Neath Port Talbot Council
Annual Governance Statement
2022/2023

Contents

Introduction

The council has adopted the 2016 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (the Framework), developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

To comply with the Framework, the council must publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the council to carry out its functions effectively. The governance framework comprises of the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the council is directed and controlled, and through which we engage with, and lead, the local community. The framework brings together an underlying set of legal requirements, good practice and management processes.

During 2023/2024 the council will conduct a self-assessment on the effectiveness of its system of internal control in place for the year ending 31st March 2023. This Annual Governance Statement contributes to the self-assessment to meet the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to ensure that:

- the council's business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations;
- public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for;
- there is sound and inclusive decision making;
- resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively; and
- there is clear accountability for the use of those resources to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people and communities.

> *"Corporate governance is about making sure that the council is run properly. It is about ensuring the council does the right things, at the right time and in the right way."*

The council's systems of internal control are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. The council cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The Framework

The Framework comprises of two core principles and five supporting principles as illustrated in the diagram.

Principles A and B run through principles C to G but good governance is dynamic, and the council as a whole is committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.

The next section: Putting the Principles into Practice, illustrates examples of how the council demonstrates compliance to meet these seven principles and the assurances taken during the year on the effectiveness of our governance arrangements.

Any governance improvement areas identified from undertaking the self-assessment have been included in an action plan set out in **Table 2** on page 76. The Corporate Governance Group, will oversee the action plan and progress will be reported to Corporate Directors Group, Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee throughout the financial year.

Progress made on improvement work identified during 2022/2023 is contained in **Table 1** on page 74.
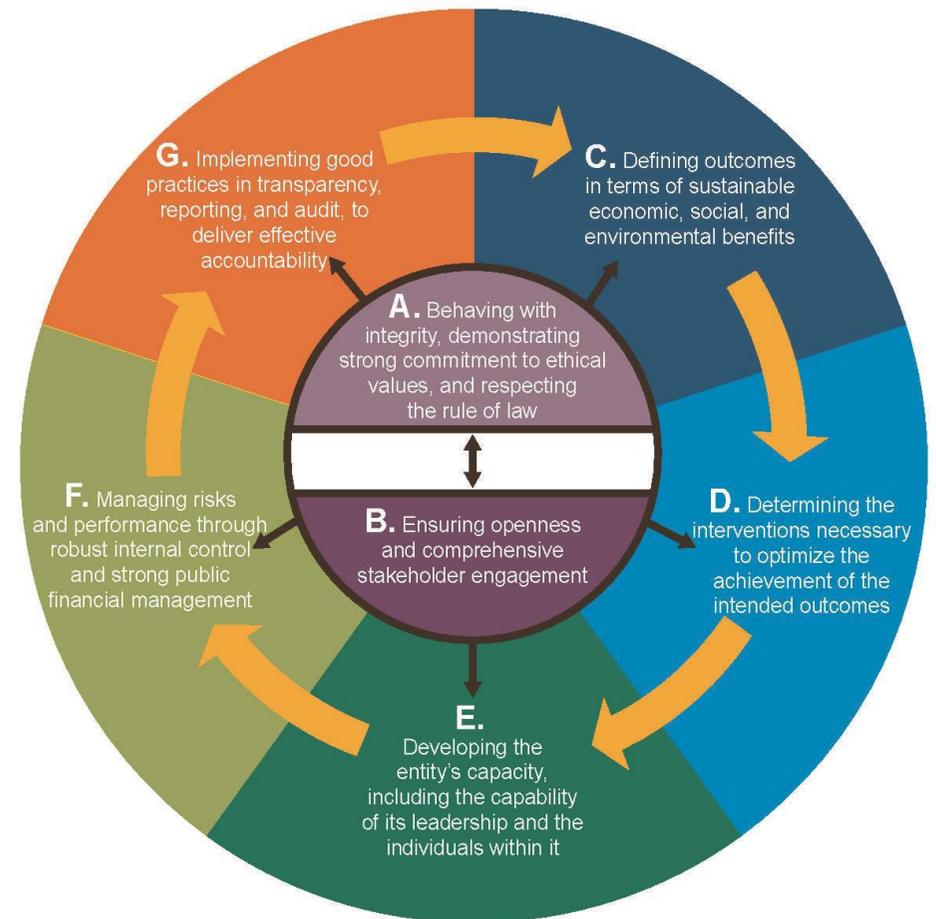
Putting the Principles into Practice

