**Overall Progress of the 7 Corporate Planning Areas**

**Corpor****ate Planning**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The Council has established a robust governance framework which looks to provide a transparent approach to how the Council delivers its services, manages its budget, and works with the community. The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The Authority has reviewed its priorities, vision and values and these are set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2022/27. The Corporate Plan acts as the Council’s business plan and is directly linked to the priorities in the Gwent Well-being Plan. The Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 26th October 2022. The priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan also act as our Well-being Objectives as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

 A new Gwent Public Service Board has been established, under Section 47 (1) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This arrangement has replaced the individual Public Service Boards in each of the five Local Authority areas of Gwent. As part of this, a Joint Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee has been established and is operated by Blaenau Gwent Council. Local Partnership / Public Service Board Scrutiny Committees will now only consider items that related to their specific areas and that are to be identified as part of the Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership.

The current Well-being Plan came to an end in 2023. The Gwent PSB has undertaken a regional well-being assessment. This used a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information including data, academic research, evidence, and people’s views (engagement) to help understand Wellbeing across Gwent communities. This assessment formed the basis of the development of the Gwent Wellbeing Plan.

The Council operates a single performance management system which includes the majority of Council planning and holds information in one place in order to avoid duplication including business planning, reporting and self-evaluation. As part of this, a well-structured performance management framework is in operation to monitor implementation of the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives.

The Council’s business planning framework is strategically aligned with the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation so that all staff can understand their contribution to its implementation. The corporate requirement is for all business plans to be updated at least quarterly. Achievements, challenges, PIs and progress against any internal or external regulatory proposals for improvement are then included within the Finance and Performance Report which is reported to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

The Sustainable Development Principles, Environment Act and Decarbonisation have been included within the business planning template used across all service areas. The five ways of working are also captured within the Corporate Reporting Template, this is supported by guidance which is reviewed and shared periodically.

Self-evaluation arrangements are in place and continue to be refined, requiring each service area to consider how its activities have contributed to the achievement of the Council priorities. The process enables us to gather and use good quality information to better understand how we are performing. Following the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council completed an assessment of the 2021/22 year and this was presented to Council for approval in October 2022. The Council has used its current business planning process to gather evidence as well as identifying a number of key documents to reference. This was the first iteration of the new self-assessment process and it is expected that amendments to the process will be made following the first year of completion.

**Financial Plann****ing**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), is a key element within the Council’s strategic planning framework. It is this financial framework which will support the Council’s financial resilience and ensure it operates sustainably. The MTFS outlines the approach that the Council will take to respond to the financial challenges faced over the next five-year period. This will be an iterative process and one that will develop and be refined as the funding position from Wales Government becomes clearer and strategic business reviews are further developed and implemented.

Bridging the Gap remains the Council’s medium/long term strategy to address identified budget gaps. Additional proposals will be developed to mitigate the possible residual funding gaps in future years.

During 2020-21, Audit Wales examined the financial sustainability of each council in Wales. In Blaenau Gwent, it was concluded that the Council had improved its financial planning and the better-than-expected Welsh Government settlements meant that the Council is now better placed to maintain its financial sustainability over the short term, but challenges remain to fully close budget gaps over the medium term. Findings included:

* The immediate impact of COVID-19 on the Council’s financial sustainability has been mitigated by additional Welsh Government funding but the Council continues to develop a more sustainable approach to financial planning and recognises the need to understand the ongoing financial impact of the pandemic;
* The Council is also increasing its useable reserves and remains committed to doing so over the medium term;
* The Council’s overall performance against budget is improving and, whilst some service areas continue to overspend, the Council is taking steps to help address some of these budget pressures;
* The Council has developed a more sustainable approach to savings planning but further challenges remain to identify sufficient savings to fully close the estimated medium-term funding gap; and
* The Council’s liquidity position remains the lowest in Wales.

In January 2022, a budget survey was undertaken with members of the public. There were 231 responses received with the following information:

* The majority of respondents were white female, aged between 35-44 with English being their main language;
* Schools were identified as a top service priority and it was felt should receive a Council budget uplift of 8.4%; and
* The percentage increase in council tax is seen as totally unacceptable.

