



CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022-2023



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, Karen Jones

This report sets out Neath Port Talbot Council's Self-Assessment for 2022/2023.

The completion of an annual self-assessment is a requirement for all local authorities in Wales. The 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.

Councillor Steve Hunt – Leader

Karen Jones – Chief Executive



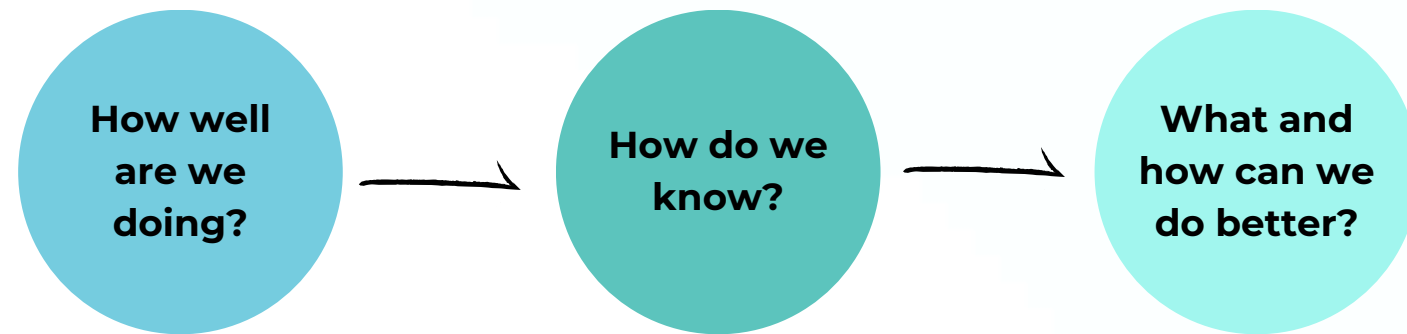
Our approach to self-assessment



As part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 a process for monitoring the performance of all local authorities based on a self-assessment was set out. The council recognises that the undertaking of a critical and honest 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.

Whilst reaching a transparent scoring officers have taken into account the changes affecting local government and their services - from budget pressures across the council, the unprecedented rise in energy and fuel costs to challenges in recruitment and retention.

These changes have a significant impact on whether the council exercises its functions effectively and utilises its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. At its simplest level, the self-assessment is about asking the following questions:



For 2022-2023 we have remained consistent to our initial approach, using elements of the Local Government Assessment's (LGA) Efficiency Monitoring Self-Assessment Toolkit which is structured around 7 key activities. To ensure our effective governance arrangements were integral to our future planning we included a supplementary core activity of 'leadership and management' to the key activities.

1. Role of the council (Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA) - Corporate Planning)
2. Getting the best from the workforce (WBFGA - Workforce planning)
3. Procurement and commissioning (WBFGA – Procurement)
4. Digital and technology (WBFGA – Assets)
5. Managing income and expenditure (WBFGA – Financial Planning)
6. Effective risk management (WBFGA – Risk Management)
7. Data and intelligence (WBFGA – Performance Management)
8. Leadership and management (introduced by NPT Council)

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.

The toolkit broadly takes into account the core activities common to the governance of public bodies set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Structuring the self-assessment around these core activities enabled us to develop a baseline in 2021-2022 where we can subsequently track year on year improvements.

Following completion of the 2021/2022 self-assessment a commitment was made to broaden the self-assessment to include physical assets and facilities as well as considering the effectiveness of the relationship between the political leadership and senior officers in the council. The assessment of physical assets and facilities has been introduced for 2022-2023, Work is ongoing to develop an assessment process around political leadership and senior officer relationships, this will be included in the 2023/2024 self-assessment.

Whilst continuing to develop our approach to self-assessment we have continued to take 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.

Our approach to self-assessment

STEP 1

Senior Managers were asked to revisit the initial self-assessment high level critiques prepared for 2021-2022 and were asked to reflect on what has changed over the last twelve months, what improvements have been made and what areas still need to be progressed. Following this reflection they were asked to re-assess where each core activity stood in relation to Developing, Mature and Leading



STEP 2

The critiques were used as a starting point for discussion with Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. During the 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 2022/2023. We also reviewed Service Recovery Plans from each directorate where they undertook their own self-assessment as part of their planning for 2023-2024. This reflection supports the overall corporate self-assessment.



STEP 3

From the completed high level critiques and the feedback obtained, opportunities for improvement (to increase the extent to which the council will meet the performance requirements in 2023/2024 and onwards) were identified and are contained in the Action Plan on pages 36-44. This is in addition to improvements identified in 2021-2022 which are still ongoing.



STEP 4

The draft self-assessment was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 13th November 2023. The Committee has a role to review the draft self-assessment and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions. Following review by Governance & Audit Committee no recommendations for any changes to the conclusions or actions were proposed.



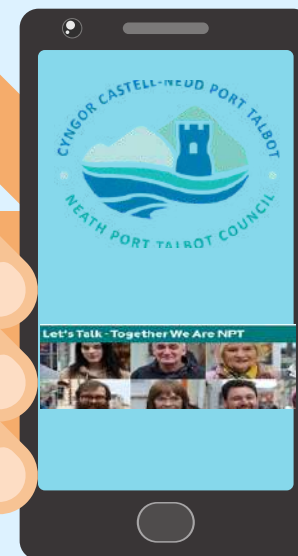
How Consultation and Engagement during 2022/2023 informed the Council's Priorities

Citizens Panel



Staff Surveys

Community Events



Youth Council

Let's Talk

Community of Practice

During 2022-2023 the council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 – Recover, Reset, Renew was embedded. The Corporate Plan was informed by many residents, employees, elected members, community organisations, businesses and other partners. The significant engagement campaign - Let's Talk was adopted in 2021 with the aim of finding out what mattered to local people.

The campaign involved internal engagement, public questionnaires and focus groups and gained over 1,700 responses. 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.

This feedback informed the four wellbeing objectives and the focus of work under each wellbeing objective for 2022/2023, during the next 5 years and the 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).

Evidence Base 2022-2023

In addition to the completion of the high level critiques assessing how the council performed during 2022/2023 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 2022-2023 and the Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023.

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 2022-2023:

- ➔ 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.
- ➔ Corporate Plan – Annual Report
- ➔ Public Service Board Wellbeing Plan - Annual Report
- ➔ Statement of Accounts
- ➔ Annual Governance Statement
- ➔ Director of Social Services Annual Report
- ➔ Quarterly Performance Cabinet Reports
- ➔ Risk Registers
- ➔ Compliments, Comments and Complaints
- ➔ Service Recovery Plans
- ➔ Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports
- ➔ Internal Audit Reports

Category 2 - Regulatory / Inspection Reports

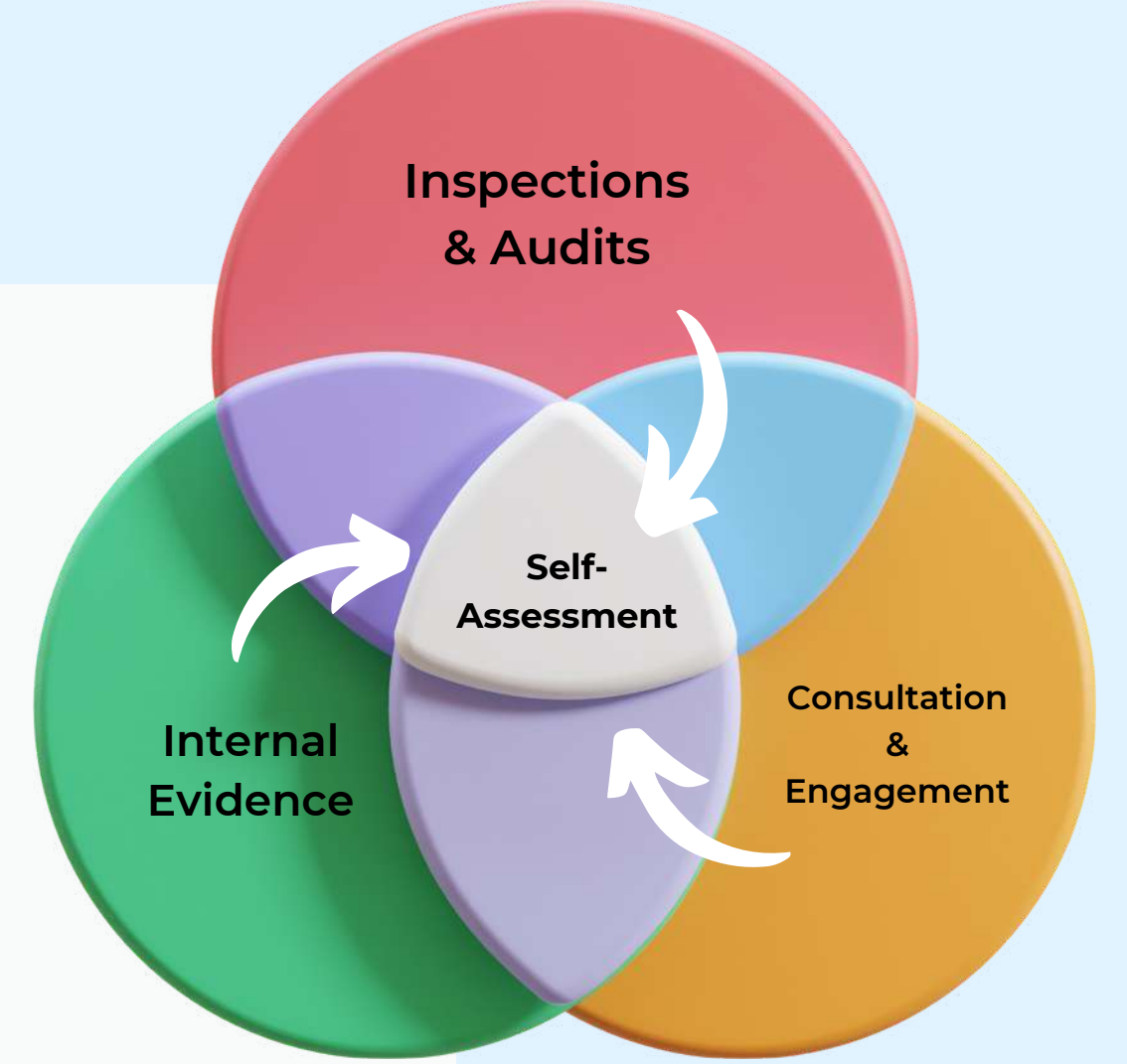
The evidence in this category provides the regulatory or external view of performance from independent bodies.