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
1.1 Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation	1.1.1 Employee Code of Conduct	In November 2020 an Internal Audit review was published of the compliance need to make the necessary declarations regarding interests, gifts and hospitality accepted/rejected. The recommendations made were taken into account and the Code was updated in January 2021.	None identified
	1.1.2 Corporate Induction	The HR Future of Work Team have been able to re-instate the Corporate Induction Programme in 2023. In terms of its purpose: participants will benefit from consistent, council-wide information – gaining an appreciation of our purpose and values, prompting them to consider how they can embody these on a day to day basis (in other words: How do I fit into the "big picture"?). There will be contributions from HR colleagues, Health & Safety, Learning & Development etc. as well as a "welcome" from the Chief Executive. New starters will still receive a "local induction" from their line managers – addressing departmental matters. Dates have been scheduled for 2023/2024.	None identified

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	1.1.3 Member Code of Conduct	Monitored by the Standards Committee and Corporate Governance Group. On signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Members are required to give an undertaking to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct. A detailed member induction programme took place following local government elections in May 2022. This included specified training relating to the member code of conduct, social media issues, gifts and hospitality and officer/member protocols. By the end of June 2022, all 60 elected members had attended and received this training. Refresher training takes place on an annual basis to enhance member's compliance with the Members Code of Conduct and to ensure members are aware of the responsibility to act ethically and with integrity, with advice provided on a variety of matters throughout the year on interests and predetermination matters. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provided an additional duty on group leaders to ensure members within their political group also comply with the Members Code of Conduct and ongoing support will be provided on this function via the Standards Committee.	Ensure all members attend annual refreshers in respect of the Members Code of Conduct undertaken by the Monitoring Officer; Ensure all Group Leaders make Standards and Ethics a standing item on their political group meeting agendas; Ensure all members are completing their declarations of gifts and hospitality, including where such gifts and hospitality are declined; Encourage Group Leaders to consider bi-annual meetings with the Monitoring Officer to discuss standards and

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		The Standards Committee were pleased to note the approach that Group Leaders take in promoting standards and the personal commitment they have to encourage members within their groups to embed ethical processes in their day to day activities. Of interest particularly to the Standards Committee was how Group Leaders deal with the "thick skin" ideology that the Public Service Ombudsman and other regulatory bodies adopt and the views that all Group Leaders have that often this is an inappropriate test and it is not something that any elected member should have to have if they face abuse from members of the public, particularly in a social media setting.

The Standards Committee are required to conduct an assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct and the Standards Committee are able to confirm that throughout 2022-2023, Group Leaders have discharged their duty, in the views of the Standards Committee, and that there were no ethical concerns arising.

The Standards Committee published their Annual Report in April 2023 for the work of the previous finance year. | ethics and how they can work together to promote standards within their political groups;

Steps be taken to promote the Member Officer Protocol to all elected members and officers of the Council, with training provided as appropriate;

A series of guidance documents be circulated to all members in respect of key conduct matters such as declarations of interest, predetermination, conduct case studies and key information for members. |

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	1.1.4 Members: An <u>induction programme for Members</u> was published on the council website in 2022.	The induction programme forms part of the authority's Strategy and Charter for Member Development and is structured for both new and returning members. The aim is to provide a supportive and structured development framework to enable Members perform their duties. Members elected through by-elections receive a tailored induction. This training programme took place following local government elections in May 2022 and continues to be embedded in member training. An annual survey takes place of members to identify any training and development needs.	None identified
	1.1.5 Staff: <u>New Starter Induction Checklist</u>	New starter induction checklist contains information about the expected standards of behaviour) must be signed by managers and their employees.	None identified
	1.1.6 <u>Performance Appraisal Process</u>	In 2023, the Learning, Training & Development Team will continue with progress in relation to the implementation of the iTrent HR / Payroll Database in Phase 2 of the Project, launching the Development module, which will facilitate more effective recording of the appraisal process and provide greater assurance. We will be able to report against the number of appraisals carried out to conclusion.	None identified

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1.2 Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)	1.2.1 Updated vision and set of values have been published in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027	The council's vision and values are incorporated into recruitment processes (and written into all new and revised job descriptions and person specifications).	None identified
	1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff are contained within the Strategic Workforce Plan: The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027	The Strategic Workforce Plan was developed following extensive consultation across the council's workforce and key stakeholders, and agreed by the council's Personnel Committee in October 2022. The 12 month Delivery Plan appended to the strategy will be reviewed later this year.	None identified
	See also 1.1.3 Member Code of Conduct - The Standards Framework for Members (Section 1, Ethical framework)		
1.3 Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions	1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The tool assesses the impact of proposed initiatives (e.g. policy, service, procedures, strategies, projects etc.) relating to key | The implementation of an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Audit Action Plan was agreed by CDG in March 2023. The action plan was developed in light of the recommendations of the three reviews of the IIA process completed in 2022.

