

COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO GAN SWYDDOG
RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

Penderfyniad Allweddol | Key Decision ✓

Mae'r Penderfyniad Wedi'i Ddirprwyo hwn wedi'i bennu yn 'Benderfyniad Allweddol' gan ei fod yn debygol o:

This Delegated Decision has been established as a 'Key Decision' as it is likely:

a) arwain at y Cyngor yn ysgwyddo gwariant sylweddol neu wneud arbedion sylweddol; to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant;

neu / or:

b) fod yn arwyddocaol o ran sut mae'n effeithio ar gymunedau sy'n byw neu'n gweithio mewn ardal sy'n cynnwys dwy etholaeth neu adran etholiadol neu ragor. to be significant in terms of its effects on Communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral wards.

c) Eraill / Other:

PWNC | SUBJECT: COUNCIL'S PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

DIBEN YR ADRODDIAD | PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Chief Executive, which is to provide an overview of the requirements that will need to be put in place in readiness for the Council's Panel Performance Assessment that will take place between 7th October 2025 to 10th October 2025, and to seek approval for the 'scoping document' that is required to be completed in advance of the assessment starting.

PENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO | DELEGATED DECISION:

Agreed:

- i. To note the requirements and the process to be followed for the Panel Performance Assessment in October 2025.
- ii. To approve the scoping document as outlined within the report;
- iii. That the Scoping document is shared with the WLGA to assist in the necessary preparations needed to be undertaken in advance of the Assessment.

Llofnod y Prif Swyddog

Chief Officer Signature



Paul Mee

Chief Executive

17th April 2025**Enw (priflythrennau)**

Name (Print Name)

Swydd

Designation

Dyddiad

Date

Mae'r penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud yn unol ag Adran 15 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 (Swyddogaethau'r Corff Gweithredol) ac yn y cylch gorchwyl sy wedi'i nodi yn Adran 5 o Ran 3 o Gyfansoddiad y Cyngor.

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

YMGYNGHORI | CONSULTATION

	Cllr Morgan, OBE (Leader of the Council)	16 April 2025
LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE	ENW A SWYDD NAME AND DESIGNATION	DYDDIAD DATE

	Cllr Webber, BEM (Deputy Leader of the Council)	16 April 2025
LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE	ENW A SWYDD NAME AND DESIGNATION	DYDDIAD DATE

	Barrie Davies, Deputy Chief Executive/Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	16 April 2025
LLOFNODSWYDDOG YMGYNGHOROL CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE	ENW A SWYDD NAME AND DESIGNATION	DYDDIAD DATE

A FYDD Y PENDERFYNIAD YMA'N CAEL EFFAITH AR Y WARD?

WILL THIS DECISION HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE WARD?

BYDD | YES**NA FYDD | NO ✓****Unrhyw sylwadau pellach/Oes angen rhoi gwybod i'r Aelod Lleol:**

Any further comments/Need for Local Member to be informed: Briefing sessions will be provided to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; Governance and Audit Committee as well as information sessions to Group Leaders and Trade Unions as appropriate.

RHEOLAU'R WEITHDREFN GALW-I-MEWN | CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.

A YW'R PENDERFYNIAD YN UN BRYN A HEB FOD YN DESTUN PROSES GALW-I-MEWN GAN Y PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU?:

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

~~YDY~~ | YES NAC YDY | NO ✓

Rheswm dros fod yn fater brys | Reason for Urgency:

Os yw'n cael ei ystyried yn fater brys - Ilofnod y Llywydd, y Dirprwy Lywydd neu Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Cyflogedig yn cadarnhau cytundeb fod y penderfyniad arfaethedig yn rhesymol yn yr holl amgylchiadau iddo gael ei drin fel mater brys, yn unol â rheol gweithdrefn trosolwg a chraffu 17.2:

If deemed urgent - signature of Presiding Member or Deputy Presiding Member or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....
(Llywydd | Presiding Member)

.....
(Dyddiad | Date)

DS - Os yw hwn yn benderfyniad sy'n cael ei ail-ystyried yna does dim modd galw'r penderfyniad i mewn a bydd y penderfyniad yn dod i rym o'r dyddiad mae'r penderfyniad wedi'i lofnodi.

NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.

DYDDIADAU CYHOEDDI A GWEITHREDU | PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES

CYHOEDDI | PUBLICATION

Cyhoeddi ar Wefan y Cyngor | Publication on the Council's Website:- _____22.04.25_____

DYDDIAD | DATE

GWEITHREDU'R PENDERFYNIAD | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Nodwch: Fydd y penderfyniad hwn ddim yn dod i rym nac yn cael ei weithredu'n llawn nes cyn pen 3 diwrnod gwaith ar ôl ei gyhoeddi. Nod hyn yw ei alluogi i gael ei "Alw i Mewn" yn unol â Rheol 17.1, Rheolau Gweithdrefn Trosolwg a Chraffu.

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Yn amodol ar y drefn "Galw i Mewn", caiff y penderfyniad ei roi ar waith ar:

Subject to Call In the implementation date will be:

_____28.04.25_____

DYDDIAD / DATE

WEDI'I GYMERADWYO I'W GYHOEDDI: ✓ | APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION :✓

Rhagor o wybodaeth | Further Information:

Cyfadran Directorate:	Performance Management
Enw'r Person Cyswllt Contact Name:	Marc Crumbie
Swydd Designation:	Head Of Procurement Delivery
Rhif Ffôn Telephone Number:	Marc.Crumbie@rctcbc.gov.uk



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

COUNCIL'S PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Author(s): Marc Crumbie & Megan Edwards

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Chief Executive, which looks to provide an overview of the requirements that will need to be put in place in readiness for the Council's Panel Performance Assessment that will take place between 7th October 2025 to 10th October 2025, and to seek approval for the 'scoping document' that is required to be completed in advance of the assessment starting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

2.1 The requirements and the process of the Panel Performance Assessment are noted.

2.2 The scoping document, as outlined within the report, is approved.

2.3 Subject to 2.2, that the Scoping document is shared with the WLGA to assist in the necessary preparations needed to be undertaken in advance of the Assessment.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contains the duty for the Council to arrange a Panel Performance Assessment at least once during an electoral cycle – i.e. an assessment should take place in the period between ordinary elections of Councillors to the Council. Arrangements must enable the Council to publish the Panel's report at least six months before the date of the next ordinary election.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Performance and Governance duties outlined in [Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) relate to strengthening and empowering local government; the Act defines Councils as '*self-improving organisations through a system based on self-assessment and Panel performance assessment*'.

- 4.2 The Act requires the Council to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', this is the extent to which:
- it is exercising its functions effectively;
 - it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
 - its governance is effective for securing the above.

Annual Self-Assessment Report

- 4.3 The Council's Annual Self-Assessment 2023/24 was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee on [19th September 2024](#), and subsequently approved by Council on [6th November 2024](#). A copy of the final document has been published on the Council's [website](#).

Panel Performance Assessment

- 4.4 The Act requires the Council to make arrangements for an independent Panel to assess the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements (refer to section 4.2), this is formally defined in the Act as a 'Panel Performance Assessment' (PPA).
- 4.5 The Act and supporting guidance state that an effective PPA can inform the Council's improvement journey and should build upon the annual self-assessment. The PPA should provide different perspectives via independent and objective challenge, together with the opportunity to test thinking with impartial expert peers.
- 4.6 Officers will note the Delegated Decision made on 18th April 2024 in respect of appointing the WLGA as the Council's facilitator for the PPA. The WLGA will help the Council through the stages of the PPA.
- 4.7 The Statutory Guidance to the Act identifies 3 stages to an assessment. The following sections of this report explain the 3 stages and provides context in terms of actions that we need to deliver prior to the assessment commencing, along with a narrative of what the Council will expect to experience during the assessment.