- ➔ Audit Wales Annual Improvement Report
- ➔ Audit Wales Reports
- ➔ Care Inspectorate Wales Reports
- ➔ Estyn Inspection Reports
- ➔ Public Service Ombudsman Wales
- ➔ 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. Examples of consultation and engagement include:

- ➔ Let's Talk Engagement & Consultation Campaign (Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and Budget 2022-2023)
- ➔ Trade Union meetings
- ➔ Youth Council
- ➔ Citizen's Panel
- ➔ Staff Hybrid Working Surveys
- ➔ Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement)
- ➔ Public Consultations; Public Services Board Well-being Assessment
- ➔ Senior Manager Workshops
- ➔ Accountable Manager Workshops
- ➔ Public Participation Strategy



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 continues to diversify.

The Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement) initially established to involve our communities and partner agencies is utilised by the council to help shape proposals before wider public consultation exercises.



SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022-2023

Following on from the self-assessment for 2021-2022 a number of actions were identified to demonstrate year on year improvement. Taking into account the evidence base and service performance the table below reflects progress made during 2022-2023. Some actions, in the main around digital, data and technology, demonstrate elements of work to be undertaken to complete the action in its entirety. The table reflects green areas where actions have been completed and amber highlighted work is ongoing. 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.

Where actions have not been completed these will be reflected in our 'Actions for Improvement 2023-2024' table on pages 36-44.

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
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Workforce Planning & Leadership and Management

SA1	Establish a Future of Work Team	August 2022	Completed - 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	Ongoing - A taskforce bringing together key internal stakeholder and partner agencies was established in November 2021. A number of actions were undertaken to fill vacant posts across the council with suitably qualified and experienced people. Developed longer term actions to support succession planning activity across the council. Additional resources provided to the HR team to support this work have now come to an end.

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022 / 2023

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
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Workforce Planning & Leadership and Management

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	Ongoing - 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 capacity issues, succession planning and retention at this level.
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	Ongoing - Work to be clear on what we expect from our leaders and managers in Neath Port Talbot is underway. We have developed a job description template and competencies for Head of Service/ Strategic Manager / Accountable Manager.
SA6	Development of an Organisational Development and Training and Development Strategy that supports the delivery of the corporate plan	Ongoing	Ongoing - Development of this strategy will flow from the discussions outlined above.

Procurement

SA7	Restructure Procurement Team	Dec 2022	Ongoing - 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
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SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022 / 2023

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
Procurement			
SA8	Develop NPT Procurement Strategy	Ongoing	Ongoing - Steps are underway to continue to develop a Neath Port Talbot Procurement Strategy.
SA9	Category spend review	Ongoing	Ongoing - As a council we need to be able to understand what we are spending our money on and where the opportunities may be to drive improvement. 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.



SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022 / 2023

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Digital, Data & Technology (DDAT)

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.	March 2023	Ongoing - Actions within the Cyber Security Strategy - Security and compliance
			Complete - Developed strategy for Risk and Information Governance Team, including the creation of a Risk and Governance Board
			Ongoing - Data classification and retention review
			Ongoing - Review of IAO / IAM arrangements – linked to updating IAR
			Completed – Reviewed risk registers - unit, division and strategic risk registers are now in place.
			Ongoing - Asset management lifecycle process, plus sort backlog of legacy infrastructure
			Completed - Developed and embedded the NPT Digital Service Standards and Technology Code of Practice across all teams
			Completed - Developed a single prioritised pipeline of Digital, Data and Technology activities, with all teams now openly recording non-business as usual work on Microsoft Planner.

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022 / 2023

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Digital, Data & Technology (DDAT)			
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>Completed – Approach undertaken shortlisted for Best Workforce Initiative for APSE Awards. Recruitment continues 14 appointments made, 18 posts to fill.</p> <p>Completed - Undertaken a full skills gap analysis across all team members linked to work plan, identifying training needs as required, linked to staff appraisals.</p> <p>Completed – Accountable Managers reviewed succession planning arrangements following training, utilising the succession planning toolkit.</p> <p>Ongoing - Developing and implementing new Intelligent Client Function across directorates.</p> <p>Completed - Introduced new multi-disciplined teams with rotation across the business areas.</p> <p>Ongoing - Embedding standards based delivery including ITIL standards, progressing with industry leader to design processes.</p> <p>Ongoing - Adopting a design-led and agile approach.</p> <p>Completed - Full restructure of Digital Services aligned to DDaT Framework - assimilated all existing staff into new structure</p>

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022 / 2023

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Digital, Data & Technology (DDaT)

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>Ongoing - Drive a cultural shift around 'digital transformation' with strong leadership across all management layers</p> <p>Ongoing - Demonstrate the value of DDaT to service design – e.g. the benefits of User Centred Design, how data should inform service design principles.</p> <p>Ongoing - Ensure Senior Leaders understand what is required to support the digital agenda.</p> <p>Ongoing - Identify next steps to support service transformation – e.g. Social Care / Flare replacement programmes</p> <p>Completed - Accepted and embedded the NPT Digital Service Standards and Technology Code of Practice.</p>
SA12	Data - Using and sharing data and evidence to provide the best possible services for citizens and businesses.	Ongoing	<p>Completed - Linked to workforce - recruitment dependency.</p> <p>Ongoing - Identify, develop and implement data platforms that will enable transformative use of data including Machine Learning and AI, opening up deeper predictive analytics.</p> <p>Ongoing - Track key management information and data-driven KPIs in accordance to business objectives and priorities.</p>

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022-2023

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Digital, Data & Technology

SA12 / cont...	Data - Using and sharing data and evidence to provide the best possible services for citizens and businesses.	Ongoing	Ongoing - Ensure that data is a core part of strategic decision making for new programmes of work.
			Ongoing - Ensure 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 processes
			Ongoing - Develop approaches to summarise and present highly complex data sets and conclusions in the most appropriate format for users.
			Ongoing - 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
			Ongoing - Workstreams with Microsoft to explore developing a 'dataverse' with condensed CRM application stack to improve join up and user experience.
			Ongoing - BI and Data Strategy (to be informed by Data Maturity Assessment 2023-2024)
			Ongoing - Approach to data analytics – building capacity across the organisation
			Completed - Head of Data started in post.

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022-2023

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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.	Ongoing	Ongoing - 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	Ongoing - 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.
SA15	Develop a robust and effective Public Participation Strategy	December 2022	Completed – The Public Participation Strategy has been co-produced with the council's Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement) to set out priorities, aims and objectives, set protocols, identify resources and evaluation mechanisms.
SA16	Develop a new Internal/Employee Communications and Engagement Strategy	March 2023	Ongoing - 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.

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?)			
SA17	Complete the review of Accounting Instructions.	March 2023	Completed - Accounting Instructions have been reviewed and updated.
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	Completed – A Corporate Performance Management Framework has been development. 86 Service Recovery Plans were completed by Accountable Managers for 2022/2023 undertaking self-assessment at service level and setting the direction of travel for the year.
SA19	Complete the review of the council's Risk Management Policy and ensure the council's Risk Register is updated regularly.	March 2023	Completed - The council's Risk Management Policy has been review and circulated to officers. A schedule of reporting strategic and directorate risks is included within the Policy. The strategic risk register is taken to Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee on a six monthly basis.
SA20	Develop a Medium Term Financial Strategy.	March 2023	Ongoing - Work continues 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	Completed - A series of training sessions for members on governance processes such as decision making, officer/member protocols and code of conduct were delivered as part of the Member Induction sessions, following local elections in May 2022. 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 continued throughout 2022/2023.
SA22	Refine the council's approach to the annual self-assessment process	September 2023	Ongoing - This work started early in the 2023 financial year and has taken into account lessons learnt from undertaking the first self-assessment and good practice identified across Wales.



SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022-2023

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 introduced during 2022-2023 were:

- » 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.

The well-being objectives were approved by Council in 2022. Under each well-being objective there are a number of improvement outcomes and priorities. The improvement outcomes set out the overall position we are aiming to achieve by 2027 and the priorities set out the strategic actions we will take to deliver that improvement during the twelve month period.

A complete review of the progress made on our well-being objectives can be found in the Annual Report 2022-2023. For 2022-2023, there was a total of 76 actions to deliver against the above well-being objectives.

Of those 76 actions, 67 (88%) were on track and 9 were off track (12%).

This is an improvement on 2021-2022 where 77% of actions (72 of 93) were on track and 21 (23%) were just off track. Overall progress on actions indicates services continued to recover during 2022-2023.

Performance Measures

To assess our performance in meeting our well-being objectives during 2022-2023, alongside the above progress on actions, we used 60 performance indicators, again further detail can be found in the Annual Report 2022-2023.

During the year we have taken the opportunity to reflect on further strategic and high level measures which can be used as a comparison tool for self-assessment and where possible to benchmark with other local authorities across Wales).

- » We have continued to meet our target of 6 average days taken to action new benefit clients and changes of circumstances (application to assessment) with an average of 3.72 days.
- » Our Children and Young People service area has continued to achieve 100% of contacts/referrals on which a decision was made within 1 working day. The percentage of child assessments completed on time has decreased by 4.8% on last years figure to 97% but has still exceed the set target of 94%.
- » Percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, or equivalent, including English or Welsh first language and Maths has decreased to 54.11 for academic year 2021-2022 from 62.75 in 2020-2021. Please note different methods were used between years due to the pandemic.
- » We have successfully prevented 53.72% of households becoming homeless through our inventions, although have not met this years target of 60%.
- » The number of visits to public libraries during the year, per 1,000 population - increased from 1918.7 to 2624.9. The number of visits to our theatres again increased from 105647 to 195130.
- » Percentage of A and B roads in poor condition has decreased from 2.10 from 2.55 and 1.8 from 1.87 respectively.
- » Road safety overall KSI figures has decreased to 20 in 2022 from 21 in 2021.
- » % Council Tax collected 97.84%, placing Neath Port Talbot 1st across Wales.
- » Average calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant 239.42, whilst just exceeding target of 230 days, positively there has been a significant decrease on 21-22 figures of 339.51 days.
- » Number of working days lost to sickness absence per employee - Sickness FTE days lost across the Council - from 13.28 to 12.78.
- » Percentage of staff who leave the employment of the local authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis, during the year increased from 9% to 10%, Increase partly due to Test and Trace leavers. Many other LAs also saw an increase.
- » Percentage of all planning applications determined in time - increase on 21-22 figure by almost 9 percent to 93.83%, again exceeding the set target of 80 days.
- » Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year which were received by the local authority - 98.84, marginal decrease on 21-22 still achieving target.
- » Digital Services - System availability remained the same at 99.90. Digital Services - NPT corporate Website User Satisfaction score increased from 89.83 to 92. Digital Services - WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) accessibility compliance score against 'AA' standard was 95.3. In March 2023 our score ranks us at 36th place for accessibility across all UK councils (approximately 400 councils).



SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Benchmarking Council Performance

Data Cymru has released a set of measures, which it has developed with support of local authorities, including Neath Port Talbot. These measures 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.

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 continuously reviewed and further strengthened during 2023/24.

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.

There was an increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints received across the council from 111 received in 2021/2022 to 165 received in 2022-2023. However, the percentage upheld/partially upheld during 2022-2023 was 7.27% (12 of 165). This is a reduction on previous years. In 2021-2022 the percentage was 19.82% (22 of 111).

However, there was a decrease in the number of Stage 2 complaints received from 25 in 2021-2022 to 22 in 2022-2023 with three upheld/partially upheld Stage 2 complaints an increase on the figure of 1 upheld/partially upheld in 2021-2022.

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

The number of compliments continues to increase by 77 from 249 received in 2021-2022 to 326 received during 2022-2023. These compliments demonstrate the recognition for staff and service delivery.

To meet our statutory duty the Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023 (AGS) has been developed using the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework' developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA), which we as a council adopted in 2016. The Annual Governance Statement 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.

The completion of the AGS is an important component of the council's corporate governance arrangements, ensuring 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 2022-2023 identified 18 areas for improvement and these can be found in the Action Plan on pages 36-44.

Self-Assessment Overview

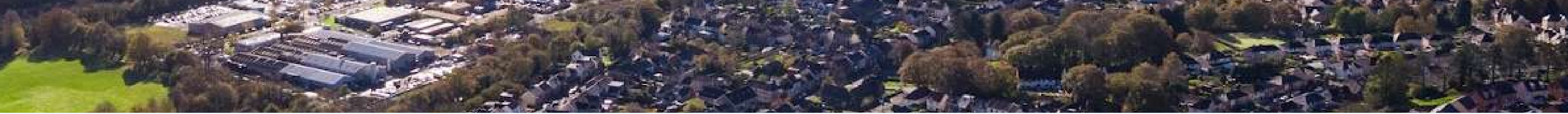
To undertake the self-assessment for 2022-2023, the council has worked across 8 core activity areas to assess whether it is exercising its functions effectively and using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

This assessment reflects the same as the self-assessment of 2021-2022 and it is acknowledged, by members and senior leaders, that whilst remaining at 'Mature moving into Leading' there has been significant progress made across the core activity areas and in time this will allow the council to sit firmly in 'Leading'. 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 2023 as part of the development of the council's Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023.

The self-assessment has not identified any additional governance areas for improvement. The action plan contained on pages 36-44 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). In conjunction with a planned review of the Corporate Plan it is imperative the council's approach to future self-assessments continues to evolve by taking into consideration on-going learning from within the council, partners, stakeholders and best practice from other local authorities across Wales.

Following completion of the 2021-2022 self-assessment a commitment was made to broaden the self-assessment to include physical assets. Work is ongoing to develop an assessment process around the effectiveness of the relationship between the political leadership and senior officers in the council, this key area will be included in the 2023-2024 self-assessment. 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.

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

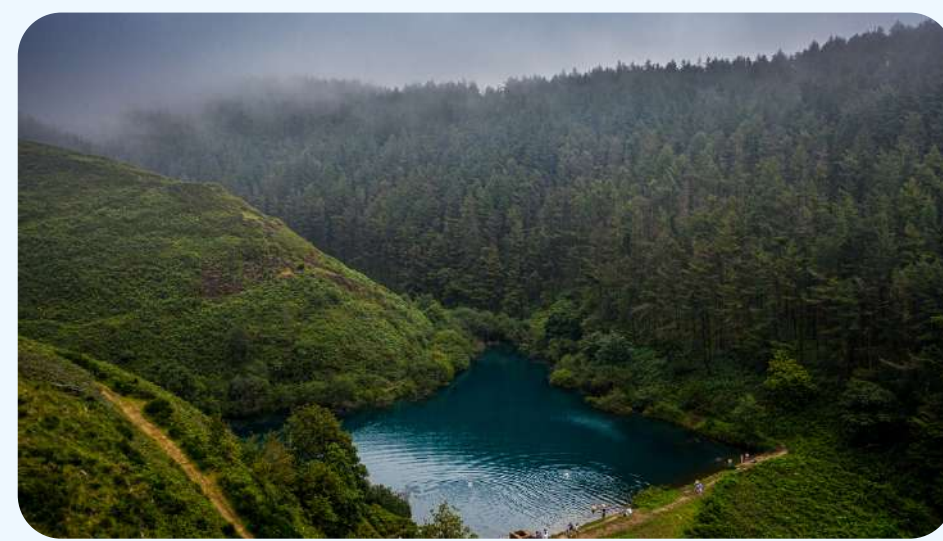


Self-Assessment Overview

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 2023 (as part of the development of the council's AGS for 2022-2023).

The self-assessment has not identified any additional areas for improvement. The action plan contained on pages 36-44 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. 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 work will be included in the 2023-2024 self-assessment. 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.





The following section provides a Summary of High Level Critiques for each Core Activity 2021/2022 which brought us to the overall assessment of 'Mature moving into Leading'

- 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*
- Physical Assets & Facilities



Summary of High Level Assessment

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 was fundamentally reviewed and a new Plan was launched setting out how the council would approach recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in the short, medium and longer term.

The Corporate Plan 'Recover, Reset, Renew' 2022-2027, 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.

During 2022-2023, a review was undertaken to update the Strategic Change Programme contained within the Corporate Plan. The Strategic Change Programme details key outcomes across each of the four well-being objectives to be achieved by 2027 providing a strategic direction for travel.

The process to review the Strategic Change Programme involved Senior Management Teams and officers from across the council, who considered a number of factors when updating the priorities and the key performance measures.

