



SELF-ASSESSMENT 2021/2022



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

CONTENTS



Page/s

03	Introduction
04	What is Self-Assessment?
05-07	Developing our approach to Self-Assessment
08	Evidence base 2021 / 2022
09-11	Summary of Performance 2021 / 2022
12	How Consultation & Engagement during 2021 / 2022 informed the Council's Priorities
13-26	Summary of High Level Assessments
27-28	Conclusion
29-35	Action Plan



Introduction

From the Neath Port Talbot Council Leader, Councillor Steve Hunt and Chief Executive, Karen Jones

This report sets out Neath Port Talbot Council's Self-Assessment for 2021/2022.

The completion of an annual Self-Assessment is a new requirement for all local authorities in Wales.

This requirement is contained in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and is a corporate, organisational assessment rather than an assessment of individual services.

As part of the Self-Assessment, we are required to consider the extent to which the Council is:

- » 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?*)

In undertaking this self-assessment process, in addition to stating what arrangements we have in place to ensure we do the above well, we have also considered how effective those arrangements are and how they can be further improved.

Cllr Steve Hunt – Leader

Karen Jones – Chief Executive



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



What is Self-Assessment?

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new process for monitoring the performance of all local authorities based on a self-assessment.

Self-assessment is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position in order to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. The council recognises undertaking a self-assessment will enable both officers and members to build on, and further support, a culture in which the council can continuously challenge the current ways of working and ask questions about how the council is operating and how to learn from best practice.

A transparent and open self-assessment is key to adapting for the future in the challenging times we find ourselves in.

At its simplest level, the self-assessment is about asking the following questions:

- » How well are we doing?
- » How do we know?
- » What and how can we do better?

Reflecting on these 3 questions has enabled the council to find a comprehensive baseline to benchmark against for coming years and support the delivery of future plans and strategies.

Timeline for completion of Neath Port Talbot's 2021/2022 Self-Assessment

Research and
collection of
evidence
Jun- Sept 2022

Engagement
workshops
Oct 2022

Review by
Corporate
Directors Group
Nov 2022

Consideration at
Governance &
Audit Committee
Feb 2023

Approved by
Cabinet
Feb 2023

Publication
of Self-
Assessment

Developing our approach to self-assessment

The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 is non prescriptive on the approach individual councils should take to completing their self-assessments. This enabled the council to determine its own approach, designed to fit local circumstances and corporate structures and informed by best practice.

When developing our approach we took into account the following key principles:

- »

Self-assessment is not a fixed judgement. To be truly effective, embedding self-assessment throughout the council should be an ongoing process, addressing issues as they are identified, responding in real time and effectively to challenges and opportunities.
- »

The self-assessment process should encourage honesty, objectivity and transparency about the council's performance and governance.
- »

The self-assessment should be focused on outcomes, what has been achieved rather than the process.
- »

The self-assessment is an evidence-based analysis, by understanding what both quantitative and qualitative information reveals about how the council is exercising its functions, using its resources and governing itself.
- »

The self-assessment should be owned and led at a strategic level, whilst involving members and officers at all levels of the organisation and a range of people across communities and partners.
- »

The self-assessment is not to be a standalone process, but integrated as part of the council's corporate planning, performance and governance processes.

From the outset, it was important to ensure the approach adopted would enable a comprehensive baseline to be established and year on year improvement to be evidenced. Improvement in this context is the ability to:

- deliver against priorities
- remain capable and adaptable to respond to the challenging environment; and
- consider how internal processes and people operate in order to make the right decisions for the longer term.



Developing our approach to self-assessment

continued...

Extensive research was undertaken to inform the approach including:

- » Discussions with WLGA on learning from other approaches across Wales
- » An academic review of existing models used in self-assessment for organisational development and sustainable success:

- European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)
- Total Quality Management (TQM)
- Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA)
- ISO 9001
- LGA Efficiency Monitoring Self-Assessment Tool

- » Interviews with academia at Swansea University School of Management
- » A review of the Statutory Guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Act

Following an evaluation of the above research, it was determined to use the LGA's Efficiency Monitoring Self-Assessment Tool.

The Tool is structured around the following 7 key activities:

1. Role of the Council
2. Getting the best from the workforce
3. Procurement and commissioning
4. Digital and technology
5. Managing income and expenditure
6. Effective risk management
7. Data and intelligence

Although worded slightly differently, the activities in the LGA Tool cover all of the core activities common to the governance of public bodies set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

1. Corporate planning
2. Workforce planning
3. Procurement
4. Assets
5. Financial planning
6. Risk Management
7. Performance Management

Considering the seven core activities as a framework for the self-assessment, and applying the 5 ways of working to those areas, will support the council to ensure it is governing itself to maximise its contribution to the seven well-being goals as contained in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the council's 4 well-being objectives contained in the Corporate Plan - Recover, Reset, Renew 2022/2027. It is acknowledged the assessment of assets is limited to digital, data and technology. This will be addressed in the 2022/2023 self-assessment when assets will be expanded to include physical assets and facilities

We have also included the following supplementary core activity that emerged during our self-assessment research as being integral to effective governance arrangements:

- Leadership and management

Structuring the self-assessment around the 7 core activities will enable a baseline to be established and improvement subsequently tracked in future years.

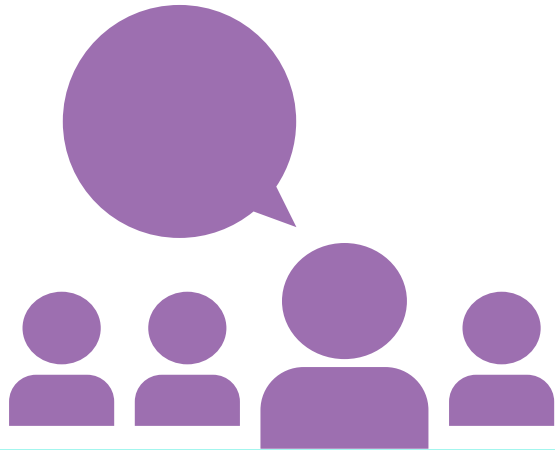
The LGA Toolkit was slightly adapted to ask the questions that will give an objective view of current performance, and these were scored against - *Developing, Mature and Leading*.



Developing our approach to self-assessment continued...

STEP 1

To initiate the self-assessment high level critiques of how the council performed during 2021/2022 across the 7 core activities were prepared by Senior Managers who also provided an assessment as to where each core activity stood in relation to Developing, Mature and Leading (as measured in the LGA Toolkit). The critiques and assessments were reviewed by an independent consultant.

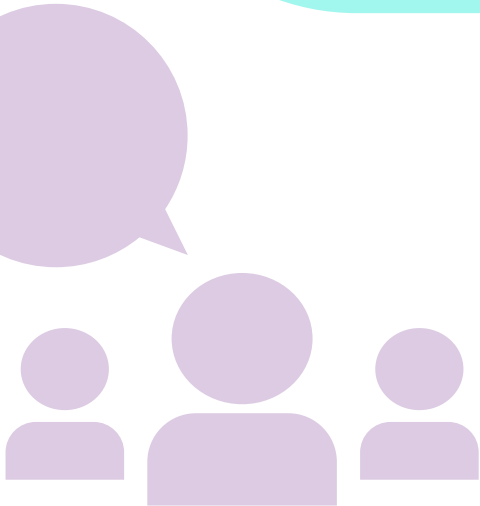


Several groups were consulted on performance

- ✔ NPT Senior Management Team
- ✔ NPT Accountable Managers
- ✔ Governance & Audit Committee
- ✔ Cabinet

STEP 2

The critiques were used as a starting point for discussion in a half day workshop attended by the Senior Management Team (Corporate Directors and Heads of Service) facilitated by the independent consultant. During the workshop 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 2021/2022. A further two workshops were held for Accountable Managers from across the council to again reflect on the assessment taking into account current working practices and service delivery from both a managers perspective and working closely with staff and feedback from service users. Feedback from these sessions are included in the core activity assessments set out on pages 13-26. Feedback from staff who attended the workshops were that the sessions were useful and provided a clear explanation of the core activities and provided the opportunity to identify where improvements could be made.