Stage 1 – Preparation

Scoping the requirements of the Panel performance assessment.

- 4.8 As a minimum the Panel is responsible for assessing the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements. The WLGA has developed supporting guidance for councils and for the Panel, and within the guidance a standard set of questions has been developed for Panel members to consider when carrying out this duty. Appendix A contains the list of standard questions that the Panel may refer to. The Council will not be expected to provide a detailed response to each of the questions listed in Appendix A prior to the PPA, they are provided for information purposes only at this stage.
- 4.9 Over and above the minimum requirement in respect of assessing the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements, the Act requires the Council to identify additional areas that it would like the Panel to review during the assessment. On this point the Act makes it clear that the Council will set the scope for the assessment. To deliver this requirement, a scoping document (Appendix B) has been completed and is based on a template provided by the WLGA.
- 4.10 The scoping document has been presented (for information) to the Senior Leadership Team and will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Information will also be provided to Group Leaders and Trade Unions as

appropriate. The scoping document will be approved via Officer delegated decision by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

- 4.11 Section 6 of the scoping document lists the areas that the Council would like the Panel to review during the assessment. The areas have been developed following detailed discussions with the Council's Senior Leadership Team and the Cabinet of the Council, and are listed as follows:

Demonstrating impact and outcomes for our communities.

We know there is a need to continue to improve how the Council's arrangements demonstrate the impact and outcomes that services have on communities now and into the future. Therefore, the Panel is requested to review this area and form a view on the extent that the arrangements meet these requirements.

Building community resilience.

A key principle underpinning the Council's Corporate Plan 2024/2030 relates to building community resilience and empowering more residents to live independent lives and in doing so, enable the Council to support better outcomes for those most in need of support. Therefore, the Panel is requested to form a view on:

The extent to which the Council's work is facilitating communities to work collaboratively, (residents, community and public sector organisations) to build resilience and enable residents to live independent lives now and over the long-term.

- How clear is our ambition to build resilience? Is it understood throughout the Council? Is our ambition shared by our communities and how do we know?
- How effective are the processes to help communities to become more resilient – what evidence is available e.g. outcome for service users, social value, financial impact for the Council and partners?

Identifying and commissioning a Panel to undertake the assessment.

- 4.12 Panel members will need to have a range of practical experience, knowledge and perspectives. The Council should also consider the importance of diversity when appointing the Panel. The scope of the assessment will be used to appoint suitably qualified or experienced members of the Panel.
- 4.13 The Council has appointed the WLGA to support us through the PPA. Whilst the Act places the responsibility on the Council to appoint Panel members, the WLGA will undertake the process of establishing a list of individuals that could deliver the role(s). Final agreement of the Panel members resides with the Council, and this will be approved via Officer delegated decision by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.
- 4.14 To ensure independence and objectivity, the Council will need to ensure that Panel members have sufficient detachment from the Council. The statutory guidance provides the following criteria in respect of ensuring independence:
- The Panel Chair must not be a current serving Officer or an Elected Member within local government.
 - No members are to be appointed to the Panel if they have been an Officer or Elected Member at the Council within the last two years.
 - A panel member should not be conflicted (in so far as a reasonable third party would regard a panel member as conflicted) in offering an assessment of how the Council is meeting the performance requirements.
- 4.15 The roles listed within the Act are as follows:

- An independent Panel Chair.
- A peer from the wider public, private or voluntary sectors.
- A serving local government senior officer, likely to be equivalent to Chief Executive or Director, from outside the Council to be assessed.
- A senior Elected Member, from outside the Council to be assessed.

4.16 Once appointed the Panel will need to prepare for the second stage, the assessment, which will be facilitated by the WLGA as follows:

- A remote introductory contact from the WLGA Head of Improvement to:
 - outline the PPA process,
 - provide an overview of the Council,
 - explain, where appropriate, the Welsh legislative and policy context (e.g. the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021)
- A remote meeting of all Panel members, chaired by the appointed Panel Chair and arranged and supported by a WLGA Improvement Officer. The purpose of the meeting would be to:
 - Introduce the peer assessors to each other
 - Outline the scope of the PPA set by the council
 - Agree a draft terms of reference (drafted ahead of the meeting by WLGA Improvement Officer, based on Council's scope)
 - Consider methodology against scope and refine as appropriate
 - Agree a time commitment for the review
 - Assign roles within the peer team (leads on difference aspects of the assessment)
 - Identify what information the peer team require for the desk-based research (to be provided electronically where possible)
 - Identify any individual peer needs or requirements
 - Agree how the Panel will consult stakeholders, noting that the consultation must be designed to be representative of the relevant population

Establishing the terms of reference for the Panel performance assessment and, once in place, agreeing the terms of reference with the Chair of the Panel.

4.17 The WLGA will prepare the draft Terms of Reference on behalf of the Council and will be based on the Council's scoping document. The Terms of Reference will be agreed between the Panel Chair and the Council via Officer delegated decision by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.

Sharing relevant information with the Panel to set the context for the assessment.

4.18 The Panel will wish to see key documents as part of their assessment. The WLGA has developed a list of documents that the Council may need to collate and send on to the WLGA Lead Coordinator, as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate plan (current and previous) • Annual statutory reports produced by the council for last three years, including Self-Assessment Report, Wellbeing Report (if separate to Self-Assessment Report), Annual Governance Statement (if separate to Self-Assessment Report), Social Services Annual Report • External inspection and regulation reports (for last three years) • Medium Term Financial Plan (current) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Participation and Engagement Strategy • Strategic Equality Plan • Any S54 Reports prepared by the Chief Executive • Staff engagement and wellbeing plans and surveys • Performance Dashboard/Reporting (councils' own KPIs) • Citizen surveys/service user satisfaction surveys |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- Procurement strategy
- Commissioning strategy
- Workforce strategy
- Digital strategy
- IT strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Commercialisation strategy
- Transformation plan
- Learning and Development Strategy
- Cabinet forward work plan
- Scrutiny forward work plan
- Scrutiny Annual Report (and any scrutiny self-evaluations undertaken recently)
- Governance & Audit Committee Annual Report and any self-assessment evaluations recently undertaken
- Customer Compliments/Complaints Reports
- Standards Committee Annual Report
- The Constitution (including Codes of Conduct, Overview and Scrutiny Structure and Terms of reference and Financial Regulations)
- Target Operating Model
- Performance Management Framework
- Risk Management Strategy & Corporate Risk Registers
- Data Management Strategy
- Head of Internal Audit Annual Report
- Net Zero and/or Climate Change Strategy

Note: The Council will be informed during April to May what documents the Panel will wish to see during the assessment. Key documents will be the Corporate Plan, quarterly performance reports and the most recent self-assessment report.

Making practical arrangements as required by the Panel to enable them to effectively conduct the assessment.