Implementation of the action plan will further improve the embedding of the IIA process into decision making. | None identified |

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	legislation (i.e. equality, sustainable development, the Welsh language etc.). It is applied to decisions relating to the initiative and to consider whether the initiative will have a positive, negative or neutral impact on the community.	Training to address the recommendations will be part of the New Member Induction Programme following the Local Government Elections in May 2022) for Members. A training programme has also been included for officers including annual refresher training and training on specific elements of the process.	
	1.3.2 Declarations of Interest	These are made by Members at the beginning of Committee meetings and recorded in the meeting minutes, with guidance and training and provided by the Monitoring Officer. The Standards Committee reviews declarations of interest and the granting of dispensations to ensure ethical decision making.	None identified

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	1.3.3 The Standards Committee	Monitored by the Standards Committee and Corporate Governance Group. On signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Members are required to give an undertaking to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct. A detailed member induction programme took place following local government elections in May 2022. This included specified training relating to the member code of conduct, social media issues, gifts and hospitality and officer/member protocols. By the end of June 2022, all 60 elected members had attended and received this training. Refresher training takes place on an annual basis to enhance member's compliance with the Members Code of Conduct and to ensure members are aware of the responsibility to act ethically and with integrity throughout the year, with advice provided on a variety of matters throughout year on interests and predetermination matters. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provided an additional duty on group leaders to ensure members within their political group also comply with the Members Code of Conduct and	None identified

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		ongoing support will be provided on this function via the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee were pleased to note the approach that Group Leaders take in promoting standards and the personal commitment they have to encourage members within their groups to embed ethical processes in their day to day activities. Of interest particularly to the Standards Committee was how Group Leaders deal with the "thick skin" ideology that the Public Service Ombudsman and other regulatory bodies adopt and the views that all Group Leaders have that often this is an inappropriate test and it is not something that any elected member should have to have if they face abuse from members of the public, particularly in a social media setting. The Standards Committee are required to conduct an assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct and the Standards Committee are able to confirm that throughout 2022-2023, Group Leaders have discharged their duty, in the views of the Standards Committee, and that there were no ethical concerns arising. The Standards Committee published their Annual Report in April 2023 for the work of the previous finance year.	

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	1.3.4 <u>Member and Officer Relations Protocol</u>	A protocol is in place as part of the council's Constitution and Employee Code of Conduct. A review of the protocol was undertaken at the early stages of the member induction programme, as part of the wider review of the council's Constitution. Copies of which have been distributed to officers. A detailed member induction programme took place following local government elections in May 2022. This included specified training relating to the member code of conduct, social media issues, gifts and hospitality and officer/member protocols. By the end of June 2022, all 60 elected members had attended and received this training. Training has also been provided to officer groups within the council on the nature of the relationship between officers and members and this training will continue in future years. The protocol is monitored by the Standards Committee who considered the protocol and its implementation at a meeting of the Standards Committee recommending a few minor changes for consideration which will now be included within the Constitution going forward and circulated to officers and members.	Continue with future training of officer groups in the significance of the member and officer relations protocol.

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1.4 Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively	1.4.1 The Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy	Cabinet approved the updated Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy at their meeting on 25th April 2023. The Strategy will be presented to Governance & Audit Committee at their meeting on 16th June 2023. It will also be publicised on the authority's Intranet.	None identified
	1.4.2 Member Interests are shown by individual Members on the council website.	Declarations of Interest for Members is a standing item on all meeting agendas and recorded in minutes of meetings. The Standards Committee reviews declarations of interest and the granting of dispensations to ensure ethical decision making.	None identified
	1.4.3 Staff Interests	An up-to-date register is held by each Director and is subject to Internal Audit review annually.	None identified
	1.4.4 Members: The Constitution	The council's Monitoring Officer is required, by law, to keep a Register of all notifications made by Members. The Register is available on the council's website and a copy is open to public inspection during normal office hours. The Standards Committee reviews declarations of interest and the granting of dispensations to ensure ethical decision making. The Constitution is regularly updated and available for public inspection either on the website or in person.	None identified

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	1.4.5 Staff Gifts & Hospitality	An up-to-date register is held by each Director and is subject to Internal Audit review annually.	None identified
	1.4.6 Whistleblowing Policy	Whistleblowing Policy was approved by Personnel Committee in August 2015 and reviewed in January 2020. The Audit Manager presented a report to Standards Committee on 31st January 2023. The report provided details of the Whistleblowing Arrangements in place and the number of referrals received in recent years.	None identified
	1.4.7 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy	The Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy was revised in March 2021 to meet the requirements set out in the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Model Complaints Policy. The Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021 sets out the following functions for the Governance & Audit Committee (from 1st April 2021): • to review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively • to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. A report to meet the above requirements was presented to the Committee on 18th February 2022	None identified

