to evaluate the effectiveness of the relationship between the political leadership and senior officers in the council for inclusion in the 2025/2026 assessment. This will foster a culture of continuous improvement, enabling the council to consistently challenge and enhance its operations for the future.

Annual Governance Statement

To meet our statutory duty, the Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025 has been developed using the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework' created by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA), which we adopted in 2016. We have also incorporated the latest guidance from the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: addendum, released in May 2025.

The Annual Governance Statement outlines the processes and procedures that enable the council to function effectively. The governance framework comprises of the systems, processes, cultures, and values by which the council is directed and controlled. This framework integrates legal requirements, good practices, and management processes. Completing the Annual Governance Statement is a vital component of the council's corporate governance arrangements, ensuring that the council operates with integrity, makes timely decisions, and follows the right procedures.



The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) demonstrates:

The council's business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations;

Resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively;

Public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for;

There is sound and inclusive decision making;

There is a commitment to continuous improvement.

There is clear accountability for the use of resources to achieve agreed priorities, which benefit local people to ensure value for money and long term-sustainability.



Summary of Performance 2024/2025

Service Performance

During the year progress updates have been provided to the Strategic Leadership, Cabinet and Scrutiny against the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024/2027, and its four well-being objectives. We have also updated on progress made across Digital Services, Finance, Legal and Democratics Services and People and Organisational Development, which make up the council’s enabling programme.

and the internal, external and consultation/engagement which have been used to support the self-assessment.

Corporate Well-being Objectives

The well-being objectives, introduced during 2022/2023, were considered as part of the Annual Report and were deemed to still be relevant as a result of feedback from engagement campaigns:

- » All children get the best start in life;
- » All communities are thriving and sustainable;
- » Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations; and
- » Local people are skilled and access high quality, green jobs.

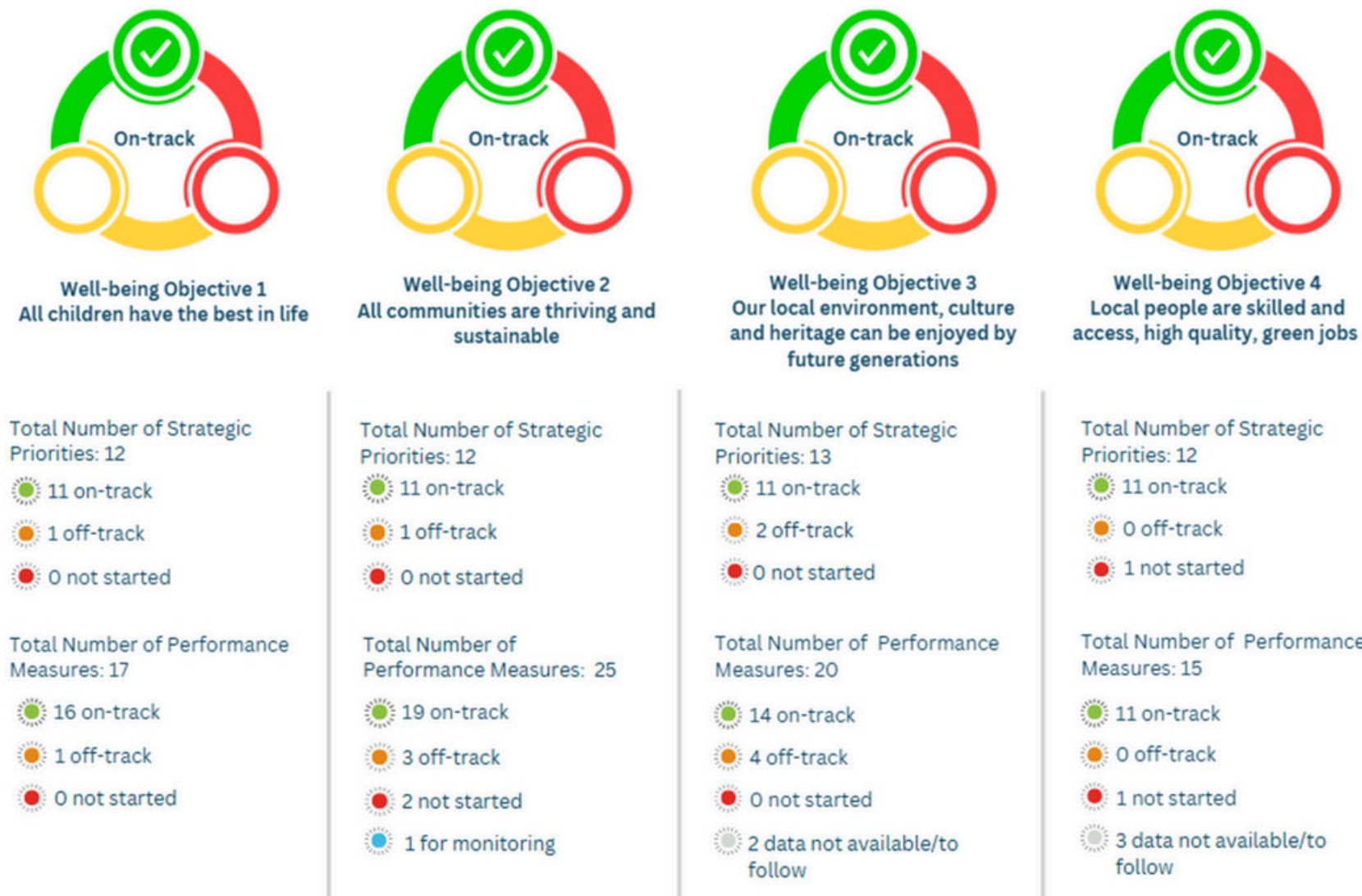
Full detail of work undertaken in year to deliver on our strategic priorities can be found in our Corporate Plan Annual Report 2024/2025.

Of the 49 strategic priorities, 44 were assessed as being on-track, 4 off-track / 1 not started.

Of the 77 performance measures, 60 are on-track, 8 off-track / 1 for monitoring. 5 of our performance measures do not have data available.

Some of the key achievements across service delivery include:

- Around 2000 children accessed the Flying Start programme, with 1415 children receiving part-time funded childcare. 1537 applications for part-time funded childcare for three to four-year-olds were approved.
- An increase of school attendance by 1.11% to 92.08% for primary schools, and an increase of 3.15% to 88.53% in secondary schools (*provisional figures*).
- Increased recruitment of mainstream/professional foster carers, reducing reliance on residential care and generating significant savings.
- Strengthened partnerships with housing developers to deliver quality, affordable, and low-carbon housing. 26 empty properties have been brought back into use, with 47 currently in progress, utilising £515,746 of Empty Property Grant funding.
- Adoption of Aberavon Seafront Masterplan to promote community use and well-being yet also encourage development and sustainable tourism and enhance the natural environment.
- Establishment of the Celtic Freeport to attract investment and create jobs in the green economy. In addition, we worked with partners to launch the Tata Transition Hub, supporting people and businesses affected by changes at Tata Steel UK.



There is still more work for us to do to build on some of the priorities which were off-track or not started. This includes the remodelling of home to school transport, the compact agreement between the council and the third sector and the development of a skills and employability strategy.

Compliments & Complaints

During 2024/2025 226 stage 1 complaints were received, marking an increase of 48 from the 178 received in 2023/2024. Notably, 44% (100) of the total complaints received were from our Environment & Regeneration Directorate, which includes services such as waste/ recycling, planning and environmental health. These services typically have a higher number of complaints due to their very nature.

There was an increase in the number of Stage 2 complaints received from 31 in 2023/2024 to 48 in 2024/2025. 23% (11 of 48) Stage 2 complaints were upheld /partially upheld in 2024/2025, an increase on the figure of 2 upheld/partially upheld in 2023/2024.

310 compliments were received during the year, a increase of 7 in the number received during 2023/2024.

More information can be found in our Corporate Compliment and Complaints Annual Report 2024/2025.

Neath Port Talbot Council Corporate Plan 2024/2027

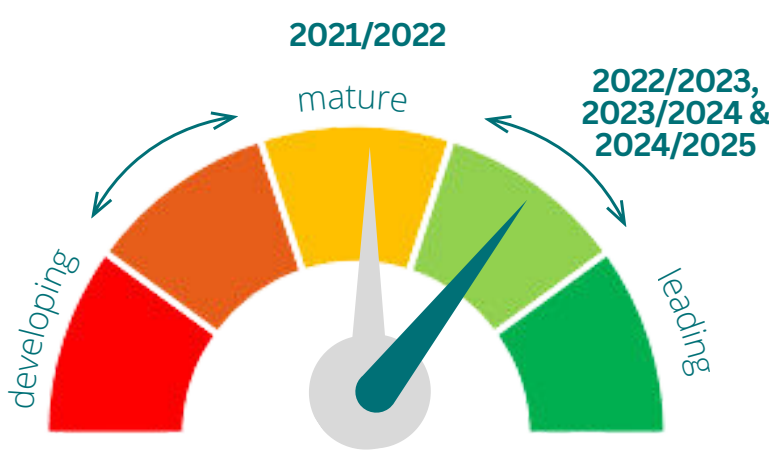
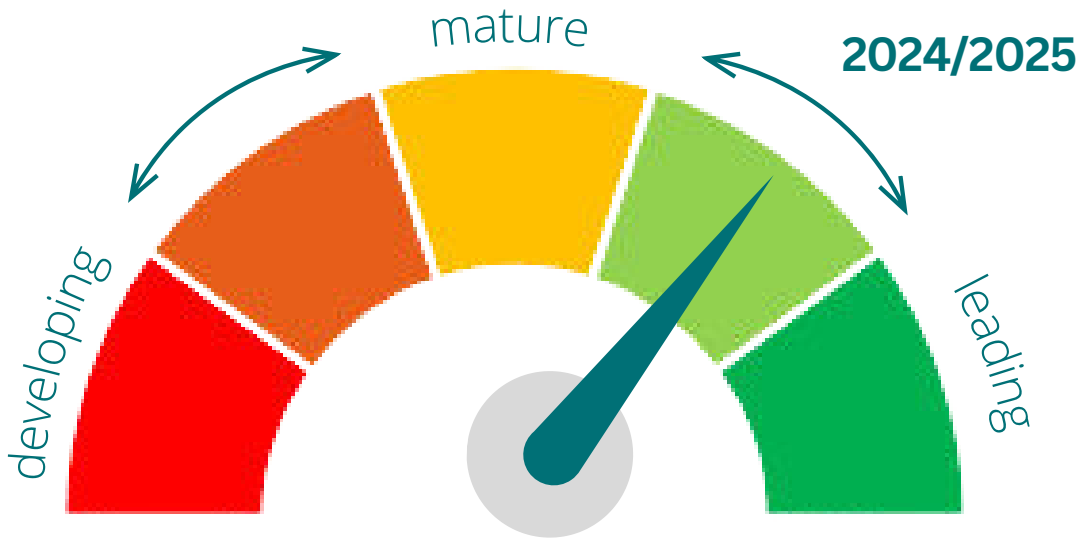
Neath Port Talbot Council
Corporate Plan 2024/2027
“Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT”

Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

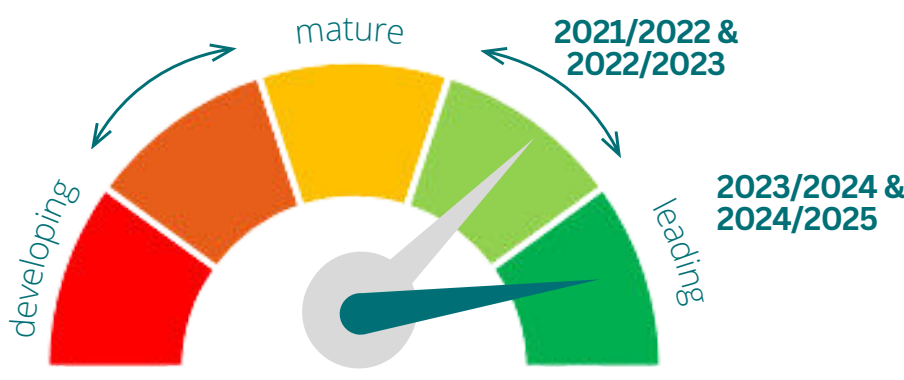
Corporate Self-Assessment 2024/2025

To ensure an honest and transparent self-assessment, we have utilised the scoring matrix outlined on page 5.

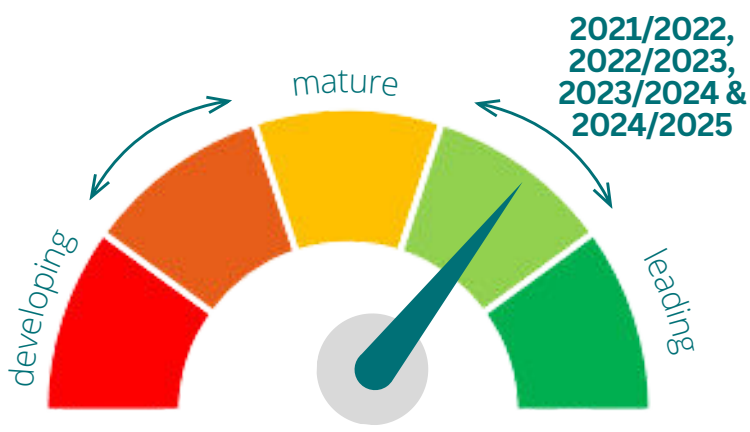
Based on the high-level assessments conducted, the overall rating for the council remains at **‘mature moving into leading’**. This has been the consistent outcome for all four self-assessments since 2021/2022. From this year’s self-assessment, and the learning and insight that has been gained, more work needs to be undertaken to encourage a cultural shift across the council. Whilst significant progress has been made over the past 12 months we need to demonstrate clearly that there is an understanding of roles and responsibilities, accountability and overall capability council wide, to deliver our functions and services before we can justifiably move into the ‘leading’ category. The gauges indicate the current self-assessment score (green) and previous scores (grey).