Additional information was also received from the survey and this information is being used to shape the services moving forward.

During February / March 2021, the Council engaged Treasury Advisors, Link Asset Services, to conduct a review of the current Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy. The review identified the opportunity to change two elements of the current Policy which would provide positive benefits to the Council by reducing the annual MRP charge until 2031/32 for unsupported borrowing and 2057/58 for supported borrowing.

The Authority has complied with the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 and, in doing so, has strived for effective risk management and control, whilst at the same time pursuing best value as far as possible. The Authority has effectively managed credit risk throughout the period, so ensuring that it has not been subjected to any financial loss as a result of the pandemic.

**Workf****orce Plan****ning**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The Council’s Workforce Strategy 2021-26 was endorsed at Council on the 29th July 2021. The Strategy is a key enabler in delivering the Council’s ambition, the New Council Operating Model and key priorities. It has a focus on the future, integrating the Council’s vision, objectives and financial planning arrangements. It links service outcomes with the workforce required to deliver them and an on-going understanding of how the workforce should look in the future through continual review, re-alignment and measurement of how outcomes are achieved. The Strategy aims to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right level, and at the right cost.

The Strategy sets out five priority outcomes for the workforce:

* Healthy Culture and Effective Leadership;
* Excellence in management across the Council;
* Modern employer of choice;
* A highly motivated and engaged workforce; and
* Evidence based decision making, planning and delivery.

The delivery plan for 2021/22 focused on the transition from responding to the Covid-19 pandemic to a new future working model, ‘Agile Services delivered by an Agile Workforce’, and set out the key actions under each of the priority outcomes. There has been good progress over the last year in achieving the priorities within the delivery plan.

The second-year delivery plan has been developed and builds on the progress of the previous year and takes account of the key national, regional and local drivers, workforce trends and financial challenges that will be facing the Council. In addition, during 2021/22 a new framework for workforce planning was rolled out at a directorate level, key themes and actions from this process have been aligned to the Strategy priority outcomes. These include recruitment and retention, succession and workforce planning and wellbeing.

As a major employer in Blaenau Gwent, the council are aware that any action which impacts on the workforce will also directly impact the community and levels of aspiration, income and employment. We provide and commission some of the most important services to the community, working with a range of other public, private and voluntary organisations in ensuring that public services are delivered to high standards. Our Workforce Strategy demonstrates the Council’s commitment and investment in its workforce and wants staff to feel engaged and motivated so that the best services can be delivered to the residents of Blaenau Gwent. There are clear drivers for change focussed on agility and sustainability by reducing environmental impact as well as property related costs that can be reinvested into front line services, improve resilience, organisational and individual outcomes, customer focus, and create a better work life and corporate social responsibility.

The performance of all directorates depends on the effectiveness of the department culture. This is a difficult ask when the teams and sections are working hard to deliver priorities amongst continual rounds of savings and non-competitive public sector salaries. However, a healthy culture is a major attractor and is important to those looking for a job in the public sector. With staff retention as a key aim for the authority, creating the right culture is key. The aim of the council is to set standards that assist with the positive nature of the culture including; embracing a change mind-set – this is central to growth and innovation, and puts people outside their comfort zone to enable change and growth; working as a team – working together, discussing problems together and backing each other up; empowering people to make decisions; embedding a sense of responsibility including holding everyone accountable; and lastly, continuous improvement.

The Council Operating Model was agreed at Council in March 2021 and included the move to agile working and the development of a supporting policy. The Model introduces modern working practices, seeks to enhance employees’ working experience, maximise performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation, in terms of improving service delivery, as well as realising financial gains. The Model also included the establishment of Community Hubs across the Borough, improving customer access to Council services.

Of Blaenau Gwent Council workers:

* 34% are agile workers;
* 8% are permanent homeworkers; and
* 58% are service based workers.