- 4.19 The WLGA Improvement Team will work with the Panel and the Council to agree arrangements for the onsite assessment. This will include agreeing and supporting facilitation of the consultation duties, access to further digital information as may be required by the Panel and coordinating a timetable of interviews/workshops for the onsite assessment. This will commence during April 2025.
- 4.20 The guidance states that a single point of contact within the Council should be nominated to assist with getting the Council ready for the assessment and to be on-site during the assessment to provide administrative support, and this has been actioned in the form of the Graduate Officer - Transformation. *Note: The Panel will require some administrative support with practical arrangements, such as arranging meetings and focus groups, and facilities for the Panel to use if appropriate. Car parking spaces will need to be booked along with lunch for the Panel members.*
- 4.21 The WLGA has advised the Council to ask that all members of SLT and Cabinet make themselves available for the week of the assessment, diaries have been blocked out for this time. In addition, diary markers should be put in for the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee and all Chairs of Scrutiny (note that this can only be actioned once the AGM takes place in May 2025).

Stage 2 – Assessment

- 4.22 The assessment is scheduled to commence on Tuesday 7th October 2025 with the Panel being on site at Llys Cadwyn for four consecutive days. A number of rooms at Llys Cadwyn have been booked for the Panel.
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- 4.23 The assessment is likely to include the following key steps for the Panel, although it will be for the Panel to determine and agree its approach:

- A scoping meeting.
- Desk based research.
- Meetings with political leaders, senior officers; and discussion groups, including with staff and partners, local people, unions and representatives of local businesses.
- Analysis of findings and agreement to conclusions.
- Presentation of key findings.
- Preparation of the Panel's report to the Council setting out their conclusions.

4.24 When approaching the assessment, the Panel might use the activities common to the corporate governance of public bodies as set out in the statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to frame their assessment (refer to Appendix A):

- Corporate planning
- Financial planning
- Workforce planning (people)
- Procurement
- Assets
- Risk management
- Performance Management

4.25 The Panel will not seek to undertake deep dives or in-depth service reviews, although the Panel may draw on the findings of other peer reviews or in-depth service reviews in reaching their conclusions. The Panel will not be looking to audit / check the Council's own self-assessment, although the approach a Council takes to self-assessment may inform a Panel's view on the effectiveness of its governance arrangements.

Engagement & Consultation during the assessment

4.26 During the PPA, the Panel will be seeking the views of a variety of stakeholders both within and outside of the Council. Whilst a variety of mediums will be considered and the most appropriate utilised, the majority will be undertaken through a series of meetings, which may be 1-2-1, small groups or larger focus groups.

4.27 The Act requires that the Panel must consult the following about the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements:

- local people;
- other persons carrying on a business in the Council's area;
- the staff of the Council;
- and every trade union which is recognised by the Council.

4.28 Over and above the requirements within the Act, the Panel may choose to consult or involve others during the assessment. The WLGA has developed a list of potential interviewees, they state that the list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, other than the expectation of statutory consultees, as follows:

Internal Stakeholders

- Leader
- Chief Executive
- All Cabinet Members
- All members of Senior Leadership Team
- Chairs of Scrutiny Committees
- Chair of Governance and Audit Committee
- Chair of Democratic Services

External Stakeholders

- Union representatives
- Stakeholder focus groups
- Public Service Board focus group
- Regional Partnership Board focus group
- A leader and/or chief executive from a neighbouring authority

- Chair of Standards Committee
- Group Leaders
- Councillor focus group/s
- Heads of Service Focus Group/s
- Staff focus groups
- Director of Resources
- Section 151 Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Audit
- Head of Procurement
- Head of Human Resources
- Head of Property
- Head of Democratic Services
- Partner organisation Chief Executives (e.g., Health Board, neighbouring councils)
- Regulators (e.g. Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, Audit Wales) – it should be noted that no information will be shared with the panel that hasn't already been reported to the council.
- Business Leaders/Chair of Chamber
- Representatives from Town & Community Councils

Notes:

- *Between April and May 2025, the WLGA will meet with the Council and will compile a project timetable for the assessment. We'll know around July 2025 who the Panel will wish to speak to and this will be in the form of focus groups (either face to face or via Teams).*
- *No fresh consultations will be required on behalf of the Panel. The Panel will be looking to use existing information / data etc.*

Sources of information required in advance of the assessment

- 4.29 The Panel will utilise a range of internal and external sources to help them to develop a broad evidence base that will inform conclusions on the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements and recommendations on how to improve, please refer to Section 4.18 of this report for a full list of documents).

Stage 3 – Reporting the outcome of the assessment

- 4.30 Once the assessment is complete, the Panel Chair will discuss their conclusions and recommendations with the Leader and Chief Executive. A report will then be produced as soon as is reasonably practicable setting out:
- its conclusions as to the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements;
 - any actions the Panel recommends that the Council could take in order to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements.
- 4.31 The Council will be provided the opportunity to review the Panel's draft report to ensure factual accuracy. This review will be undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet Members.
- 4.32 The Council's response to the draft report will be sent to the WLGA who will then discuss with the Panel to consider the Council's comments and any proposed amendments. Following this, a final report will be provided to the Council, it will be translated by the WLGA.
- 4.33 The Panel will determine the format and content of the report, with a copy of the final version being issued to:
- The Council
 - The Auditor General for Wales
 - His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
 - The Welsh Ministers

- 4.34 The final report will not include the Council's response to any recommendations. The Council will be required to prepare a response, and will be required to state:
- the extent to which it accepts the conclusions in the report;
 - the extent to which the Council intends to follow any recommendations contained in the report; and
 - any actions it proposes to take to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements.
- 4.35 The Act requires the Council's draft response to be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee for review, challenge and approval. Should the Committee require amendments to the response then these need to be considered by the Council.
- 4.36 The Panel's final report along with the Council's response will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee and then Full Council, this will be consistent with the Council's approach to the annual self-assessment.
- 4.37 As soon as reasonably practicable after receiving the final report from the Panel, the Council will publish the report along with its response.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There are no equality, diversity or socio-economic implications aligned to this report.

6 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Welsh language implications aligned to this report.

7 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 There are no consultation and/or involvement implications aligned to this report.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The WLGA will pay for assessment, the only cost that the Council will incur will relate to refreshments for the Panel and a lunch on each day of the assessment.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The report aims to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duties in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

10 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 10.1 Ensuring that the Council has arrangements in place to delivery effective and efficient services helps the Council to deliver its well-being objectives.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the Council to make arrangements for an independent Panel, defined in the Act as a 'Panel Performance Assessment' (PPA), to assess the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance

requirements. A PPA must take place at least once within an electoral cycle. The PPA is required to assess the extent to which:

- The Council is exercising its functions effectively.
- The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
- The Council's governance is effective for securing the above.

11.2 The Act and supporting guidance make it clear that the Council will set the scope for the PPA. The scoping document attached at Appendix B has been completed and is based on a template provided by the WLGA. Section 6 of the scoping document identifies the areas for review during the assessment.

11.3 Focusing the assessment on the areas that we have identified will help ensure that we receive meaningful recommendations from Peers that will add value, hopefully provide independent assurance and continue the Council's journey in delivering effective and efficient services for our communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

15th April 2025

PREPARATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL
AND FRONTLINE SERVICES**

Author(s): Marc Crumbie & Megan Edwards

Background Papers

[The Council's Annual Self Assessment | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.](#)

Officers to contact: Paul Griffiths, Marc Crumbie & Megan Edwards

Appendix A: Question Hierarchy – Assessing the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements as set out within the Act.