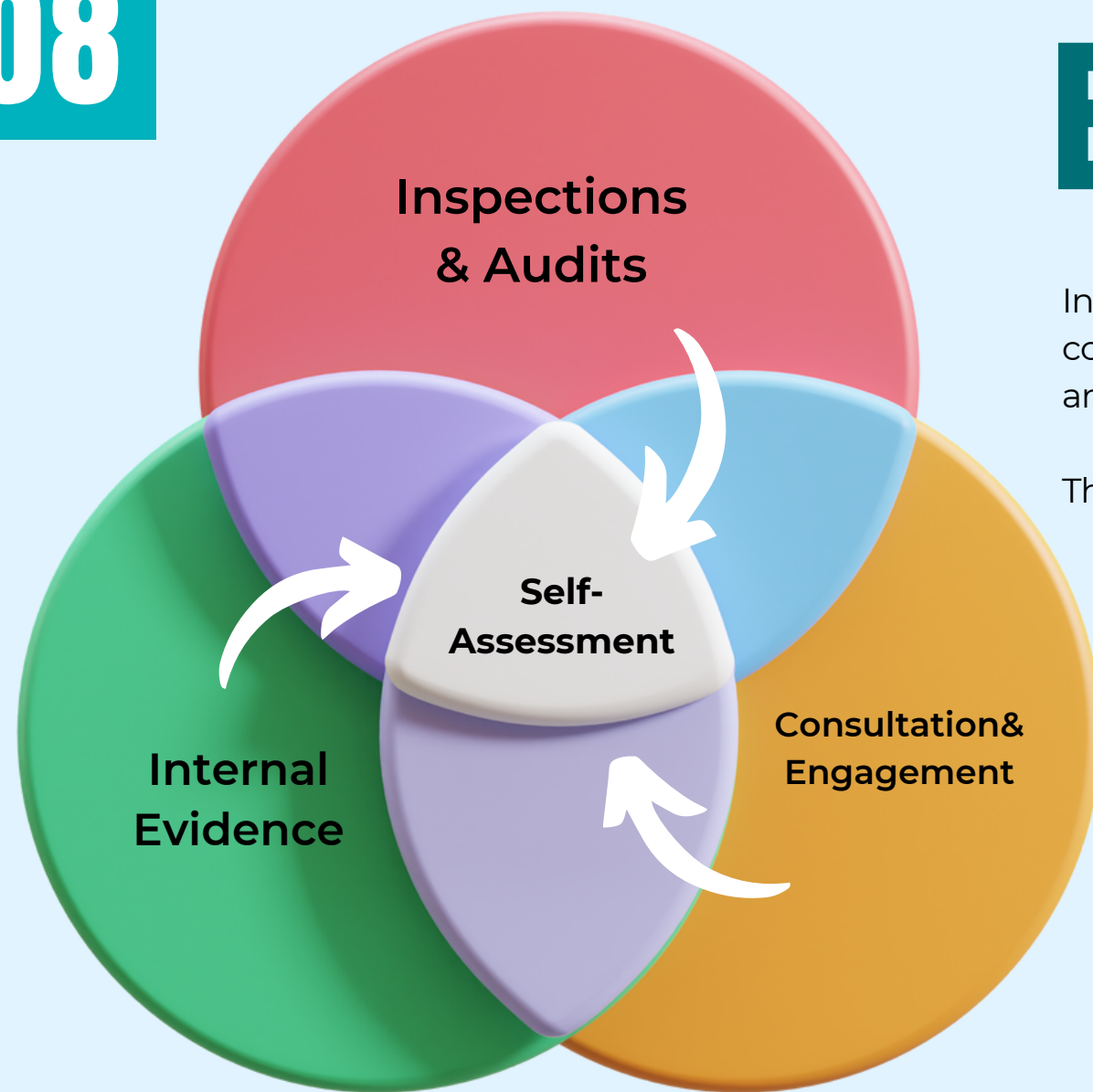
STEP 3

From the core activity assessments and the feedback obtained during the workshops, opportunities for improvement (to increase the extent to which the council will meet the performance requirements in 2022/2023 and onwards) were identified and are contained in the Action Plan on pages 29-35. A number of the opportunities for improvement were identified during 2021/2022 as part of the extensive, council-wide work to develop the council's revised Corporate Plan for the period 2022/2027. The Plan sets out the strategic vision for the council and included a programme of organisational development to develop the capacity and capability of the council over a 3-5 year period. The self-assessment exercise has provided assurance the opportunities for improvement identified during 2021/2022 were the right things to be focussing on during 2022/2023 onwards. Progress on those improvement areas is included in the Action Plan.

“ *I really enjoyed the workshop; it was really well planned, and I feel that we got a lot out of it. Thank you for organising it, it was really good to have that opportunity to feedback.* ”

STEP 4

The draft self-assessment was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 15th February 2023. The Committee has a role to review the draft self-assessment and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions. Following review by the Committee no recommendations for any changes to the conclusions or actions were proposed.



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. Due to the wide range of functions and service areas our approach to engagement has diversified. Prior to Covid, a Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement) was established to involve our communities and partner agencies from the outset in the work that is undertaken by the Council to help shape proposals before wider public consultation exercises. An event was held which gathered together over 28 key partners with representatives of range of groups including, children and young people, carers, people with disabilities, Welsh speakers and partners.

Evidence Based 2021 / 2022

In addition to the completion of the high level critiques of how the council performed during 2021/2022 across the 7 core activities, we have also considered a wide variety of evidence in assessing our performance during 2021/2022. Some of the evidence has been used to inform other annual reports including the [Corporate Plan Annual Report 2021/2022](#) and the [Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022](#).

The evidence can be presented in 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 2021/2022:

- ➡ Corporate Plan – Annual Report
- ➡ Documentation to inform the development of the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 - a vast amount of work was undertaken to reflect on achievements to date and make suitable and sustainable plans for the coming years.
- ➡ Public Service Board Wellbeing Plan - Annual Report
- ➡ Statement of Accounts
- ➡ Annual Governance Statement
- ➡ Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021/2022
- ➡ Quarterly Performance Cabinet Reports
- ➡ Risk Register
- ➡ Compliments, Comments and Complaints
- ➡ Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports
- ➡ Internal Audit Reports

Category 2 - Regulatory / Inspection Reports

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| ➡ Audit Wales Annual Improvement Report | ➡ Estyn Inspection Reports |
| ➡ Audit Wales Reports | ➡ Public Service Ombudsman Wales |
| ➡ Care Inspectorate Wales Reports | ➡ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation |

Category 3 - Consultation & Engagement

The evidence in this category is via listening to staff, residents and businesses about their experiences of services and working within the authority. Engagement has developed significantly since the pandemic and is paramount in how the Council improves and effectively and efficiently delivers services. The Council's Let's Talk campaign, Youth Council, Citizen's Panel and Community of Practice re-enforce the commitment to listen and to be accountable to act on feedback.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ➡ Let's Talk Engagement & Consultation Campaign (Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and Budget 2022/2023) | ➡ Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement) |
| ➡ Trade Union meetings | ➡ Economic Development Strategy |
| ➡ Youth Council | ➡ Consultation |
| ➡ Citizens Panel | ➡ Senior Manager Workshops |
| ➡ Staff Hybrid Working Surveys | ➡ Accountable Manager Workshops |

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2021 / 2022

The following information provides a summary of some of the reports included in the 3 categories of internal, external and consultation/engagement which have been used to support the self-assessment.

Well-being Objectives

The well-being objectives in place during 2021/2022 were:

- » To improve the well-being of children and young people
- » To improve the well-being of all adults who live in the county borough
- » To develop the local economy and environment so that the well-being of people can be improved.

The well-being objectives were approved by Council in 2017. Under each well-being objective there are improvement priorities and steps. The improvement priorities set out the overall improvement we are aiming to achieve and the steps set out the strategic actions we will take to deliver that improvement.

For 2021/2022, 77% of steps (72 of 93) were on track and 21 just off track. This is an improvement on 2020/2021 where 65% of steps were on track and 24 were just off track. Overall progress on steps indicates services started to recover during 2021/2022. This recovery was against a backdrop of significant impacts and disruption caused by the pandemic (during 2020/2021 and 2021/2022).

Key Performance Indicators

To assess our performance in meeting our well-being objectives during 2021/2022, alongside the above progress on steps, we used 58 performance indicators.

The summary below shows a higher proportion of corporate plan key performance indicators achieved targets in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20 and the percentage improving increased by 3% compared to 2020/21.

**Caution should be taken with the comparison as performance for some measures across both 2020/21 and 2021/22 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.*

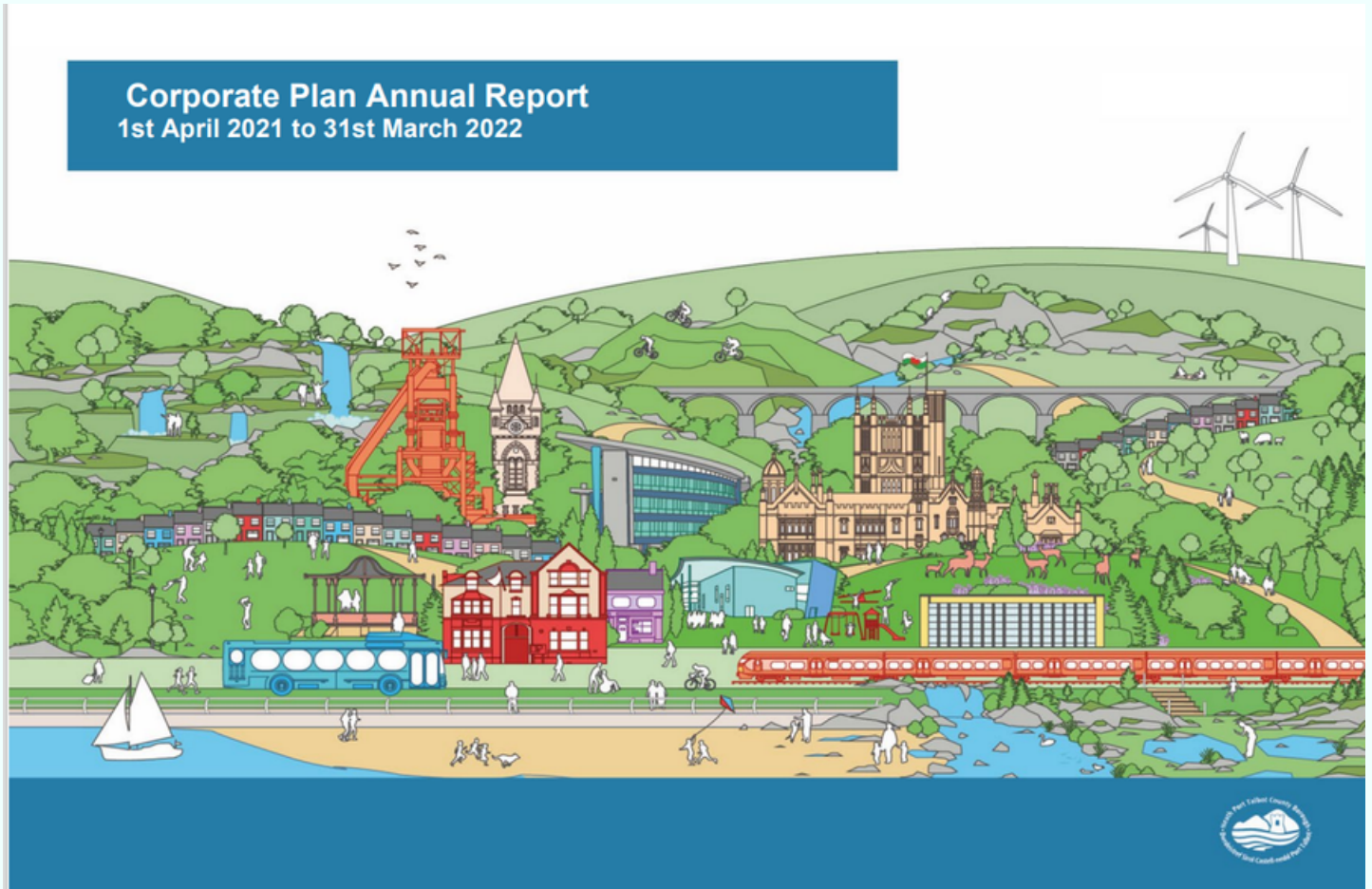
Comparing against Targets - During 2021/22, of the performance indicators that had comparable targets, 70% (28 of 40) achieved target, 7.5% (3 of 40) were within 5% of target and 22.5% (9 of 40) were 5% or more below target.