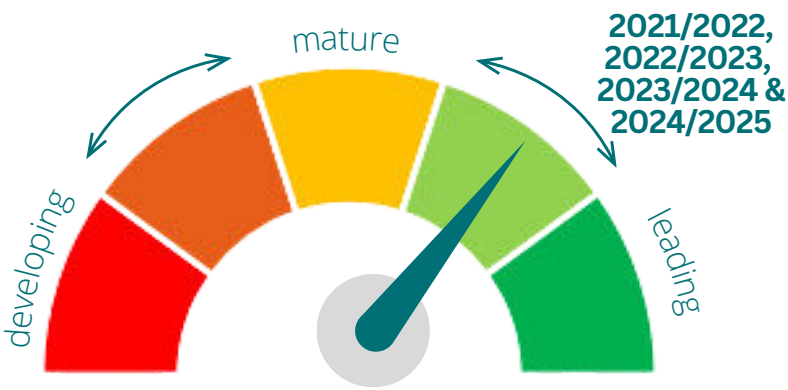
**Corporate Planning -
Role of the Council
Summary - Page 11 - 12**



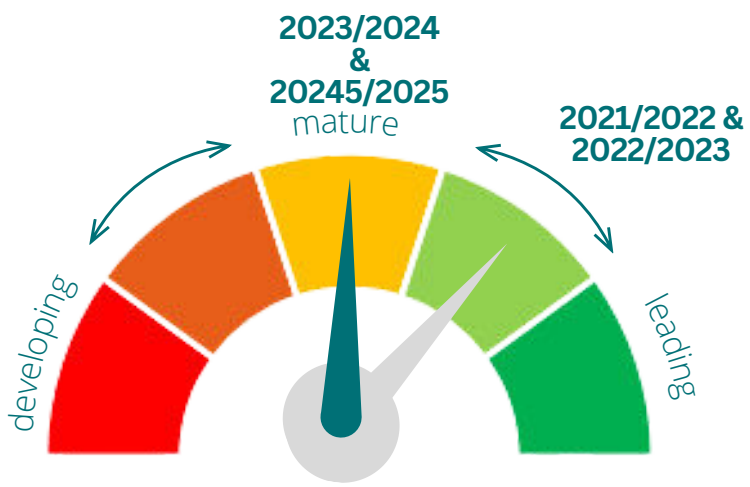
**Workforce planning -
Getting the best from the workforce
Summary - Pages 13 -15**



**Leadership and Management
Summary - Pages 16 - 19**



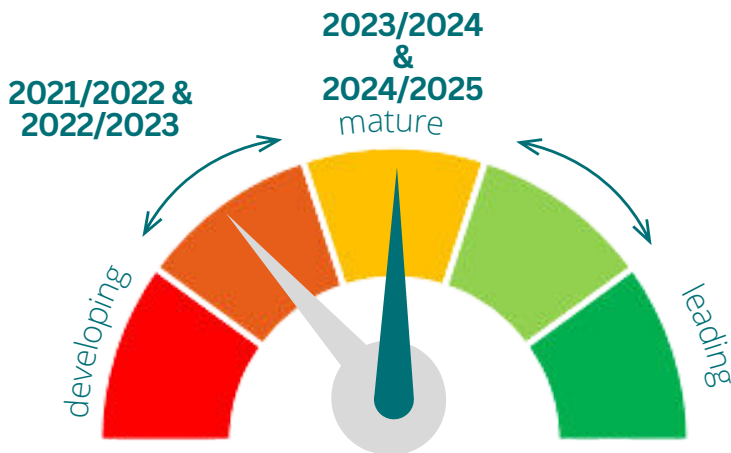
**Procurement & Commissioning
Summary - Pages 20 - 21**



**Risk Management -
Effective Risk Management
Summary - Page 22**



**Data, Digital & Technology / Digital Assets
Summary - Pages 23 - 24**



**Financial Planning -
Managing Expenditure / Managing Income
Summary - Page 25**



**Physical Assets & Facilities-
Summary - Pages 26 - 27
(Please note this section was added to
self-assessment in 2022/2023)**

Corporate Planning 'The Role of the Council'

Corporate Plan 2024/2027

During 2024/2025, the council published the Corporate Plan “Working Towards a More Prosperous, Fairer and Greener NPT” for the period 2024/2027.

A lot had changed since the previous plan was published in 2022 so the council took the opportunity to take stock and reset the council’s priorities considering the new context the council was working within. This included more people seeking help from social services; more people presenting as homeless; and more children needing extra help in school and in travelling to school.

The funding made available by the UK and Welsh governments for those functions in the previous two years had fallen significantly short of what was needed to respond to the needs of communities. Conversely, the council had secured a large amount of investment funding under the UK Government’s Levelling Up agenda to help regenerate communities along with major projects that have the potential to grow a large number of sustainable jobs into future years, including the Freeport status for the port of Port Talbot. In addition, the announcement by Tata Steel UK Ltd of the decarbonisation programme to see the end of traditional steel making at Port Talbot, and a move to new technologies, added a further strategic dimension to the above landscape.

The refreshed Corporate Plan described the next set of actions the council believed needed to be taken to balance the needs of our communities in the present, with the opportunities to be grasped if we are to create a more prosperous, fairer and greener future for everyone over the long term.

The revised plan incorporated 9 corporate transformational programmes, which supported the delivery of the four well-being objectives. Cross-cutting plans, service delivery and other partnership plans continued to support the delivery of the well-being objectives. A new requirement introduced during 2024/2025 was the completion of Service Delivery Plans at Head of Service level. Operational services could choose to continue to complete Service Plans at the Accountable Manager level if they wished to. In addition to the above, the council moved to a new model of scrutiny which placed performance as a standing agenda item at every meeting.

Corporate Strategy 2025/2028

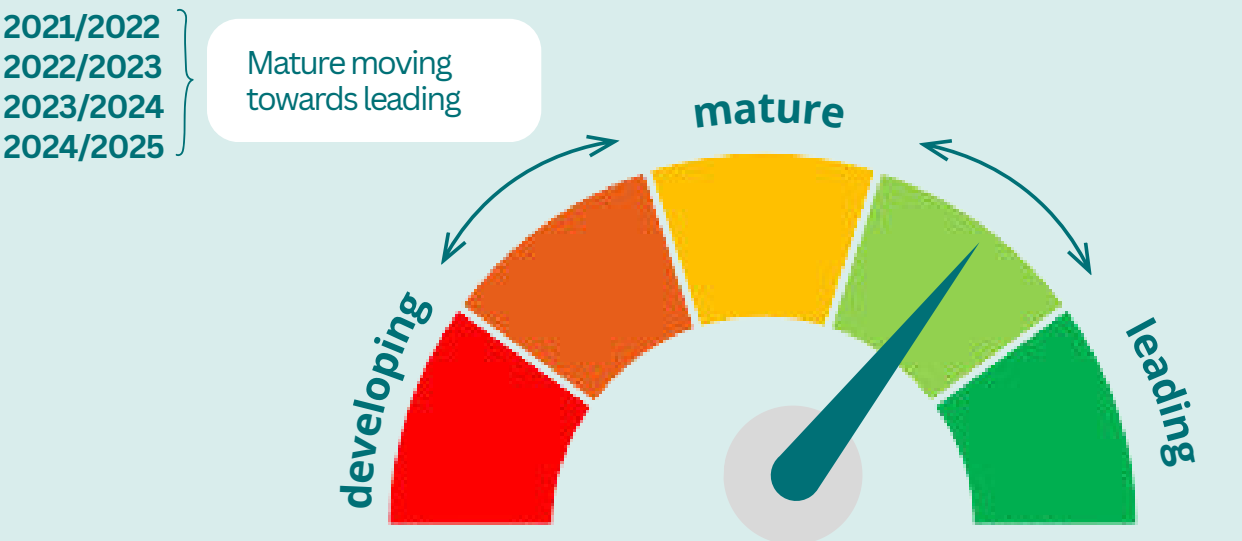
Towards the end of 2024/2025, work started to re-focus the content of the 2024/2027 Corporate Plan. It was acknowledged there was a need to strip back some of the content to ensure there was an emphasis on the delivery of the well-being objectives and the three year aims, focusing on key strategic areas of work, considering budget pressures and the additional demands on directorates.

It is proposed that the Strategy covers the period 2025/2028, taking in the next two years of this local government term, and allowing the elected 2027 political administration to settle in and establish their priorities. A key improvement in the Corporate Strategy is the inclusion of 3 levels of performance measures – service measures, service user feedback measures, population/outcome measures.

In addition, there is a renewed focus on four cross-cutting (*pictured below*) areas of work which promote the wide range of work undertaken to contribute to our well-being objectives across a diverse range of council services.

We wanted to ensure that this contribution is recognised, demonstrating the council’s commitment and the difference we are making.

The delivery of the Corporate Strategy will be supported by Heads of Service Business Plans. The detail on delivering the council’s aims will be set out within these business plans through actions and performance measures and progress will be monitored as outlined in the council’s revised corporate performance management framework (page ??).



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations. Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

Regarding our ‘Corporate Planning’ function our scoring remains ‘Mature’ for the fourth consecutive year. While progress has been made in this area, a more mature cultural shift, across the council is needed, to understand roles and responsibilities to ensure effective and efficient implementation and monitoring of key governance related functions and services.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents:

- Corporate Plan 2024/2027: “Working Towards a More Prosperous, Fairer and Greener NPT”
- Head of Service – Business Plans
- Corporate Performance Management Framework
- Strategic Equalities Plan
- Welsh Language Promotional Strategy
- Corporate Plan Annual Report
- Self-Assessment
- Annual Governance Statement

Regulators Report:

- Annual Audit Summary 2024
- Audit Wales: Use of Performance Information: Service Users Perspective & Outcomes

Corporate Planning 'The Role of the Council'

Corporate Performance Management Framework

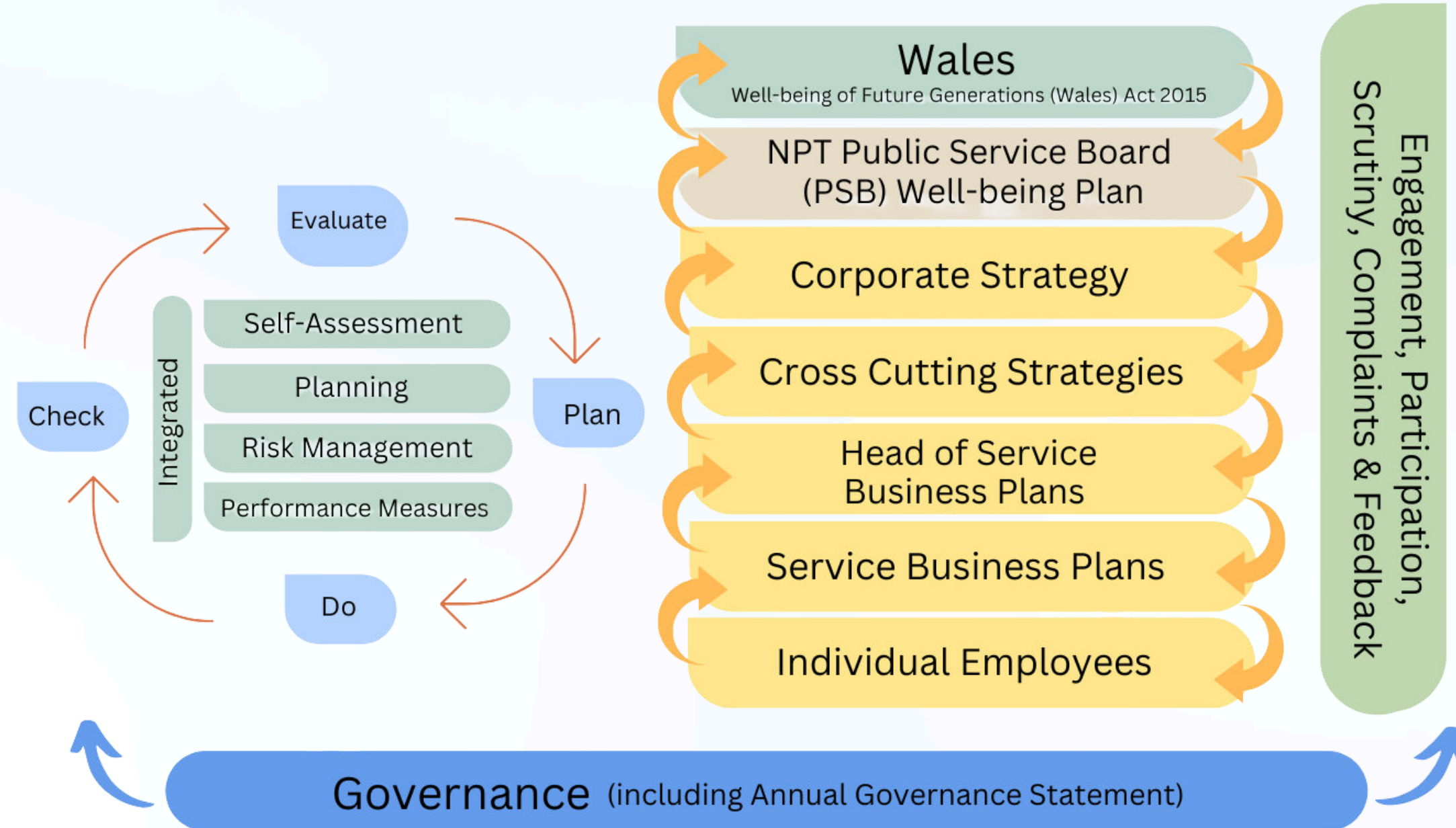
During 2024/2025, the council revised its corporate performance management framework for implementation in 2025/2026. It was acknowledged by the Strategic Leadership Team that performance management arrangements required strengthening across the council at the strategic, service and operational levels.

The review took account of the different performance management requirements across the council, ensuring a streamlined approach and improved visibility of performance management at all levels.

The purpose of the framework is to ensure we have effective corporate governance within the council. It builds on existing operational risk management practices and complements other systems of governance to form the council's internal systems of control. The framework establishes roles & responsibilities and the corporate / service planning and performance reporting and monitoring reporting regime involved in ensuring a robust approach to corporate / service planning and performance management.

The framework aims to promote good management, performance, stewardship of public funds, and public engagement, ultimately demonstrating that the council is "Working Towards a More Prosperous, Fairer and Greener NPT".

It is important that we have a fit for purpose Corporate / Service Planning and Performance Management Framework in place that joins up council business from employee level up to council level, and where everybody is clear where they fit, and how they contribute to achieving the council's vision, purpose, well-being objectives and strategic priorities contained in the Corporate Strategy.



For our framework to be fit for purpose, it is important that our planning (including corporate planning, strategy and policy planning, service planning, financial and workforce planning), performance and governance related process (including risk management, self-assessment, complaints handling, engagement and scrutiny processes) as well as benchmarking and associated policy and performance research are robust and interwoven into our decision making, reporting and monitoring processes.