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	1.4.8 Social Services Compliments and Complaints	The latest Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2021/2022 was prepared and reported to Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet on 26th January 2023. No systemic issues were identified.	None identified
	1.4.9 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints	The latest Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2021/2022 was reported to Cabinet on 4th October 2022. No systemic issues were identified. During 2022/2023 quarterly complaints and compliments data have been reported to relevant Cabinet Boards on a quarterly basis.	None identified
	See also 1.4.4 Members: The Constitution, Part 5, Section 3 'Personal Interests' addresses this.	Member's interests are published on the council's website for each meeting throughout the year. The Standards Committee reviews declarations of interest and the granting of dispensations to ensure ethical decision making.	None identified
	See also 1.1.1 Officers: Employee Code of Conduct (Section 9, 2017)	The council's Contract Procedure Rules, Employee Code of Conduct and the Public Contract Regulations (2015) require officers and members not to have any involvement in a tender process where they have a potential conflict of interest. They should have no role whatsoever which should negate the need for any declarations of interest to be made.	None identified

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2.1 Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance	2.1.1. Corporate Procurement Team	Ethical standards are acknowledged by the team when undertaking tender work for other sections and when developing and evaluating procurement process.

The team also monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt.

The Ethical Employment Code of Practice and Modern Slavery Statement issued to all sections sets out processes that should be valued. | Corporate Procurement to monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt. Head of Legal & Democratic Services to report annually to the Corporate Governance Group. |
| 2.2 Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation | 2.2.1 Member training

See also 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct)

See also 1.3.3 Standards Committee – special dispensation to vote | The induction programme forms part of the authority's Strategy and Charter for Member Development and is structured for both new and returning members. The aim is to provide a supportive and structured development framework to enable Members to perform their duties. Members elected through by-elections receive a tailored induction.

This training programme took place following local government elections in May 2022 and continues to be embedded in member training. An annual survey takes place of members to identify any training and development needs. | None identified |

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
		Annual reports are presented to Standards Committee. Members Declaration of Acceptance of Office – undertaken to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct. Leading in the Welsh Public Service Behaviours Framework.	
2.3 Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values	2.3.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy 2018	Training is provided to recruiting managers and courses undertaken in relation to Recruitment and Selection, Safe Recruitment and other Employment Policies and Procedures delivered in 2022/2023. Unconscious bias training is available for managers; a review of equalities training is underway and a matrix approach is being considering, setting out what training is mandatory for particular groups of employees, including recruiting line managers. It will be proposed that all recruiting managers undergo unconscious bias training.	None identified
	2.3.2 Pay Policy Statement 2023/2024	The 2023/2024 review has taken place and the revised Pay Policy Statement was presented to Council on 15th March 2023.	None identified

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	2.3.3 Contract Procedure Rules	Training is available to staff and advice booklets are provided. Ongoing support is provided to sections in complying with procurement rules and processes. A dedicated section of the council's intranet has provided standard documents and processes for officers to follow.	None identified
2.4 Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation	2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019	Policy introduced in 2019 and annual reports brought to Cabinet and Cabinet Scrutiny setting out how the council complies with the arrangements set out in the policy.	None identified
	2.4.2 Continue to participate in a number of partnerships. Governance arrangements are in place for each for partnership which: • Clarify the roles of members both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the council;	Given the importance of collaboration to this council, Scrutiny committees review existing collaborations to make sure they were all on a strong footing, and are productive to enable the council's Cabinet to be confident that those arrangements are working in the best interest of citizens. Also, ensuring that there is clear and effective democratic oversight of those arrangements. The focus of this work was reviewed in 2021/2022 as part of the council's Recover, Reset, Renew work. To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services. This work is ongoing and proved complex whilst officers were required to work from home. As a result of hybrid working, further work will be undertaken to fully gather this list (given it requires access to the council's Archives in Port Talbot Civic Centre).	None identified

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	• Clearly set out the legal status of the partnership; and • Make clear the extent to which representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.		
3.1 Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations	3.1.1 Cabinet and Committee reports contain a section entitled "Legal Impacts" so that legal obligations are placed at the forefront of decision making. See also 1.4.4 The <u>Constitution</u>	'Safe and Legal Decision Making Training' is available for relevant officers and is provided on an annual basis by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to council officers. Democratic Services Officers and Legal Services monitor reports to ensure legal compliance.	None identified

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
3.2 Creating the conditions to ensure that statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements	3.2.1 Financial management arrangements	We have a range of policies and procedures (such as financial regulations, financial procedures, contract standing orders, accounting instructions and officer delegations) that conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010).