In late 2022, a survey was undertaken with staff to understand the feelings towards agile working with 433 responses returned, 26% of the workforce. The results were analysed and a series of focus groups with staff and the Trade Unions were held to gain further insight. Feedback from these sessions tended to mirror that of the survey. Overall, the workforce is mainly positive about the agile working arrangements. Moving forward, actions include:

* Reviewing the facilities across the five agile working hubs of: ViTecc, General Offices, Anvil Court, Energy Centre and the LAC in Blaina; and
* A further review of the agile working policy and the flexible working policy.

The Organisational Development (OD) Service are responsible for the development and review of all of the Council’s HR related policies. In line with OD’s Policy Schedule, the Disciplinary and Capability Policies (Corporate Staff) were due for review. In addition, following a number of complex disciplinary cases, the Council procured an external consultant, to review a particular disciplinary case and associated processes. The review set out a number of recommendations for the Council in relation to the management of disciplinary processes. These recommendations have been taken on board in the review and development of the policies including:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Policy / Procedure | Covers | Who it applies to |
| Disciplinary Policy & Procedure | Conduct | Corporate employees |
| Capability Policy | Performance | Corporate Employees |
| Disciplinary Procedure for the Chief Executive | Conduct and performance | Chief Executive |
| Disciplinary Procedure for Specific Statutory Officers | Conduct and performance | Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer & Head of Democratic Services |
| Disciplinary Procedure for Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers | Conduct and performance | A Chief Officer reports directly to the Chief Executive. A Deputy Chief Officer reports directly to one or more of the statutory or non-statutory chief officers. |

The Council had no capability cases during the 2022/23 period. Eleven grievance cases were investigated across the Council, eight of which have been resolved and three remain active. Two cases are collective grievances, one of which is now an Employment Tribunal claim, with implications for 81 plus staff.

On an annual basis the Council is expected to report on its annual performance with regards to health, safety and welfare at work. A summary of this performance includes:

* The number of employee accidents/incidents decreased from 171 in 2021/2022 to 162 in 2022/2023;
* The number of non-employee accidents also decreased from 326 in 2021/2022 to 325 in 2022/2023;
* The number of employee accidents/incidents and diseases reportable to the HSE has decreased from 24 in 2021/2022 to 9 in 2022/2023;
* The number of non-employee accidents/incidents reportable to HSE has increased marginally from 8 in 2021/22 to 9 in 2022/2023;
* There were 4 interventions by the Fire Authority and 0 interventions by the HSE;
* The Health and Safety Advisors investigated 59 accidents/incidents;
* One referral from the Occupational Health Department was made to the Health and Safety Advisors. Recommendations were provided to the mangers of the referred persons by the Health and Safety Advisors on reasonable adjustments for the affected individuals;
* There were 5 cases investigated following insurance claims being made; and
* The departmental referrals to the Occupational Health service fell from 656 to 456.

**P****rocureme****nt**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The Authority is committed to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Wales Procurement Policy that identifies Procurement as a strategic enabler, delivering key policy objectives to support the Council’s economic, social, and environmental priorities.

Council approved its revised Commissioning and Procurement Strategy in March 2023, ‘Maximising the Socially Responsible Blaenau Gwent Pound £’. The strategy sets out how our commissioning and procurement activities will support the Council’s corporate priorities:

* Objective 1: Ensuring legal compliance and robust and transparent governance;
* Objective 2: Promoting socially responsible procurement activities and processes;

2.1 Increasing community and social value benefits delivered by suppliers;

* 1. Contributing to the Council’s aim to be a Net Zero Council by 2030;

2.3 Improving Fair Work and Safeguarding practices within our supply chain;

* Objective 3: Securing value for money and managing demand through effective and robust contract management arrangements; and
* Objective 4: Promoting innovative and best practice solutions.

A Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board (SCCB) has been established to provide oversight and scrutiny of the Council’s commercial activities, primarily commissioning, procurement, investments, and trading. The SCCB is supported by an operational group Business and Commercial Opportunities Network (BACON).