The following is taken from Appendix A of the [WPGA methodology](#) for the Panel Performance Assessment. It is not intended to be an exhaustive or prescriptive list. The extent to which these issues are explored will be decided by the Panel, but they will form the overall basis of the Panel's assessment when reviewing the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements as set out within the Act.

Performance Requirement One: The extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively.

Guiding Principle: The council is self-aware and able to demonstrate that it is delivering its functions in accordance with the local, regional, and national context. Where improvement is required, suitable interventions have been identified promptly that should achieve the desired outcomes.

Panel Considerations

Leadership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do the leadership consider are the key issues from a political (executive and non-executive) and officer perspective? Are views consistent?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council provide effective place leadership?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a collective narrative of place?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the Public Services Board effective in ensuring that partners work collaboratively?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council benefit from effective local and regional partnership arrangements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do the community and voluntary sector describe their experience of working with the council?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a focus on systems leadership and influence – locally, regionally, and nationally?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do leaders demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of local communities? Do they show commitment to working with partners to reduce inequality and delivering services that are inclusive and accessible to a diverse community?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the council's leadership champion and direct action on climate change? How is the council working with partners and the community to reduce the impact of climate change?
Corporate and Service Planning:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council have a clear vision and priorities which are evidenced based and informed by the local context (place shaping), with a wider understanding of how this relates to the regional and national context? Is the plan current and realistic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the councils corporate planning process adequately meet the requirements of the WPGA, socio-economic and equalities duties?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the council's approach to climate change mitigation measures relating to its own operations? Are the local government 2030 net zero commitments in Net Zero Wales understood and owned across the council? How is the council contributing to the target of net zero by 2050 across its whole community?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the approach to adaptation and building local resilience to climate change?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have planned mitigation and adaptation actions referred to above been prioritised and costed, and aligned with the council's financial strategy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an integrated organisational cross-cutting approach to tackling issues such as climate change, poverty, regeneration/local economy, wellbeing, etc.?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the policy framework integrated to ensure that core duties and cross-cutting priorities are aligned?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a shared understanding and ownership of the council's vision and priorities across officer groups and councillors?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there clarity over what is required to achieve the council's objectives, including due consideration for the 5 ways of working, resourcing, and governance of performance? Are these requirements evident at service planning levels (golden thread)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council communicate effectively? How does the council use community capacity to shape and deliver priority outcomes? To what extent does the council listen, empower, co-produce, collaborate?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that under-represented groups are communicated and engaged with effectively? Do they have opportunities to be involved in decision making and the design and delivery of services?
<p>Risk & Assurance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any evidence to suggest that there are concerns over the delivery of statutory duties that would have a corporate impact? If so, is the council managing these risks?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there sufficient assurance from Internal Audit, Audit Wales, and other regulators on performance against statutory duties and achievement of objectives?
<p>Performance Management:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the outcome of the council's self-assessment of delivery against their functions?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is data used effectively to evaluate performance, identify risks, and drive improvement?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is scope to determine local service delivery standards, has the council determined expected standards, against which performance is measured using metrics and/or benchmarking?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a shared understanding of priorities for improvement across senior management, councillors, communities, workforce, and partners?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What progress is the council able to evidence from its reporting to date of its own emissions, in accordance with the Public Sector Net Zero reporting guide? Are any steps being taken to record, monitor and report on progress with emissions reduction in the wider community?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How satisfied with services are residents, including under-represented groups? How is this measured?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council collect, share and publish relevant EDI data and information about its communities? How is EDI information regularly updated and used to identify priorities for the local area?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence of an embedded and continuous approach to performance management, which identifies required interventions that are acted upon promptly?

Performance Requirement Two: The extent to which the council is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.

Guiding Principle: Resources are effectively aligned to assist the council in delivering its objectives and statutory functions and the council is able to demonstrate value for money is being achieved.

Panel Considerations

Corporate and Service Planning:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are corporate objectives and key statutory duties embedded within service plans?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do service plans include an evaluation of service performance (including audit and complaints/compliments) to identify areas of improvement are these aligned with corporate improvement objectives?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a clear commitment to prevention, with suitable resource deployed to preventing or resolving issues (root cause) over treating and managing issues? Has consideration been given to collaboration with other services/partners to provide an integrated solution?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is climate thinking integrated into medium and longer-term planning and are planned actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation sufficiently resourced? Are resources focused on the activities which will have the most significant impact?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council regularly consider the most appropriate delivery options for services (e.g. outsourcing, co-sourcing, commercial arms-length company, community transfer, etc.)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is failure demand identified and treated?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has capacity to deliver objectives been quantified is this evident at service planning levels?
Digital & Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council use digital tools and data to facilitate transformation and efficiency savings?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council have digital and data strategies that support corporate objectives and enable early identification and adapt to changing user needs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the council design its digital services around service user needs, and identify suitable metrics to continuously drive improvement?
Financial Planning:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the corporate planning cycle aligned to the statutory budget planning cycle and has the council allocated funding according to priorities and need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a medium-term financial plan/strategy which demonstrates how the council will sustain service delivery and manage future budget, demographic, demand, inflationary (workforce and other, and legislative pressures)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a shared understanding and ownership of the scale of the current and future financial challenges?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there sufficient reserves to provide assurance on management of risk and sustainability?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the council compliant with the principles Cipfa Financial Management Code, if there are areas for improvement is there evidence that action is being taken? (Refer to councils own self-assessment, internal audit review).

- Do councils make good use of the powers available to them to recover costs/generate funding? E.g. full cost recovery, commercial strategies, community asset transfer, grants, etc.
- How is the council measuring value for money? Is there a clear understanding of unit cost and are trends in over/underspends monitored within the context of VFM?

Workforce:

- Does the council's organisation design support best use of the workforce?
- Are capacity and skills aligned to priorities?
- Is the council proactive in managing recruitment pressures and skills gaps? (considerations such as employer brand, recruitment accessibility, apprenticeship and graduate routes, etc)
- Are staff retention issues highlighted and further explored to look at root cause and potential mitigation?
- Do workforce plans take account of current and future skills needs and gaps?
- To what extent do workforce profiles represent the community?
- Has the council embedded equalities and anti-racism practices into their HR policies and practices and does it regularly review the effectiveness of these arrangements in line with the diversity and inclusivity of the workforce?
- Do individuals understand their contribution to the corporate objectives?

Procurement:

- Has the council reviewed its supply chains and procurement strategy in the context of the WBFGA to support the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing for current and future generations?
- Does the council adopt a category management approach to procurement?
- Are contracts evaluated and awarded based on the interpretation of Welsh Governments Wales Procurement Policy Statement?
- Does the council's procurement strategy maximise the councils spending capacity for community benefit and to support low carbon economic growth? Is there awareness of the WLGA procurement toolkit, which supports councils with embedding decarbonisation and sustainability into procurement at all levels.
- Does the council routinely publish and promote local service/goods provision gaps to support foundational economy?
- Are there suitable evaluation mechanisms in place to measure impact and continuously refine approaches?

Risk & Assurance:

- Is risk management embedded in the council? Does risk awareness and management inform decision-making?
- Is there evidence of integrated identification and responding to corporate risks?
- Is there a shared understanding of the most significant corporate risks (threats and opportunities)?
- Is there a collective view of the council's risk appetite that is communicated and understood?
- Is there evidence of a robust assurance framework, including data/reporting from key support functions such as finance, risk management, business continuity, HR, asset management, procurement, climate change, IT, health and safety, etc.?
- Is innovation encouraged and supported within the context of a mature approach to risk management?