This will enable a holistic view of performance, providing a different insight to the overall performance of the council. This holistic view of performance will be strengthened during 2025/2026.

Strategic Planning & Performance Group

During 2024/2025, the Strategic Planning & Performance Group was established to further strengthen performance management arrangements across the council. The aim of the group is to foster an effective corporate planning and performance management culture across the council, it is also to ensure Directorate Management Teams and Accountable Managers are fully informed and engaged on the corporate planning and performance management requirements and timescales.

The Group will play a key role in ensuring the effective implementation of the council's revised corporate performance management framework during 2025/2026.

Workforce Planning

'Getting the best from the workforce'

The council continues to invest in its workforce and through the Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022/2027. It was approved by the council's Personnel Committee in October 2022 the council sets out the following vision and objectives.

CLEAR VISION

We want to have the right number of people with the right skills and attitudes in place at the right time to deliver council services and functions.

OUR KEY OBJECTIVES

- Delivering the workforce actions needed in the short, medium and long term to implement the Corporate Plan whilst ensuring the health, safety and well-being of our people.
- Embedding the Corporate Priorities, Vision and Values.

In 2023 the Strategic Workforce Plan was reviewed to ensure that the priorities remain fit for purpose and a further 12 month delivery plan developed. This of course was carried out with input from the Strategic Leadership Team and all of our stakeholders, including managers, employees, trade unions and external partners and regulators. We repeated this exercise in 2024, again with thorough engagement and involvement with our stakeholders, signing off priorities and the 12 month delivery plan for 2025/2026 with the Strategic Leadership Team and Personnel Committee in March 2025.

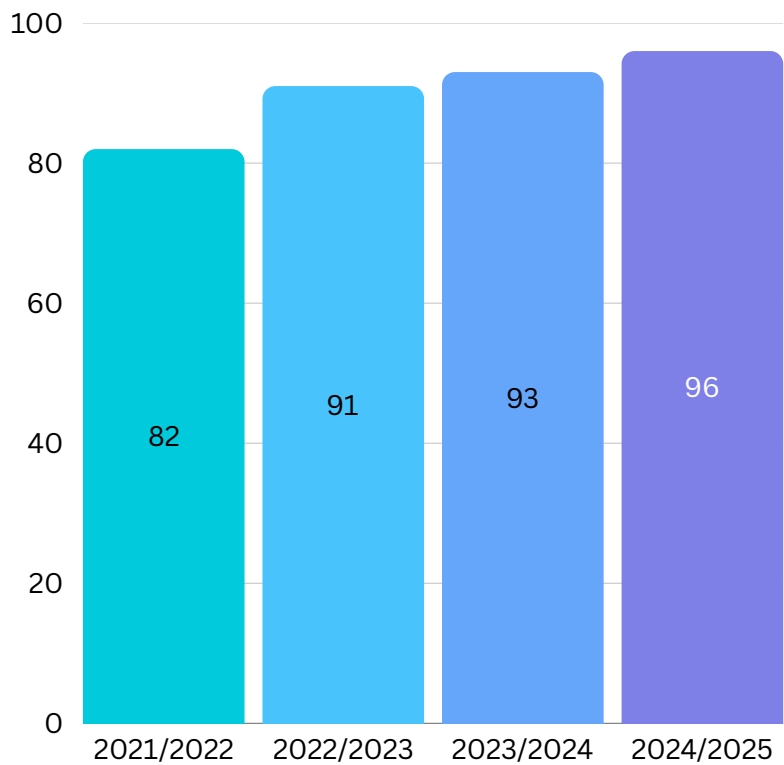
An important aspect of the 2023 and 2024 reviews has been to assess what has been the impact of the delivery of actions linked to the Strategic Workforce Plan. Appendix 1 of the report describes the outputs of the Delivery Plan, and where we are able to we have provided evidence of the quantifiable and measurable impact. For example, in relation to recruitment we can now evidence that the significant activity to support recruitment is having a positive impact on the council's ability to attract candidates and successfully appoint to vacant posts:

- We can evidence that more people are applying for jobs with the council, seeing an increase in applications of 46% when compared to 2021/2022. And it should be noted that the number of jobs advertised has decreased this year (as a result of budget savings managers are not advertising as many vacancies); even with 225 less vacancies advertised, we have received 2,189 more applications.

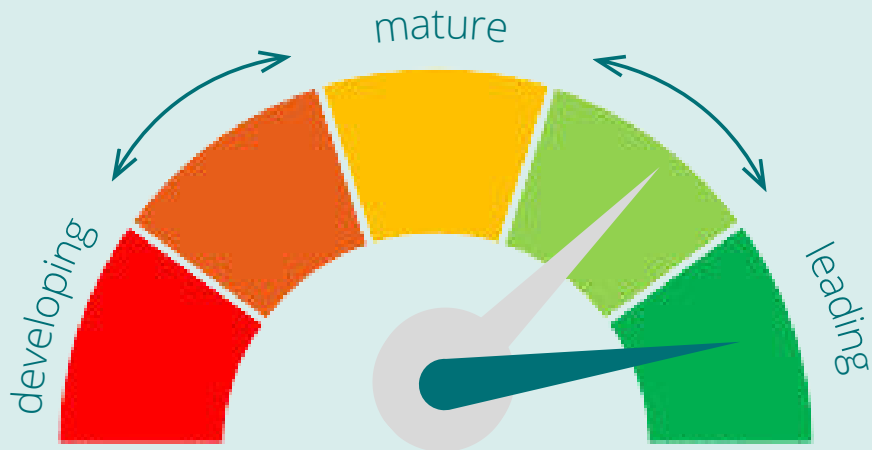
Recruitment is outstripping resignations, and that in turn means we have a positive rather than negative retention rate; this speaks positively to our activity to improve employee experience and engagement and retain talent. We have provided activity rates, for example the numbers of employees participating in the leadership development pathway programmes; this indicates that employees are engaging with initiatives. We have also provided feedback from participants providing employee voice, the impact of actions on individuals in our workforce – the case studies provided aim to bring personal impact to life.

Our employee survey will now be an annual event, which means we will be able to track changes in employee opinion and attitude and see how this may be influenced by employment strategies. Where we can, we have provided feedback from other sources where this is available, so for example ratings on external job recruitment sites (resourcing NPT) show a positive view of the council as an employer of choice when compared with local government competitors.

Our overall successful appointment rate (%)



2023/2024 & 2024/2025	Leading
2021/2022 & 2022/2023	Mature moving towards leading



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

Regarding our 'Workforce Planning' function our scoring remains in 'Leading' for the second year. As a council we will continue to engage with our workforce and adapt accordingly.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

- **NPT Council Documents:**
 - Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022-2027
 - Review of the Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 Report to Personnel Committee dated 19th February 2025
 - Corporate Plan
 - CIPD People Impact Survey 2022 / 2025
 - Employee Survey 2024
 - Service Succession Plans

Regulators Report:
Audit Wales Springing Forward Review

Workforce Planning - *'Getting the best from the workforce'*



Employee Survey 2024

'Let's Talk about working at NPT Council' was conducted between 13 March and 31 May 2024. As well as informing and helping us to measure the impact of employment initiatives, the feedback from employees has been used to inform actions in the Delivery Plan for 2025 / 2026. This will seek to address the identified areas for improvement from the survey feedback, in particular focussing on internal employee communications, appraisals and performance management, management of change and career planning and pathways. Heads of Service, Local Authority Headteachers' Group for Primary Schools (LLAN) and National Association of Secondary Headteachers (NAASH) have been provided with reports with data specific to their respective services, to enable them to determine any service level actions that need to be taken.



Service level workforce planning

At a corporate level, the Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022/2027 aims to ensure the right resources, skills and capabilities are in place to deliver the priorities of the council in the short, medium and long term. At an operational service level, a comprehensive Succession Planning Toolkit was developed to assist managers to prepare a service level Succession Plan in order to identify and develop the potential future leaders and individuals required to fill other business-critical positions within the council to ensure we continue to provide high quality services to our citizens. To date, 62 succession plans have been completed covering around 75% of the council's workforce (excluding schools). We reviewed the Toolkit in 2024, developing an interactive Excel based toolkit, already pre-populated with key employee data, and interactive stop down pick lists, enabling more efficient completion and consistency in the data that can be collated from succession plans. This new template will be launched in May 2025 with updated training available for managers.



Social Partnership

We are very proud of our long standing partnership with our recognised trade unions, which helps us to develop innovative and creative solutions to employment challenges. Trade unions support our workforce planning, through involvement in the development of the strategy and delivery plans. A trade union representative has been seconded to the Future of Work Delivery Team and has been instrumental in ensuring employee voice is at the heart of all that we do. Trade unions play an active role in managing change across the workforce and, as an example of this, trade union representatives are members of the council's Redeployment Action Group, alongside representative Heads of Service from across the council, working together to safeguard employment and facilitate the redeployment of any employees whose employment is at risk. In addition, we work closely with trade union to reach consensus on the setting and delivery of our corporate well-being objectives.



Talent Management

Establishing the Talent Management Team has been an important action in our strategic approach to workforce planning. The team was established in February 2024 comprising of experienced professionals with an enthusiasm for talent management. The team support our services with succession planning, talent management and career development activity, helping the council to attract, retain, motivate and engage top talent.

The team liaise and work in partnership with a broad range of organisations to support our succession planning and recruitment strategies. This includes attending job fairs to represent NPT jobs and careers, attending regular 'Want To Work' days with the Job Centre Plus, liaising with universities and further education colleges to shape qualifications to meet our employer needs, working with Tata to share talent management experience and support redeployment of displaced employees, the provision of career coaching and career planning workshops to NPT employees, support for employees 'at risk' e.g. of redundancy, and bespoke support for recruiting managers particularly where jobs are 'hard to recruit to'. The team have helped widen the council's recruiting net, utilising digital technology, as well as promoting inclusive recruitment practices.



Workforce Planning Networks

We attend and contribute to the WLGA HR Directors Network, a forum for sharing best practice and innovation, as well as problem solving. We also attend the Local Government Association National Workforce Planning Network, a UK wide forum that aims to promote workforce planning and share best practice.

Awards & Recognition

March 2024: we were delighted to be shortlisted as finalists in the category 'Best HR In-House Team' in CIPD Cymru Annual Awards with the award submission and interview focussing on all that we have been seeking to achieve through the Strategic Workforce Plan and the demonstrable impact of actions.

September 2024: Welsh Government have recognised the strength of our social partnership working, inviting the Head of People & Organisational Development and the Chair of the Joint Trade Unions to present at the Social Partnership Conference held in Swansea in September 2024 and highlight the council in a case study on their website [Neath Port Talbot Council social partnership case study | GOV.WALES](#)

September 2024: the Strategic Workforce Plan was shortlisted for the Best Workforce Initiative in the UK wide Association for Public Sector Excellence Awards.

March 2025: the Head of People & OD was shortlisted for the HR in Wales awards in the Excellence in People Leadership category.

Workforce Planning - *'Getting the best from the workforce'*



Benchmarking People Practice

In 2021, the council began working in partnership with the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) via their People Development Partner (PDP) Scheme which seeks to recognise organisations that are demonstrating a real commitment to better work and working lives.

To be a CIPD People Development Partner, an organisation must:

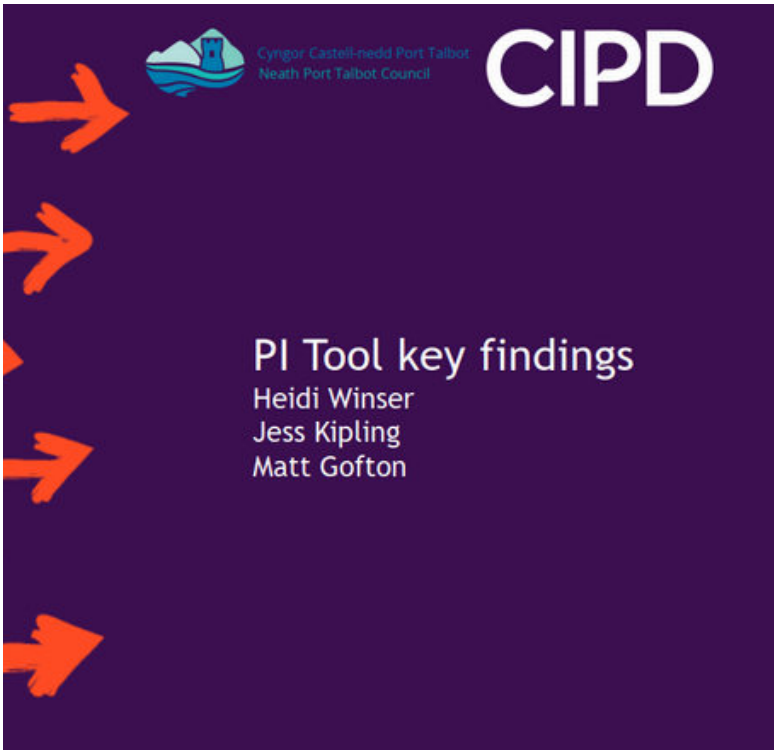
- Recognise and align HR capability and practices against the CIPD’s international standard of excellence (the CIPD Profession Map)
- Be committed to the ongoing professionalism of its HR people through qualifications and membership
- Be a champion for the profession by providing entry points (for example through apprenticeships and graduate programmes)
- Work with the CIPD to continually support the HR team to thrive through training and development
- Invest back into the wider profession by participating in research and policy.

The key to success for any business is how it develops, attracts and retains its people. We see the vital importance of having the very best HR capabilities and talent working for this council and that is why we have worked with the CIPD to be the best that we can be.

The CIPD assessed and confirmed the council for PDP Status in the summer of 2022, and by becoming a People Development Partner, this has confirmed the council’s dedication to raising the capability, credibility and impact of its people functions, including its Human Resources, Training and Organisational Development functions. The council was the first employer in Wales, and one of the first councils across the United Kingdom, to be awarded PDP status. We are really pleased to have led the way with this benchmarking and development activity, and have been able to share our experience with a number of other councils across the UK. We are pleased to see that the number of councils also with PDP status is now increasing.