This compares favourably to 2020/21 where 61% (23 of 38) achieved target, 18% (7 of 38) were within 5% of target and 21% (8 of 38) were 5% or more below the target set. In 2019/20, 54% achieved target.

Comparing against previous year performance - In 2021/22, 60% (29 of 48) improved or maintained performance, 15% (7 of 48) marginally declined but within 5% and 25% (12 of 48) declined by 5% or more.

In 2020/21, 57% (24 of 42) improved or maintained performance, 24% (10 of 42) marginally declined and 19% (8 of 42) declined by 5% or more. In 2019/20, 63% (32 of 51) improved or maintained performance.

Examples of improvements include more year 11 pupils studying Welsh first language which is likely to rise steadily for the next 3 years, child assessments completed in time (99%), employability programme outcomes linked to Workways+, Communities for Work (16-24) and Communities for Work Plus, increase in apprenticeships within the council, quicker processing of benefits, further improvement in the condition of A, B and C roads, increases in council tax and National Non-domestic collection rates (NNDR) and more services available online.





SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE continued...

We also achieved or exceeded our targets for a range of measures which include our recycling rates (although the recycling rate reduced slightly), street cleanliness, food establishments meeting food hygiene standards (97%), percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless, our Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) figure, healthy relationship lessons to pupils, air quality measure, 410 jobs created/safeguarded as a result of financial support by the authority and % local government electors verified and registered to vote.

Some of our performance has declined and/or missed targets during the year, almost all of these continue to be affected in some way by the impacts of the pandemic including school attendance, the average time taken to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), Communities for Work (age 25+) outcomes, domestic abuse high risk repeat referrals, time taken to clear fly tipping, planning applications determined in time and council sickness rates (which have significantly increased).

The average time taken to answer telephone calls from the public was below target and showed a slight drop in performance for the year, however, performance improved in the second half of the year. Contact with young people through the youth service and visits to theatres, leisure centres and libraries are still lower than pre-pandemic levels.

More detail of service achievements can be found in Corporate Plan Annual Report 2021/2022

Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) / Benchmarking Council Performance

Previously, at council level, performance has been compared with other local authorities across Wales against the national set of Public Accountability Measures (PAMs). However, these measures ceased being collected and compared nationally in 2021.

Although, a number of these measures are still being benchmarked by our service areas. A number of services also share good practice and information via benchmarking groups.

Data Cymru is currently developing a set of measures with support of local authorities, including Neath Port Talbot, which can be used for benchmarking at council and service level. In the meantime, Neath Port Talbot Council will be reviewing our own benchmarking arrangements to further strengthen and improve them.

At an operational level, service areas for 2022/23 have completed a self-assessment of performance when developing their Service Recovery Plans (SRP). Within the SRP guidance, services are encouraged to benchmark their performance (e.g. with other organisations) where data is available. This process will be reviewed and further strengthened during 2022/23.

Complaints and Compliments

Complaints and compliments provide valuable information about how we are performing and what our customers think about our services. Most people who complain tell us what we have done wrong and how we can do better. We use this feedback to improve our services. Publishing an annual report demonstrates the council's commitment to transparency and a positive approach to acknowledging, investigating, responding to and learning from complaints. The annual report for 2021/2022 can be found [here](#).

There was an increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints received across the Council from 102 received in 2020/2021 to 111 received in 2021/2022. However, the percentage upheld/partially upheld during 2021/2022 was 19.82% (22 of 111). This is a reduction on previous years. In 2020/2021 the percentage was 23.53% (24 of 102) and in 2019/2020 the percentage was 31.76% (47 of 148).

There was an increase in the number of Stage 2 complaints received from 14 in 2020/2021 to 25 in 2021/2022. However, only 2 Stage 2 complaints were upheld/partially upheld (8.33%) - an increase in just one when comparing to the previous year when 1 of 14 (7.14%) Stage 2 complaints received was upheld/partially upheld.

No systemic failings could be attributed to a particular service area from the instances reported and investigated.

There has been a steady year on year increase in compliments from 115 in 2017/18 to 360 in 2020/2021. However, in 2021/2022 there has been a reduction in the number of compliments received falling to 249.



SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE continued...

The council has adopted the 2016 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA). To comply with the Framework, the council published an Annual Governance Statement, which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the council to carry out its functions effectively. The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the council is directed and controlled. The framework brings together an underlying set of legal requirements, good practice and management processes.

Neath Port Talbot Council Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022

The completion of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is an important component of the Council's corporate governance arrangements which is about making sure the Council is run properly, does the right things at the right time in the right way and:

- ➔ Its business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations;
- ➔ Public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for;
- ➔ There is sound and inclusive decision making;
- ➔ Resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively
- ➔ There is clear accountability for the use of resources to achieve priorities which benefit local people and communities

The self-assessment of the effectiveness of internal control for the year 2021/2022 identified 6 areas for improvement and these can be found in the Action Plan on pages 29-35. The AGS for 2021/2022 – can be found [here](#).



How Consultation and Engagement during 2021/2022 informed the Council's Priorities

Community
Events

Youth
Council

Let's Talk

Citizens
Panel

Staff
Surveys

Community of
Practice

The council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 – Recover, Reset, Renew was informed by many people – residents, employees, elected members, community organisations, businesses and other partners. Internal engagement started during spring 2021 to establish lessons learned and priorities for recovery. This included the involvement of all accountable managers in completing strategic assessments to identify lessons learned and proposals for the future shape of services.

A cross party Coronavirus – Member Panel met on five occasions (during March 2021 – November 2021) to discuss approaches to form the basis of recovery from the pandemic and a number of all Member Seminars were also held to discuss recovery planning.

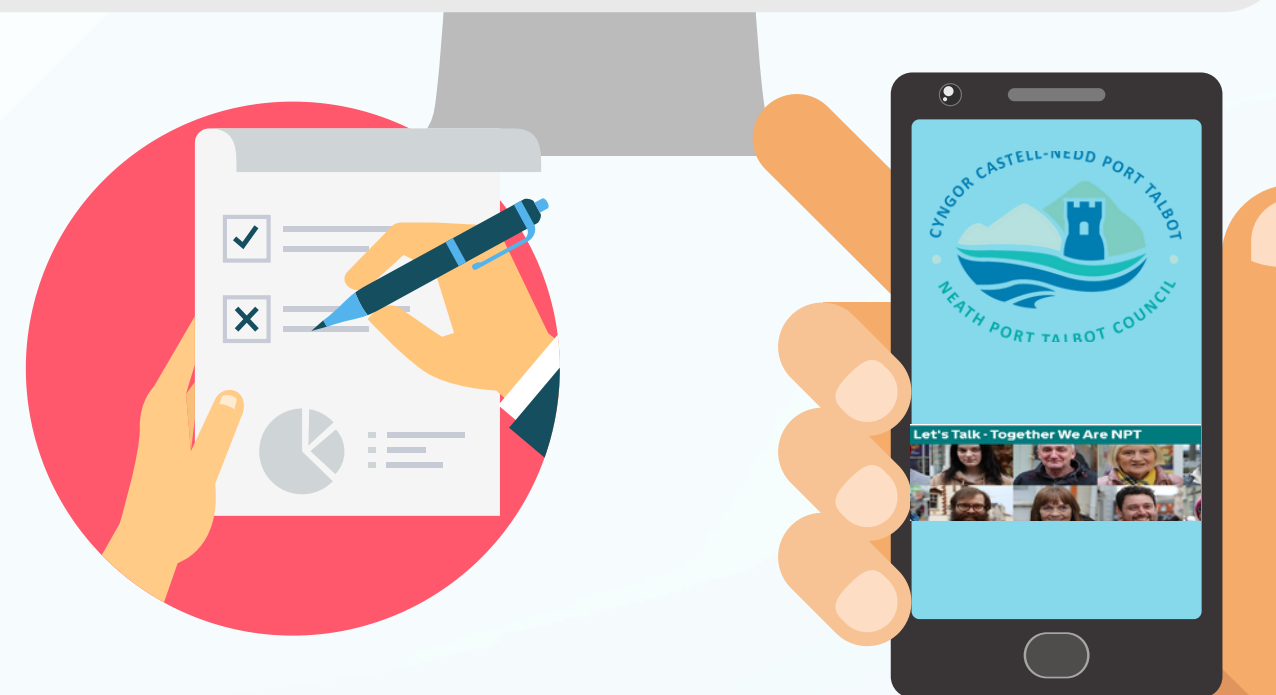
The initial phase of public engagement “Let’s Talk” started on 19th July and the aim of this phase was to find out what mattered to local people in the context of recovery from Covid-19. Over 1,700 responses were received. The feedback informed the four draft wellbeing objectives and the proposed focus of work under each wellbeing objective during 2022/2023, during the next 5 years and the longer term.

During this initial phase, the Chief Executive visited a number of wards across the county borough to talk to local Members, groups and residents about what mattered to local people in the context of recovery.

The second phase of the public consultation, which started on 5th January 2022, tested whether or not we had captured what is important to people now and in the future in terms of the changes we aim to make over the next 12 months, the next 5 years and the longer term.

Most people strongly agreed / agreed with each of the four draft wellbeing objectives and most people agreed with all the things we should focus on in the next 12 months and longer term. There were a number of consistent themes in the detailed feedback under each wellbeing objective and the draft Plan was amended to reflect that feedback.