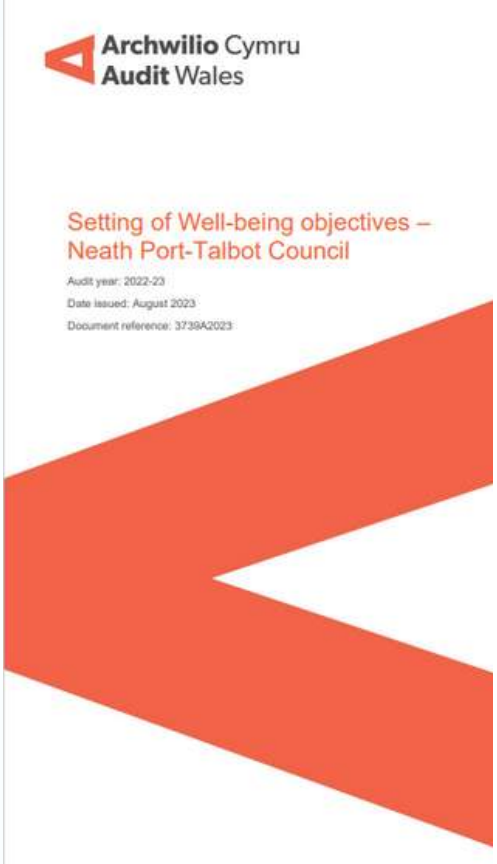
These factors included the following:

- » the on-going pandemic and the demand on services and functions;
- » ensuring the Corporate Plan reflects the political priorities of the current Administration; latest performance data of services and functions;
- » the budget for 2023-2024 recently approved by Council and the likely budget outlook; and frequent changes in the council's external environment;

The four well-being objectives within the Corporate Plan remained unchanged as they were deemed still relevant and the main focus continues to be 'Recover, Reset, Renew'. Therefore the Strategic Change Programme was the only part of the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 which was reviewed and updated.

The updated Strategic Change Programme was presented to Cabinet on 25th April and Council on 26th April 2023.

On reflection, it is recognised there is a need to re-set the council's corporate planning framework to ensure corporate planning sits at the strategic level, setting a clear direction of travel to achieve the council's 4 well-being objectives and is supported by appropriate arrangements at the directorate / service level setting out how the direction of travel will be achieved along with a robust monitoring framework.



Recommendations

Exhibit 1: recommendations

- R1 In order to support the effective delivery of and accountability for its WBOs, the Council should:
 - develop a clearer understanding of when and how partners will support the delivery of its WBOs;
 - ensure its MTFS 2023-2027 clearly considers how the Council's resources support the delivery of its WBOs and identifies how any future financial risks or savings might impact on the delivery of its WBOs; and
 - ensure that as it refreshes its CPMF, it looks for opportunities to develop more outcome-focused metrics that will enable it to measure its cross-cutting WBOs.



During 2023-2024, a review will be undertaken of the council's corporate planning framework to inform the development of the Corporate Plan for the period 2024-2027.

This review will also address the following recommendation contained within the Audit Wales Report – "Setting of Well-being Objectives – Neath Port Talbot" (August 2023):

The above report was published following an examination of how the council had applied the sustainable development principle throughout in the process of setting its well-being objectives; to provide assurance on the extent that the council applied the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives; and identify opportunities for the council to further embed the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives in future

The examination found the council has applied the sustainable development principle and carried out extensive engagement when setting its wellbeing objectives but will need to further develop its monitoring arrangements.

A key component of effective corporate planning is performance management.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Corporate Planning 'The Role of the Council'

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 a fit for purpose Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF) in place. The CPMF 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.

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.

Work was completed during 2022/2023 to develop an "interim" Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF) to strengthen the council's performance management arrangements and to demonstrate the above mechanisms are in place. The "interim" Framework, contained within the image below, demonstrates how the council will meet the duties contained within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Framework is "interim" as it is acknowledged performance management arrangements require strengthening across the council at the strategic, service and individual levels (re-setting the link between actions, performance and risk). A review will be undertaken during 2023/2024 to define an improved performance management capability that will enable the council to deliver and demonstrate the achievement of our vision, purpose and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and to achieve the required savings as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in future years.

The review will also take account of the different performance management requirements across the council, ensuring a streamlined approach and improved visibility of performance management at all levels. During 2022/2023, further work was undertaken to improve the Service Recovery Planning arrangements. Service Recovery Plans are completed by all services and are 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.

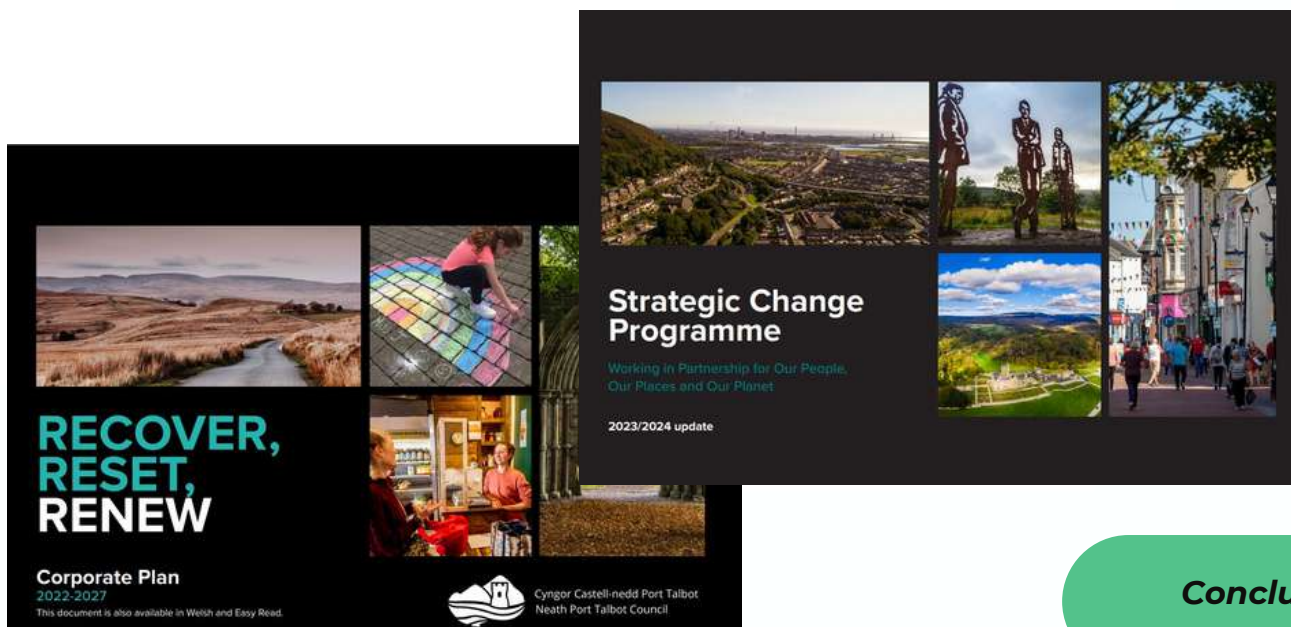
This included the issue of revised guidance particularly on how services take into consideration how residents access and utilise services and to gauge satisfaction levels. To date a range of engagement methods have taken place including the introduction of the Let's Talk campaign, the Community of Practice (Involvement & Engagement) and the council's Citizen's 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.

The revised guidance also provided additional information on the identification, scoring and mitigation of risks.



Corporate Performance Management Framework Diagram

Copies of Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and Corporate Plan Strategic Change Programme for 2023-2024



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 continues to invest in its workforce and through the [Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027](#), which was approved by the council's Personnel Committee in October 2022. The document 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:

We aim to ensure our people are well led, supported, trusted and recognised for the contribution they make. We want our people to 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. We will develop an employment framework that is fit for the future of work”

Throughout 2021 and 2022 preparatory work took place to develop the draft Strategic Workforce Plan, aligning to the Corporate Plan and the Strategic Change Programme for the same period. This included:

- » Engagement with key stakeholders so we understood what's important to employees at every level and our trade union partners. We used surveys, workshops, drop-in sessions and focus groups.
- » We worked with Heads of Service and Accountable Managers to understand what matters to them and their priorities for their teams and the services they deliver. This was used to develop and determine our workforce priorities for the next 5 year period.
- » We worked with our trade union partners to ensure the workforce plan is underpinned by fairness and transparency.
- » We informed our approach with the outcome of an Audit Wales review of workforce planning across the council.
- » We worked 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. As part of the scheme, the CIPD carried out a People Impact Survey to determine how the council's current people capability aligns to CIPD standards. This provided us with feedback on our strengths and key areas for improvement, feeding in to the priorities set out in the draft plan.

The plan sets out key workforce priorities and a 12 month delivery plan. The plan will be reviewed during 2023 to ensure that the priorities remain fit for purpose and a further 12 month delivery plan will be developed. This will of course be carried out with input from the Corporate Management Group and all of our stakeholders, including managers, employees, trade unions and external partners and regulators.

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 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.

The toolkit was launched in late 2019. As with all services, priorities changed as we grappled with the challenges associated with COVID-19, and as such, work on succession planning was suspended.

