

APPENDIX B – THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO THE PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The Council welcomes the report from the Panel and would like to formally thank all members of the Panel for their time when undertaking the Assessment. We accept the conclusions in the report and intend to follow the three areas for improvement / recommendations contained therein.

The Panel Report confirmed that we are exercising our functions against the performance duties within the Local Government and Elections Act 2021, this external and objective judgement being consistent with the conclusions drawn by the Council as part of our own [annual self-assessment](#) arrangements.

The Panel Report also provides a high level of assurance that the arrangements in place across the Council are strong and effective, with a Team RCT approach that has a track record of delivery, an ethos of continuous improvement and is focussed on maintaining the wellbeing of its communities. This position is reflected within the overall conclusion of the Panel Report that states:

“The panel concluded that Rhondda Cynon Taf is a good, well run and ambitious Council, focused on improving the lives of its citizens”

Alongside the above position, we recognise there is further work to do to better understand the impact and outcomes of our work, moving from a service-focused approach to one which is person-centred, and which will help to deliver our ambition to strengthen communities’ resilience. The areas for improvement / recommendations that have been identified within the Report will help us shape our approach.

Table 1 provides a summary of the areas for improvement / recommendations along with the Council’s response.

TABLE 1 – THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO THE AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT / RECOMMENDATIONS

Areas for improvement / recommendations	Response
<p>Resources</p> <p>The Council is giving careful consideration to the way it will implement the changes necessary to deliver its ambitions for transformation, including the capacity it will need to deliver the changes.</p> <p>The Council is encouraged to take the time needed to ground its approach in evidence and to give early consideration to the role that workforce, digital, data and communications will need to play to enable the delivery of the changes that it wants to achieve</p>	<p>The Council has put in place an updated Transformation Plan that has been informed by the learning and experiences gained from service transformation delivered over recent years alongside the importance of maintaining disciplined and robust financial management and service planning arrangements. This proven approach has provided a sound foundation in updating the Transformation Plan that will enable the Council to continue to deliver its Corporate Plan well-being objectives, transform services and, at the same time, live within its means.</p> <p>The programme of work will focus on embedding, across all Council Services, the principles underpinning the four key pillars set out in the Transformation Plan (Community Resilience; Prevention; Customer / Resident Experience; and Efficient, Effective and Optimised Use of Resources). This will be progressed through integrating the Transformation Plan principles into the Council’s Performance Management Framework and associated service planning, delivery and self-assessment processes, ensuring on-going review and prioritisation is afforded to these areas on an organisation wide basis. The work will be accompanied by support and training across the workforce to raise awareness and understanding and providing opportunity for feedback as part of seeking continuous improvement.</p> <p>Alongside, there will be a continued focus on reviewing, updating and delivering key strategies, including Digital and Workforce; on-going development of arrangements to make better use of data to create actionable intelligence; and further strengthening our approach to involvement with residents, community groups and partner organisations. These arrangements will be key to informing and supporting the delivery of service transformation, in line with the changing needs of our communities, and increasing their resilience.</p> <p>We will also use our well-developed reporting arrangements, for example, quarterly Performance Reports and annual self-assessment, to report the impact of our work.</p>

Areas for improvement / recommendations	Response
<p>Demonstrating Impact and Outcomes for our Communities</p> <p>The Council is building on its existing strong performance framework to integrate its work on engagement and community resilience in measuring outcome and impact.</p> <p>The Council understands it needs to adopt a test and learn approach to the delivery of the change it wants to make and this needs to be done jointly with partners.</p> <p>The Council is encouraged in taking forward this process to develop the skills and capacities to enable it to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with communities and partners to design their impact and outcome measures at community and County Borough levels. • Measure how impact and outcomes vary across demographics and geography. • To evaluate the extent to which existing engagement approaches provide for and encourage participation and involvement. 	<p>The Council has, over the past year, developed its approach to more clearly set out the outcomes and impact its work is having, and is incorporating this information into its performance reporting arrangements that are published, presented to Cabinet and scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>This on-going programme of work will be extended to integrate with the plans and activities being progressed with communities and partners around ‘Building Community Resilience’, as set out below. This collective work will include: further developing our understanding of community needs; devising and testing impact and outcomes measures; and using shared learning to support skills and capacity development within the Council, partners and across our communities.</p> <p>In parallel, as part of supporting the delivery of the Council’s Involvement Strategy 2025 – 2030, we will evaluate engagement activity and monitor the diversity of our engagement to ensure we are hearing a range of voices from different backgrounds and that those who are digitally excluded have opportunities to have their say.</p>

Areas for improvement / recommendations	Response
<p>Building Community Resilience</p> <p>The Council recognises that it needs to take sufficient time to develop a shared understanding of what it is seeking to achieve.</p> <p>Some steps have been taken to get the Council ready for this change which includes a realignment of the senior team.</p> <p>The Council is encouraged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest time in learning from practice elsewhere and involve its communities and partners in developing a shared understanding of community resilience • Understand and establish the key enabling resources, such as data, workforce, communication and engagement method, digital systems, to support the change programme. • Identify opportunities to test, learn and iterate the approach prior to scaling up. • Take a whole Council approach to the change, ensuring that each part of the Council understands how it needs to adapt to bring about the cultural change that is sought 	<p>The Council fully recognises the need to have a shared understanding with our communities and partners of “community resilience” and how it can be defined. Work to identify existing research and good practice in this regard has been commenced by the HDRC and will inform our approaches with communities going forward. The involvement of the community and voluntary sectors in exploring this important foundational work has commenced through constructive dialogue with members of Interlink RCT and further work is planned to ensure common language and understanding amongst all partners.</p> <p>The ambition of the Council to work in a more collaborative and empowering way with communities is described clearly in our Corporate Plan 2024-2030 and there are examples of emerging good practice by services that already underpin our work with communities in this area. It is accepted that there is more work required to ensure a whole Council approach that effects cultural change for both the Council, our communities and our partners, with the transformation pillars being identified and work will be progressed on developing implementation plans. As part of this work, we will articulate our ‘Council Commitment’ to establishing and supporting a new relationship with the community and voluntary sector that builds on a number of work streams and priorities such as improving shared outcomes linked to early intervention and prevention activities, our place based approach to community development, a review of our approach to commissioning community services and the Business in the Community Pride in Place Programme. The Council will ensure that community representatives shape this ‘Council Commitment’ document and are part of our work streams, recognising their role as partners in co-developing and embedding our approach to improving community resilience.</p>