In addition, the Chief Executive attended a number of consultation events to engage partners and stakeholders in the development of the Plan (Public Services Board; Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum; Staff Council; 3rd Sector consultation; Town & Community Council Liaison Forum.





The following section provides a

Summary of High Level Critiques for each Core Activity 2021/2022

- Corporate Planning - *Role of the Council*
- Workforce planning - *Getting the best from the workforce*
- Leadership - *Leadership and Management*
- Procurement - *Procurement & Commissioning*
- Risk Management - *Effective Risk Management*
- Data, Digital & Technology
- Financial Planning - *Managing Expenditure / Managing Income*

Summary of High Level Assessment

Corporate Planning '*The Role of the Council*'

Corporate Planning is the process by which businesses create strategies for meeting business goals and achieving objectives.

During 2021/2022, the Council’s Corporate Plan 2018-2022 was fundamentally reviewed and a new Plan was launched setting out how the council will approach recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in the short, medium and longer term.

The Plan ‘Recover, Reset, Renew’ was informed by six months of engagement and consultation to ensure we took the views of people living and working in the county borough, partners, businesses, trade unions and visitors on board from the very earliest stages. This ensured the Plan was developed in true collaboration.

The Plan was also informed by an analysis of other important factors that needed to be taken into account including: poverty, deprivation and inequalities; public finances; green recovery and decarbonisation; digitisation, demographic change; future of work; community; and government policy.

The council’s purpose, vision, values, relationships and priorities were also reset and renewed taking into account:

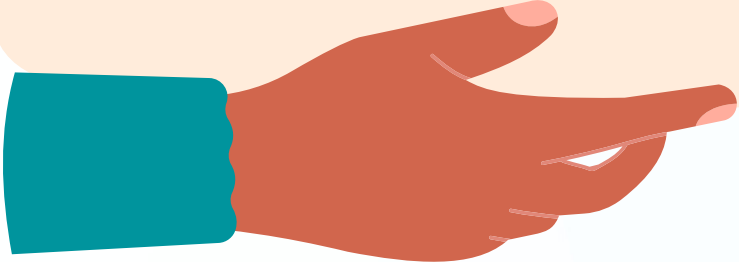
- » what matters to local people, businesses and our employees;
- » the impact that we know Covid-19 has had on our communities, our local economy and wider stakeholders;
- » the lessons we have learned from our pandemic response and from elsewhere; and
- » other anticipated changes in our external environment.

The Plan clearly sets out the Council’s Purpose, Vision, Values and Priorities:

Purpose: *To help Neath Port Talbot residents live good lives*

- Our Vision:**
- 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
 - Local people are skilled and access high quality, green jobs

- Values:**
- Connected – what matters to you matters to us
 - Caring – we care about you, your life and the future of our county borough
 - Collaborative – we work with our citizens and our partners because together we can achieve more
 - Confident – we are optimistic and confident about the future



The plan summarises the context in which it has been developed and sets out the council’s strategic change programme for the next five years which has four well-being objectives:

- » 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.
- » Local people are skilled and access high quality, green jobs.

In addition the Plan includes an Enabling Programme – a programme of organisational development to develop the capacity and capability of the Council over a 3-5 year period to deliver the significant organisational change that is needed to deliver the well-being objectives, cultural changes and associated programmes of work.

A key component of effective corporate planning is performance management.

The council understands the need to and how to review the performance of services. In terms of the need the council recognises the importance of having have a fit for purpose Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF) in place that sets a clear direction for the council that links/joins up all council business from employee level up to council level and where everybody is clear how they contribute to achieving the Council’s vision, values and priorities.

It is imperative that our planning (including financial and workforce planning), performance and risk processes are robust and interwoven into our decision making at every level of the organisation.

It is important that we have mechanisms in place to manage and monitor performance and everyone in the council has a role to play in performance management and everyone understands their responsibilities regarding performance management.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Corporate Planning '*The Role of the Council*' continued...

These processes will enable the council to achieve its vision and values and deliver the council's well-being objectives so that we can improve outcomes for our residents and businesses, whilst achieving value for money and contributing to the national 7 well-being goals.

During the development of the council's revised Corporate Plan and planning for recovery, it was evident the council's current performance management framework was no longer fit for purpose. It was recognised work was needed around strengthening the council's performance management arrangements and work is currently underway (2022/2023) to develop a revised Corporate Performance Management Framework which will demonstrate the above mechanisms are in place.

In terms of how to review the performance of services, the council recognised in 2021/2022 the need to further develop this process and during 2021/2022 preparatory work was undertaken to develop a Service Recovery Plan (SRP) template for all services to complete as part of the council's approach to recovery. The SRP is designed to tell a story of where the service is now, how do you know and what you have to do to improve and change to get to where you want to be.

Although there is still some work to be done to ensure consistency across the council, there was general agreement in the workshops, that with ongoing refinement, the Corporate Plan and supporting SRP processes were fit for purpose and defined as part of "the golden thread".

It was also acknowledged there is more work needed across service areas to take into consideration how residents' access and utilise services and to gauge satisfaction levels which will be addressed via revised guidance to be issued for the development of SRP's for 2023/2024

To date a range of engagement methods have taken place including the introduction of the Let's Talk campaign, the Community in Practice (Involvement & Engagement) and the council's Citizens Panel.

These engagement methods have been extremely productive and along with a revised Engagement Strategy (both internal and external) will enable the Council to involve residents/service users and staff in the shaping and development of future service delivery.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: the council is mature in corporate planning

Summary of High Level Assessment

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

The council believes people make the difference. The council's Workforce Plan 2018-2022 sets out the following purpose and vision:

PURPOSE:

To ensure the Council has the right number of people with the right skills and attitudes in place at the right time to deliver its services and functions.

WORKFORCE VISION:

It is important that we are able to map out our priority workforce measures needed to shape the future workforce and ensure it has the capacity and capability to deliver our Corporate Plan. We can then deliver what matters to our communities and customers and fulfil our well-being objectives and the Workforce Management Improvement Priority.

The plan also sets out the following vision specifically in relation to the council's workforce:
People – we believe people make the difference. We will ensure our people are well led, supported, trusted and recognised for the contribution they make.

People will be treated fairly and with respect and also encouraged to bring forward ideas about how we can improve what we do. We will develop a workforce which is representative of its communities and people will have equal opportunity to progress in our organisation. We will develop a culture where people are accountable for and recognised for what they do and how they do it.

The Workforce Plan 2018 – 2022 sets out alignment to the well-being objectives of the council, financial planning, asset management planning and governance arrangements, as well as the corporate change programme. This Plan sets out five key workforce themes and the appended delivery plan sets out the intended actions, outcomes, and measures under each of the themes. Throughout 2021 / 2022 preparatory work took place to develop the draft Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy for the period 2022 – 2027, aligning to the Corporate Plan and the Strategic Change Programme for the same period.

At a corporate level, the Workforce Plan for 2018 – 2022, and the draft Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 aim 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 operational service level, the 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. The toolkit was launched in late 2019.

During 2021/2022, Audit Wales undertook a review of workforce planning arrangements across the Council. The review found that pre-Covid, the council had made significant progress with workforce planning and developed clear processes and tools and was aware that it needs to do more to embed it consistently through all levels and all services.

The review identified a number of strengths:



Summary of High Level Assessment continued...

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

During Covid, Audit Wales found the council's reactive workforce planning during the pandemic worked well, with strong focuses on maintaining essential services and ensuring employee wellbeing. The pandemic has highlighted to the council the value of people and the value in planning how those people work. Planning is more than important than ever with the council facing recruitment and retention challenges alongside the need for new skills and ways of working.

The council has strategic and operational tools in place to create effective workforce plans. The council has the opportunity to build on the current momentum where people have recognised the need for effective future planning. The council should clarify its own vision for workforce planning after considering a number of key themes that have arisen during our fieldwork.

Strengths identified included:

- ➡ Early establishment of workforce groups
- ➡ Surveyed employees for redeployment
- ➡ Recruited and trained for new teams
- ➡ Working together across boundaries, focus on the tasks and the residents, not the budget
- ➡ Clear proof that remote working is effective
- ➡ HR processes returned quickly
- ➡ Now looking at the 'new normal'
- ➡ Focus on employee wellbeing

The Audit Wales review identified a number of areas for improvement including recommendations for workforce priorities for consideration the next planned iteration of the workforce plan.

As a result of Audit Wales work and review of the **Workforce Plan 2018 – 2022** a number of actions have already been initiated as part of the council's Strategic Change Programme (Corporate Plan 2022/2027) including the establishment of a Future of Work Team and Recruitment Taskforce – additional resources to supplement the People & Organisational Development service to ensure deliverability of this ambitious programme and drive the council's recruitment strategy.

During the self-assessment, there was a general positivity from Senior Management and Accountable Managers regarding Workforce Planning across the council.

In particular the work around the development of the Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027, recruitment and succession planning undertaken during 2021/2022.

Feedback from all workshops confirmed communication and engagement of staff was key in the development of the Strategic Workforce Plan. Comments from the Accountable Managers workshop included the feeling that senior management were supportive, solution focussed, open to discussions and ideas and willing to take informed risks. However, comments were made on the need to put more emphasis on long-term planning.



Conclusion of Self-Assessment: the council is mature in workforce planning and moving towards leading.

18 Summary of High Level Assessment

Leadership & Management

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management across the council has strengthened significantly over recent years and was further highlighted when we were plummeted into a global pandemic. Like all other authorities across the UK the demand for support and services was incredible, with staff mobilising with immediate effect to provide residents, businesses and voluntary organisations with assistance in a variety of ways.

Further assessments, and audits, undertaken during 2021/2022 demonstrated the impact of strong leadership across Neath Port Talbot Council. In the main this is reflected via reports published by Council regulators (Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn). One such report [1] rated the governance and leadership of the council's Youth Offending team as 'outstanding'. Similarly, the following extract has been taken from the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements report [2] where the leadership and management of this work was reviewed staff confirmed 'There was strong leadership from the local authority officers who strategically and operationally actively promoted an effective safeguarding culture across all school's'.