The 2022-2023 Delivery Plan, appended to the Strategic Workforce Plan, sets out that we will “embed operational service level workforce planning, via the Succession Planning Toolkit”.

The outcome is described as “*our Heads of Service and Accountable Managers will have the knowledge and skill set to develop a succession plan for each service, 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*”.



Summary of High Level Assessment continued...

Workforce Planning 'Getting the best from the workforce'

All Accountable Managers were tasked with developing a succession plan on behalf of their respective areas. To achieve this aim, an external provider was commissioned to develop a short workshop (in a train-the-trainer format). Having delivered the initial sessions, subsequent delivery was picked up by the Future of Work Team.

A number of video tutorials and staff case studies were also created, as supplementary resources. All Accountable Managers were expected to attend the live workshops, with an expectation that completed plans would be submitted by 31st March 2023.

The three hour workshops were delivered at numerous locations across the borough. Seven workshops were delivered throughout September and October 2022, with 64 managers attending. In some instances, Heads of Service took part, and some managers delegated responsibility to other officers within their team. A small number of managers cancelled attendance at short notice (due to service needs). In this instance, the Training Officer followed up and has offered 1:1 support. Very few managers failed to engage at all.

The format for the workshop involved a lead presenter, with up to three co-facilitators. The facilitators were tasked with supporting a group, and would record feedback from the sessions.

The purpose of the workshop was not to “teach” individuals how to complete a succession plan – but rather to create space for managers to come together and discuss any challenges, but also to note areas of strength.

All attendees were actively involved in the workshops, and openly shared their concerns and perceptions, and also highlighted where good practice was taking place. Participants were reminded that any feedback was shared without judgement or prejudice, but also without any promises in terms of finding a solution. It was emphasised that some matters may be out of the control of the Authority.

However, it was pledged that all feedback would be escalated, with subsequent updates circulated to all attendees.

As at the 31st March 2023, 30 succession plans have been completed. Analysis of these plans will take place early in 2023-2024, to determine corporate actions to support succession planning across services and to help overcome any perceived challenges.

How do we know if we are getting it right?

The Audit Wales review of workforce planning arrangements across the council in 2021- 2022 reported:

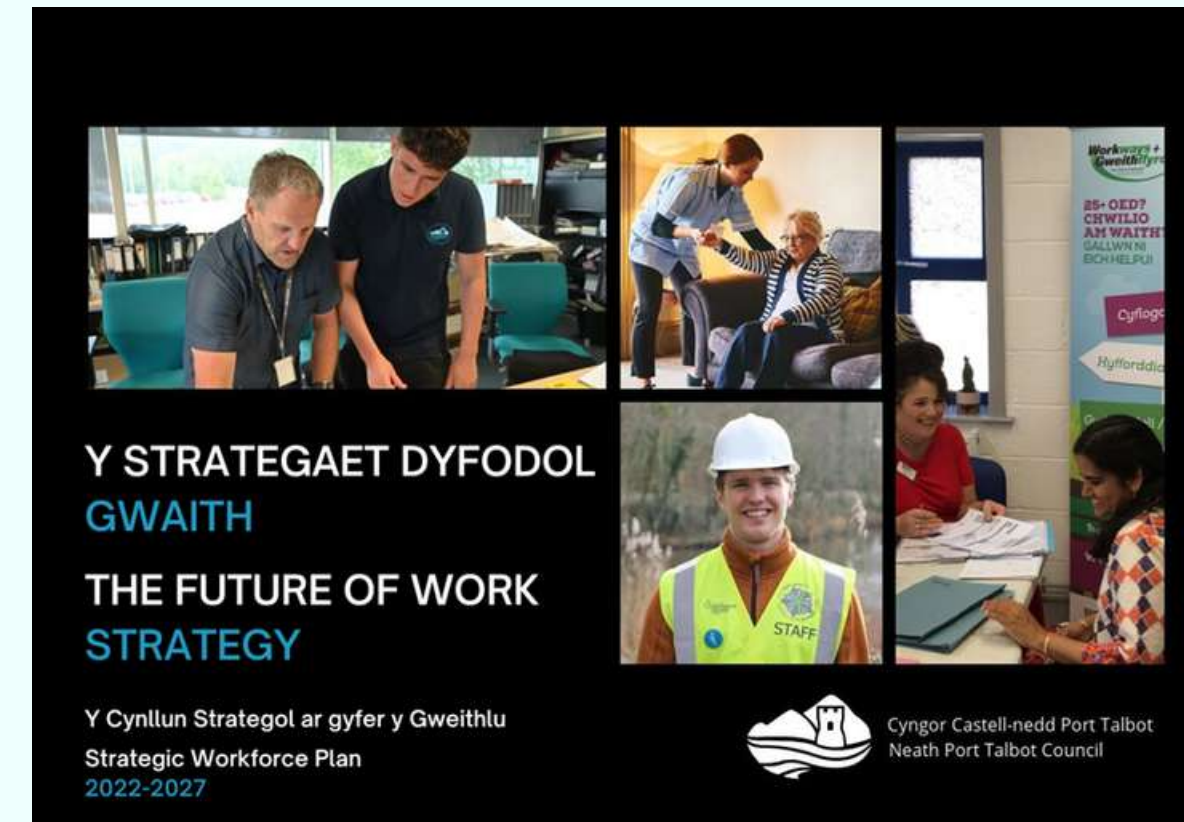
Before Covid

The Council has made significant progress with workforce planning and developed clear processes and tools. The Council is aware that it needs to do more to embed it consistently through all levels and all services. However, intended follow-up action was curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Strengths :



Areas for improvement: ‘Process’ and culture work to do to embed/embrace workforce planning further





Summary of High Level Assessment continued...

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

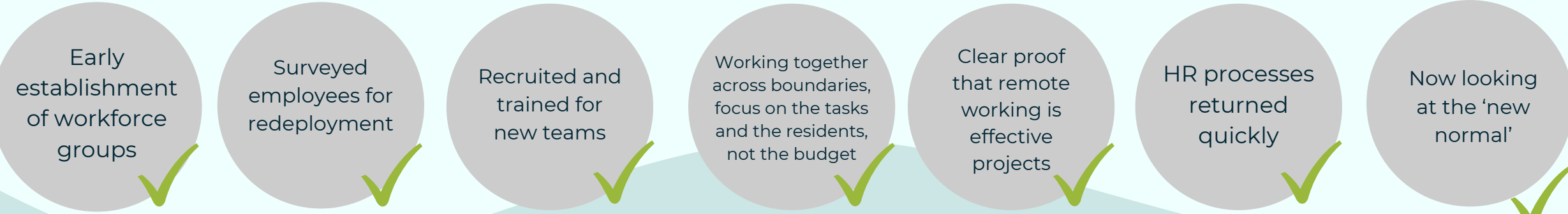
During Covid:
The council's reactive workforce planning during the pandemic worked well, with strong focuses on maintaining essential services and ensuring employee wellbeing.

The pandemic has highlighted to the council the value of people and the value in planning how those people work. Planning is more 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.

Our Strengths



Areas for improvement: Existing HR Information System (VISION) did not help / More emphasis needed now to embed effective operational level workforce plans

The Audit Wales review also provided the council with recommendations for workforce priorities for consideration in the next planned iteration of the workforce plan

Resources to deliver the Strategic Workforce Plan

The council has allocated resources to delivery of the Strategic Workforce Plan for 2022 – 2027: The Future of Work Strategy. The council has established a Future of Work Team to supplement the resources of the People & Organisational Development Service.

This team includes HR, Organisational Development and Engagement professionals, as well as a seconded trade union officer in line with the council's commitment to working in social partnership with recognised trade unions.

This additional capacity will help ensure that the ambitions of this strategy will be realised over the course of the next 3 - 5 years.

The delivery of the plan will be via a partnership between the council and its employees at all levels. The plan will be monitored and reviewed at regular intervals, to ensure it remains fit for purpose, relevant and that planned deliverables are having the intended impact.

Our Part

We Will:

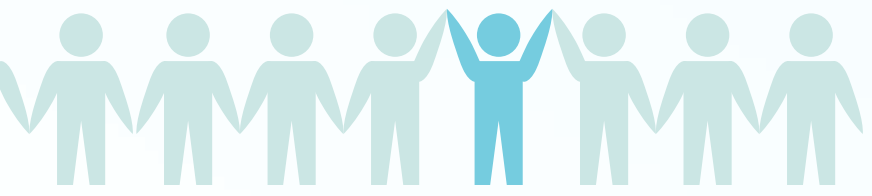
- Connect with you and involve you in policy development.
- Ask for your views and build our employment framework around what matters to the people in our workplaces.
- Trust you and empower you to make the decisions that are right for your service.
- Provide you with the training and tools to help you do your job with confidence.

Your Part

Your Will:

- Engage and contribute to help build the future of work.
- Keep yourself up to date with employee news and information.
- If you are a manager you will engage with your team(s) and involve them in your decision making.
- Tell us what matters to you and let us know if we get things wrong.
- Engage with the training and development opportunities that are provided.