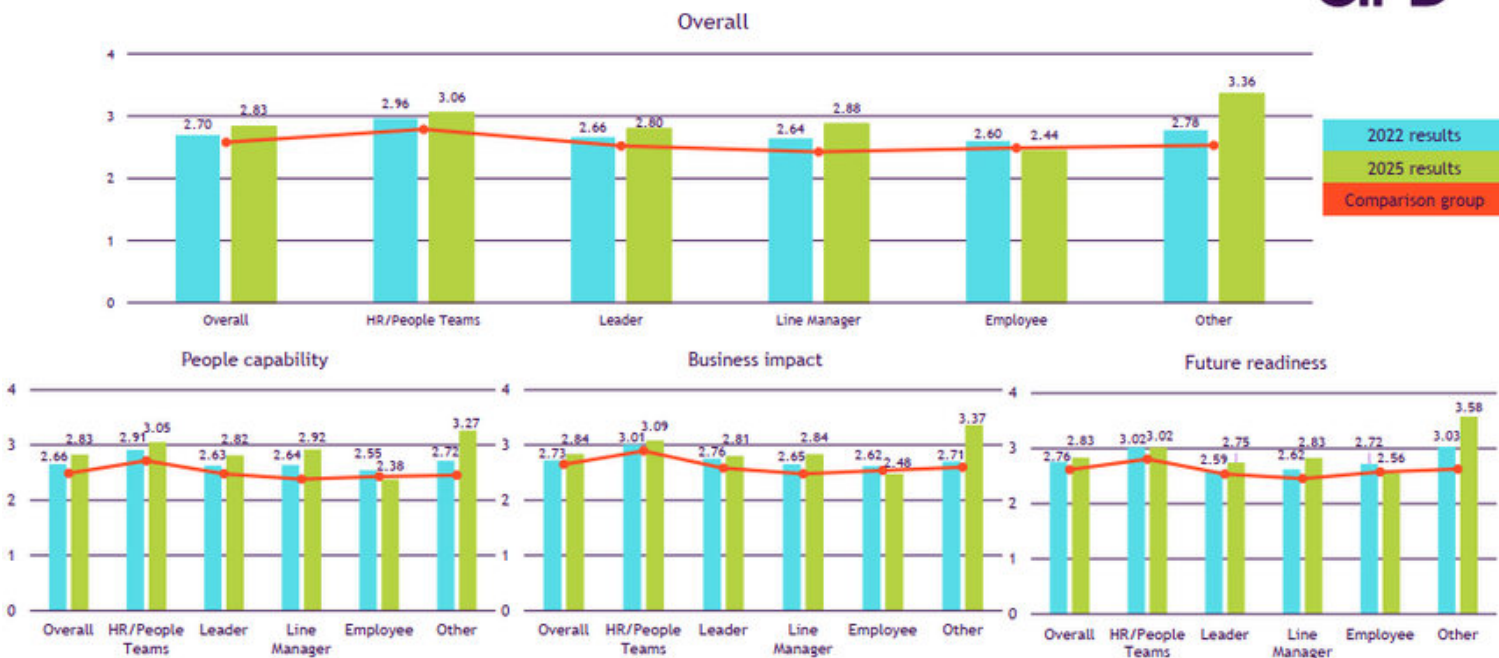
As part of the scheme the CIPD carried out a People Impact Survey across the council to determine how the council’s current people capability aligns to CIPD standards, as set out in the CIPD Profession Map, as well as public sector benchmarking. This information was used to inform the Strategic Workforce Plan and to inform the development plan for the HR team. We have focussed on developing our skills sets around Organisational Development and Design, People Data Analytics, Talent Management and most recently, on Reward and Recognition; more importantly we have used these skill sets to drive forward priorities and actions set out in the Strategic Workforce Plan.

In March 2025 we repeated the People Impact Survey and benchmarking exercise, to see how our people practice has evolved over the 3-year period and to inform ongoing development work within the HR team. We are delighted to report that the results show improvement across the 24 categories assessed (with the exception of one that remained the same) and rated consistently higher than the public sector benchmarking comparison group.



Overall, the data presented in the graphs below indicates a positive trend in the perception of HR/People Teams' performance and impact across different groups within Neath Port Talbot.

Neath Port Talbot vs comparisons: Overall averages



Leadership & Management

Developing our Leaders

The starting point when considering the development of managers and leaders in the council is to understand what it is we want our managers and leaders to be – what are the things we want them to do and what do we expect of them in terms of behaviours and values; taking into account of course the council’s Corporate Plan.

Every Corporate Director, Head of Service and Accountable Manager currently has a job description in place which articulates the expectations of their role, and particularly for employees in roles that require professional membership and / or registration, these job descriptions will refer to leadership expectations of professional and regulatory bodies. We reviewed these arrangements in 2023/2024, and this has led to the development and agreement of a Leadership Competency Framework.

This framework outlines the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours associations with an effective, 21st Century Public Leader. The Framework is encompassed in new template job descriptions and person specifications for the following levels:

- Head of Service
- Strategic Manager
- Accountable Manager

The council has a range of policies and procedures in place which set out the expectations of our leaders and managers in relation to a range of employment and corporate processes (e.g. financial and governance requirements). The annual performance appraisal scheme requires every manager, from the Chief Executive downwards, to have regular performance discussions with direct reports, confirming objectives and monitoring progress towards them.

Leadership Development

The Strategic Workforce Plan: the Future of Work Strategy sets outs that we will embed a strategic approach to how we develop Chief Officers and senior leaders that enables them to demonstrate the key competencies required of them in their role.

The Plan sets out the following priority action “The development of well-resourced corporate programmes proving comprehensive development at every level of leadership will help ensure that the leaders of today and tomorrow are capable, confident, competent and compassionate”.

In 2023, a Leadership Development Pathway was agreed by the Strategic Leadership Team. This outlines opportunities for development from the point of induction and replaced a much more ad hoc approach to leadership development. The comprehensive programme draws on ILM qualifications – considered the de facto standard in terms of leadership and management qualifications, designed in line with National Occupational Standards. In completing any of the qualifications listed from Levels 2 to 5, participants will also achieve a NVQ qualifications at the same level. We have maintained an effective partnership with training provider Talk Training, who continue to offer fully funded ILM qualifications from Levels 3 to 5. The table on page ? provides total number of current learners and achievers.

With a view to providing additional support, an invitation was extended to all current ILM students in 2024 to attend a Personal Development workshop. It was noted that ILM students, whilst the course provided a sound academic grounding, students might perhaps miss the “context” of management at NPT. At this session, it was agreed that a regular Study Network might be beneficial, since finding time and quiet space to work on assignments was on occasion, problematic. These are held on a bi-monthly basis.

Take up is currently very low and this will be reviewed in terms of its suitability. Talk Training will, however, be facilitating an Assignment Writing workshop in the new year. In the meantime, we continue to build close relationships with learning providers, ensuring regular monitoring and updates, with a view to giving students the best possible chance of completion and achievement.



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

Regarding our ‘Leadership and Management,’ our scoring remains ‘Mature moving into leading’ for the fourth consecutive year.

In previous years, limited focus was placed on leadership and management due to budget and resource pressures. In addition to progressing the Strategic Workforce Plan and supporting initiatives, current investment must continue to ensure this work develops further. This will help shift the cultural approach across the council and move the scoring into the leading category.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents

- Strategic Workforce Plan The Future of Work Strategy 2022/2027
- Annual performance appraisal scheme
- Leadership Competency Framework
- Leadership Development Pathway
- ILM uptake
- Ment2be mentoring scheme uptake

“The **Corporate Plan 2024/2027** sets out set out the council’s vision, values and priorities and in relation to leadership states that:

“Our leaders and managers have a tremendous impact on the council’s culture and through our leaders we want to provide a sense of vision, purpose and inspiration to our employees. Creating Team NPT will enable us to learn from one another, build organisational confidence, lead to innovation and improve outcomes for the people who live and work in Neath Port Talbot”.

”

Leadership & Management



31 Overcoming Imposter Syndrome



31 Speaking with Confidence Course



31 A Professional Development Programme for New and Curious Managers Workshop 1

We now have an established Leadership Development Programme (for New & Curious Managers). Cohort 4 took place in January 2025, and Cohort 5 is scheduled for September 2025.

The programme has been further developed following feedback from managers and covers topics aligned to the Employment Cycle and grouped into three strands: Leading the Service, Leading Yourself and Leading Others. Participants are also invited to share ideas for future training, which has triggered the development and delivery of addition sessions extending our leadership development offer. These include: The Conflicting Extremes of Leadership: Avoiding Hubris and Overcoming Impostor Syndrome and Step Up to Stand Out: Creating a Personal Brand.

Working with The Hub Events, we facilitated a short workshop: Developing Resilience as a Manager. The purpose was to provide an element of support towards “Leading Self”, particularly in view of current challenges faced by the council.

We are pleased to benefit from the support of internal members of staff, who have developed and delivered courses based on feedback from managers – particularly the Writing Committee Reports workshops (x2) as facilitated by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services.

We delivered our first Speaking with Confidence Course, which aimed to “demystify” the notion of public speaking in the context of NPT – for example: at a Cabinet meeting. 8 participants attended the first course, which concluded with 5 attendees delivering a short presentation to an invited audience. Audience members (including Heads of Service) gave constructive, developmental feedback to each of the participants.

Similarly, a new workshop was developed and delivered, with a focus on “Leading Yourself”. Step Up to Stand Out: Creating a Personal Brand, explores how we can develop our leadership presence, and how we wished to be seen by the wider workforce. It also examines aspects of personal development – encouraging reflection and forward planning, as well as considering how we can look after our own well-being.

A new workshop has been developed and launched in February 2025: The Reflective Leader.

The purpose of this workshop is to encourage managers to review their practice and embed the notion of continuous improvement.

Participants benefited from a workshop on the theme of the Corporate Plan (Everyone’s Business), a review of their student experience (challenges, barriers, but also service and personal improvements), and a career development workshop to establish future needs.

Senior Leadership Development

A partnership with Neath Port Talbot College, has established a fully funded ILM Diploma in Strategic Leadership & Management (at Level 7). Funding at this level is rare, with average costs quoted at £4000 per participant.

Through our internal leadership development pathway, the Level 7 qualification is recommended to those working at Service Leader level and above (in particular, aspiring Heads of Service).

In addition to the above, all senior leaders receive updates on opportunities provided by external partners (e.g. Academi Wales Senior Leadership Experience, Summer/Winter Schools).

One Service Leader (ENV) had the opportunity to participate in the SOLACE Future Leaders Course in 2024 / 2025. This is a one-year programme, aimed at middle managers with potential to progress into more corporate roles, and to broaden their understanding of the strategic challenges facing Local Government. One Corporate Director (S&CS) participated in the INPD Directors Development Programme Accelerator course, which covered the key themes of advanced senior leadership and strategic planning.

Coaching Network

Five members of staff have completed accredited coaching qualifications, with a view to establishing a Coaching Network, to provide further support to enable leadership development. Whilst most coaches are “active”, further work needs to be completed in terms of agreeing common protocols and the collection of thematic data. The thematic data will eventually inform future training programmes. However, we continue to procure coaching services, where potential conflicts of interest are identified, or where personal preference is expressed.

All coaches are invited to participate in professional supervision on a quarterly basis. The purpose of which is to ensure ethical practice, and to provide additional development support to the coaches.

Feedback

“Since the programme, I have been given the opportunity to act up, with the ability of being a line manager once a job goes out to advert.

Therefore, all the knowledge I have gained will be able to be put into practice, such as the recruitment and selection process, on-boarding etc. Also, because of the skills I gained, my manager was able to identify these within me to give me the opportunity.”

“I just think that it personally it has made feel valued again as an employee, of having interactions with higher management it seems as if the Council is going in the right positive direction, where the Strength of the Council lies in the commitment and dedication of staff to work for the betterment of everyone.”

Feedback for improvement

There appeared to be consensus about the hybrid format. Colleagues agreed that virtual sessions were somewhat more convenient, but compromised interaction.

“The presentations seems more suited to face-to-face events, so it can be difficult to get a conversation/ interaction with the group started in virtual events”

Evaluation Feedback

All participants are encouraged to share suggestions for other workshops.

Based on feedback a new workshop has been added on the theme of “Finance for Non-Finance Managers”.

It was noted that workshop evaluations were poor, and failed to demonstrate impact. A full evaluation has since taken place, with focus groups added with a view to further interrogating the data. To help mitigate this moving forward, a short workshop on the theme of Reflective Practice has been added to future courses. It is hoped this will encourage reflection as a leadership skill, but will also provide feedback on a session by session basis.

Leadership & Management

Mentoring Programme

The Ment2Be NPT mentoring scheme (winner of the Chwarae Teg FairPlay Employer Award in 2023) was developed to support low paid women access advice and guidance to help them with career development and progression is now on its second cohort. Since the implementation of the programme, it has developed to be an inclusive offer across the whole workforce.

We asked the 10 mentees who completed the first cohort of the Career Mentoring Scheme for their feedback in relation to the Scheme.

The feedback highlights several positive outcomes:

- Invaluable Support: Mentees reported that their mentors provided crucial support, helping them understand the work environment and overcome various challenges.
- Insightful Experience Sharing: Mentors shared their extensive council experience, offering insights into their career journeys and practical advice, which mentees found highly beneficial.
- Broader Understanding of Council Operations: Through the mentoring sessions, mentees gained a broader understanding of council operations, enhancing their overall knowledge and perspective.
- Guidance on Learning Styles and Work Preferences: Mentees received helpful guidance on their learning styles and work preferences, which aided in their personal and professional development.

As a result of feedback, training has been provided for mentors and mentees to help them get the most out of this scheme.

Embedding skills to line manage and lead in a hybrid world.

We continue to offer workshops to both managers and staff on the theme of Developing Effective Remote Teams and Making the Best of Remote Working.