A review of Accounting Instructions has been completed during 2022/2023 | None identified |
| | 3.2.2 Democratic Services - support function. | The Head of Democratic Services presents an annual report to Democratic Services Committee and Council, outlining the resource requirements to enable the Council, Cabinet and Committee to receive high level support and discharge of its democratic functions. The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee presents an Annual Report of the Democratic Services Committee to full Council updating Members on the work that has been undertaken by the Committee during the previous civic year. | None identified |

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	See also 1.4.4 The council's Constitution sets out the different responsibilities of Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff, which highlight their roles and responsibilities.	The Monitoring Officer oversees the council's Constitution and ensures it is kept up to date. A review of the Constitution takes place at regular intervals to ensure it is constantly up to date and annual reports will be produced to the Democratic Services Committee on any updates required to the Constitution and to seek Members views on constitutional provisions.	None identified
3.3 Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders	3.3.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports contain a section entitled "Legal Impacts" so that legal obligations are placed at the forefront of decision making.	Legal Enterprise Case Management Software providing audit trails of legal advice given and time spent providing legal advice on all matters. Transaction documentation and hard copies of legal advice provided are stored by the council. Legal training provided to officers on regular basis to ensure they are up to date with recent legal developments and powers available.	None identified
3.4 Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively	3.4.1 Data Protection Breaches Panel review cases.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Information Risk Officers report annually to the Corporate Governance Group to give an assurance that the current system for dealing with data protection breaches is fit for purpose. The authority retains a breach register and 0 referrals were made to the Information Commissioner's Office.	None identified

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Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	3.4.2 Internal Audit Special Investigations / Disciplinary Cases See also 3.3.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports	The council requires that all officers who carry out disciplinary investigations have undertaken the ACAS Investigation Officers training. In addition, Heads of Service who are the decision makers in disciplinary investigations must have attended the ACAS Decision Maker training.	None identified
3.5 Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively	See 1.4.1 Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Policy See 1.4.6 Whistle Blowing Policy	Cases are monitored by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the council's Standards Committee in relation to members conduct. During the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, the Monitoring Officer was notified of a total of 5 complaints made against County Borough Councillors alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct. Three of these complaints were dismissed by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales as not being appropriate for investigation. Two are presently subject to further consideration. During the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, the Monitoring Officer was notified of 13 complaints made against Town and Community Councillors alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct. All 13 were dismissed by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales as not being appropriate for investigation. The Monitoring Officer has not been made aware of any further complaints.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.1 Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness	4.1.1 The council produces a number of annual reports throughout the year to give assurances about our governance arrangements.	The following reports are available to the public and the Corporate Governance Group oversee any risks identified to governance arrangements, arising from these annual reports. 1. Corporate Plan Annual Report 2. Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report 3. PSB Well-being Plan Annual Report 4. Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 5. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Annual Report 6. Internal Audit Report 7. Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 8. Ombudsman Annual Report 9. Pay Policy Statement	None identified
	4.1.2 FOI Policy / FOI Publication Scheme	Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy was published in March 2014. A review of the Publication Scheme took place in 2020, to consider updated advice from the Information Commissioner's Office and found only minor changes were required to consider updated legislative requirements. This was then considered and the Publication Scheme updated in Autumn 2023. This will be continually monitored to ensure legislative compliance. Work is also ongoing to look at ways to further promote and publish	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
		other information held by the council such as Freedom of Information Act responses.	
	4.1.3 The council's strategic purpose, vision and values are set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027	Purpose, vision and values are set out in the council's Corporate Plan 2022/2027. The Future of Work Strategy embeds the council's vision, values and priorities in everything we do.	None identified
	4.1.4 Council Meeting Cycle	The council agrees its meeting cycle at its Annual Meeting and this is published on the council's website. Meetings are supported with forward work programmes detailing items for the next 3 meetings.	None identified
	4.1.5 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020 This includes new 'Brand' guidelines to create consistency and increase visibility and understanding about what the council does.	The review of the 2018/2020 Strategy has been delayed due to the pandemic. Work is underway to align the revised Strategy and will be completed in early 2023/2024. We have improved the accessibility of information to better engage all stakeholders in the council's work, with the intention that there will be a continuous flow of information about how the council is delivering on its well-being objectives and to keep stakeholders up-to-date. Council website (www.npt.gov.uk) performance is monitored using Google analytics to see how our website is being used. We also carry out an annual website survey to measure our effectiveness and ensure the website is performing as expected.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.2 Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case the justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided	4.2.1 Executive and non-executive and regulatory report guidance and report templates	The guidance was developed and circulated to reporting officers in May 2019. As and when changes arise the guidance is updated and circulated to report authors/officers. Report templates ensure the relevant information and advice is presented to substantiate recommendations. Guidance has been presented to officers throughout the year on matters such as Welsh Language considerations and other legislative updates.	None identified
	4.2.2 Safe and Legal Decision Making	Training is available for relevant officers and takes place at regular intervals by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services	None identified
4.3 Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and	4.3.1 Modern.gov system See also 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)	All publically accessible reports are published on the council website via Modern.gov system showing the decisions taken at each meeting.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
consequences of those decisions are clear.			
4.4 Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action	4.4.1 Neath Port Talbot Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018/2020	The review of the 2018/2020 Strategy has been delayed due to the pandemic. Work is now underway to align the revised Strategy and will be completed in early 2023/2024. The council uses Snap Survey software for corporate consultations for both internal and external stakeholders. The Planning Policy Service use Objective consultation software for the Local Development Plan. These arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective and value for money when reviewing budget for the forthcoming financial year.	None identified
	4.4.2 Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement	The NPT Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement was launched in 2019 and membership has grown to 60+ council officers and representatives from partner organisations. Members regularly engage with a range of specific stakeholder groups as part of their work and the Community of Practice provides a forum for members to work more smartly and in a more collaborative way to ensure that everyone in our communities can have the opportunity to have their say on the decisions that affect them. It is intended to provide a professional and respectful forum for members to share experiences and knowledge on involvement and engagement issues in a spirit of mutual learning and peer support.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
		The Community of Practice undertook a key role during 2021/2022 in supporting the Let's Talk campaign which informed the priorities contained in the council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and will again support the update of the Strategic Change Programme 2023/2024 and Budget setting for 2024/25 and beyond.	
	4.4.3 Citizens' Panel	Launched in January 2020, the NPT Citizens' Panel is made up of more than 500 residents from across the county borough and actively involves them in decision making at a very early stage, so they help shape proposals before these go out to wider public consultation. This will strengthen the council's approach to consultation and engagement and also help us to meet our obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Citizens' Panel is due to be review and further developed in 2023/24 in line with the action plan in the Public Participation Strategy. The aims will be to refresh the Panel, and undertake recruitment to increase membership and more closely represent the profile of residents in the county borough in terms of geographical spread and protected characteristics.	Review the Citizens' Panel and further develop in line with the action plan in the Public Participation Strategy