Assets:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a strategic asset management policy, strategy and plan, which is aligned to corporate objectives and priorities, corporately owned and led, which identifies the objectives and actions that are required of many different services across the council?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the operation and management of the councils property portfolio known and regularly reviewed through quality data on inventory, condition surveys, regulatory compliance, voids, joint ventures, community transfers, etc.?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are assets being managed to support other agenda such as climate change, housing shortages (health and wellbeing) financial resilience, place shaping, social value and regeneration?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council operate a corporate landlord model, and does it deliver efficiencies and support the delivery of corporate outcomes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council have sufficient resources to maintain and manage the property portfolio to the expected levels? If not, is there a plan to increase resource, outsource or rationalise the portfolio to a manageable level?

Performance Requirement Three: The extent to which the council has effective governance in place for securing performance requirements one and two.

Guiding Principle: There are clear and robust governance arrangements, which encourages an open and transparent culture that welcomes scrutiny and constructive challenge.

Panel Considerations

Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the Annual Governance Statement cover the key issues – and is it reflective / self-critical? When and how are the governance essentials reviewed? e.g., Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an effective Internal Audit function (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards self-assessment and external assessment)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an effective Governance & Audit committee?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is scrutiny welcomed and supported – both formal O&S (if applicable) and scrutiny more generally? Do all members have the opportunity to inform and influence?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence that the governance arrangements of the council provide sufficient assurance and constructive challenge on key priorities and performance challenges, to enable early intervention where necessary?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does scrutiny add value through the provision of a broader perspective to influence policy, monitor and challenge performance, and review decisions to assess effectiveness on delivering intended outcomes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do statutory officers have sufficient authority and support to undertake their duties? Do statutory officers work together and feel listened to?
Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the council well led by councillors and officers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an effective top-team?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the roles of members and officers clear? Are there good officer-member and member-member relationships?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key governance issues from a political and officer perspective? E.g., clarity, transparency, speed of decision making, accountability. To what extent are they structural or cultural / behavioural?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are councillors and officers supported in their leadership roles – including learning and development?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do political group leaders take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do political and managerial leaders at all levels demonstrate leadership and commitment to reducing inequality and challenging discrimination within the councils?
<p>Organisational culture:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a positive organisational culture – e.g. respect, transparency, co-operation, challenge, and a commitment to continuous improvement– and how is this reflected in behaviours and practice?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do protected groups of staff say about the culture of the organisation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there whistleblowing procedures in place? Do staff have confidence in this procedure?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are staff engaged with and listened to? Is there strong internal communications?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there staff led networks or other safe spaces for staff from protected groups to discuss equality issues? Do staff networks feel able to influence the organisation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is overall organisational health? What is the direction of travel of key indicators? e.g., staff satisfaction / morale, sickness absence, senior management stability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there effective governance structures and processes to oversee and monitor the delivery of equality objectives and strategies?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are managers trained and equipped to manage staff fairly and deal with any Equality, Diversity and Inclusion related issues?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What known equality gaps exist within the organisation (e.g. pay gaps) and to what extent are mitigation plans in place?
<p>Financial Governance:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there effective budget monitoring arrangements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there sufficient arrangements in place to oversee capital and treasury management arrangements?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are financial plans backed by business cases and delivery plans which identify the steps needed to achieve the desired outcomes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the arrangements for managing and monitoring delivery sufficient?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the organisation act to rectify matters when actuals diverge from budgets?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there are commercial activities, is there sufficient understanding of the financial risks and evidence of effective governance and scrutiny? Are risks managed within the risk appetite?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council work positively with its Governance and Audit Committee and its internal and external auditors to ensure effective financial controls are in place and to address issues raised?
<p>Capacity to Improve:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence of successful transformational change? Does the councils have a current transformation plan aligned to corporate and financial strategies?

- | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Does the council's approach to self-assessment drive interventions and continuous improvement? |
| • How does the council adapt and learn? Is the council agile and able to pivot? Is innovation encouraged and supported? |
| • What will the council look like in the future? |
| • How is change and transformation led and managed? |
| • What are the key areas for development / capacity for improvement challenges? |
| • Are plans realistic (sufficient resource, achievable, timely, etc)? |

APPENDIX B – PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SCOPING DOCUMENT



Panel Performance Assessment

Scoping Document

2025/26

This document outlines the agreed parameters of the Panel Performance Assessment of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, taking place between 7th October 2025 and 10th October 2025. Facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association, these arrangements comply with the Council's duty to arrange a panel performance assessment under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

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AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the Council to make arrangements for an independent Panel, defined in the Act as a 'Panel Performance Assessment' (PPA), to assess the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements. A PPA must take place at least once within an electoral cycle. The PPA is required to assess the extent to which:
- The Council is exercising its functions effectively.
 - The Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
 - The Council's governance is effective for securing the above.
- 1.2 In addition to the Panel reviewing the above requirements, the Act and supporting guidance make it clear that the Council will set the scope for the PPA – i.e. identify additional areas for review. This scoping document has been completed and is based on a template provided by the WLGA. Section 6 of this scoping document identifies the areas for review during the assessment. This list of areas has been developed following discussions with the Council's Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet.
- 1.3 Focusing the assessment on the areas that we have identified will help ensure that we receive meaningful recommendations from Peers that will add value, hopefully provide independent assurance and continue the Council's journey in delivering effective and efficient services for our communities.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The Council considers itself to be an ambitious and self-evaluating organisation that strives to deliver effective and efficient services so that the best possible outcomes can be delivered for our communities. The purpose of this document is to:
- Provide the Panel with an overview of our leadership team, the communities that we serve and our aspirations for the future.
 - Give context for the Panel, serving as a useful introduction to the Council and the local area, and outlining the Council's vision and well-being objectives.
 - Identify the areas that should form the scope of the Panel Performance Assessment.
 - The aim will be to seek assurance and to embrace any recommendations that the Panel propose.

3. LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 The range of services delivered by the Council is diverse in nature and complexity - from maintaining green spaces, collecting recycling and refuse, delivering meals on wheels, educating our young people, and caring for those that require support to remain independent. The terrain of the county borough is equally diverse. Services are delivered within the community and from a significant number of locations, ranging from offices, depots, and frontline buildings. Strong and clear leadership is key to delivering our services.

Political and Organisational Leadership

- 3.2 The Council comprises of 75 Members / Councillors who are elected to represent the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf for a 5-year term. At the Local Government Elections on the 5th May 2022 the [Council political makeup](#) established a Labour majority. Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE is the appointed Leader of the Council. The second largest political Group is Plaid Cymru and Councillor Karen Morgan is the appointed Leader of the Opposition.