The Developing Effective Remote Teams workshop also features in the internal Leadership Development Programme (for New & Curious Managers)

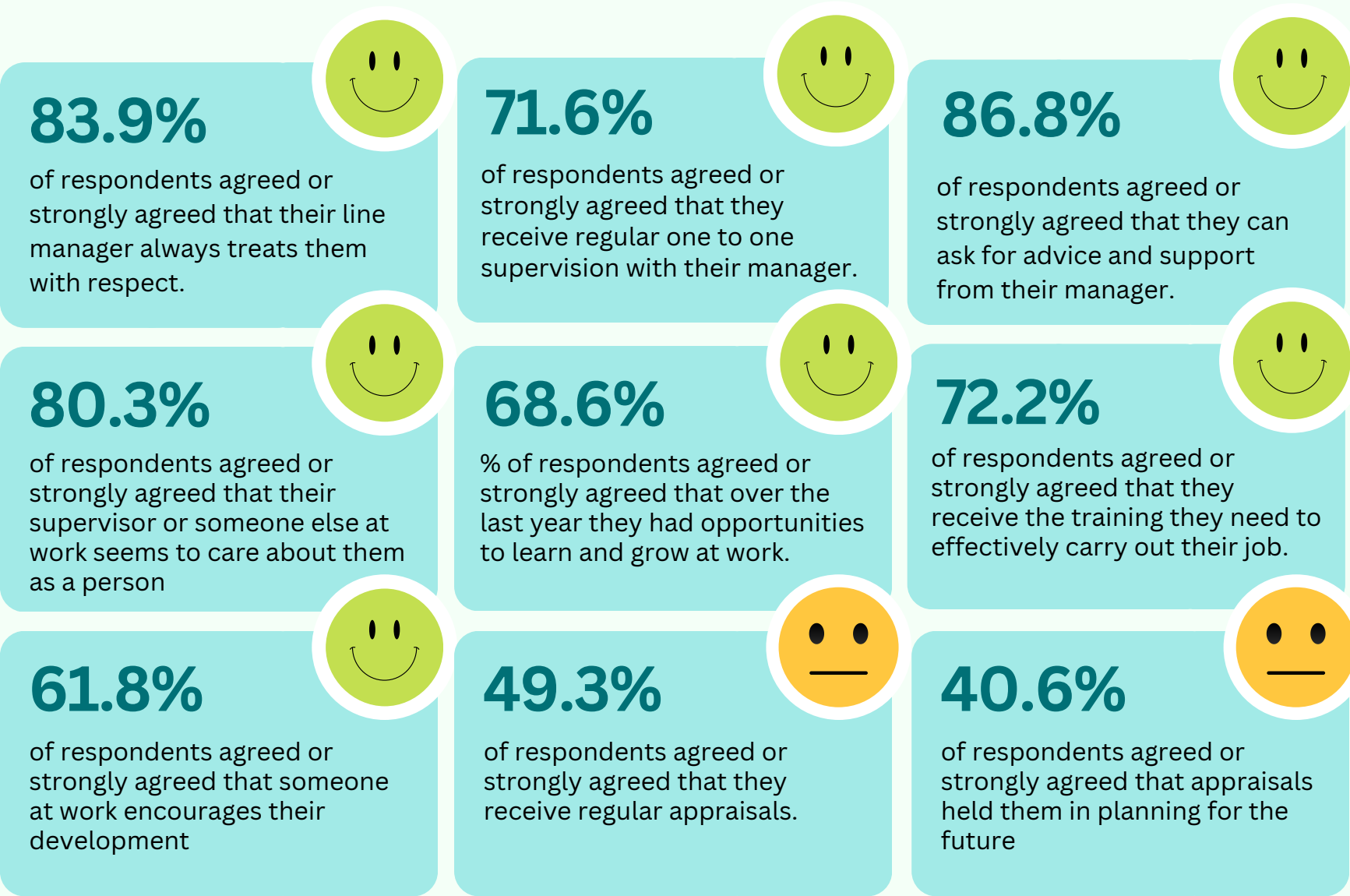
Whilst this has been somewhat effective, the workshops are now under review, to reflect the more “routine” nature of remote working.

To coincide with this, a new workshop (Coaching Conversations for Managers) has been developed (and delivered) by external provider Jeff Kidner. The purpose of the workshop is to promote better communication with team members, with a focus on encouraging a growth mindset, and enabling individuals to act.



What do our employees say?

Employee Survey 2024



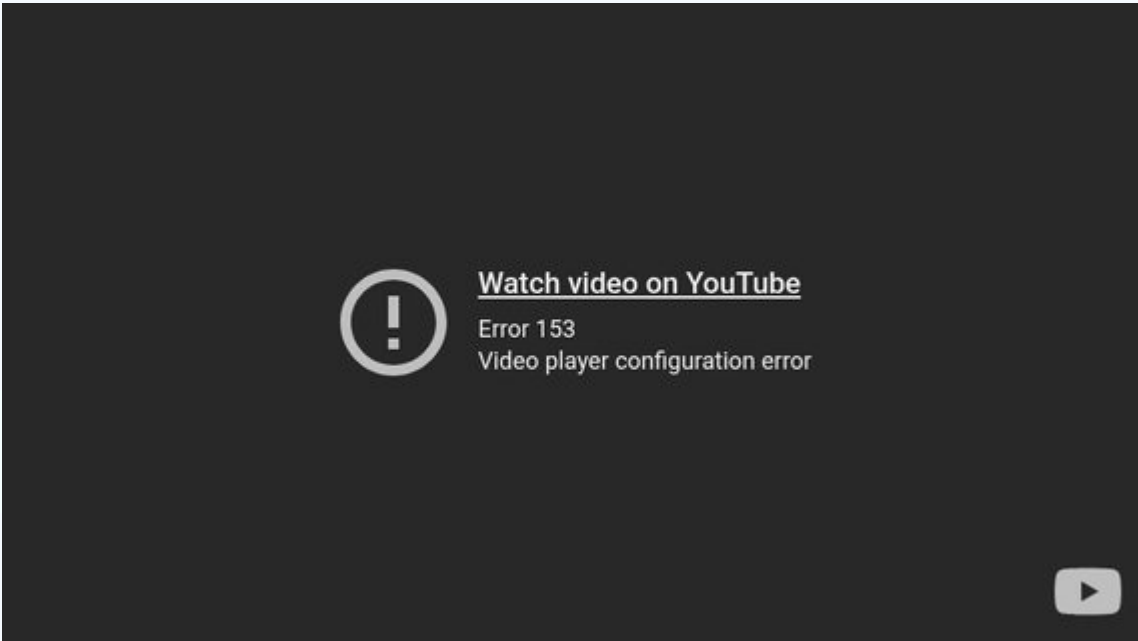
These responses demonstrate a supportive leadership and management culture, but more work is needed to ensure that our leaders and managers understand their role in developing others. However, the survey was conducted in April / May 2024, and since then we have continued to embed leadership development. The survey will be repeated in September 2025 and it will be interesting to see if respondents’ views have changed as a result of our continued work in relation to developing leaders and managers.

Leadership & Management - Training

Key:
Env - Environment & Regeneration
SSHH - Social Services, Health and Housing
ELLL - Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning
S&CS - Strategy & Corporate Services
Finc - Finance

Leadership Development Programme	Env	SSHH	ELLL	S&CS	Finc	Total
Cohort 1	5	7	7	4	0	23
Cohort 2	5	9	1	1	3	19
Cohort 3	6	3	5	2	1	19
Total	17	19	13	7	4	59
Additional training						
Developing Resilience as a Manager	4	1	1	5	0	11
Overcoming imposter Syndrome	1	15	2	5	0	22
Writing Committee Reports	14	8	5	6	0	33
Speaking with Confidence	0	5	3	0	0	8
Step Up tp Stand Out: Creating a personal brand	1	2	0	2	0	5
Developing Effective Remote Teams	1	5	0	0	0	6
Making the Most of Remote Working	3	8	0	0	0	11
Coaching Conversations for Managers	7	4	2	9	1	23

Inspiring
our future
leaders &
managers



Project Management						
Note: Split available per directorate on request	Level 3	Level 4	Level 4	Level 5	Level 7	Total
Current ILM learners	4	27	8	35	13	87
Achievers	1	7	0	5	0	13

ILM Diploma in Strategic Leadership & Management	Env	SSHH	ELLL	S&CS	Finc	Total
Active Learners	4	7	2	0	0	13
Coaching						
Level 5	0	2	0	2	0	4
Level 7	0	1	0	0	0	1
Number of managers benefiting from coaching	1	10	2	3*	0	16

* 2 managers (Strategy Corporate Services) benefiting from the support of an external coach (costed to Future of Work budget)



Procurement - 'Procurement & commissioning'

The council is faced with the challenge of ever increasing demands and expectations for services at a time when our resources have reduced in real terms. The current operating context sees increased pressures on councils facing further restrictions on revenue and capital finances. In addition, increased volume and complexity of demand and market pressures on services, particularly social care, creates further challenges. Increased costs due to high inflation, exponentially higher energy costs, the climate change emergency, disruptions in the supply chains and suppliers unable to meet contractual requirements, and the war in Ukraine are all material to the way in which councils approach procurement.

The procurement landscape in the public sector has also changed dramatically over the last 3 years with the coming into force of the Procurement Act 2023 and Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

The council applies many different service delivery models across its procurement operations, using a ‘right model for the right service’ approach. This includes single/multiple provider frameworks and contracts, use of small Lots, local, regional and pan-regional frameworks, joint ventures and many partnership operations.

The council is faced with the challenge of ever increasing demands and expectations for services at a time when our resources have reduced in real terms.

Sustainable procurement is the central theme of our procurement work. Sustainable Procurement is defined as: “The whole process of acquisition, covering goods, services, works and/or capital projects. The process spans the entire life-cycle from the initial concept through to the end of the useful life of the asset (including disposal) or the end of a service contract or a works/capital project”.

Procurement Strategy 2024/2028

The council’s Procurement Strategy has been developed with a full appreciation of the complex regulatory framework within which procurement operates, and incorporates the legislative reforms. It also recognises that it is an area with high risks – with potentially significant impacts on service delivery, financial management and legal compliance, as well as the overall reputation of the council. The Procurement Strategy will embed the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 into our processes and ensure our procurement activity plays a positive role in helping the Council achieve its target of becoming a net zero carbon contributor by 2030.

Whilst there are strict guidelines and legal requirements set out by UK and Welsh Governments in the way the providers of goods, services and works to the council are chosen, the council are still able to procure in a way that has positive impact for our local suppliers and the economy of Neath Port Talbot. To this end the council is committed to using procurement to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Neath Port Talbot. The council recognises that procurement is fundamental to achieving our vision, protecting our front line services and supporting a socially sustainable economic environment. The council has already demonstrated a clear commitment to this agenda.

Our approach will be one of continuous improvement, seeking to bring about real change and to improve the lives of those who live and work within our borough.



With an annual spend on bought in goods, services and works of **£300,760,229.58** in the financial year 2024/2025, the council must manage this spend responsibly.

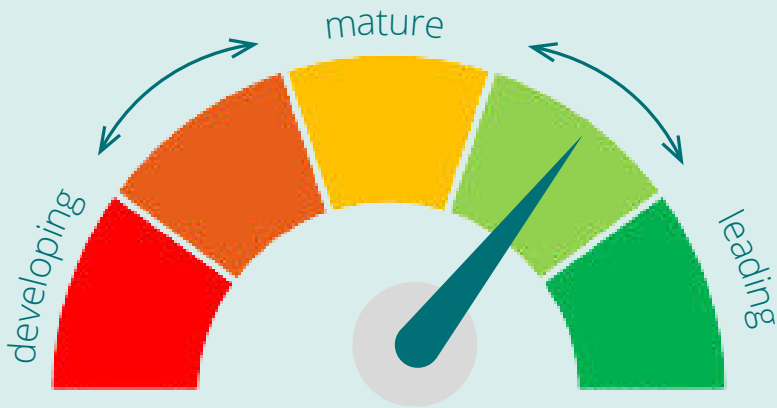


The Procurement Strategy looks to build upon and consolidate the progress that has been made by drawing together a number of different legislative requirements, policy initiatives and aspirations into a single coherent framework underpinned by 6 key priority themes:

- Securing value for money
- Think NPT first
- Contributing to making Neath Port Talbot Net Zero by 2030
- Improving fair work and safeguarding practices
- Making procurement spend more accessible to local small businesses and the voluntary and community sector
- Increasing social value in procurement and benefits to the community
- Ensuring legal and regulatory compliance and transparent governance and be innovative in approach through the digital world.

2021/2022
2022/2023
2023/2024
2024/2025

Mature moving towards leading



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

Regarding our ‘Procurement’ function, our scoring remains ‘Mature moving into leading’ for the fourth consecutive year.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents

Procurement Strategy 2024/2028
Contract Procurement Rules
Head of Service Business Plan

Regulators Report:

Audit Wales Arrangements for Commissioning Services

Procurement - 'Procurement & commissioning' continued...

In order to implement the Procurement Strategy and the legislative reform, the council has now approved new Contract Procedure Rules to ensure all these principles are embedded in procurement activity.

The aim of the council's Contract Procedure Rules is to ensure the council has standing orders and procurement procedures providing a corporate framework for the procurement of all goods, services and works for the council. The overarching purpose being to ensure that the council complies with all UK Government and Welsh Government legislation and policy that governs and/or relates to the procurement of goods, services and works and ensure that the council obtains value for money and the required level of quality and performance in all contracts

As part of its tender strategy work and following recommendations from Audit Wales, a Procurement Strategy Document has been prepared which will be completed for all tenders over the value of £30,000 for goods and services, and £75,000 for works. It will consider ways to meet continuous improvement in its procured services and ensure obligations within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are embedded in procurement processes.

Commissioning officers have detailed expertise and understanding of their expenditure and supplier base and able to use this knowledge to commission services which are required by the council. However, work is in isolation from commercial and procurement advisers in some areas, but there is an acknowledgement that a cross-council approach to design and implementation is needed to improve procurement functions.

To address this, training packages for officers in respect of procurement processes have been developed to ensure procurement knowledge is embedded into service delivery. Systems are in place to allow data and intelligence to be collected on costs incurred, but access has been obtained to tangible data to allow access to identify themes and areas of expenditure. Toolkits have been developed to address this and ensure the provision of accurate data as we undertake strategic work programmes.

Change Control policy is implemented across the board for all contract changes and variations to enable continued enhancement (where legislation allows).