SCCB is an officer board, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by Corporate Leadership Team. The Board provides strategic guidance to the Commissioning and Procurement community and assesses major commercial and procurement projects. The goal of the SCCB is to ensure shared ownership for the realisation of desired outcomes and efficiencies across the Council and to ensure that commercial activities become an enabling function and that fully supports Council priorities. The SCCB also oversees the delivery of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

The Board has been put in place as a ‘check and challenge’ with regards to the merits of each spending proposal and contracts over £75k and ensures a consistent approach to spending in line with the objectives of the Authority. The Board has an agreed Terms of Reference and has implemented a quarterly market intelligence report since April 2022. As part of this, central contracts register, and annual departmental procurement plans have been established to support the Council’s social and commercial aspirations as well as informing its Medium Term Financial Strategy.

BACON is an officer group, chaired by the Service Manager Business and Commercial Opportunities and has representation from all service areas. BACON has been established to support the development of an entrepreneurial culture and mind-set in both officers and elected members, including working with the senior leadership to identify more business minded and commercially focused opportunities within existing and future service delivery. BACON has an agreed Terms of Reference and a business case framework which is used to consider commercial opportunities.

**As****sets**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network is estimated at £1.093 billion and is the Authority’s most valuable material asset.

The Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) sets out how the Council manages and treats it property and land, ensuring that it is well placed to manage expectations, budgets and services going forward.

Audit Wales has recently carried out a ‘Springing Forward’ review which included the Council’s arrangements for managing its assets and resulted in recommendations being identified covering a few areas including developing a longer-term asset strategy.

It was agreed at the Corporate Asset Management Working Group (CAMWG) that a revised SAMP would commence with recommendations coming back to CAMWG for review. Corporate Leadership Team is leading on a review of accommodation and the demand for buildings. The findings of which will be incorporated into the SAMP. Meetings have been arranged with Service Heads to discuss accommodation needs and corporate Asset & Property Meetings are convened on a monthly basis to review property needs.

Many Community Asset Transfers (CATs) are on short term leases or tenancies, so the focus on completing longer term leases continues, where this is possible, and addressing any issues which stop the Council entering into longer term arrangements.  Progress on the CATs include:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Completed CATs (in the last two years)** | **Close to Completion** | **New CATs Being Processed** |
| * Millennium Gardens (Terence Gardens) Brynmawr –lease to Growing Spaces November 2021
* Sirhowy Woodland – licence completed June 2021 (common land).
* Market Hall Cinema Brynmawr - freehold transfer April 2022
* Rassau Community Centre – handover to new trustees completed at the end of the reporting year so is the most recent entry in this category.
 | * Hilltop Fields Pavilion (shared with Flying Start), changing rooms and pitches – lease issued to Beaufort Colts AFC and awaiting signature
* Rassau Resource Centre – lease to Rassau Resource Community Centre CIC agreed. Awaiting completion
* Beaufort Welfare - upper Changing Room and Rugby Pitch. Completion anticipated in coming months.
* Beaufort Welfare – lower Changing Room & Football Pitch. Completion anticipated in coming months.
* Roseheyworth Field – changing rooms and pitches. Completion anticipated in coming months.
 | * Area at Jim Owen Pavilion, Cwmtillery - Application for wetland area by Pentref Tyleri CBC (occupy part of pavilion/ Garden held by Abertillery Excelsiors).
* Coedcae Scout Hut - Older Community Building which Scouts want to surrender. Growing Spaces looking to take on and are completing application.
* Cwm Community Allotments – Application by Barefoot Farm. Solicitors instructed
* Windsor Road Field - Abertillery Bluebirds’ proposal to take on playing field for junior football use.
* Six Bells Tennis - Proposed CAT of kiosk (previously Friends) and area alongside for new cabin/ changing facility.
* Brynithel Recreation Ground - shared pavilion (Flying Start) and pitches. Awaiting clarity over Group’s (St. Illtyds Sport & C.I.C.) ability to proceed.
 |