In addition to the above, a workshop was held by Audit Wales in February 2022 noting their Assurance and Risk Assessment [3] detailing emerging risks and next steps. Listed as one of the assurances for the year was that Audit Wales deemed that the council has 'Strong strategic leadership and a new corporate directors group providing clear direction to services and staff'.

Developing our Leaders

Whilst there are strong, forward thinking, strategic leaders providing clear direction to staff and services, we are developing processes, procedures and frameworks to underpin "leadership and management" in terms of training, development and strengthening resilience.

The council, as at 2021/2022, did not have a leadership development plan or strategy in place. Whilst there are strong, forward thinking, strategic leaders providing clear direction to staff and services[1], there are developing frameworks underpinning "leadership and management" in terms of training, development and strengthening resilience. During the austerity decade the leadership development budget was deleted, along with the post-holder employed to deliver leadership development activity.

In January 2022, the council confirmed its commitment to the development of its workforce by approving the creation of a significant Organisational Development reserve budget to create and support the development of the whole workforce. This includes leadership and management development to provide a sense of vision, purpose and inspiration to employees and build organisational confidence, lead to innovation and improve outcomes for the people who live and work in Neath Port Talbot.

MEET TEAM NPT WORKING AT NPT HOW WE RECRUIT SEARCH & APPLY

Search Jobs

Meet Team NPT

With us, you can

Each person in Team NPT makes their own unique and valuable contribution to our work.

Find out more from them about what's it's like to work together to help our residents live fulfilled lives in a place we're all proud of.

Karen Jones
Chief Executive

Joshua Ralph

Anthony Boyle

Beth Parker

Jacqueline Davies

Shelby Martone

[1] Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation – An inspection of youth offending services in Neath Port Talbot, May 2022

[2] Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Wales National Probation Service, South Wales Police - June 2021

[3] Audit Wales - Assurance and Risk Assessment Workshop, February 2022



Summary of High Level Assessment

Leadership & management continued...

Whilst implementing the council's Strategic Workforce Plan - The Future of Work Strategy (2022 – 2027) the following action has been made a priority “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 addition, leadership and management effectiveness going forward will be evidenced through the annual appraisal cycle.

This cycle will act as the council's internal ‘climate check’ this is in development and will be highlighted through the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027 setting out the council's vision, values and priorities and in relation to leadership.

A comprehensive programme of in-house training and development activity is being planned by the Learning, Training & Development Team.

In March 2022, the Chief Executive initiated a review of the council's organisational design focusing on the senior management leadership level, aiming to “increase capacity at head of service level and also to provide an opportunity to make portfolios more coherent”.

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.

During the self-assessment, there was significant agreement that more learning together across the council leadership team would be helpful, aligning senior staff to a level of leadership which would drive continuous improvement. This ranged across induction, understanding the current position and performance of the council and knowing what each other does to encourage innovation across directorates.

Accountable Managers felt it was imperative that clear and consistent careers development paths and opportunities to progress were available and the expectations on leaders, strategic leads was clearly and a full definition of competencies articulated.

**Y STRATEGAET DYFODOL
GWAITH**

**THE FUTURE OF WORK
STRATEGY**

Y Cynllun Strategol ar gyfer y Gweithlu
Strategic Workforce Plan
2022-2027

Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: the council is mature, and has plans in place to move to leading.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Procurement - '*Procurement & commissioning*'

Procurement is defined as the process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment. This is the central theme of our procurement work.

Procurement rules and policies are going to be subject to significant change in forthcoming years, to not only meet legislative changes, but also to ensure the council achieves its priorities. This includes the development of a new procurement strategy.



The council is committed to ensuring it achieves value for money from its third party procurement expenditure – circa, £205,000,000 per annum. Third-party spend is increasing, as is the reliance on procured goods and services, with local government remaining a significant commissioner and purchaser at both a place and aggregate level across all key spend categories.

Increased volume and complexity of demand and market pressures on services, particularly social care, has created 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 the council must approach procurement.

The council has clear policies in place to increase value through the procurement process via its contract procedure rules and various policies and protocols. As part of its tender strategy work, it considers ways to meet continuous improvement in its procured services.

Training packages for officers in respect of procurement processes are being developed to ensure training is embedded in service delivery. In addition, toolkits are being developed to address this and ensures the provision of accurate data as we undertake strategic work programmes.

Arrangements are in place to address supplier performance and contract and relationship management is recognised by the council as being essential to overall performance.

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. Potential collusion and market distortion is actively investigated. Contract conditions ensure maximum legal protection to the council.

The council is exploring the best approach to Member engagement in procurement and commercial matters to ensure the views of residents and elected representatives filters through to procurement processes.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Procurement - '*Procurement & commissioning*' continued...

During the self-assessment, it was acknowledged the council has clear policies in place to increase value through the procurement process via its contract procedure rules and various policies and protocols.

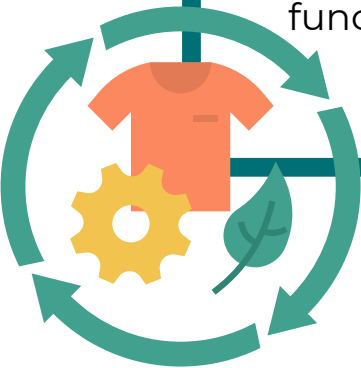
Whilst the amount of work placed upon procurement and the ability to get decisions approved was held in high regard it was highlighted there are areas to improve on to ensure more cross functional working. Those using the service were positive about the work of the legal team but would like to be able to speed up the process if resources allowed.

Senior Managers acknowledged they are engaged in procurement and commercial issues routinely taking advice at key decision points and officers are engaging in procurement processes at an early stage. Commissioning officers have detailed expertise and understanding of their expenditure and supplier base and are able to use this knowledge to commission services which are required by the council. Work however 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.

Systems are in place to allow data and intelligence to be collected on costs incurred but limited access to tangible data to allow access to identify themes and areas of expenditure. Toolkits are being developed to address this and ensures the provision of accurate data as we undertake strategic work programmes.

It was acknowledged that focus is still on compliance and standard cost/quality ratios but innovation is also a consideration. Arrangements are in place to address supplier performance and it is essential that both contract and relationship management is monitored and expenditure is challenged where required. Training packages for officers in respect of procurement processes are being developed to ensure training is embedded in service delivery.

It was acknowledged, there are areas which need to be improved on to get to a position where we are a leading operation but from a compliance and an operational perspective, and procurement functions meet the needs of the council and service delivery. More work needs to be focussed on community impact (consideration and understanding of the cost of living to vulnerable groups and long term service needs which will continue throughout 2022/2023 onwards).



Conclusion of Self-Assessment: the council is mature with its strengths being in process, legislative compliance and achieving good results for the council.



Summary of High Level Assessment

Risk Management - '*Effective risk management*'

The council's Risk Management Policy was developed in 2015 and describes a structured and focussed approach to managing risks and exploiting opportunities at a corporate level. The policy applies to all of the activities of the council and builds on existing good operational risk management practices within the council and complements the other systems of governance, which form the council's internal systems of control.

It is acknowledged that during 2021/2022 the focus of risk management was extensively around the council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic ensuring the council was able to respond to the pandemic in a structured and measured way.

This meant there was a lessening of focus on the approach (framework) set out in the above policy, in particular the recording and reporting of both operational and strategic risks at an officer level and the oversight of those risks by members.

However, the council recognises risk management is the process followed to control the level of risk in decision making, functions and service activities which could impact on the achievement of the council's vision, purpose and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027.

It is also recognised that an effective system of corporate governance leads to good management, good performance good stewardship of public funds, good public engagement and ultimately is essential for the council to demonstrate that it is acting in the best interests of the community it serves.

Although recovery remains a focus for the council, there are a number of new number challenges facing the council (e.g. financial (budget),

economically (cost of living crisis / energy)) and it is essential the council has a robust risk management policy in place to deliver the following benefits in such a chaotic and turbulent environment the council now finds itself in:

- » Protection of reputation and assets and demonstrates openness and accountability (good governance and internal control)
- » Provides early warning on key / emerging matters to enable transparent, timely decision making and intervention at appropriate levels leading to greater financial and budget controls
- » Supports the achievement of the council's vision, purpose and priorities
- » Contributes to building a risk savvy workforce and environment that allows for innovation and a responsible approach to risk taking

During 2022/2023, work has been initiated to revise the 2015 Policy. The revised Policy will demonstrate the Council's commitment to the management of risk in order to:

- » Support the delivery of the council's vision, purpose and priorities;
- » Ensure statutory obligations are met;
- » Safeguard all stakeholders to whom the council has a duty of care;
- » Protect physical and information assets and identify and manage potential liabilities;
- » Ensure effective stewardship of public funds, efficient deployment and use of resources and securing value for money for the public purse;
- » Learn from previous threats, opportunities, successes and failures;
- » Preserve promote and protect the reputation of the council; and
- » Build a workforce where innovation and a responsible approach to risk taking is part of its culture.