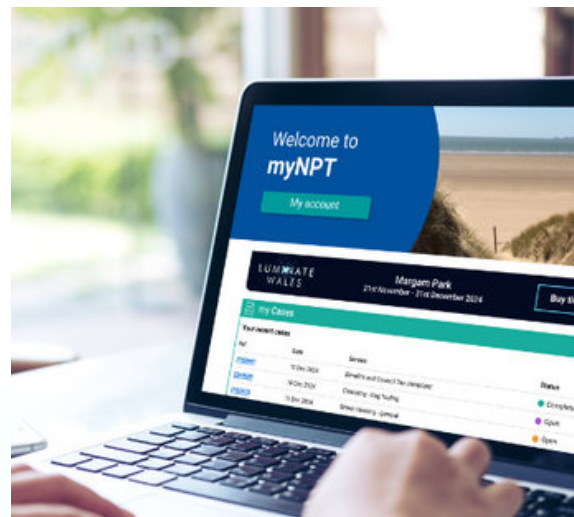
Standard documentation is available and used in all circumstances across all departments, senior managers are engaged in procurement and commercial issues, routinely taking advice at key decision points, it is positive to note officers are engaging in procurement processes at an early stage. It is acknowledged that focus is still on compliance and standard cost/quality ratios but innovation is considered. Tenders are mainly viewed as legal documents but written in plain language and the procurement team is often invited to contribute to the planning phase but increased visibility of the service throughout 2024/2025 and through the development of the Procurement Strategy has led to Corporate Procurement having a greater input into commissioning activities, with regular information on expenditure and contractual processes reported to management teams.

Well defined systems are in place to target both financial loss and fraud with a proactive approach to issues, such as irregular transaction, duplicate payments and fake creditors and invoices throughout the supply chain with arrangements in place to address supplier performance and contract and relationship management is recognised by the organisation as being essential to its overall performance. Post contract reviews are undertaken by most departments on identified categories of expenditure. Potential collusion and market distortion is actively investigated with contract conditions in place to ensure maximum legal protection to the council.

It was identified that a number of contract registers are held but in a variety of service areas with no one central or public access to ensure future planning of services and how best organisational spend can be addressed. An all council Contract Register has now been established and is live on the council's website.

Officers are working on early engagement with the market when it comes to forthcoming tenders and work has taken place to develop an online contract and procurement register. Future needs are being signalled to the market using a variety of channels including publication of pipeline information and engagement events. Our first Procurement Pipeline will be published in Spring 2025 on the council's website. The overall aim being to ensure high value and or high profile acquisitions are examined for creating commercial opportunities for both the Council and providers.

The council continues to explore the best approach to Councillor Engagement in procurement and commercial matters to ensure the views of residents and elected representatives filters through to procurement processes. The Procurement Strategy will place members as the leaders in respect of setting goals and strategies for the council and the Contract Procedure Rules provides a clear delineation of the duties and roles of members, with a focus on what thresholds are to be considered by elected members.



Risk Management - 'Effective risk management'

The council is committed to a proactive approach to risk management. It recognises risk management is an essential part of delivering good governance and reduces the uncertainty of achieving the council’s vision, purpose and priorities, as set out in the Corporate Strategy.

The council’s approach to the management of risk continues to develop.

Arrangements currently in place are an effective part of the council’s corporate governance framework leading to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public funds, good public engagement and is ultimately essential for the council to demonstrate that it is acting in the best interests of the community it serves.

Corporate Risk Management Arrangements 2024/2025

As set out in the councils’ Corporate Risk Management Policy, the Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and monitored during 2024/2025:

- At a senior officer level, the strategic risk register was reported to Strategic Leadership Team (formerly Corporate Directors Group - 21st April 2024, 5th June 2024, 21st August (Away Day), 23rd October 2024, 15th and 29th January 2025.
- At a senior member level, the strategic risk register was reported to Cabinet on 13th November 2024.
- At a directorate level, the four directorate risk registers were monitored within directorate's own Senior Management Teams.
- To meet duties set out in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the strategic risk register was reported and Governance and Audit Committee on 22nd November 2024.
- At a Head of Service level – risks were identified via Heads of Service Delivery Plans.
- At a service level, service plans completed by accountable managers (optional) contained risks associated with service delivery.



Strategic Risk Register

During 2024/2025, following feedback from the Governance and Audit Committee, the strategic risk register has been updated for clearer and more effective monitoring.

Research was undertaken by officers as to ways in which the layout could be improved and become more user-friendly. Conversations also took place with other councils in Wales to look at best practice.

Each risk is now detailed on its own page with a description, mitigating actions, owner’s comments, and both inherent and revised risk scores. Mitigating actions are divided into risk controls and additional steps.

As part of the monitoring arrangements, information has been included in monitoring reports to provide a visual representation of the reduction in risk scores because of mitigating actions. A further improvement to be actioned during 2025/2026, is the introduction of target risk which will provide further information on risks which will be tolerated by the council.

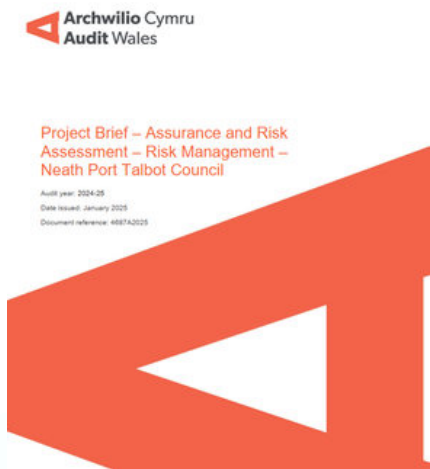


Risk Appetite Statement

During 2024/2025, a Risk Appetite Statement was developed. The council acknowledges that achieving the priorities outlined in the Corporate Strategy necessitates taking risks.

This statement describes how the council will balance risks and opportunities to pursue and deliver the well-being objectives, strategic priorities contained within the Corporate Strategy and associated plans and strategies. To inform the development of the Risk Appetite Statement, officers researched examples of Statements.

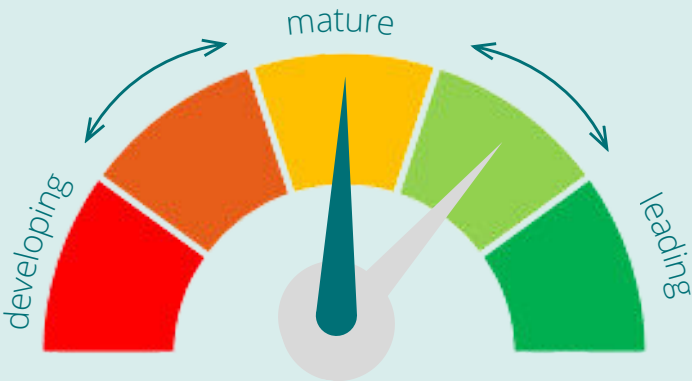
The Statement is a key element of the council’s Code of Corporate Governance and the Strategic Risk Register has been updated to reflect the risk appetite set out in the Statement.



Audit Wales have now completed their **review of the council’s Risk Management arrangements** and at the time of preparing this self-assessment, the report setting out their findings is being drafted. Any recommendations from the review will inform further improvements in the council’s approach to strategic risk management.

Reflecting on the content of risk registers, there is a need for more support for senior managers on the identification, scoring and mitigation of risks. This will be further progressed during 2025/2026. As part of our drive to not only improve process, but also encourage personal development, we will be looking to deliver training for Governance & Audit Committee members to support the Committee in discharging its duties contained in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2023/2024 & 2024/2025	Mature
2021/2022 & 2022/2023	Mature moving towards leading



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

In relation to our ‘Risk Management’ our scoring remains as ‘Mature’ for the the second year. We realise that whilst some improvement works have been undertaken during the year, there is more to do to ensure we have an effective risk management approach. This work includes a cultural shift to embed risk across everything we do council-wide.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents

- Corporate Risk Management Policy
- Updated Strategic Risk Register format
- Risk Appetite Statement
- Regular monitoring by Strategic Leadership Team
- Directorate Risk Registers

Committees

- Regular monitoring by:
- Cabinet
- Governance and Audit Committee

Digital, Data & Technology

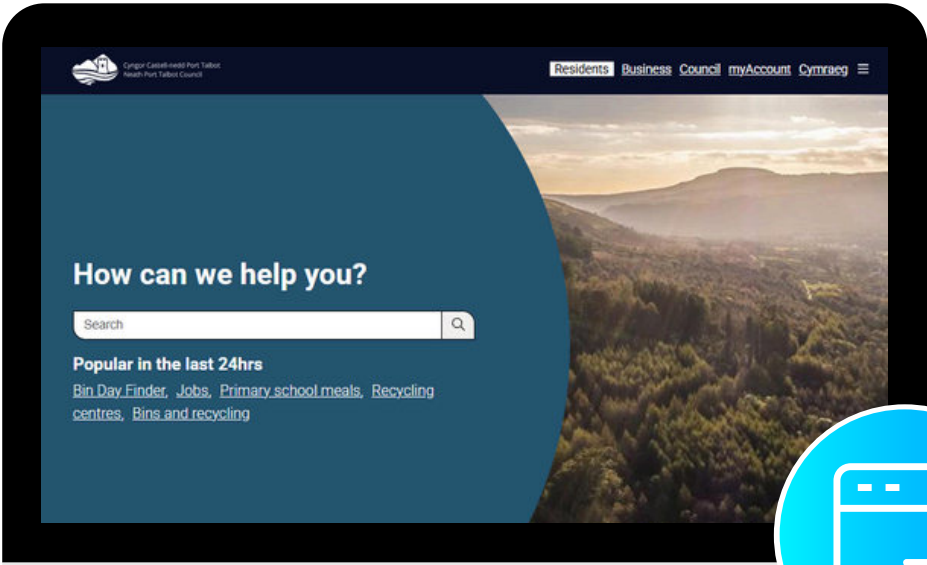
In 2024/25, the Neath Port Talbot Digital, Data and Technology Strategy undertook its second annual review and associated update. This was scrutinised and approved by full Council on the 24 July 2024.

The strategy continues to set out our strategic vision, aims and delivery themes, demonstrating how the council will embrace new approaches and emerging technologies to provide our users with the best value, user-centred products and services. Through the development of the DDaT Strategy, many of the key components for improvement have been drawn together into a cohesive structure and have supported delivery plans across a range of service areas

All staff across the Digital Services Division continue to engage in the development and ongoing evolution of the DDaT strategy through their 1:1 appraisal, team meetings and annual staff surveys. This is helping individuals understand how the roles they play are contributing to the wider divisional and corporate objectives.

Over 2024/2025, the Digital Services team has continued to deliver extensive reactive support across the council’s service areas. Through the continuation of our service delivery pipeline and supporting Digital Delivery Board, we have demonstrated how we have prioritised and approved planned developments, moving towards a more proactive approach for workload management by directly delivering 25 major projects in 2024/2025.

We have reviewed and migrated over
2,800 pages of content,
We have reviewed and migrated over



The NPT website is ranked in the top 10 for accessibility against other UK council websites – with a 99% accessibility score.

Full engagement with all directorates and service area senior management teams have taken place and will continue quarterly or as needed basis.

We have seen improvements through our formal succession planning, by developing career paths for hard to recruit roles, and the delivery of an improved training plan which has begun to reduce some pressure and alleviate some of the backlog. However, there remains a significant volume of work to be completed and recruitment and retention remain a key risk.

The work of the Data Team has led to the development of a data strategy which is aligned to the council’s objectives and the DDaT strategy and has been informed by insights from a data maturity assessment completed in late 2023.

The Data Team have continued engaging with service areas to understand the data they hold, its purpose and the process by which it is collected; they assess the data quality of several datasets and look at linking data across directorates. The team are supporting management by providing new visualisations and analysis to help achieve our strategic theme ‘Data and research led decision making.

This new website design with the user experience at its core, has enhanced the resident experience, reduced failure demand, and increased agility for rapid updates.

Services and information

Bins and recycling

- > [Check your bin day](#)
- > [Bulky items collection](#)
- > [Order a new bin, box or sack](#)
- > [Recycling centres](#)
- > [What can you recycle](#)

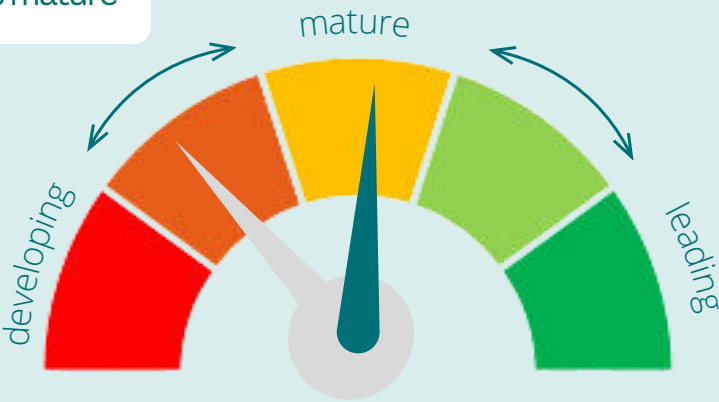
Schools and learning

- > [School admissions](#)
- > [School term dates](#)
- > [Welsh-medium education](#)
- > [Find a school](#)
- > [School meals](#)

Planning & building control

Parking, roads and travel

2023/2024 & 2024/2025	Mature
2021/2022 & 2022/2023	Developing moving towards mature



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

In relation to ‘Digital, Data & Technology’ our scoring remains as ‘Mature’ for the second year. Whilst we now have the digital components in place, a wider cultural shift is needed across the council to determine clear priorities.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents:

- DDaT Strategy and Annual Review
- Service Delivery Pipeline
- Digital Delivery Board
- Quarterly business plan reporting and metrics including website User Satisfaction Score / incident resolution times
- Head of Service Business Plan

Service User Feedback:

- User feedback from specific programmes of work including - Pilot of Copilot / trialling of Magic Notes
- Service Area Satisfaction surveys
- Digital Services Surveys - Staff Satisfaction
- Employee Survey

Regulators Report:

- Audit Wales Digital Strategy Review and recommendations

Other documents:

- Digital Self-Assessment review with WLGA

Digital, Data & Technology continued...

Cyber Security remains a key priority for the Division. As reported to Cabinet Policy and Resources Sub Committee on 9 April 2024, the NPT Cyber Security Strategy has been developed to support council's approach to protecting its information systems, the data held within them, and the services they provided from unauthorised access, harm or misuse.

Whilst the cyber threat landscape continues to evolve and grow year-on-year, the activities highlighted in the report, both completed and planned, provide the council with a sound approach to its defence.

Overall, our cyber security posture continues to improve. The cyber team is being restructured to better align with the changing environment and our DDaT structure, ensuring minimal impact on the council's operations. Operational updates include changes to mobile device and password policies, participation with six other local authorities in a live cyber-attack simulation facilitated by Emergency Planning College, and working towards integration into the Welsh Security Operations Centre (SOC), which is expected to be completed by mid-2025.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in local government operations can significantly enhance service delivery and operational efficiency. However, it is crucial to ensure its use aligns with ethical standards, legal requirements, and the council's strategic objectives.