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	4.4.4 <u>Public Participation Strategy</u>	The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act") requires local authorities to publish, consult on, and regularly review a public participation strategy to encourage local people to participate in their decision making. This includes where councils make decisions in partnership with another council or in conjunction with another individual or body such as a local health board. The Public Participation Strategy 2023-2027 outlines the council's objectives, approach and mechanisms for encouraging and enabling public participation, together with information on how local people can influence decision-making. It also supports the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and reflects our values by setting out how we will encourage and enable local people and communities in Neath Port Talbot to be actively involved in decisions that affect them. Progress on the Strategy is reported to the Organisational Development Project Board and will be included in the forward work programme for Cabinet going forward.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.5 Effectively engaging to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably	4.5.1 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020 4.5.2 Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020	See 4.1.5 - Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020 See 4.4.1 - Neath Port Talbot Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020	None identified
	4.5.3 Key Stakeholder List	We have a list of key stakeholders that we engage with on major policies and plans. These include: Youth Council; Black Minority Ethnic Community Association; and consultee database for the Local Development Plan.	None identified
	4.5.4 Youth Mayor	First established in September 2019 and elected by the young people of the borough. The role involves representing the voice of all children and young people across the borough at a number of pre-determined civic duties.	None identified
	4.5.5 Partnership working with our trade unions and teaching associations	This is a major feature of the council's culture in relation to workforce engagement. It involves elected Members, managers, employees and trade unions developing and implementing a way of working based on mutual respect and trust, shared objectives and joint ownership of problem solving.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.6 Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively	4.6.1 Third Sector Partnerships	The council has a long and productive relationship with third sector organisations and awards grant funding to organisations so they can support our communities in a wide range of ways. The Partnership Agreement (Compact), between the council and the voluntary sector in Neath Port Talbot, formally recognises and values the contribution of voluntary work to local people, communities and supporting us to deliver on some of our services. It provides a framework for further developing the many years of partnership working in the county borough, in pursuit of our shared interest to build strong communities where everyone has an equal chance to lead a fulfilled life. It also sets out the partnership responsibilities and expectations on both the council and the voluntary sector.	Commence the review of the Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the council and the voluntary sector (to be completed by September 2024)
	4.6.2 Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum	The Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum meets on a quarterly basis and is regularly consulted on key council policies e.g. budget and Corporate Plan.	None identified
	4.6.3 County Borough Council / Community Councils Liaison Forum	The council meets with the Town and Community Councils throughout the year to discuss a wide number of issues. Meetings were held throughout 2022/2023 to discuss issues of concern to the Town and Community Councils and also to update them on the council's approach to supporting communities.	Commence the review the Charter between the council and Town and Community Councils (to be completed by September 2024)