- 3.3 The political leadership of the Council is conducted through the Executive Leader and Cabinet model. Under the Leaders Scheme of Delegation, the Cabinet comprises of 8 elected Members, which includes the Leader and Deputy Leader. Further details of the Cabinet, the Leaders Scheme of Delegation including portfolio responsibility is available on the Council's [website](#).
- 3.4 The [Constitution](#) of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- 3.5 The purpose of the Constitution is to:
1. provide clear leadership to the community it serves, in active partnership with citizens, local businesses, voluntary and community organisations, and other agencies, in order to improve the quality of life of all those who live in, work in, or visit Rhondda Cynon Taf;
 2. support the active involvement of local citizens in the process of democratic decision making;
 3. help all Councillors to represent their constituents more effectively;
 4. enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively;
 5. ensure that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and that the reasons for decisions are clearly explained;
 6. create a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to public account;
 7. ensure that no one will review or scrutinise a decision in which they were directly involved; and
 8. improve the delivery of services to the community, which are procured or provided by the Council, or by its strategic partners.
- 3.6 The Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) consists of the Chief Executive of the Council and other Senior Officers who are responsible for the organisational leadership and management of the Council on a day-to-day basis. Mr Paul Mee is the Council's Chief Executive and Mr Barrie Davies is the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. A link to the Council's Senior Leadership can be found [here](#). Some of the Senior Leadership Team have statutory responsibilities.

Accountability

- 3.7 All public authorities have a responsibility to be open and transparent and the Council's scrutiny arrangement helps to discharge this responsibility. Accountability is fundamental to delivering services in the public sector.
- 3.8 The purpose of scrutiny is to improve the lives of local people through improved public services. It is important that the work of Scrutiny adds value and makes a difference to the Communities it serves. Whilst a number of potential roles exist for Overview & Scrutiny Committees its main functions can be summarised as:
- 'Holding the Executive to Account' - This includes the review of Executive decisions, the monitoring of performance in respect of the implementation of Council policies and service delivery, and monitoring the strategic direction of the Authority to ensure that it meets the needs of the local community;
 - 'Policy Review' - Through acting as a consultee on policy proposals or conducting detailed investigations into policy areas, the Committees may arrive at policy recommendations to Cabinet or Council.

3.9 The Council's scrutiny arrangements comprise of:

- Overriding Overview and Scrutiny Committee (which includes Call In consideration)
 - Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Committee
 - Community Services (including Crime and Disorder)
 - Education & Inclusion

3.10 A link to the structure and terms of reference for each committee can be found [here](#).

3.11 Scrutiny Committees are not decision making bodies, their role relates to scrutiny and review of policy, and raising awareness of important issues and decisions that the Authority will make. The overview and scrutiny process provides an opportunity for Councillors and, in some cases, external representatives, to examine various functions of the Council, to ask questions about how decisions have been made and to consider whether service improvements can be put in place. It provides an opportunity for Councillors to champion issues of public concern and to participate in the development of new policies. It facilitates debate about priorities, budget, the strategy of the Council and its vision for the Borough. It also provides opportunities for pre-scrutiny of decisions and also arrangements for decisions to be 'Called In'.

3.12 In addition to the four Scrutiny Committees the Council has a number of other committees in place that help to hold decision makers to account.

3.13 Details of all committee meetings that take place are provided on the Council's [website](#).

4. OVERVIEW OF OUR AREA AND COMMUNITIES

4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf is situated within the South Wales valleys covering 424 square kilometres, stretching from the Beacon Beacons National Park in the north to the Capital City of Cardiff in the south. The residential area of RCT was primarily developed in response to the discovery and mining of Welsh coal and porcelain production in the 19th century, which has marked the area with a rich industrial, social, and cultural heritage.

4.2 The Council is the third largest Local Authority in Wales, with an estimated population of 241,178 residents (StatsWales 2023) and 103,300 Households (Census 2021) who make up diverse communities with different needs and aspirations. The age demographics of the area include a median age of 41 years (Census 2021), and a growing ageing population, with 19.9% of residents aged 65 and over (StatsWales 2023). The Council has the second largest population of children aged 0-15 across all local authorities in Wales (StatsWales 2023).

4.3 The communities are rich in culture and identity, but the area does have some of the most deprived demographics in Wales. In 2019, RCT had a relatively high deprivation rate of 32% and had the second highest number of young children living in these circumstances when compared with other local authorities (Welsh Government). This contributes to the continued high demand and increasing complexity for Children's Services. This is expected to continue in the current context as vulnerable families experience the long-term impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

4.4 The Council works in partnership with the Cardiff Capital Region to support more businesses to develop, modernise, be sustainable, and grow. The borough is home to 6,835 active businesses and 169 social enterprises which play a vital role in supporting our local economy (ONS 2023). The Council has a strong track record of supporting development and business

growth including through the successful [delivery of regeneration strategies and placemaking plans](#) and administering [grant funding](#). RCT has a high business birth rate (11.8 compared to 10.3 in Wales), however the business rate of closure has also increased in recent years to above the Wales average.

4.5 Across RCT there is a wide range of community facilities and infrastructure for our residents to use and enjoy, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.



4.6 The Council has a strong track record of capital investment, and this is set to continue into the future – the aim is to invest in community facilities to provide current and future generations with the best possible environments for our citizens to visit, learn in and be proud of. This has included the delivery of [significant investment in our school buildings](#) as part of the Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, development of extra care facilities, as well [investment in road schemes](#), an ongoing programme of maintenance for our structures and investment in flood alleviation works to combat the growing impact of adverse weather conditions on local communities.

4.7 The Council has a rich history of heritage and culture, and this is something that forms the key focus of our tourism offer. The Council operates the Welsh Coal mining experience at the Heritage Park and The National Lido of Wales and is a partner in the Valleys Regional Park, with gateway sites at Dare Valley Country Park and Ynysangharad Park. In addition, local attractions including Zip World and the Royal Mint are closely engaged in the RCT Tourism Strategy.

4.8 The residents of RCT have access to several means of public transport including 5 bus stations, 51 bus routes, and several rail lines. However, the topography of the area can make travel across the County borough challenging. Our public transport network will strengthen in coming years following the completion of the South Wales Metro which aims to electrify and transform the Core Valley Lines.

Our Residents

4.9 RCT residents are on average in poorer health than across Wales, possibly related to the industrial past of the area. 76% of all residents describe their health as “very good” or “good”, 15.7% as “fair”, and 8.3% as “bad” or “very bad” (Census 2021). In 2021, life expectancy in the Council area was 77.0 years for males and 80.5 years for females, but healthy life expectancy only 57.1 and 60.7 years respectively, below the Welsh average. According to

the Census 2021, Rhondda Cynon Taf is in the top 10% of local authority areas across England and Wales with the highest proportions of people whose health was bad or very bad, were disabled and limited a lot, or provided at least 20 hours of unpaid care (ONS).