Conclusion of Self-Assessment: the council is mature and has plans in place to move to leading.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Data, Digital & Technology

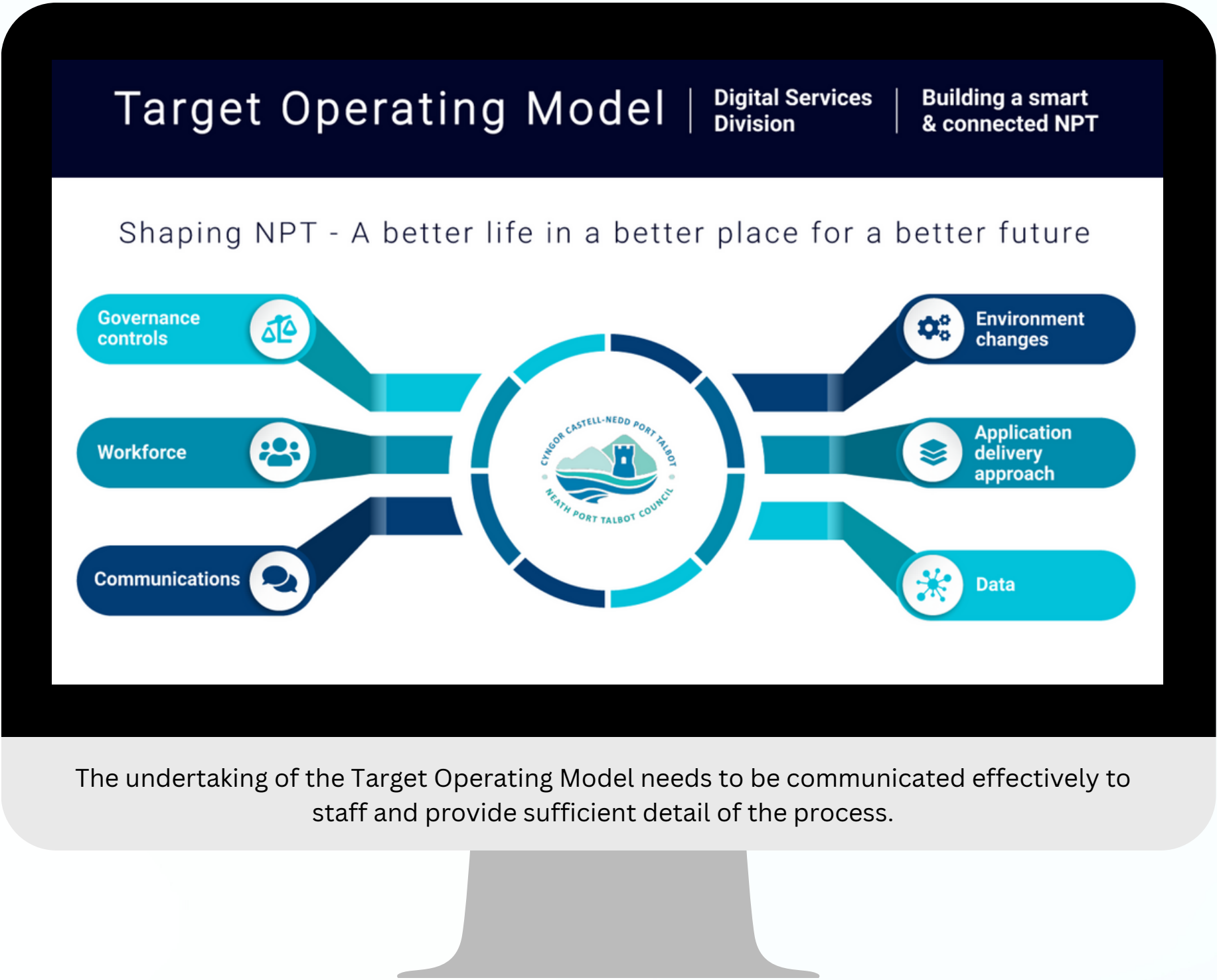
The recent independent baseline for digital services has identified a number of specific areas for improvement including Digital Infrastructure; Application delivery; Data; Cyber Security; Digital Capability and Capacity; and the wider workforce skillset.

The Digital Services team continues to deliver extensive reactive support across the council's service areas and in recent years, the loss of key staff with a lack of succession planning has created further pressures, along with an increased backlog in service maintenance and development that is urgently required.

During the self-assessment, the newly formed Data team was acknowledged as a step in this direction. The new team will support the whole council in better using the extensive data sets available to inform service design and delivery. Areas such as Management Information, developing a Data & Business Intelligence Strategy, standardising data architecture, and using data analytics to support service delivery are all in scope.

There is a need for the Data Team to have an understanding of service and community needs and as result support the council to ensure data silos do not exist across the council. It is clear that aligned data collection is limited. There is ad-hoc reporting / manual exports from applications and data is not currently linked to form a single holistic view across customer journey. There is a large amount of data duplication / multiple copies being held by departments across the council. GDPR restrictions needs to be reviewed to ensure data can be held collectively and be used for a multiple of purposes in the best interest for the service user/resident.

As a result of an independent review of digital operations an innovative new Target Operating Model (TOM) will transform how digital services operates across the council and will support the implementation of the Corporate Plan and transform the experience for all residents, businesses, staff and visitors.



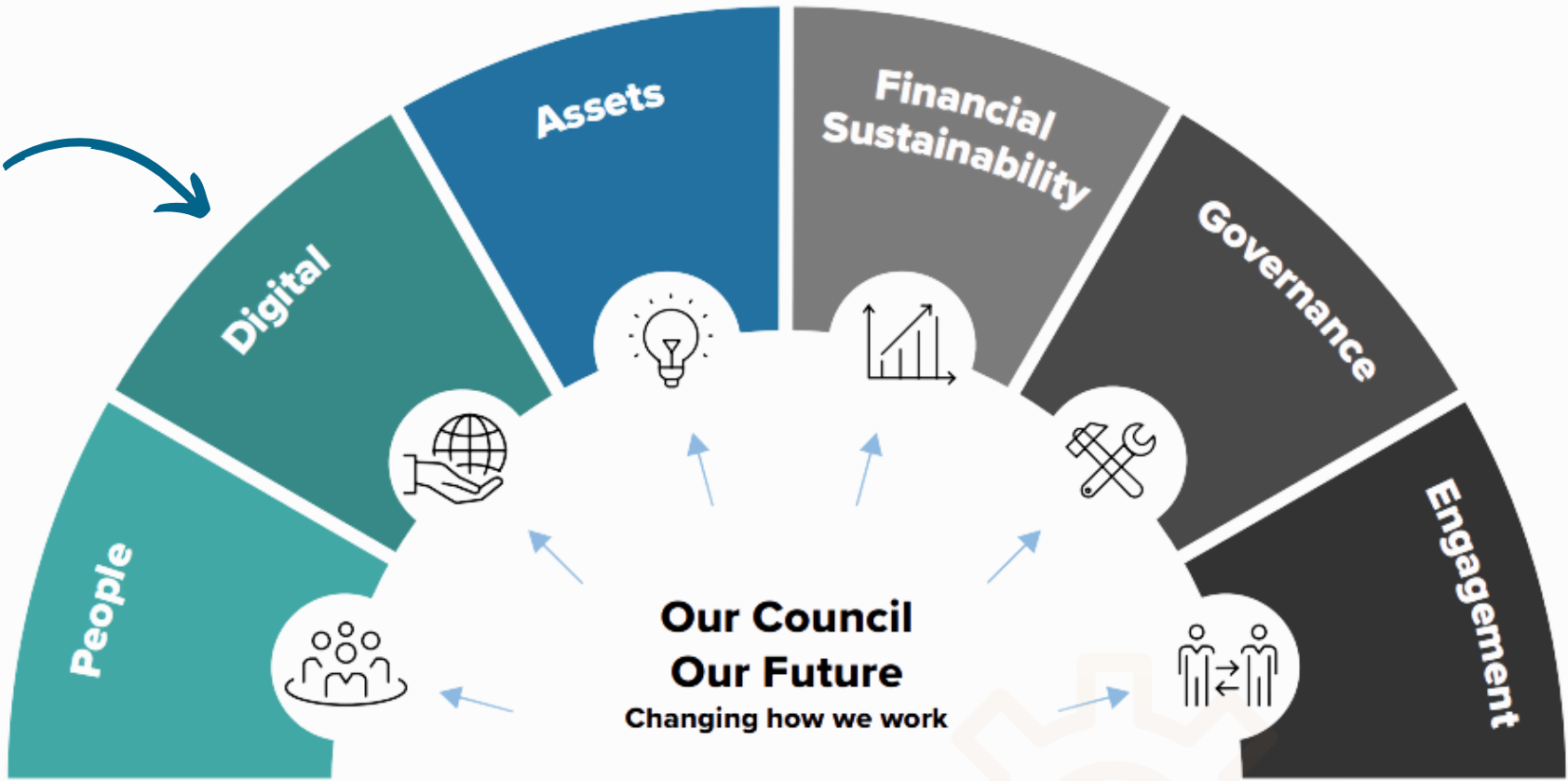
During the self-assessment, there was significant praise for the IT and Digital team who are seen as:

helpful and valued and now a team that acts with the confidence of a valued part of the council

Summary of High Level Assessment

Data, Digital & Technology continued...

The premise for the Corporate Plan 2022-2027, and embedded in the programme of organisational development which will develop the capacity and capability of the council over a 3-5 year period, is to become a Digital Enabler to take smart and connected steps to improve as a council and as a place.



There is a comprehensive understanding of the strategic opportunities around Digital, Data and Technology which will bring to improve service delivery and allow the council, and county borough as a whole, to become smart and connected.

There is a clear direction of travel at an executive level to progress this approach, which will require a whole council shift, it cannot be done in isolation by digital services and it will require strong leadership and a financial commitment across all Directorates. There has definitely been a marked shift in the support and willingness to develop 'digital solutions' for service areas, although further work needs to be undertaken to ensure there is a true undertaking of what service areas require.

This is where a holistic approach is required to tap into service knowledge and experience to develop fit for purpose systems.

In the main, teams are generally quick to respond to issues, but resources impact on timing and priorities shift.

It is imperative that digital plans are designed and in place with clear governance and aligned to the strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan. It's not about more tech, more platforms, more solutions to problems we think exist, it's about real user centred design, placing our residents, businesses and visitors at the heart of service delivery.

There are a number of proven examples where the council have utilised Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to improve service and reduce cost in service areas including HR, Land Charges and Finance. We are actively planning engagement with wider service areas to explore additional opportunities.

Measurable, improved services and reduced unit costs, Where RPA has been implemented service improvements have been made and cost reduced (e.g. Environmental Information Requests 95% reduction and Faster Payments 91% reduction).