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
		Ongoing training was also provided to Town and Community Councils by the Monitoring Officer on the Member's Code of Conduct.	
	4.6.4 Informal partnerships	There are a number of informal partnerships in place, e.g. Equality and Community Cohesion Group which is made up of both officers from across the council and representatives of external organisations.	None identified
	4.6.5 Public Services Board (PSB)	PSB members work together to deliver the objectives set out in the PSB Well-being Plan and monitor progress on delivery of work.	None identified
4.7 Ensuring that partnerships are based on: • Trust • A shared commitment to change • A culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; and • that the added value of	See 2.4.2 Continue to participate in a number of partnerships and 4.5.4 Youth Mayor	The council plays an active role in collaborative arrangements to ensure the best return for our citizens and other stakeholders. These arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure they meet the required needs of the council and where they do not reports are brought to members highlighting various risks and concerns for the decisions to be made on future actions.	None identified
	4.7.1 Staff Council (Consists of: LGS Green Book Negotiating Forum, LSPG (Schools trade union partnership forum), Service Joint	All of these groups meet regularly and are an opportunity for two-way information sharing, consultation and where necessary, negotiation. As part of our approach to partnership working, trade unions have representation in other forums; so for example, trade unions sit as an integral part of the Future of Work Team.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
partnership working is explicit	Consultative Groups, and the Corporate Health & Safety Trade Union Forum).		
4.8 Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users - establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes	See 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)	Consultation with stakeholders is a key element of the IIA process and guidance as to what needs to be considered is readily available to officers. Consultation is imperative as part of this process in order to help determine whether 'initiatives' (e.g. policy, service, procedures, strategies, projects etc.) will have a positive, negative or neutral impact on the community.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.9 Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement	See 4.5.1 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018/2020	Clear strategies are in place to ensure members and officers communicate effectively in relation to community engagement. See 1.1.1 Employee Code of Conduct See 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct - monitored by the Standards Committee See 4.1.5 and 4.5.1	None identified
4.10 Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs	See section 4.4 and 4.5		
4.11 Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account	See section 4.5		

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.12 Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity	4.12.1 Council has a number of duties through the following legislation to ensure inclusivity of feedback from all stakeholder groups: • Equality Act 2010 • Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, • Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 • Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 • Environment (Wales) Act 2016)	See 1.3.1	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
4.13 Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users	4.13.1 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.	The Corporate Plan 2022-2027 sets out the council's revised purpose, vision, values and wellbeing objectives. The Corporate Plan demonstrates how the council contributes to the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Neath Port Talbot and to the seven national wellbeing goals contained in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The priorities under each wellbeing objective in the short and medium term demonstrate how the council intends to maximise its contribution to the seven wellbeing goals set by Welsh Government. The Strategic Change Programme, re-branded 'Working in Partnership for Our People, Our Places and Our Planet', has been reviewed in 2022/2023 setting out our key priorities for 2023/2024.	None identified
	4.13.2 The Council's four Well-being Objectives and statement are published in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027	Audit Wales has issued certificates confirming that the council has discharged it duties under relevant legislation for both the council's Corporate Plan and Annual Report.	None identified

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvements / action**
5.1 Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions	See 4.1.4 - The council's vision is set out in the Corporate Plan	The council's vision is set out in the published Corporate Plan 2022-2027.	None identified
	5.1.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF)	An interim Corporate Performance Management Framework (CPMF) has been developed and demonstrates how the council will meet the duties contained within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

These duties include the undertaking of an annual corporate self-assessment. Service Recovery Planning at an accountable manager level.

The CPMF is an "interim" framework as it is acknowledged performance management arrangements require strengthening across the authority at the strategic, service and individual levels. The proposed review, we will define an improved performance management capability that will enable the council to better deliver the vision, purpose and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and to achieve the required savings as part of the council's Medium Term Financial plan (MTFP) in future years.

It would also facilitate the detailed requirements gathering for a replacement Corporate Performance Management System, following the decision to no longer utilise the CAMMS platform. | Review business planning and performance management arrangements across the council |

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvements / action**
5.2 Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer	5.2.1 Commissioning	The council delivers or commissions an enormous range of services and functions that affect the day to day life of everyone who lives in the county borough. Service user questionnaires are undertaken as part of contract monitoring; contracts require processes to be in place to ensure providers actively engage with service users, informing service and feedback on proposed changes. Contract Monitoring Officers review practice, including interviewing service users.	None identified
5.3 Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available	See section 4.1	We examine the progress made in achieving our well-being objectives set out in the Corporate Plan, including the key performance indicators. On an annual basis progress is summarised in our Annual Report which includes data on key areas of performance.	None identified
5.4 Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes	5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy	The council's Risk Management Policy has recently been reviewed and approved by Cabinet in 2023. The Strategic Risk Register will be reviewed at CDG quarterly and taken to Cabinet every six months. Directorate Risk Registers will also be reviewed at CDG every six months (at a minimum)	Ensure all strategic risk are embedded and further refine Directorate (operational) Risk Registers
	5.4.2 Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)	In January 2021 the Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Services took over the role of SIRO, which was subsequently passed to the newly appointed Chief Digital Officer in July 2021.	None identified