Recognising the potential impact that Generative Artificial Intelligence can have on transforming service areas, we have initiated two new pilot activities to establish clear use cases across the council.

Some example projects include - Magic Notes, aimed at enabling front line workers to record conversations with residents, carers, providers, staff, and others involved in the delivery of services to residents and have those conversation transcribed, summarised and a list of actions created by Magic Notes, a web app which has been created by Beam.

The primary goal of this pilot project is to streamline the administrative processes for professionals working with families, thereby reducing processing time. Another key objective is to enhance managerial, and staff support by expediting the production of supervision notes. This will ensure that staff members receive their supervision notes promptly, which is expected to boost morale, meet staff targets, and enhance feedback mechanisms.

Furthermore, the project aims to decrease wait times for individuals by facilitating quicker processing of assessments and referrals. This will enable faster follow-ups from other services waiting on these assessments, ensuring families receive the support they need more promptly. The project is anticipated to bring significant benefits to both staff and service users.

The second pilot activity involves Microsoft CoPilot. Microsoft Copilot's AI capabilities are designed to streamline processes, reduce manual workload, and provide insightful analytics for better governance. The brief for this project outlines the key deliverables, objectives, and methodologies we will use to ensure a successful implementation.



Key Project Objectives include:

- To integrate Microsoft Copilot's AI functionalities into a specified range of council services and systems. For the pilot, we are going to licence 20 users who must be prepared to fully engage with the pilot activities.
- Engagement with Microsoft Partner to deliver M365 Copilot Workshop Goals (may require this doc to iterate accordingly), to identify and deliver a pilot pipeline of Microsoft 365 Copilot automation opportunities across the council.
- To train the staff involved in the pilot on the effective use of Copilot.
- Develop a Copilot Community of Practice on Viva Engage.
- To improve identified service delivery through AI-driven insights and automation.
- To establish a framework for continuous learning and adaptation of Copilot's features.

Key Deliverables include:

- A fully integrated pilot of the Microsoft Copilot system within the council's existing IT infrastructure. Identification of appropriate training materials and delivery of sessions for council staff.
- A set of protocols and best practices for Copilot's use in daily operations.
- An evaluation report detailing Copilot's performance and impact, specifically focused on benefit realisation around cashable savings, service improvement etc.



Connectivity improvements across Neath Port Talbot - **99% of residents can now access superfast speeds of 30Mb/s+, 75% of residents can access ultrafast speeds of 300Mb/s+.** The Swansea Bay City Deal NPT Broadband Engagement officer has regular engagement with the broadband operators. Leaflets and posters also distributed to capture those that are not already online.

Financial Planning

'Managing expenditure'

The council understands the resources required to deliver effective and efficient services at cost centre/activity level. This then aggregates up to the level of resources required to deliver the overall council budget.

Whilst the council does not have a documented Medium Term Financial Strategy it does have a set of Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) assumptions, which are updated annually. A number of strategic interventions to redesign the way in which some of its services are delivered have been detailed. These include increased use of automation and robotics, and a number of service reviews in relation to accommodation and transport. The council has an established process to monitor variations on a monthly basis through its budget monitoring process. These variations do not only focus on financial variances but seek to understand the activity which drives any variances.

The council is aware that to understand and influence costs, it is imperative to understand the activity which drives that cost. Our governance arrangements are such that Corporate Directors are responsible for delivering their services within an overall financial envelope referred to as their 'cash limit'. Where possible, Directors will take action to contain the causes of any variations, if not possible they will look to take action elsewhere to contain overall expenditure within the cash limit.

Moving forward, and taking into account global financial pressures, there is a balance required of delivering statutory services and planning for the longer-term, alongside being innovative and trying new things to make improvements. Finance officers and senior management have good understanding and a pragmatic approach to Directorate needs and are required to deliver a holistic approach to budget setting and recognising challenges. The council has quantified inflationary, demand and demographic pressures which are reviewed on an annual basis, accepting that this cannot and will not be an exact science.

These approaches will include increased use of automation and robotics and a number of service reviews in relation to accommodation and transport. The medium term financial plan will be essential in determining what and where improvements can be made, this will underpin all other choices. Individual service managers are aware of the demands within their own areas and work to ensure that the service meets the customers' needs in the most efficient way.

Performance is currently not compared with other councils, and various bench-marking measures have come and gone over the years. Historically, it has proven to be exceptionally difficult to compare costs with other council's on a like-for-like basis. Differences in accounting arrangements has meant that previous exercises have ended up focussing on issues such as apportionment of overheads as opposed to any meaningful comparisons.

'Managing income'

Income generation remains an area where there is still work to be done, and this is accepted across senior management and continues to need significant attention in the foreseeable future.

The role of Commercial Coordinator is integrated into the Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture services. As well as identifying and developing income generation opportunities across the authority, the officer is also now involved with activities unrelated to his main commercial role.

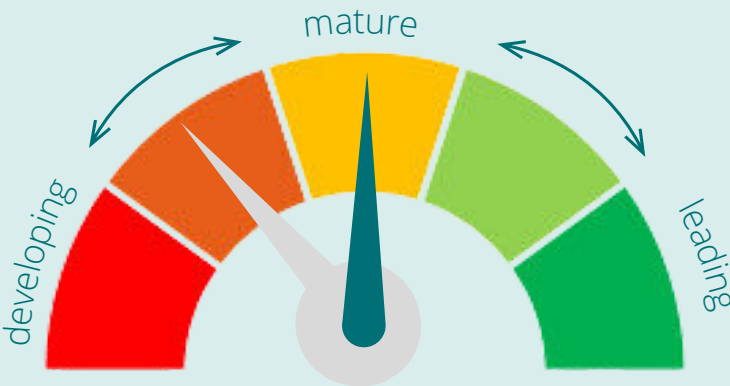
Income generated by the Commercial Coordinator from initiatives during 2024/2025 included the following:

- Roundabout Sponsorship scheme: £45,547
- Awards & Events sponsorships: £17,964
- Other asset sponsorships - eg Margam Park Train: £3,579
- Poster Sites in multi-storey Car Parks: £3,570

The above income stream alone have further potential for development. Key to this is the development of a pro-active strategy and building on relationships with the local businesses.

Reflecting on the current budget, rising costs and future Welsh Government budget settlements, maximising income generation for the benefit of the council, residents, businesses and the environment was seen as an area that could yield results in the medium-term. More emphasis will be focused on commercial strategy, prioritising services where there are established market opportunities.

Investment in capacity to maximise external grant income is key. In addition, there is work ongoing to review fees and charges and determining whether they are proportionate to the cost of services and regulatory activity. This work is linked to the strategic outcomes the council wishes to achieve.



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

In relation to our 'Financial Planning', our scoring remains as 'Mature' for the second year. To enable forward progression we will finalise our Medium Term Financial Plan to support our assumptions to underpin decision making and budget development.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents-

- Medium Term Financial Plan assumptions
- Audit Wales NPT Financial Sustainability
- 2023/24 Revenue Budget Outturn Report
- 2025/2026 Revenue Budget

Regulators Report:

- Audit Wales Financial Sustainability (National Report)
- Audit Wales NPT Financial Sustainability

Physical Assets & Facilities

The Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2024-2029 was adopted by Cabinet in April 2024. This superseded the previous 2016/2021 plan and is central to management of the council’s property portfolio.

The plan is structured around an Asset Management Framework that consists of an Asset Management Plan 2024/2029 (five corporate objectives), an Asset Management Strategy 2024/2027 (covering governance, Corporate Landlord and monitoring) and a rolling action plan that will be updated annually. The framework ensures that the strategic objectives for asset management are aligned with the council’s Corporate Plan.

There continues to be progress made on rationalising the council’s property portfolio by optimising space utilisation and operating from fewer more efficient buildings, whilst also safeguarding front-line services.

The data gathered through the continued implementation of the CAMP will enable the council to make evidence-based decisions regarding the type, condition and location of buildings required for council activities.

The current financial landscape means that there is continuous demand on the council to review the basis for holding assets, whilst also proactively seeking new opportunities for collaboration with other public sector organisations and community partners to deliver services.

Currently, property asset needs within the council are not fully understood by all sections. Moreover, the capacity and capability of the existing professionals that work within property services is not always recognised or fully utilised by other section within the council. This is addressed in the new Property Asset Management Plan.



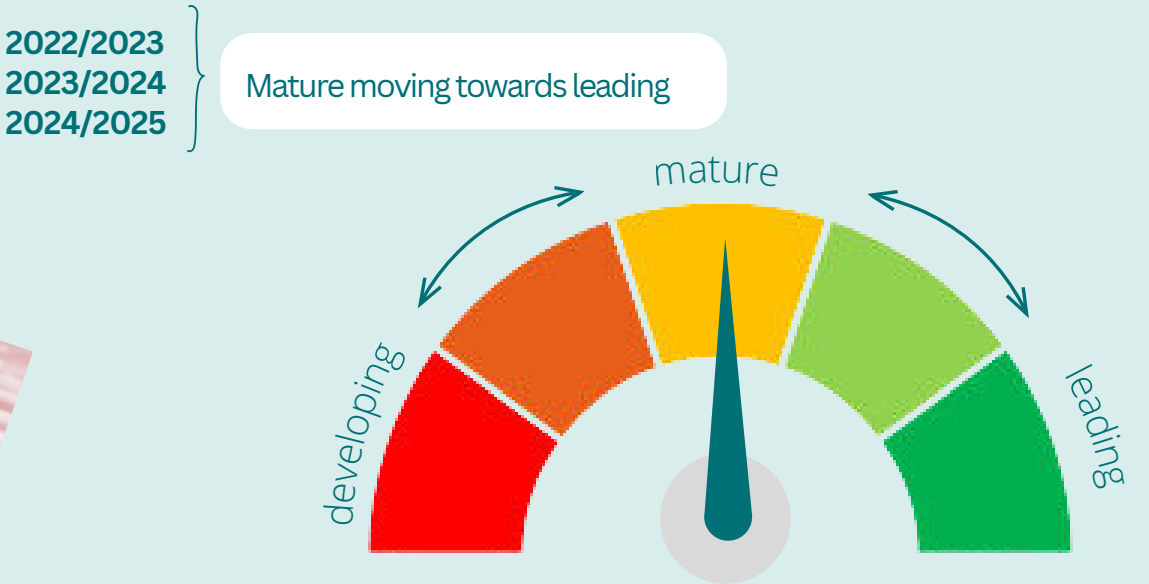
The retention of a professional property team recognises the importance of ‘inbuilt intelligence’ in key property related services areas. The strategy endorses the continuation of a coordinated property related service, whilst drawing in private sector support when needed to drive innovation/change and major asset related project delivery.

The full implementation of the Corporate Landlord model remains a key feature of the plan, with a formal commitment outlined within the Asset Management Strategy to manage property corporately. The strategy will ensure that over the life of Asset Management Framework, it is fully implemented to enable all strategic property and property compliance matters to be managed corporately across the council’s various service areas.

The CAMP and the council’s detailed response to Audit Wales on their Springing Forward: Strategic Assets review, were noted by the Governance & Audit Committee on 21 February 2025, underscoring the importance of governance and scrutiny processes.

Maintenance and statutory compliance for our buildings remain a significant financial commitment, with ongoing challenges related to the age, condition, and suitability of parts of the portfolio.

The CAMP prioritises investment to ensure retained assets provide safe, accessible and suitable environments. Value for money is to be pursued through an intelligent data gathering and robust forward planning as a means of reducing the council’s reliance on reactive maintenance. However, within the current financial climate, moving away from a reliance on reactive maintenance measure will be a challenge.



Supporting our scoring

To deliver an honest and transparent scoring for 2024/2025, we have thoroughly reflected on in-year progress, this includes any recently approved plans and strategies, awards, service user feedback, recognition, and consultations.

Additionally, we have incorporated recommendations from regulators and reports, which provide valuable insights into our performance and highlight areas for improvement. The self-assessment process also involves gathering feedback from Directors and Heads of Service through surveys and verbal feedback collected during meetings.

In relation to our ‘Physical Assets and Facilities’ our scoring remains as ‘Mature’ for the third year. Whilst progress has been made in this area, persistent financial constraints continue to necessitate the most efficient use of the council’s property assets resources, this remained a key priority for 2024/2025, and will continue on for the foreseeable future.

Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

NPT Council Documents

- Corporate Asset Management Plan 2024/2029
- Asset Management Policy
- Asset Management Action Plan
- Corporate Plan
- Head of Service Business Plan
- Net Zero Costed Delivery Plan
- Local Area Energy Plan (Provides Net-Zero pathway that informs CAMP Action Plan)

Regulators Report:

- Audit Wales Springing Forward: Strategic Assets
- Audit Wales Brownfield Management Response

Physical Assets & Facilities

An Asset Challenge Process will be implemented, with the Strategic Asset Management Group overseeing this process and escalating decisions to Cabinet/Council as needed. The performance of each asset against strategic and policy objectives will feed into the asset challenge process.

This means that each asset should be subject to regular scrutiny to assess whether they are delivering or remain capable of delivering their objectives. This will enable the council to make informed choices about the future of its assets in a structured and objective fashion. The Strategic Asset Management Group will provide oversight of the asset challenge process, with relevant decisions referred on to Cabinet/Council.

Through these and other partnerships, the council will continue to explore, develop and exploit opportunities for collaborative working with public and quasi-public bodies by amalgamating asset knowledge to help promote economies of scale, sustainable levels of occupation and better working practices.

Decarbonisation and biodiversity are critical considerations. The Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) 2024 sets a Net-Zero pathway that the CAMP must be aligned with. The council is committed to tackling climate change by prioritising carbon reduction through responsible and sustainable asset management. This includes improving building energy efficiency, exemplified by the award-winning, energy-positive Bay Technology Centre.

In terms of brownfield regeneration, the Governance & Audit Committee also considered Audit Wales' national report on "making best use of brownfield land and empty buildings" and approved the NPT officer response on 21 February 2025. The CAMP Action Plan will now include measures for a brownfield register and monitoring.

The flagship ***SWITCH***
(*South Wales
Industrial Transition
from Carbon Hub*)
research facility on
Harbourside, Port
Talbot was granted
planning permission
and £8.2 million in
Transition-Board
funding was endorsed
on 6 February 2025.