- 4.10 Data suggests that geographic disparities in health, disability and unpaid care may also be connected to the legacy of industry in the area. Half of the top 10 local authority areas in England and Wales with the greatest need in terms of general health, disability, and the need to provide unpaid care were in the south of Wales, which includes Rhondda Cynon Taf. The predicted number of people aged 65+ with dementia is expected to rise by over 56% in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 3,315 in 2020 to 5,192 by 2040. These issues all contribute to significant pressure on provision of social care. The Council has successfully gained funding for a [5 year Health Determinants Research Collaboration](#) which aims to tackle the wider determinants of health and reduce health inequalities.
- 4.11 In the 2021 Census, 12.4% of RCT residents reported being able to speak Welsh. Although below the Wales average (17.8%), RCT was one of the few authorities to show an increase in Welsh speakers since the previous Census, reflecting the strong commitment to the [Welsh language promotion strategy](#) and [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan](#) in RCT.
- 4.12 Across the area there is a clear disparity in skills and education attainment levels. While 26.7% of our residents have a degree or equivalent Level 4 qualification, 24.4% of our population have no qualifications (Census 2021). At 8.2%, the proportion of the working age population with no qualification is also higher than the Welsh and UK average (ONS 2023). However, we acknowledge and prioritise this as an area for improvement as outlined in our [2024-2030 Corporate Plan](#).
- 4.13 62.1% of our population are of working age with 72.7% of residents classified as economically active and 27.3% as economically inactive, which is forecasted to decrease after 2028 (ONS 2024). The inactive are a diverse group – comprising early retired, students, and sick or disabled individuals. However, at 77.6% and 67.9% both male and female participation rates in RCT are lower than in Wales and the UK generally, although this has improved over recent years (ONS 2024).
- 4.14 Across the County Borough 66.2% of our employed workforce is in full-time employment which exceeds the Welsh average (ONS 2022). This can partly be attributed to the industrial mix of the local area and specifically the manufacturing industry, which accounts for 13.8% of all jobs (ONS 2022). However, the public sector is by far the largest employer in our area with 33.7% of service industry jobs in public administration, health, and education (ONS 2022).
- 4.15 [School attendance and engagement](#) was significantly impacted by the covid pandemic, however the previous 2 academic years have seen growth in attendance across nearly all demographics although attendance does remain below pre-pandemic levels. High levels of exclusions remain a concern, in line with the picture across Wales. A strong focus on these areas is reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 4.16 As in the rest of Wales, there has been a significant increase in children with Additional Learning Needs and capacity in learner support classes is being increased as well as building a new special school to cater for those with the most complex needs.

Climate Change RCT

- 4.17 The Council's [Climate Change Strategy](#) agreed in June 2022, contained a series of actions which were developed and progressed to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change and to take steps that will reduce our Carbon Footprint and enable the Council to meet its ambitious targets by 2030, i.e.:
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a Carbon Neutral Council;
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough will be as close to Carbon Neutral as possible;
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector.
- 4.18 Since June 2022, a number of progress reports on climate and environment related projects have been presented to Cabinet, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and to Scrutiny Committees in accordance with agreed work programmes. Cabinet also agreed that the monitoring of the Climate Change Strategy is included in the Council's quarterly performance reports, with updates reported during 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 4.19 A summary of progress in Q4 2023/24 can be viewed by clicking [here](#). This also contains the items considered by the Climate Change Sub Committee at its meeting on 7 March 2024.
- 4.20 In April 2024, [Council](#) agreed its new [Corporate Plan for 2024-30](#) which further embeds Climate Change into the work of the Council through its four new Well-being Objectives. To view current progress against the Nature and the Environment Well-being Objective please view the latest Quarterly Council Performance Report available [here](#).

5. VISION FOR THE AREA, OUR LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OUR FINANCES

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-being Plan 2023-2028

- 5.1 The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) requires the formation of a statutory partnership, a Public Services Board, consisting of statutory and invited partners. As the footprint of one of the statutory partners, the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board](#), covers RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend CBCs. In 2023, the former Cwm Taf and Bridgend PSBs merged with other public and third sector partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area to form the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board](#) (PSB). In May 2023, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB published Well-being objectives for the areas of RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend in the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-being Plan 2023-28](#), [following a Well-being Assessment of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg areas conducted in 2022](#).

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2030 – 'Working with our Communities'

- 5.2 The Council's [Corporate Plan 2024-30 'Working with our Communities'](#) sets out our Well-being Objectives and supports the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-being Plan 2023-28.
- 5.3 The Corporate Plan provides the direction of travel for the Council and in doing so directs our resources to ensure they are effectively and efficiently utilised to meet the needs and demands of our communities; it also identifies the outcomes our communities can expect to see.
- 5.4 The Council's Corporate plan includes a vision for the local area, the purpose of the plan along with the Well-being Objectives for 2024/30. They are summarised as follows:
- **The Vision**
'All people, communities, and businesses can grow and live in a healthy, green, safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future'

- **The Council's Purpose** and the reason exists is:
'To provide community leadership and deliver high quality public services, working alongside residents, communities and our partners so that people, businesses, and the environment can thrive and prosper'.
- The Corporate Plan provides a structure to show how the Council will deliver the Vision and Purpose by setting four Well-being objectives, as required under the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). The Well-being Objectives aim to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Rhondda Cynon Taf and contribute to the 7 National Well-being Goals. The Well-being Objectives are as follows:
 - People & Communities: Supporting and Empowering RCT Residents and Communities to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
 - Work & Business: Helping to Strengthen and Grow RCT's Economy
 - Nature & the Environment: A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature
 - Culture, Heritage and Welsh language: Recognising and Celebrating RCT's past, present and future.

5.5 The Corporate Plan is underpinned with Priority Action Plans for each of the Well-being Objectives, which are updated annually and agreed by Cabinet at the beginning of the financial year. Where relevant, actions, measures and targets contained within the Service Delivery Plans will form part of the annual priority plans to deliver one of the Council's four Well-being Objectives/Priorities

5.6 Actions, milestones and measures identified are subject to scrutiny and audit as part of the Council's regular performance reporting to demonstrate that the Council is meeting its statutory requirements.

Strategic Risk Register & Performance Management Framework

5.7 The Strategic Risk Register supports the delivery of the Council's Well-being Objectives, taking account of current and potential risks. The format of the Strategic Risk Register clearly sets out the controls and actions that will help to manage the strategic risks along with timescales for delivery. An overall summary from each Risk Lead Officer on the position of their designated Strategic Risk(s) is included.

5.8 The Council has a mature Performance Management Framework which outlines in detail the processes in place for supporting delivery of our Vision and Wellbeing Objectives. This includes Annual Self Evaluation, Delivery Planning, Chief Executive Challenge and Individual Performance Reviews.

Managing our finances

5.9 The Council's Revenue Budget for the 2024/25 financial year and Three-Year Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27 were approved by full [Council on 6th March 2024](#) in line with the Cabinet's proposals and recommendations.

5.10 The revenue budget setting process for 2024/25 was once again undertaken within the context of significant financial pressures and increasing demand for services as a result of the on-going UK wide cost-of-living crisis and legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic. Against this position, on the 27th February 2024 the Minister for Finance and Local Government (Rebecca Evans MS) announced revenue funding levels for local authorities in Wales, an increase of

3.0% for Rhondda Cynon Taf, which was below the average all Wales increase of 3.3%, with settlement levels ranging from 2.3% to 5.0%.

5.11 Within this challenging environment, the Council's medium term financial planning arrangements enabled the formulation of robust spending requirements and forecasted funding well in advance of March 2024, and informed the delivery of a programme of work to propose, publicly consult on and agree a strategy to address the second largest budget gap the Council faced of over £36M, and followed on from successfully addressing the largest budget gap of £38m in the previous year.

5.12 The outcome was the construction of a balanced budget for 2024/25, that did not compromise our financial stability and aimed to protect and develop our key services. More specifically, the revenue budget:

- took account of the principles being developed as part of the Council's new Corporate Plan 2024 – 2030 'Working With Our Communities';
- provided for pay and non-pay inflation and the forecasted impact of additional burdens and demand led pressures on Council services;
- prioritised funding to cover additional costs in our schools together with the requirement for schools to deliver an efficiency saving target; and
- set a Council Tax increase of 4.99%, one of the lowest increases across Wales.

5.13 These measures resulted in a remaining budget gap of £7.5m, that was balanced through the Council's on-going prudent management of reserves.