Occupation of CATs needs to be regularised on some sites where groups are in occupation, but formal / revised paperwork need to be concluded. Progress of these CATs include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Community Asset Transfer** | **Progress** |
| **Bedwellty Park Bowling Green & Pavilion** | Occupying under terms of Tenancy at Will. Charity site - application will need to be made to Charity Commission for a lease to be granted. |
| **Cwm Welfare – fields and pavilion** | Cwm Community Sports are currently on a tenancy at will. Charity site - application will need to be made to Charity Commission for a lease to be granted. The pavilion is already occupied by boxing. The Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) is assisting in these matters. |
| **Blaina Institute**  | Blaina Community Institute Limited have been in occupation of the building since 1/6/17. A draft lease has been issued - negotiating.  |
| **Metropole Theatre Abertillery** | Occupied by Awen Cultural Trust under terms of a Licence from 09/04/2021. Lease negotiations are progressing. A list of works was agreed at the point of transfer and the Council are looking to source funding contributions from the Welsh Governments ‘Transforming Towns’ program. A portion of the building is occupied by Abertillery Museum under a separate Lease agreement. |
| **Llanhilleth Institute** | Draft lease issued to Llanhilleth Miners Institute - negotiating |
| **Tredegar Sports Ground pavilion, stand & pitches** | Occupied under Tenancy at Will. Charity site - application will need to be made to Charity Commission for a lease to be granted. |
| **EV Welfare rugby stand, pitches, terrace** | Occupying under terms of Tenancy at Will. Charity site - application will need to be made to Charity Commission for a lease to be granted. |
| **Cricket Pavilion – EV Welfare** | Occupying under terms of Tenancy at Will. Charity site - application will need to be made to Charity Commission for a lease to be granted. |
| **EV Welfare – bowls pavilion & 2 greens** | Occupying under terms of Tenancy at Will. Charity site - application will need to be made to Charity Commission for a lease to be granted. |

**Risk Manag****ement**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The Authority has in place a Risk Management Framework that includes a Risk Management Strategy and Handbook with the aim of embedding a consistent and effective approach to Risk Management throughout the whole Council. The risk management arrangements are aligned to the Performance Management Framework and corporate business planning process. These set out the risk appetite of the Council and provide a methodology to ensure a consistent assessment, prioritisation of the risks the Authority faces and any mitigating actions.

The Framework identifies the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers, guidance on how to describe, evaluate and assess risk. It also requires for risk registers to be maintained at Service and Directorate levels to support the Corporate Risk Register which holds the most significant risks faced by the Council.

Effective Risk Management allows the Authority to deliver services in pursuance of its obligations. Monitoring Arrangements are in place whereby the Corporate Risk Register is reviewed and updated by Corporate Leadership Team on a quarterly basis and are also included within the Finance and Performance Report.

At the end of the 2023 financial year, the Council had identified 11 corporate risks, four of which were classed as critical and the remaining classed as high. This is an increase from 2022 when there were ten corporate risks with only one being rated as critical. The main risks facing the Authority during the period were:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk Description** | **Potential Impact** | **Residual Score** |
| Failure to deliver and sustain the changes required to ensure that vital services are prioritised within the financial constraints faced by the Council.  | financial pressures and demand challenges will result in reductions to services, significant impacting their availability and quality. | **Critical** |
| Failure to ensure that the Councils ICT arrangements provide assurance in terms of operational functionality and data security and enable the required digital transformational change | Service continuity impacted, transformation of services cannot take place and the potential for cyber attacks | **High** |
| Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent | Vulnerable people at risk of harm and abuseNegative reputation for the Council  | **High** |
| Failure to improve staff attendance rates within the Council will lead to an unacceptable impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively and financially | Unacceptable impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively and financially support the cost of sickness absence. | **Critical** |
| If the Council does not manage its information assets in accordance with requirements set down within legislation then it may be faced with financial penalties and possible sanctions that hinder service delivery. | Financial penalties and possible sanctions that hinder service delivery | **High** |
| The Financial resilience of the Council could be at risk if the Council does not ensure that financial planning and management decisions support long term stability and sustainability. | Inability to deliver effective services/ lower quality services provided.Unplanned reduction of services provided. | **High** |
| Failure to deliver the Council's priorities within the agreed annual budget resulting in the increased use of emergency finance measures and the drawdown of reserves | Adverse impacts on the communityLack of service provision Not meeting statutory requirements  | **Critical** |
| (a) Impact of cost of living (inflationary) increase driven by a number of crosscutting forces on our communities have created significant challenges for those already in need. (b) Impact of cost of living (inflationary) increases on businesses in Blaenau Gwent (c) Impact of cost of living (inflationary) increases on the Council (and staff) resulting in increased levels of service demand | Negative impact on communitiesBusiness closuresIncreased demand for services resulting in increased demand on services. Impact on staff | **Critical** |
| The 2 schools in an Estyn category and currently in receipt of Council Intervention fail to make appropriate progress against the Statutory Warning Notice to Improve and their Post Inspection Action Plans. | Poor reputation of the CouncilStatutory intervention Standards of education are not improvement  | **High** |
| There is a risk that the Council’s Business Continuity processes are not robust enough to enable the provision of critical services in an emergency | Essential services not delivered to an acceptable standard during disruptive incidents Poor reputation for the Council  | **High** |
| Failure to maintain appropriately skilled, adequate staffing resources will lead to an unacceptable impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively | Vital services will not be protected if the Council fails to find more efficient ways of working and improvements to social, economic and environmental well-being of the areas will not be achieved | **High** |