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: The current position of the council's digital and technological assets is progressing from developing to mature.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Financial Planning *'Managing expenditure'*

The council understands the resources required to deliver effective and efficient services at cost centre/activity level. During 2021/2022 an exercise was undertaken to demonstrate the actual activity being delivered at service level. This exercise not only looked to quantify the physical inputs i.e. numbers of staff but also the outputs i.e. number of refuse collections etc.

The council is in a strong position in comparison to some other local authorities across Wales. To evidence this the council has started the process of developing a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), various models have been prepared which deal with different scenarios for a number of the key drivers of costs and income. When approved this plan will detail a number of strategic interventions to redesign the way in which some services are delivered.

At present these interventions are being translated into more detailed plans with specific objectives including accountability for delivering subject to appropriate check point and governance arrangements.

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’s 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 Corporate 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, 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, recognising challenges.

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.

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. Various benchmarking opportunities have come and gone over the years, primarily due to the aforementioned difficulties. It would be beneficial to find common ground to allow benchmarking to take place.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: The general assessment, and in conjunction with Audit Wales recommendations, is that the position is moving from developing to mature.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Financial Planning '*Managing income*'



It is accepted that as a council work in this area is significantly under developed and will need significant attention in the foreseeable future. The council currently has an income generation working group and a Commercial Coordinator, although work in this area took a back seat during the Covid pandemic due to the support needed within the Communications Team.

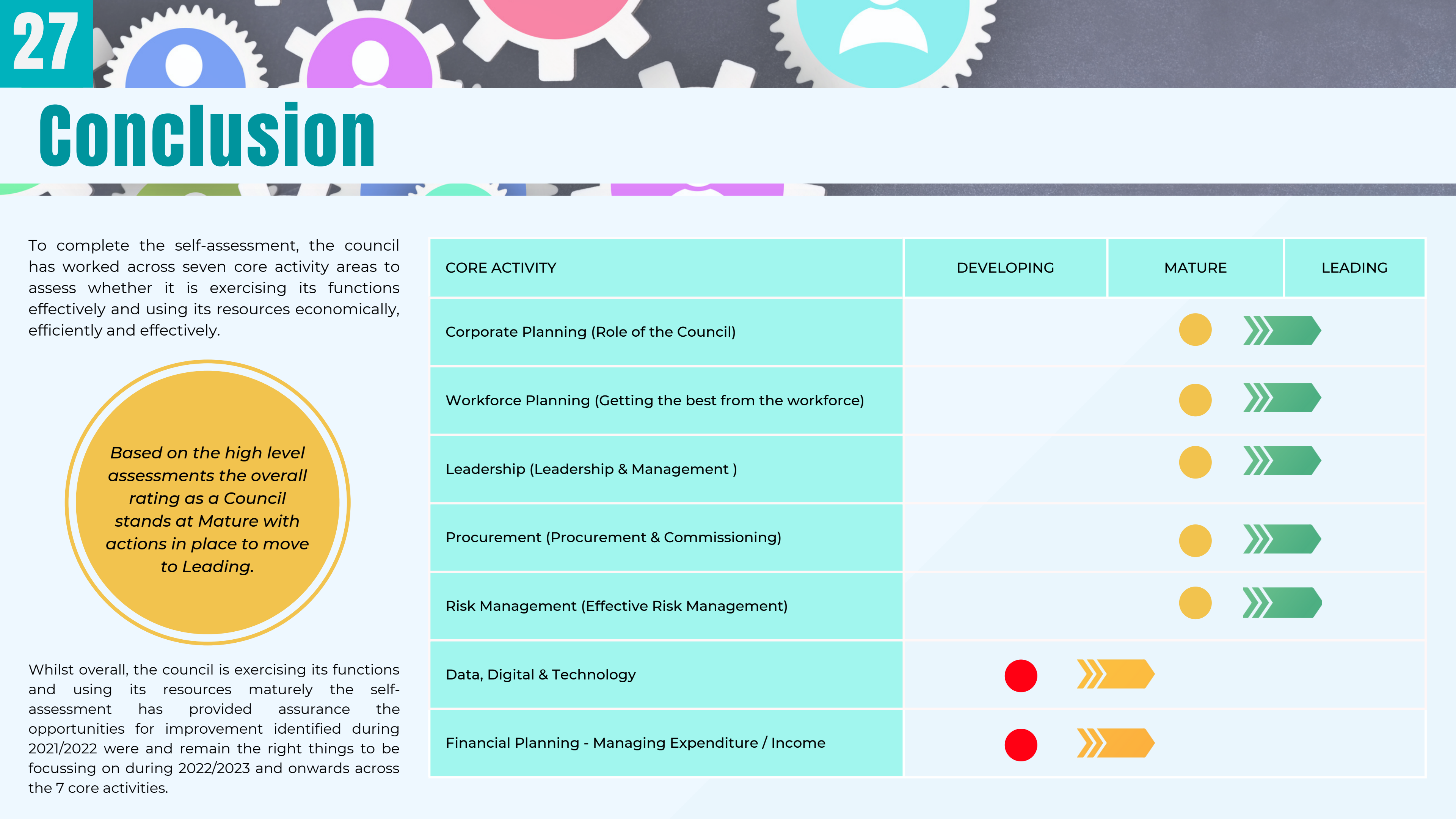
Initiatives to date have been of a small scale and as such have not required a great deal of risk management.

During the self-assessment, 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, it was felt that this should be a specific role and not an add-on to a current role.

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 a need to consider whether fees and charges are proportionate to the cost of services and regulatory activity. This work will be linked to the strategic outcomes the council wishes to achieve.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: The general assessment is developing but with plans in place to move to mature.



Conclusion

To complete the self-assessment, the council has worked across seven core activity areas to assess whether it is exercising its functions effectively and using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

Based on the high level assessments the overall rating as a Council stands at Mature with actions in place to move to Leading.

Whilst overall, the council is exercising its functions and using its resources maturely the self-assessment has provided assurance the opportunities for improvement identified during 2021/2022 were and remain the right things to be focussing on during 2022/2023 and onwards across the 7 core activities.

CORE ACTIVITY	DEVELOPING	MATURE	LEADING
Corporate Planning (Role of the Council)		<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Workforce Planning (Getting the best from the workforce)		<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Leadership (Leadership & Management)		<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Procurement (Procurement & Commissioning)		<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Risk Management (Effective Risk Management)		<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
Data, Digital & Technology	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	
Financial Planning - Managing Expenditure / Income	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	

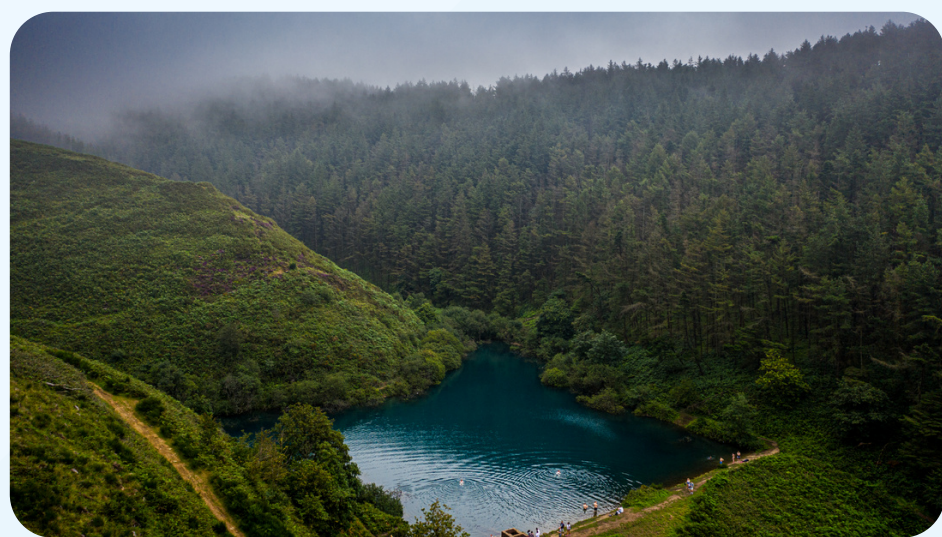
Conclusion continued...

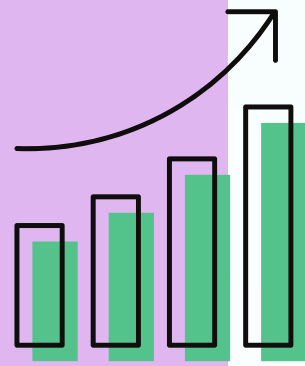
With regard to assessing if the council has effective governance in place for securing functions and resources - a number of improvements were identified following the self-assessment on the effectiveness of the council’s system of internal control in place for the year ending 31st March 2022 (as part of the development of the council’s AGS for 2021/2022).

The self-assessment has not identified any additional areas for improvement. The action plan contained on pages 29-35 contains actions to address the improvement areas referred to above. The action plan will be monitored by the council’s Corporate Governance Group (a group of Senior Officers from across the council who have governance related responsibilities).

It is imperative the council's approach to future self-assessments continues to evolve by taking into consideration on-going learning and best practice from other local authorities across Wales. For example, the council is mindful of the assessment of assets for this self-assessment focused primarily on digital and technology. The 2022/23 self-assessment of assets will be broadened to include physical assets and facilities.

With regard to leadership this self-assessment focused on leadership from an officer perspective but this will be expanded to consider the effectiveness of the relationship between the political leadership and senior officers in the council. This will ensure the ongoing development of a culture in which the council can continuously challenge current ways of working and to challenge how the council is operating to secure improvement for the future.





ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

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

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Workforce Planning & Leadership and Management			
SA1	Establish a Future of Work Team	August 2022	Completed - Advertised and recruited additional resources to supplement the People and Organisational Development service to ensure deliverability of the ambitious programme of work.
SA2	Develop and implement the council's Strategic Workforce Plan for the 2022-2027: The Future of Work Strategy	October 2022	Completed - The Strategic Workforce Plan 2022-2027: The Future of Work Strategy was approved and published in November 2022.
SA3	Establish a Recruitment Taskforce to drive the council's recruitment strategy	Sept 2023	A taskforce bringing together key internal stakeholder and partner agencies was established in November 2021, and meets, with external partners, on a quarterly basis. A number of actions are underway which aim to fill vacant posts across the council with suitably qualified and experienced people and to do so at pace; and to develop longer term actions to support succession planning activity across the council. Additional resources have been provided to the HR team to support this activity for a period of 18 months.
SA4	Review of the council's organisational design to enable the council to do the work necessary to effectively and efficiently achieve the council's priorities whilst delivering a high-quality customer and employee experience.	March 2023	A phase one approach was developed and implemented in September 2022, reviewing activities across the senior team to improve synergy between services and 'right-size' senior management capacity .A Strategic Manager pay grade proposal was approved in October 2022 to address further capacity issues, as well as succession planning and retention at this level. A framework to implement this is being developed and will be available in January 2023, as part of Phase 2 of the organisational review.

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Workforce Planning & Leadership and Management / continued....			
SA5	Development of 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.	March 2024	Work to be clear on what we expect from our leaders and managers in Neath Port Talbot is underway – developing a Job Description template and competencies for Head of Service/ Strategic Manager / Accountable Manager. A facilitated discussion with the senior team is planned for March 2023: ‘What does leadership mean in NPT?’. A climate check of ‘leadership’ in NPT will be undertaken in 2023, to provide a baseline assessment of the impact of leadership. A Leadership and Management Development programme is being scoped for delivery to a first cohort by March 2024. Coaching and Mentoring qualification being made available to managers to establish a Coaching Network across the council.
SA6	Development of an Organisational Development and Training and Development Strategy that supports the delivery of the corporate plan	Ongoing	Development of this strategy will flow from the discussions outlined above.
Procurement			
SA7	Restructure Procurement Team	Dec 2022	Recruitment has been ongoing to address demands. Appointments have been made and the process of backfilling vacant posts continues which will allow redistribution of work.
SA8	Develop NPT Procurement Strategy	Ongoing	Steps are underway to develop a Neath Port Talbot Procurement Strategy which aims to set out how the council intends to carry out procurement in socially responsible way, and meet the objectives it has set. The purpose of this strategy will be to set out how we are changing procurement within the council, to enhance our contract management arrangements and set out the vision and strategic direction necessary to deliver better outcomes for our communities. The strategy will be developed with a full appreciation of the complex regulatory framework within which procurement operates. It will also recognise 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.

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Procurement			
SA9	Category spend review	Ongoing	<p>We need to be able to understand what we are spending our money on and where the opportunities may be to drive improvement. For example, there is need to deliver on net zero carbon targets and also remove the risk to the council's financial stability that is now being challenged by the hike in energy costs and wider inflation.</p> <p>A strategic analysis is being undertaken to challenge why we are spending this money in the first place as well as focusing on how we can drive better value for money and contribute to the delivery of our corporate plan.</p> <p>This work will continue in the coming months to move towards a more strategic approach to the council's procurement, underpinned by spend data analysis and policy. In the meantime some immediate consideration has been given to steps that could be taken to ensure appropriate decision making is being embedded throughout the Council now, with the aim of reducing expenditure and improving efficiencies in commissioning and procurement activities.</p>
Data, Digital & Technology			
SA10	Digital Governance – Developing a robust framework for establishing clear accountability; roles; decision making; and risk and change management authority for all our digital decisions. We will ensure there is appropriate governance arrangements so that decisions are taken by the right people, at the right time, based on the best information available.	Ongoing	<p>Activities in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop new Digital Strategy for NPT, building on Smart & Connected• Scope and implement the Digital Transformation Board• Baselining and implementing a forward financial plan including 2023/24• Actions within the Cyber Security Strategy - Security and compliance – Gap analysis with Audit Wales Learning from Cyber Attacks• Develop strategy for Risk and Information Governance Team, including the creation of a Risk and Governance board• Data classification and retention review• Review of Information Asset Owner / Information Asset Manager arrangements – linked to updating Information Asset Register• Reviewing strategic and service risks across Division• Asset management lifecycle process, plus sort backlog of legacy infrastructure <p>Activities complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and embedding the NPT Digital Service Standards and Technology Code of Practice across all teams• Develop a single prioritised pipeline of Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT) activities, with all teams now openly recording non-Business As Usual work on Microsoft Planner

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Data, Digital & Technology			
SA11	Digital Workforce – Developing and growing the digital skills both within Digital Services and across the wider council to deliver services that are citizen and business focused.	Ongoing	<p>Activities in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recruitment continues - 14 appointments made, 18 posts to fillUndertaking a full skills gap analysis across all team members linked to work plan, identifying training needs as required, linked to staff appraisalsAccountable Managers reviewing succession planning arrangements following training – utilising the succession planning toolkitDeveloping and implementing new Intelligent Client Function across directoratesIntroducing new multi-disciplined teams with rotation across the business areasEmbedding standards based delivery including ITIL standards, progressing with industry leader to design processesAdopting a design-led and agile approach <p>Activities complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Full restructure of Digital Services aligned to DDaT Framework - assimilate all existing staff into new structure <p>Also link into wider People and Organisational Development workstream:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Drive a cultural shift around 'digital transformation' with strong leadership across all management layersDemonstrate the value of DDaT to service design – e.g. the benefits of User Centred Design, how data should inform service design principlesEnsure Senior Leaders understand what is required to support the digital agendaIdentify next steps to support service transformation – e.g. Social Care / Flare replacement programmesAccept and embed the NPT Digital Service Standards and Technology Code of Practice
SA12	Data - Using and sharing data and evidence to provide the best possible services for citizens and businesses.	Ongoing	<p>Activities in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Linked to workforce - recruitment dependencyIdentify, develop and implement data platforms that will enable transformative use of data including Machine Learning and AI, opening up deeper predictive analyticsTrack key management information and data-driven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in accordance to business objectives and prioritiesDevelop a data working group to steer priorities across the council for data cleansing and ongoing data management and usageEnsure that data is a core part of strategic decision making for new programmes of workEnsure that complex data modelling (conceptual, logical, physical) is to a high standard and can be used to identify potential opportunities, enabling and facilitating decision making processesDevelop approaches to summarise and present highly complex data sets and conclusions in the most appropriate format for users

33

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

 continued...

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Data, Digital & Technology			
SA12 / cont	Data - Using and sharing data and evidence to provide the best possible services for citizens and businesses.	Ongoing	<p>Arrange training and input across teams to assist managers in analysing data within their own areas and use analytics to monitor report usage across the council</p> <p>Activities in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workstreams with Microsoft to explore developing a ‘dataverse’ with condensed CRM application stack to improve join up and user experience• Business Intelligence and Data Strategy• Data Architecture review• Approach to data analytics – building capacity across the organisation <p>Activities complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linked to workforce – Head of Data recruited and started
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.	March 2023	A cross directorate working group is developing the Framework. To date progress includes the development of a set of Terms of Reference (including broad strategies to be delivered).
SA14	Develop a robust and effective Engagement Strategy (both internal and external)	March 2023	A review of the existing engagement strategy is currently underway ensuring that it reflects and compliments both the new Strategic Framework for Communications and Marketing and the Public Participation Strategy.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT continued...

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Communications / Consultation / Engagement			
SA15	Develop a robust and effective Public Participation Strategy	Dec 2022	The draft Public Participation Strategy has been co-produced with the Council's Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement) to determine priorities, aims and objectives, set protocols, identify resources and evaluation mechanisms. The draft is being consulted on for a period of 12 weeks (5th December 2022 – 26th February 2023) following which it will be presented to Cabinet and Council for adoption in early 2023.
SA16	Develop a new Internal/Employee Communications and Engagement Strategy	March 2023	The Internal/Employee Communications and Engagement Strategy is being developed in tandem with and in a way that reflects and compliments both the Strategic Framework for Communications and Marketing and the Public Participation Strategy.
Q3 - ENSURING GOVERNANCE IS EFFECTIVE FOR SECURING FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES (what and how can we do better?)			
SA17	Complete the review of Accounting Instructions.	March 2023	The review has almost been completed. Thirteen sets of Accounting Instructions have been reviewed with the remaining three to be complete in the forthcoming months.
SA18	Develop and implement a revised Corporate Performance Management Framework that meets the new duties under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021	March 2023	Work is on-going to implement a revised Corporate Performance Management Framework. The Council's first Corporate Self-Assessment (as required under the Act) is currently being drafted and will be presented to Governance & Audit Committee on 15th February 2023. 100% (86 of 86) of Service Recovery Plans that were required to be completed by Accountable Managers for 2022/2023 have been completed and includes the requirement to undertake an ongoing self-assessment at the service level.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT continued...

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Q3 - ENSURING GOVERNANCE IS EFFECTIVE FOR SECURING FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES (what and how can we do better?)			
SA19	Complete the review of the Council's Risk Management Policy and ensure the Council's Risk Register is updated regularly.	March 2023	Work is ongoing to re-draft the Council's Risk Management Policy and will be completed by end of March 2023. The council's schedule of strategic risks has revised and will be reported Cabinet early in the new year.
SA20	Develop a Medium Term Financial Strategy.	March 2023	Work is ongoing to develop a medium-term financial strategy. The technical work regarding identifying the funding gap over the period is almost complete. Work has also commenced on developing appropriate strategic interventions with the intention of closing the estimated funding gap.
SA21	Work to deliver governance awareness training across the Council is ongoing and will continue to ensure appropriate training takes place with Council officers.	March 2023	As part of the Member Induction sessions, following local elections in May 2022, officers have provided a series of training sessions for members on governance processes such as decision making, officer/member protocols and code of conduct. Similar training sessions have been provided to officers, for example a series of training on the importance of the member/officer protocol was provided to all Environment Accountable Managers in June 2022. Further training sessions and ad hoc advice notes to officers have continued throughout 2022/2023.
SA22	Refine the Council's approach to the annual self-assessment process	Sept 2023	This work will start early in the 2023 calendar year and will be based on a lessons learnt exercise and good practice identified across Wales.

CONTACT US



 01639 686868

 www.npt.gov.uk