5.14 Alongside setting the revenue budget, the Council also agreed a new 3-year Capital Programme of £165.630m to enable the continued development of key services, including additional funding of £19.3m targeted to support the aspirations and priorities of the new Corporate Plan. The updated Capital Programme, supported by Council resources and a proactive approach to securing funding from a range of external organisations, provides investment in areas such as:

- Regeneration – an on-going and long-term funding commitment to the economic regeneration of the County Borough, investing in support for local businesses, town centre regeneration and the re-development of key sites and transport infrastructure, that will enable further business development and employment growth;
- Housing – a programme of targeted work to support bringing empty homes back into use; creating more affordable housing; helping to ensure people can live as independently as possible via, for example, disabled facilities grant support; and grants that help to make homes more energy efficient, for example, the Heating Grant and Solar Panel Grant;
- Social care – on-going investment in Children's Services facilities and Adult Services establishments, including the extra-care programme;
- Highways, roads and flood alleviation – through on-going maintenance and investment in highways structures, that will help to reduce our day-to-day maintenance and running costs, and drainage infrastructure;
- Parks, green spaces and play areas;
- Schools – through progressing the delivery of an ambitious programme to create new schools and further improve the condition of existing schools; and
- Solar projects and electric vehicle charging provision as part of supporting the Council's climate change ambitions.

5.15 Full details can be found within the Council's [budget book 2024/25](#).

Monitoring and reporting

- 5.16 [Quarterly updates](#) in respect of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective are reported.

6. AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This section of the scoping document summarises the outcome of the most recent [annual self-assessment](#) and concludes by highlighting areas that the Council proposes the Panel focus on during the assessment.

- 6.2 To provide clarity when the annual self-assessment for 2023/24 was reported, an important distinction was noted in respect of the difference between the annual self-assessment process and the way in which the strategic direction of the Council is set:

- The Council's Corporate Plan sets the strategic direction of the Council and includes the well-being objectives – these set the Council's ambitions for change and include actions and measures to deliver.
- The review of the 'performance requirements' focused on assessing and identifying improvements in respect of how the Council discharges its duties for example, the strength of its corporate arrangements, and in doing so will support the effective and efficient delivery of the Corporate Plan well-being objectives.

- 6.3 Whilst the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 recommends the use of the core set of activities as the framework for the self-assessment, the Council went beyond these, as follows:

- Strategic planning and Approach*
- Governance and Scrutiny
- Finance, Performance and Risk Management*
- Human Resources/Workforce Planning*
- Asset Management*
- ICT and Digital
- Procurement and Commissioning*
- Partnerships
- Involvement, Engagement and Customer Feedback
- Welsh Language
- Equalities and Socio-economic Duty
- Regulators' Feedback
- Net Zero
- Corporate Safeguarding

Note: the core activities as defined by the WFG have been marked with an asterisk for clarity, additional were areas included with the aim of producing a more detailed assessment.

- 6.4 The annual self-assessment 2023/24 concluded:

The Council's arrangements have provided the basis to maintain the organisations' financial stability and resilience, during a period of significant financial pressures and constrained funding, through robust planning, prioritisation and management of scarce resources. This position was underpinned by sound scrutiny and decision-making processes and well-established self-assessment arrangements, and supported Corporate Plan priority areas,

wider service delivery and improved outcomes for service users. A small number of areas for improvement have been identified to further strengthen existing processes.

Based on the self-assessment process the Council has demonstrated that it has exercised its functions effectively; used its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and that governance arrangements were effective for securing the above.

6.5 14 areas for improvement were identified. The areas for improvement have been cross referenced to the 'performance requirements' of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act and the 'core activities' as listed within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. They have been summarised in the following Table:

Performance Requirements	Core Activity	Area for Improvement
How we exercise our functions effectively.	Strategic Planning and Approach	We need to use the new Corporate Plan 2024/30 as a springboard for further innovation and delivery of more targeted and efficient services. This means continuing to consider all options and opportunities, researching what others are doing and deliver on-going service transformation.
	Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management	
Using our resources more economically, efficiently, and effectively	Strategic Planning and Approach	We need to build further capacity to support transformational change, particularly in frontline service areas experiencing sustained high levels of demand.
	Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management	
	Strategic Planning and Approach	We need to reflect on how our services work together where similar roles are discharged and consider structural changes to our workforce where required. This will help us to deliver better outcomes and be more effective and efficient.
	Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management	
	Strategic Planning and Approach	We need to increase the use of data and turn this into meaningful information, whether this is how we compare with others or to inform how services could be changed (i.e. learn from others) to deliver services more effectively and efficiently. This will also support on-going effective scrutiny.
	Governance & Scrutiny	
	Human Resources/Workforce Planning	
We need to build on the progress made to date to implement the iTrent system (i.e. the integrated Payroll and HR System). This will allow for a wider suite of data to be accessed and reviewed to measure compliance by our managers, for example, personal development reviews and training take-up.		

Performance Requirements	Core Activity	Area for Improvement
		We need to continue to develop our succession planning arrangements to support medium to long term service planning and resilience.
	Asset Management	We need to ensure that we have the right assets in the right place and not be limited by where our assets currently are. The information we hold and refresh on the needs and demands of our residents, now and in the future, will inform this process.
		For all of our built assets, we need to ensure they are utilised fully and are run efficiently, supported by our energy consumption monitoring arrangements.
	ICT and Digital Service	We need to continue to change at pace and explore technology such as Artificial Intelligence to support on-going effective and efficient service delivery that meets the needs of our customers / service users. We also need to continue to explore what others are doing and where relevant, learn from them.
		We need to review our website and ensure that information that is regularly requested is easy to find and accurate, this can help to improve the customer experience and reduce the number of calls received by our call centre allowing them to focus on the most important calls. This will also allow our residents to receive the best possible service by 'going online'.
	Procurement and Commissioning	We need to rollout our carbon toolkit across key contracts with a view to moving from Tier 1 to Tier 2 reporting to Welsh Government.
Improved governance	Governance & Scrutiny	Through our reporting arrangements we need to better demonstrate the impact that we are having on our communities.
	Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management	
	Involvement and Engagement	
	Procurement and Commissioning	We need to develop our social value reporting to not only show the outputs, but to also show the impact that these are having on individuals and our communities.

Areas of focus for the Panel

6.6 In addition to reviewing the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements, it is recommended that the scope of the Panel Performance Assessment focuses on the following areas.

Demonstrating impact and outcomes for our communities.

We know there is a need to continue to improve how the Council's arrangements demonstrate the impact and outcomes that services have on communities now and into the future. Therefore, the Panel is requested to review this area and form a view on the extent that the arrangements meet these requirements.

Building community resilience.

A key principle underpinning the Council's Corporate Plan 2024/2030 relates to building community resilience and empowering more residents to live independent lives and in doing so, enable the Council to support better outcomes for those most in need of support. Therefore, the Panel is requested to form a view on:

The extent to which the Council's work is facilitating communities to work collaboratively, (residents, community and public sector organisations) to build resilience and enable residents to live independent lives now and over the long-term.

- How clear is our ambition to build resilience? Is it understood throughout the Council? Is our ambition shared by our communities and how do we know?
- How effective are the processes to help communities to become more resilient – what evidence is available e.g. outcome for service users, social value, financial impact for the Council and partners?

6.7 This scope has been reviewed and approved, and we look forward to working with the WLGA and the Panel to agreeing the Terms of Reference.