The Internal Audit Service works on a risk based approach, to an annual audit plan, in order to assess the internal control environment of the Authority. The work of the section is prioritised in line with the Authority’s objectives. The results of all audit work are reported to the Governance & Audit Committee who can, if necessary, call Officers to account where weak control is identified. Policies are maintained for Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery, and Anti-Money-Laundering. Adherence to these is considered as part of the work of the Internal Audit function.

The Gwent Local Resilience Forum covers the Gwent Police area and is a partnership made up of representatives from the emergency services, local authorities, Natural Resources Wales, health agencies, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, utilities, military, and Welsh Government along with voluntary organisations and other private agencies. Although the LRF is not a statutory body, it is a statutory process. Set up as a requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Local Resilience Forums (LRF) are the principal mechanism for multi-agency collaboration to ensure the effective delivery of the duties identified in the act.

The Community Risk Register highlights the main risks that have the largest potential to have significant impact on residents and businesses in the Gwent area, including:

* Human Infectious Diseases
* Severe Weather
* Flooding
* Loss of Critical Infrastructure
* Industrial Accidents
* Animal Disease
* Transport Incidents
* Malicious Threats

**Perfor****mance Mana****gement**

**How Well We Are Doing and How Do We Know:**

The Council has a well-established performance management framework in place which supports all aspects of service planning, delivery and improvement. As part of this, the Council’s Well-being Objectives, as identified within the Corporate Plan, have been used to shape all service planning throughout the Council. A ‘golden thread’ has been developed from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation. As part of the business planning arrangements, progression of the sustainable development principles has been included and is reported on against each Well-being Objective. Twice a year the Council receives performance monitoring of the Corporate Plan as part of the Finance and Performance Report. Alongside this, there are a number of other performance reports provided internally and through the democratic process including:

* The ACRF (Annual Report of the Director of Social Services);
* Education Director Report; and
* Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Report.

The business planning process has become more streamlined with the incorporation of Performance Indicators, Risk Registers, the Environment Act, Low Carbon Actions as well as proposals for improvement from auditors. Future developments will include the Welsh Language and Equalities. This information is contained on a central monitoring system used across the organisation. The self-evaluation process directly links to the business planning process.

In 2021 Audit Wales reported to the Council on their review, ‘Data-driven decision making’. This review considered the way the Council is using data to inform the response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as looking at the wider vision and arrangements for using data to inform decision making. Audit Wales identified several strengths, including the way the Council used data to inform its response to the pandemic and to support its recovery planning. Audit Wales also highlighted some areas for consideration, such as developing a delivery plan to help implement the Council’s vision for using data effectively and better understand the resources needed. The Council has improved a number of performance areas but there is an inconsistency across areas of the Council and some performance reports lack sufficient detail.