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



Summary of High Level Assessment

Leadership & Management

As part of our 2021-2022 self-assessment we considered our Leadership and Management across people and processes. This approach will continue giving an overview of the strengths of our leaders and managers whilst we continue to develop our underpinning procedures.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management across the council has continued to strengthen. We have been faced with many challenges whilst recovering from the global pandemic and adapting to a number of new working practices. Many services are still feeling the impact of the pandemic legacy and like all other authorities across the UK the demand for support and services continues to be heightened, needing strong leaders.

Assessments and audits undertaken during 2022-2023 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). As an example based on the Estyn judgements, there has been significant improvement in leadership within NPT schools since commencement of the Leadership Strategy in September 2017. A high number of schools in Neath Port Talbot previously received follow-up from Estyn because of adequate or unsatisfactory leadership. Only a half of schools had been judged by Estyn to have effective leadership for the four years prior to the implementation of the leadership strategy. Since implementation of the strategy this has improved to 85%.

Developing our Leaders

The Corporate Plan 2022 – 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”.

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.

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 and Management development has been provided over the past 10 years through accessing apprenticeship levy funded programmes such as ILM levels 5 – 7 and through ad hoc activities provided by Academi Wales and other delivery partners, including for example:

- » Mentoring support for Chief Officers
- » Aspiring Corporate Directors (SOLACE)
- » Aspiring Heads of Service (SOLACE)
- » Digital Leadership Events
- » Managing and Leading Hybrid Teams workshops
- » Senior Leadership Experience with Academi Wales
- » A comprehensive programme of in-house training and development activity has been delivered by the Learning, Training & Development Team

In January 2022 the council confirmed its commitment to the development of its workforce by approving the creation of a significant reserve budget to fund organisational development activity and supporting the development of our whole workforce, including leadership and management development.

The Strategic Workforce Plan The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 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”.*

A review of our arrangements was carried out in 2022 (a paper based review, focus groups and staff survey). This demonstrated that we can strengthen what we have in place to provide more consistency in how we articulate the qualifications, skills, abilities and knowledge requirements for our leadership roles.

A clearly articulated leadership development pathway will enable all employees to see what qualifications, skills, abilities etc. they need to have in place in order to progress.





Summary of High Level Assessment

Leadership & management continued...

Work is underway to develop a comprehensive set of proposals, which include template job descriptions, person specifications and competencies across each of our leadership levels, as well as a holistic Leadership and Development Pathway incorporating corporate programmes to support each stage of development which could look like this:



Initial focus groups and surveys have demonstrated support for this approach and these proposals will be developed further in 2023, working of course with our leaders at every level and seeking input from all key stakeholders to ensure that what we develop is fit for purpose.

Job Design

As well as being able to articulate our expectations, we need to ensure our jobs are designed effectively – that jobs are ‘right-sized’ and activities organised to create efficiencies. 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”.

The covering paper to the consultation proposals sets out “This presents an opportunity to undertake an organisation design process to design and implement an organisation structure with appropriately designed jobs that measurably enables efficient and effective delivery of the Corporate Plan (ensuring we have right people in the right place to deliver the Plan)”.

The initial actions focussed on where activity sits across the organisation and resulted in some changes in Head of Service portfolios. Additional capacity has been created through the establishment of an additional Corporate Director (Strategy and Corporate Services) and two Heads of Service (Head of Leisure, Tourism, Culture and Heritage and Head of Housing and Communities).

Additionally, in October 2022 Elected Members approved a proposal to create a Strategic Manager pay grade, to sit in between NPT Grade 13 and the NPT Head of Service Grade. This will not only support the recruitment and retention of senior people, but also support succession planning, providing a bridge post between Accountable Manager level and Head of Service; the learning curve for newly appointed Heads of Service will be significantly reduced. It will increase strategic capacity at the top of the organisation and support the delivery of the council’s corporate plan priorities.

Resources to deliver the Leadership and Management Development Framework

The council has allocated resources to delivery of the Strategic Workforce Plan for 2022 – 2027: The Future of Work Strategy. The council has established a Future of Work Team to supplement the resources of the People & Organisational Development Service. This team includes OD professionals, and the additional capacity has enabled the service to support the review of leadership and management development arrangements. The reserve funding allocated for OD will also support the funding of leadership and management development programmes over the next 2 – 3 years. Once the leadership and management development programme has been established, it will be necessary to identify resources to ensure its sustainability in the longer term.

How do we know if we are getting it right?

We are developing proposals for an Employee Engagement Strategy, to include an annual employee survey; this comprehensive survey will include qualitative and quantitative feedback in relation to leadership and management.

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.

With an annual spend on bought in goods, services and works of £259,000,000 in the financial year 2022/2023, the council must manage this spend responsibly.

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.

The procurement landscape in the public sector has changed dramatically over the last 3 years and will continue to change over the next 2 years with the coming into force of the Procurement Bill and Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and UK procurement reform following the departure from the European Union.

A Welsh Government report published in March 2021 acknowledges that despite the unprecedented challenges facing the Welsh public sector through Brexit and Covid-19, procurement has risen to the challenge and through effective leadership and collaborative working has accelerated its progress in the procurement evolution journey in Wales.

We are 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 council is creating a Procurement Strategy (to be approved by members in in 2023/2024) which 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, we 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 we are 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 strategy will look 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.

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 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. 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.



Summary of High Level Assessment

Procurement - '*Procurement & commissioning*'

continued...

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 and 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.

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.

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 2022-2023 has led to Corporate Procurement having a greater input into commissioning activities.

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

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.

High value and or high profile acquisitions are examined for creating commercial opportunities with a forward work programme of commissioning activities prepared.

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. Throughout 2022-2023 a council Contract Register has been developed which will be implemented in autumn 2023.

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.

A procurement strategy (pursuant to legislative requirements) is being developed to bring together the NPT procurement principles, consideration has been given to the development of this area in the NPT Corporate Plan and work programmes identified to progress this area of work.

The council is exploring 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 proposed Procurement Strategy will place members as the leaders in respect of setting goals and strategies for the council.

Performance reporting is undertaken and social benefits achieved as well as savings but restricted to specific procurement exercises and some departments to ensure an accurate representation of benefits realised are identified.

Officers work 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.

Performance reporting is undertaken and social benefits achieved as well as savings but restricted to specific procurement exercises and some departments to ensure that tangible benefits can be identified and communicated to stakeholders.

Social value is embedded into corporate strategy and service delivery and there is a consistent framework for management and delivery. This demonstrates behaviours for collaboration and partnership building with communities and potential suppliers.

There is a proactive approach to integrated SME organisations into procurement and commissioning with an acknowledgement of a convening role that commissioners can have and what the benefit of facilitated relationships between SME's and other providers can bring.

Commissioners communicate with the market the local need and the desired market outcomes.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: the council is mature authority and as we move forward into the 2023/2024 period we will start progressing towards being considered leading, which will be underpinned by our Council Procurement Strategy. There are areas which need to be improved on to get is to a position where we are a best model of operation but from a compliance and an operational perspective, procurement functions meet the needs of the council and service delivery. More work needs to be focussed on community impact which will continue throughout 2023/2024, with social value being a key factor that will feature in our council Procurement Strategy.

Summary of High Level Assessment

Risk Management - '*Effective risk management*'

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 priorities as set out in the council's Strategic Change Programme 2023-2024.

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.

Corporate Risk Management Arrangements 2022/2023

At a strategic level, the council's strategic risk register was reported to Cabinet on 22nd February 2023 and Governance and Audit on 17th March 2023.

Service Risk Management Arrangements 2022/2023

At a service level – risks were identified via the Service Recovery Plan (SRP) process (introduced from 2022-2023). SRP's are completed by Accountable Managers who are required, at an operational level to identify and manage risks associated with service delivery.

Reflecting on the content of the SRP's completed for 2022-2023 in relation to risks there was clearly a need for more support for Accountable Managers on the identification, scoring and mitigation of risks. This was taken into consideration when reviewing the guidance for the updating of SRP's in readiness for 2023-2024.

In addition, following the council's exit from the Corporate Performance Management System (CAMMS), the new performance management reporting arrangements include a template for the updating of progress against SRP's. The format of the template provides more detail on how to score risks.

During 2022-2023, work was completed on revising the council's Corporate Risk Management Policy.

The revised Policy aims to promote an open, consistent and proactive risk management attitude which encourages the taking of opportunities to better serve the needs of our communities within the resources available to the council.

The Policy demonstrates 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;
- » Ensure effective stewardship of public funds, efficient deployment and use of resources and securing value for money for the public purse;
- » Safeguard all stakeholders to whom the council has a duty of care;
- » Protect physical and information assets and identify and manage potential liabilities;
- » Learn from previous threats, opportunities, successes and failures;
- » Preserve, promote and protect the reputation of the council; and
- » Build a workforce where improvement, innovation and a responsible approach to risk taking is part of the culture.

The revised Policy does not aim to bring about a one-size-fits all approach to managing risks, but it does aim to provide a broad and high level approach by providing a framework of good practice and ensures the management of risk is structured and comprehensive. The Policy sets out clearly the Corporate Risk Management Framework (which includes escalation, reporting and monitoring processes).