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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

APPENDIX 1

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

2025/2026

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

This document is also available in Welsh

Improvement Action Plan

As a result of this self-assessment 19 actions have been identified to be added to the council’s improvement action plan. In addition, the improvement actions noted in the self-assessments undertaken during previous self-assessments are also reflected in the table below, with progress to date highlighted in amber. Whilst these actions are ongoing there has been a significant amount of work undertaken to move work forward, alongside balancing service delivery and managing a range of external challenges.

Q1 & Q2 - EXERCISING FUNCTIONS EFFECTIVELY AND USING RESOURCES ECONOMICALLY, EFFICIENTLY & EFFECTIVELY *(How well are we doing and how do we know?)*

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT ACTION ADDED	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Procurement				
SA7	Restructure Procurement Team	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	Nov 2025	Ongoing - In response to recent legislative changes impacting public sector procurement practices, the Council has initiated a comprehensive review aimed at strengthening the Procurement Team’s capacity, resilience, and support structures. This proactive measure ensures that the Council remains agile and fully equipped to meet emerging regulatory requirements and operational challenges. The review is focused on identifying opportunities to enhance resource allocation, streamline processes, and bolster specialist support across key procurement functions. Particular attention is being given to areas experiencing increased demand or complexity due to the new legislative landscape. The goal is to ensure that the Procurement Team is not only compliant but also positioned to deliver best value, drive innovation, and support strategic objectives across the organisation. This ongoing work underscores the council’s commitment to continuous improvement and its recognition of procurement as a critical enabler of service delivery and financial sustainability.
SA9	Category spend review	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	Ongoing	Ongoing - The council has made significant progress in adopting a more strategic and data-driven approach to procurement, with the aim of enhancing value for money, supporting corporate priorities, and addressing financial pressures. A key focus has been on understanding what we are spending, why we are spending it, and where opportunities exist to improve outcomes. This has involved a comprehensive spend analysis exercise, which is helping to identify patterns, inefficiencies, and areas for potential savings or reinvestment. This insight is critical as we work to align procurement activity with the council’s broader objectives, including our commitment to achieving net zero carbon targets. In light of rising energy costs and inflationary pressures, a strategic review is underway to challenge existing spending assumptions and explore alternative approaches that reduce financial risk. This includes evaluating contracts, supplier relationships, and commissioning practices to ensure they are fit for purpose and delivering maximum value. In parallel, immediate steps have been taken to embed more robust decision-making processes across the organisation. These include: • Strengthening procurement governance and oversight. • Promoting early engagement with procurement and commissioning teams. • Encouraging services to consider whole-life costs and social value in their planning. • Rolling out guidance and tools to support smarter, more sustainable purchasing. This work marks a shift towards a more proactive and policy-led procurement function—one that not only supports operational delivery but also contributes meaningfully to the Council’s financial sustainability and strategic ambitions.

Q1 & Q2 - EXERCISING FUNCTIONS EFFECTIVELY AND USING RESOURCES ECONOMICALLY, EFFICIENTLY & EFFECTIVELY *(How well are we doing and how do we know?)*

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT ACTION ADDED	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Procurement

SA36	The Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders will be updated to take into account the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023.	2023/2024 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - Following the formal adoption of the updated Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders by Cabinet in January 2025 and full Council in February 2025, a series of improvement actions have been initiated to ensure effective implementation across the organisation. A comprehensive training programme is underway, targeting procurement officers, contract managers, and service leads, supported by both e-learning modules and in-person workshops to ensure consistent understanding of the new rules. All procurement-related templates, guidance documents, and workflows have been reviewed and updated, with a new procurement toolkit introduced to support practical application. Procurement systems are being enhanced to reflect the revised thresholds and approval processes, including the integration of automated compliance checks to strengthen audit readiness. Governance has been reinforced through regular reporting to the Procurement Board and Audit Committee, alongside internal audits and spot checks to monitor compliance. Externally, key suppliers and partners have been informed of the changes, with briefing sessions and updated guidance provided to support a smooth transition. Finally, feedback mechanisms have been introduced to capture user experience and inform continuous improvement, with a post-implementation review scheduled for the third quarter of 2025 to assess the impact and identify further opportunities for refinement.
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Communications / Consultation / Engagement

SA13	Develop a Strategic Framework for Communications and Marketing. This framework will provide a revision of tone, channels and forms of communication to reinforce the council's vision, values and priorities. The framework will also include principles of good communications and marketing practice.	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	Ongoing	Ongoing - Westco, a trading company of Westminster City Council with extensive experience in public sector communications, has been appointed to review our Communications and marketing function. The review commenced in October 2024 and the final report was delivered in June 2025, which sets out a number of recommendations to further develop a strategic approach to communications and marketing across the council. A report is being prepared setting out the resource requirement to implement the recommendations of the review.
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No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT ACTION ADDED	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Communications / Consultation / Engagement				
SA14	Develop a robust and effective Engagement Strategy (both internal and external).	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	October 2025	Ongoing - The Consultation and Engagement strategy along with a toolkit has been drafted. Following senior officer feedback the guidance is being expanded to include advice on engaging with additional key interest groups and a delivery plan has been produced, with a set of accompanying measures currently in development.
SA16	Develop a new Internal/Employee Communications and Engagement Strategy.	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	October 2025	Ongoing - Following discussions with HR and Corporate Policy, Performance and Engagement officers, and work undertaken to map the draft contents of our Internal/Employee Communications and Engagement Strategy, it has been identified that our Strategic Workforce Plan already contains most of the elements required. Therefore, to avoid duplication and potential confusion, officers have been tasked within reviewing the action plan within the Strategic Workforce Plan to identify additional actions particularly around employee communications, reward and recognition, and employee engagement survey feedback.
SA37	Further progress improvement actions set out in the Public Participation Strategy.	2023/2024 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - Further develop and promote public involvement in the council's Overview and Scrutiny Process.
				Ongoing - Undertaking a programme of work with the council's Democratic Services Committee to consider and enhance diversity in democracy and looking at barriers that could prevent members of the community standing for council.
				Ongoing - Undertaking a detailed programme of work to understand and address concerns relating to harassment, alarm and distress for elected members and how this can sometimes be a barrier for those wishing to participate in the democratic services process.
				Ongoing - Build the capacity of children and young people to participate, sharing knowledge and power with them so that they can shape decision making. Ensure wider representation of seldom heard children and young people, and those with protected characteristics, particularly Additional Learning Needs, in participation activities and work towards embedding children’s rights into decision-making, policy and practice within Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning by rolling out training to staff.

No.	Action Description	Improvement Action Added	Achieve By	Progress to Date
Corporate Planning				
SA23	Undertake a review of the council’s Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF).	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - Work is underway to strengthen our performance management arrangements. This will be further underpinned by the all Wales report prepared by Audit Wales on Performance Data.
Q3 - Ensuring Governance is Effective for Securing Functions and Resources (what and how can we do better?)				
SA20	Develop a Medium Term Financial Strategy.	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - Work has progress on development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy however further work is required to develop proposals to ensure the council has a sustainable financial footing.
SA22	Refine the council’s approach to the annual self-assessment process.	2021/2022 Self-Assessment	October 2025	Ongoing - A project plan for the 2024/2025 Self-Assessment has been completed, aligning it with other statutory reports like the Annual Governance Statement and Corporate Plan Annual Report. Additionally, Directors and Heads of Service completed a survey to aid in the assessment's scoring and content. The survey asks for feedback on the following functions • Digital services • Our approach to procurement • Financial services • The role of the council • Risk management • Physical assets and facilities The completed self-assessment will be presented to Governance & Audit Committee on 9th September and Cabinet on 29th October for approval.
SA27	Continue with future training of officer groups in the significance of the member and officer relations protocol.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	Dec 2025	Ongoing - In addition to the bespoke training opportunities, the training content has now been embedded into the corporate training programme for new Accountable Managers. This ensures that all new managers receive consistent and up-to-date guidance as part of their induction and ongoing development. Looking ahead, a detailed review of the protocol is scheduled to take place in Autumn 2025, led by the council’s Modernisation Group. This review will assess the effectiveness of current practices and identify areas for enhancement. Following this, a suite of detailed training packages will be developed and rolled out to ensure all relevant staff are fully equipped to implement the updated procedures with confidence and consistency.

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT ACTION ADDED	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
SA28	All Group Leaders make Standards and Ethics a standing item on their political group meeting agendas; Group Leaders consider bi-annual meetings with the Monitoring Officer to discuss standards and ethics and how they can work together to promote standards within their political groups; Steps will be taken to promote the Member Officer Protocol to all elected members and officers of the council, with training provided as appropriate; A series of guidance documents to be circulated to all members in respect of key conduct matters such as declarations of interest, predetermination, conduct case studies and key information for members.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - To support the Council’s commitment to high standards of conduct and ethical governance, a series of improvement measures are being implemented. All Group Leaders will ensure that Standards and Ethics is a standing item on their political group meeting agendas, providing a regular opportunity to reinforce expectations and address any emerging issues. In addition, Group Leaders will be encouraged to meet bi-annually with the Monitoring Officer to discuss standards-related matters and explore ways to promote a culture of integrity within their groups. To further embed ethical practices, steps will be taken to promote the Member-Officer Protocol to all elected members and officers through targeted communications, inclusion in induction materials, and the delivery of appropriate training. A suite of concise guidance documents will also be circulated to all members, covering key conduct areas such as declarations of interest, predetermination, case studies on member conduct, and summaries of ethical responsibilities. These resources will be complemented by ongoing training and development opportunities, including scenario-based workshops and refresher sessions, to ensure continued engagement and understanding of the Council’s standards framework.
SA30	Corporate Procurement to monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt. Head of Legal & Democratic Services to report annually to the Corporate Governance Group.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - The Procurement Strategy and the new Contract Procedure Rules have now been formally approved. These form the foundation for a more strategic, transparent, and value-driven approach to procurement across the council. As part of the ongoing implementation programme, the Corporate Procurement Team is conducting a detailed spend analysis to better understand expenditure patterns and identify opportunities for efficiency and financial savings. This analysis is central to ensuring that procurement decisions are evidence-based and aligned with the Council’s corporate priorities. To support the embedding of the new strategy and rules, a structured training programme will be rolled out across departments. This training will reinforce key principles and ensure consistent application of procurement best practices. The effectiveness of this training will be subject to regular review to ensure it remains relevant and impactful. In addition, spot checks will be introduced to monitor procurement processes and ensure compliance with the new rules. These checks are helping to identify areas for improvement and reinforce accountability. The council’s Internal Audit Section has also played a key role in supporting compliance. A recent audit on the use of purchasing cards has been completed, and further procurement-related compliance checks are being incorporated into the Internal Audit work programme going forward. Together, these measures reflect a strong commitment to continuous improvement, financial stewardship, and the delivery of high-quality, value-for-money services.
SA31	Commence the review of the Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the council and the voluntary sector.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	Sept 2025	Ongoing - The review was conducted in collaboration with the third sector, resulting in the development of a draft revised Compact. During the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum meeting on 25th March 2025, it was agreed for council officers and CVS officers to collaborate to finalise the draft.

No.	Action Description	Improvement Action Added	Achieve By	Progress to Date
Q3 - Ensuring Governance is Effective for Securing Functions and Resources (what and how can we do better?)				
SA32	Commence the review of the Charter between the council and Town and Community Councils.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	Dec 2025	Ongoing - Due to capacity this work will be completed during 2025/2026.
SA33	Ensure all strategic risks are embedded and further refine Directorate (operational) Risk Registers.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	March 2026	Ongoing - To ensure our strategic risk management process is embedded within the corporate governance framework the council's Strategic Risk Register has been updated for better monitoring. Each risk is now detailed on its own page with a description, mitigating actions, owner's comments, and both inherent and revised risk scores. Mitigating actions are divided into risk controls and additional steps. A Risk Appetite Statement has been established. The council acknowledges that achieving the ambitions outlined in its Corporate Strategy necessitates taking risks. This statement delineates how the council will balance risks and opportunities to pursue and deliver the well-being objectives, strategic priorities, and associated plans and strategies contained within the Corporate Strategy. The Risk Appetite Statement is a key element of the council's Code of Corporate Governance and the Strategic Risk Register has been updated to reflect the risk appetite set out in the Statement. Audit Wales have completed their review of the Council's Risk Management arrangements and the report setting out their findings is being drafted. The outcome of which will inform any further improvements required in the Council's approach to strategic risk management. As set out in the Corporate Risk Management Policy, the Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite are presented to the Strategic Leadership team on a quarterly basis and to Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee on a six-monthly basis.
SA34	A review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing work to be undertaken by the Information Governance team.	2022/2023 Self-Assessment	March 2027	Ongoing - The audit of council information assets and handling is continuing as planned, with higher risk items identified and addressed. Upon completion of the Information Asset Audit, there will be an ongoing review of these information assets and council processing activities as 'Business as Usual' to provide adequate assurance of compliance Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing. The review of Data Processing and Data Sharing arrangements is incorporated into the audit of council information assets and handling. This will identify higher risk items including those relating to Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing in order that they are addressed. Due to significant resource pressures impacting the Information Governance team, progress on the Information Asset Audit has not been possible at the planned pace. Work has continued as far as is possible on the identification and addressing of those higher risk items in the course of the usual work undertaken by the Information Governance team. However, this will increase the time required significantly. Exploratory work is underway to identify alternative means to complete the Information Asset Audit work.

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT ACTION ADDED	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Q3 - ENSURING GOVERNANCE IS EFFECTIVE FOR SECURING FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES (what and how can we do better?)				
SA38	Improving Cyber Resilience in NPT Council - Cyber resilience is vital for local government's to maintain public trust, prevent service disruptions, and manage the increasing threat landscape. With a significant rise in cyber-attacks, including phishing and ransomware, we must implement robust cybersecurity measures to protect critical infrastructure and resident data. Proactive approaches to safeguarding networks and systems help ensure the continuity of essential services and mitigate the impact of potential cyber threats.	2024/2025 Self-Assessment	December 2027	New improvement action - Cyber strategy review
				New improvement action - Cyber Assessment Framework
				New improvement action - Cyber Security Awareness Programme
				New improvement action - CymruSOC/SIEM continuation
				Completed - Migrate Endpoint Protection to a new XDR platform (Trend Vision One)
SA39	Strengthen the council's approach to compliments and complaints processes.	2024/2025 Self-Assessment	March 2026	New improvement action - Progress recommendations made in the Internal Audit Complaints Review report