Summary of High Level Assessment

Risk Management - '*Effective risk management*'

Governance & Audit

- Review and assess the Council's Corporate Risk recommendations to the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements
- Ensure the annual internal audit plan takes account of the contents of the Strategic Risk Register.
- Review the outcomes of audits, highlighted risks and officer responses.

Internal Audit

Strategic / Directorate Risk Registers and risks identified at the service level (via Service Recovery Plans) to inform the Internal Audit Action Plan.

Cabinet

Approve the Corporate Risk Management Policy and review on a 3 yearly basis (at a minimum)
Review the content and effective management and monitoring of risks on the Strategic Risk register on a six monthly basis
Ensure relevant risks are considered as part of every Cabinet report decision.

Corporate Directors Group

- Agree risks and mitigating actions to be included on the Strategic risk register (including those escalated from Directorate Risk Registers)
- Manage, monitor and review the Strategic Risk Register on a quarterly basis (at a minimum)
- Provide assurance to Cabinet on a six monthly basis (at a minimum) that Strategic Risks are being actively managed and monitored.
- Take assurance from Heads of Service that medium and high risks identified at the Directorate level are being managed appropriately by receiving Directorate Risk Registers on a six monthly basis (at a minimum).

Senior Management Teams

Agree Directorate risks for inclusion on the Directorate Risk Register (to be informed by those risks identified in Service Recovery Plans) and any others identified
Manage, monitor and review the Directorate Risk Register on a quarterly basis (at a minimum) to ensure risks are being managed appropriately
Identify Directorate risks for escalation to the Strategic Risk Register
Present Directorate Risk Registers to Corporate Directors Group on a six monthly basis (at a minimum)

Accountable Managers

Identify risks at the service level and include in relevant Service Recovery Plan
Manage, monitor and review service level risks (ongoing)
Escalate high level risks to Senior Management Team for consideration of inclusion on Directorate Risk Register.

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

Through the development of the new Digital Services Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) Strategy, many of the key components for improvement will be drawn together into a cohesive structure and will support delivery plans across a range of service areas.

The Digital Services team continues to deliver extensive reactive support across the council's service areas. With the planned introduction of a service delivery pipeline and supporting Digital Transformation Board, we will prioritise and approve planned developments, driving a more proactive approach.

Further improvements have been introduced through a formal succession plan, development of some career paths in hard to recruit roles, and 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 concern.

A new Data team has been established and now consists of Head of Data, a senior data analyst and a data analyst. The team has started making good progress in a number of areas including developing governance frameworks to oversee data management and research activities (data management board, research board); promoting the use of accepted data standards across the council; engaging with partners and stakeholders to build strong relationships, share data and plan

for future research collaborations; identifying, developing and implementing data platforms that will enable transformative use and visualisation of data; and promoting training opportunities in basic and advanced data analytics across the council.

This work is feeding into a data strategy which is aligned to the council's objectives and the new DDaT strategy and will also be informed by insights from a data maturity assessment that will run in the autumn of 2023.

The data team have begun 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.'

During the self-assessment, and with the introduction of a customer satisfaction survey, the hard work and commitment by the digital services team is providing service areas and the council with the products and services needed to meet their objectives.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: There are still significant pieces of work to be undertaken to ensure the council has robust data management functions in place, which places this area of work as mature.

Assets - 'Digital & technology'

As part of the development of the new Digital Services Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) Strategy, we are reviewing the previous strategy 'Smart and Connected' and the Corporate Plan building on the foundations previously laid down.

Within the new strategy, one of our strategic aims is to 'continue to put all our residents, businesses, elected members, staff and visitors at the centre of what we do'.

Our products and services build upon our digital service standards and code of practice which works toward delivering on our strategic themes. This provides the Digital Service teams with a framework to fully understand user needs and outcomes requirements through service mapping, user research and data for the strategic themes 'Data and research led decision making' and 'Using the right technology.' All this forms a clear roadmap for us to deliver products and services which will provide continuous iterative improvement to service delivery and aid service areas and the council to meet its objectives.

As part of the roadmap to delivering on our strategy we have plans underway that will provide an infrastructure that is flexible enough to support the council's needs for the foreseeable future. This will also become a significant asset for the council providing a safe and secure foundation for innovative products and services, data storage and information exploitation.

With a willingness for service areas to exploit technology to help achieve their objectives we have seen a rise in interest for the provision of digital solutions. Recently we have introduced Business Relationship Officers to liaise with service areas and gain understanding of their strategic aims and objectives and marshal digital services resources to work with them to deliver these. We have also developed and deployed multi-disciplinary teams to aid in rapid agile iterative delivery for service areas.

To ensure that there is sufficient governance for the demand in digital solutions we have introduced a Digital Transformation Board to prioritise and approve planned developments. The board will provide authorisation and oversight for objectives delivered, resources deployed and cost budget control.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: The current position of the council's digital and technological assets is 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. This then aggregates up to the level of resources required to deliver the overall council budget. An exercise has been undertaken to try 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.

Through the development of a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which is 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, 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. 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 at present and various benching marking measures have come and gone over the years. Historically it has proven to be exceptionally difficult to compare costs with other councils 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.

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



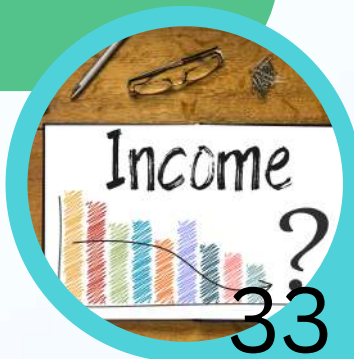
Financial Planning 'Managing income'

Income generation remains an area where there is still work to be done, and this is accepted across senior manager and continues to need significant attention in the foreseeable future. The council currently has an income generation working group and a Commercial Coordinator, we have also appointed a new Head of Service (Head of Culture, Leisure, Heritage and Tourism) who has specific responsibility for driving commercialisation and income generation.

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. 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 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.

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





Summary of High Level Assessment

Physical Assets & Facilities

The council has an existing Asset Management Strategy in place to manage its land and property portfolio. It is currently being updated and will form part of the council's Asset Management Framework.

The review of the Asset Management Strategy, as part of the new framework, will ensure that it is aligned with the Corporate Plan, whilst also confirming that progress is being made on setting the council's strategic objectives for asset management.

Over a number of years significant progress has been made in rationalising the council's property portfolio by using fewer buildings more efficiently, whilst also continuing to protect front-line services and maintaining service delivery. However, continued financial constraints has meant that innovation and the efficient use of its remaining resources continue to be at the forefront of the council's priorities moving into 2023-2024.

The information compiled as part of the revised Asset Management Plan will together with other supporting information enable the council to make evidence based decisions to identify the type and location of buildings required to accommodate council activities in the future.

The current landscape provides both opportunities and challenges that require the council to review its basis for holding assets, whilst also seeking new opportunities such as collaborating with other public sector organisations to deliver services now and in the future.

The council's Strategic Asset Management Framework will provide an overview of our land and property portfolio, together with our main priorities for managing and developing the portfolio over the next five years.

Currently, the property asset needs within the council are not fully understood by all sections. Moreover, the capacity and capability of the existing property services professionals within the council is not always recognised or fully utilised by other sections.

The retention of a professional property team recognises the importance of 'inbuilt intelligence' through the retention of key property related services areas. This proposed strategy will endorse 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.

Whilst there is a Corporate Landlord model operating within the council, it has only been implemented in part and the forthcoming 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 Corporate Landlord model needs to be fully endorsed, supported and resourced to ensure that all property decisions are taken with the full benefit of professional property advice and that they align with the Corporate Plan.



Summary of High Level Assessment

Physical Assets & Facilities



Maintenance and statutory compliance for our buildings is a significant financial commitment for the council. The council currently has challenges relating to the age, condition and suitability of its portfolio. It is vitally important that the assets to be retained in the longer term are maintained to ensure a safe and appropriate environment to deliver services, to support the customer/service users and the workforce. It is also important that both revenue and capital funding is prioritised to the areas of most need. There is a balance between needing to maintain the existing council assets alongside achieving its aims and objectives.

To ensure that the council secures value for money for such work, it maintains an intelligent client capability to ensure that externally procured work delivers value for money for the council. It is through strong planning of future revenue and capital planned maintenance works, together with the maintenance of an intelligent client capability that budgets will be spent more efficiently with emergency or reactive maintenance being reduced.

It is appropriate that the council regularly reviews the assets within its portfolio to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned with its corporate priorities and objectives. To do this we will implement an asset challenge process.

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.

The council works closely with other public sector organisations across Neath Port Talbot to explore opportunities to reduce premises costs and make assets work better for its communities and customers.

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 key elements that can be delivered through the management of our property portfolio.

The Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency and has set the ambitious target of a net-zero carbon public sector by 2030. If the council is to meet this climate target, it must act to tackle climate change by prioritising carbon reduction and zero emissions through more responsible and sustainable asset management.

The council has a Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy in place and we are currently developing a costed delivery plan, with support from external consultants to identify the actions required to achieve net zero.

Conclusion of Self-Assessment: The general assessment is mature.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT 2023-2024

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
Corporate Planning			
SA23	Undertake a review of the council's Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF)	March 2024	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.
Workforce Planning & Leadership and Management			
SA3	Establish a Recruitment Taskforce to drive the council's recruitment strategy	March 2024	A proposal for a Talent Management Team has been developed which will replace Recruitment Taskforce initiative. If additional funding is provided the team will continue with initiatives to attract external candidates as well the development and continual movement of internal staff. Ensure employees understand the opportunities that are available to them within the council.
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 2024	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 proposal has been developed and will be considered by Corporate Directors Group in October 2023, as part of Phase 2 of the organisational review.
SA24	Review Strategic Workforce Plan and Action Plan	March 2024	First year progress underway, reviewing action plan in readiness for 2024-2025.

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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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 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 climate check of 'leadership' in NPT will be undertaken in 2023-2024, 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. In 2023 we launched the Ment2Be NPT Mentoring Scheme, matching mentors and mentees, with the aim of supporting career development 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.
SA25	Review succession planning toolkit	March 2024	Review and improve succession planning process, continue with officer engagement and training.

Procurement

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 a 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.
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No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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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. 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. The work has moved 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>
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Data, Digital & Technology (DDAT)

SA10	<p>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.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Develop new Digital Strategy for NPT, building on Smart & Connected – add to action plan for 2023-2024 implement and embed, aligned to Digital Delivery Plan and pipeline, co-ordinated through Digital Transformation Board.</p>
			<p>Actions within the Cyber Security Strategy - Security and compliance.</p>
			<p>Data classification and retention review.</p>
			<p>Review of IAO / IAM arrangements – linked to updating IAR.</p>
			<p>Asset management lifecycle process, plus sort backlog of legacy infrastructure.</p>

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
Data, Digital & Technology (DDAT)			
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>Developing and implementing new Intelligent Client Function across directorates.</p> <p>Embedding standards based delivery including ITIL standards, progressing with industry leader to design processes.</p> <p>Adopting a design-led and agile approach.</p> <p>Drive a cultural shift around 'digital transformation' with strong leadership across all management layers.</p> <p>Demonstrate the value of DDaT to service design – e.g. the benefits of User Centred Design, how data should inform service design principles.</p> <p>Ensure Senior Leaders understand what is required to support the digital agenda.</p> <p>Identify next steps to support service transformation – e.g. Social Care / Flare replacement programmes.</p>
SA12	Data - Using and sharing data and evidence to provide the best possible services for citizens and businesses.	Ongoing	<p>Identify, develop and implement data platforms that will enable transformative use of data including Machine Learning and AI, opening up deeper predictive analytics.</p> <p>Track key management information and data-driven key performance indicators in accordance to business objectives and priorities.</p>

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Data, Digital & Technology (DDAT)

SA13	Data - Using and sharing data and evidence to provide the best possible services for citizens and businesses.	Ongoing	<p>Develop a data working group to steer priorities across the council for data cleansing and ongoing data management and usage.</p> <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>Workstreams with Microsoft to explore developing a 'dataverse' with condensed CRM application stack to improve join up and user experience.</p> <p>Business Intelligence and Data Strategy (to be informed by Data Maturity Assessment 2023-2024).</p> <p>Data Architecture review.</p>
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SA26	Operational Environment providing resilient and fit for purpose technical architecture aligned to our technical code of practice	Ongoing	<p>Full review of the technical operating environment, in conjunction with specialist partners.</p> <p>Develop technical road map including Cloud and Mobile Device Management (MDM) Strategy</p> <p>Review of business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements.</p> <p>Develop full service catalogue for operations.</p>
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No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Data, Digital & Technology

SA26 cont...	Operational Environment providing resilient and fit for purpose technical architecture aligned to our technical code of practice	Ongoing	<p>Schools Managed Service Review.</p> <p>Review of software and hardware contracts linked to forward payment profile.</p> <p>Programme to refresh digital service desk linked to best practice processes.</p>
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Communications / Consultation / Engagement

SA13	Develop a Strategic Framework for Communications and Marketing.	March 2024	Work to develop a 'One Council Strategy' to deliver a joined up approach to Communications and Marketing has commenced A key deliverable of the strategy is the Strategic Framework for Communications and Marketing. A cross directorate working group will support the development of the Framework together with other deliverables of the One Council Strategy.
SA14	Develop a robust and effective Engagement Strategy (both internal and external)	March 2024	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
Q3 - ENSURING GOVERNANCE IS EFFECTIVE FOR SECURING FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES (what and how can we do better?)			
SA27	Continue with future training of officer groups in the significance of the member and officer relations protocol.	Ongoing	A protocol is in place as part of the council's Constitution and Employee Code of Conduct. A review of the protocol was undertaken at the early stages of the member induction programme, as part of the wider review of the council's Constitution. Copies of which have been distributed to officers. Training has also been provided to officer groups within the council on the nature of the relationship between officers and members and this training will continue in future years. The protocol is monitored by the Standards Committee who considered the protocol and its implementation at a meeting of the Standards Committee recommending a few minor changes for consideration which have now been included within the Constitution going forward and circulated to officers and members.
SA28	<p>All Group Leaders make Standards and Ethics a standing item on their political group meeting agendas;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>Steps be taken to promote the Member Officer Protocol to all elected members and officers of the council, with training provided as appropriate;</p> <p>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.</p>	Ongoing	<p>The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provided an additional duty on group leaders to ensure members within their political group also comply with the Members Code of Conduct and ongoing support will be provided on this function via the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee were pleased to note the approach that Group Leaders take in promoting standards and the personal commitment they have to encourage members within their groups to embed ethical processes in their day to day activities. Of interest particularly to the Standards Committee was how Group Leaders deal with the "thick skin" ideology that the Public Service Ombudsman and other regulatory bodies adopt and the views that all Group Leaders have that often this is an inappropriate test and it is not something that any elected member should have to have if they face abuse from members of the public, particularly in a social media setting. The Standards Committee are required to conduct an assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct and the Standards Committee are able to confirm that throughout 2022-2023, Group Leaders have discharged their duty, in the views of the Standards Committee, and that there were no ethical concerns arising. The Standards Committee published their Annual Report in April 2023 for the work of the previous finance year.</p> <p>A review of the protocol was undertaken at the early stages of the member induction programme, as part of the wider review of the council's Constitution. Copies of which have been distributed to officers. Training has also been provided to officer groups within the council on the nature of the relationship between officers and members and this training will continue in future years. The protocol is monitored by the Standards Committee who considered the protocol and its implementation at a meeting of the Standards Committee recommending a few minor changes for consideration which will now be included within the Constitution going forward and circulated to officers and members. A series of guidance documents have now been produced in respect of member's interests, predisposition and predetermination and work commenced on the development of a guide in respect of social media and the code of conduct which will be considered by the Standards Committee in 2023/2024.</p>

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Q3 - ENSURING GOVERNANCE IS EFFECTIVE FOR SECURING FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES (what and how can we do better?)

SA29	Continue with future training of officer groups in the significance of the member and officer relations protocol	Ongoing	<p>A protocol is in place as part of the council's Constitution and Employee Code of Conduct. A review of the protocol was undertaken at the early stages of the member induction programme, as part of the wider review of the council's Constitution. Copies of which have been distributed to officers.</p> <p>Training has also been provided to officer groups within the council on the nature of the relationship between officers and members and this training will continue in future years. The protocol is monitored by the Standards Committee who considered the protocol and its implementation at a meeting of the Standards Committee recommending a few minor changes for consideration which have now been included within the Constitution going forward and circulated to officers and members.</p>
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.	March 2024	The Corporate Procurement Team have spent the last year developing toolkits that will enable better reporting of financial spending and to monitor control mechanisms in respect of procurement activities. Work has been ongoing to address procurement compliance in respect of the use of the council's Select List as well as addressing individual tendering arrangements in service areas. As part of the development of its procurement strategy and ongoing monitoring of council expenditure this work will continue.
SA31	Commence the review of the Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the council and the voluntary sector	Sept 2024	Work has commenced on the review.
SA32	Commence the review of the Charter between the council and Town and Community Councils	Sept 2024	Discussions have commenced within the Town and Community Council Forum on how to take this work forward.
SA33	Ensure all strategic risks are embedded and further refine Directorate (operational) Risk Registers	March 2024	The Strategic and Directorate Risk Registers have been reviewed by Corporate Directors Group. The Strategic Risk Register has been presented to both Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee. The Directorate Registers are being developed and will be presented to Corporate Directors Group (as set out in the council's Corporate Risk Management Policy).

No.	ACTION DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVE BY	PROGRESS TO DATE
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Q3 - ENSURING GOVERNANCE IS EFFECTIVE FOR SECURING FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES (what and how can we do better?)

SA34	Further development of a medium term financial strategy.	March 2024	Work has progress on development of a Medium Term Financial Plan however further work is required to develop proposals to ensure the council has a sustainable financial footing.
SA35	A review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing work to be undertaken by the Information Governance team.	March 2024	An audit of council information is underway to identify information assets, their characteristics, risks and any gaps in required documentation.



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