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvements / action
		The SIRO reports directly to the Corporate Directors Group and Corporate Governance Group on information security matters. The SIRO is accountable for information risk throughout the Authority and ensures that information risks are treated as a priority across all service areas.	
5.5 Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available	5.5.1 Let's Talk Campaign See 4.13.1 The Council's strategic vision and priorities	The priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 were informed by an extensive engagement exercise "Let's Talk". This was undertaken in two phases between July 2021 and January 2022.	Revisit the Let's Talk campaign during 2023/2024 to inform priorities for 2024/2025.
5.6 Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits - considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision	See also 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) See also Corporate Plan 2022-2027		

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvements / action
5.7 Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints.	5.7.1 Welsh Government Procurement Policy See also 2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019	Complying with the policy, by ensuring that contracts over the value of £1,000,000 include community benefits clauses and contracts split into "Lots" or smaller arrangements – allowing smaller organisations to bid for elements of contracts if they are unable to bid for larger packages. The council has made a commitment to actively examine where it sources its goods and services from to ensure those arrangements are ethical.	None identified
5.8 Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social, and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs	See section 5.7 / 4.3 / 4.4		
5.9 Ensuring fair access to services	5.9 Strategic Equality Plan (SEP)	Work to review the actions as contained in the SEP commenced during 2022-2023. During the early stages of the review a	None identified

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvements / action**
		number of actions have been identified as being no longer appropriate for inclusion for variety of reasons, including: • Are now considered 'business as usual' • Have been completed; and • Circumstances in which they were developed have now changed. However, the review has since been paused to allow for a more comprehensive review during 2023-2024 which will consider and aim to address the inequalities faced by our communities as well as having the opportunity to better align the SEP with the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2027.	

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
6.1 Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided	6.1.1 Corporate Self-Assessment	The requirement to publish an annual self-assessment is contained within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and is a corporate, organisational assessment rather than an assessment of individual services. As part of the self-assessment, the council is required to consider the extent to which it is: • exercising its functions effectively (how well are we doing?) • using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively (how do we know?) • ensuring its governance is effective for securing the above (what and how can we do better?) In undertaking this self-assessment process across 7 key areas, in addition to stating what arrangements we have in place to ensure we do the above well, we have also considered how effective those arrangements are by reflecting and scoring ourselves and identifying how these areas can be further improved.	Further refine the council's annual self-assessment process.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
	See 1.4.4 The council's Constitution sets out the different responsibilities of Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff highlight roles and responsibilities.	The Monitoring Officer oversees the council's Constitution and ensure it is kept up to date. The report guidance for both Executive and Non-Executive reports requires report authors to describe all options that have been considered, not just any preferred option.	None identified
6.2 Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts	See sections 4.4.4 / 4.10 / 4.11 / 4.12 The Monitoring Officer oversees the council's Constitution and ensure it is kept up to date. The report guidance for both Executive and Non-Executive reports requires report authors to describe all options that have been considered, not just any preferred option.		None identified

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
6.3 Planning Interventions - establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets	See 5.1.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework		
6.4 Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered	See 6.2		
6.5 Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	See 2.4.2 Continue to participate in a number of partnership and 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy		

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
6.6 Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances	See 4.13.1 Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015		
6.7 Establishing appropriate local performance indicators (as well as relevant statutory or other national performance indicators) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured	See 5.1.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework	There is a clear structure in place for delivering the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, which includes performance measures for each Well-being Objective.

At service level, Service Recovery Plans require the inclusion of key service recovery performance measures that are linked to service priorities and outcomes and improvements and changes that the service wants to achieve. Key business as usual service performance measures can be included as well.

Officers are encouraged to include qualitative measures of success (inspection/reviews or feedback results/what the aim is/what you want to achieve/ what does good look like?) as well as performance measures. | None identified |
| 6.8 Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly | See also 5.1.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework | | |

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
6.9 Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium-term financial plan	6.9.1 Budget setting process	On 2nd March 2023, Council approved the 2023/2024 budget following stakeholder consultation. The requirement to set a balanced budget was met.	Further development of a medium term financial strategy.
6.10 Informing medium and long-term planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy	See above 6.9.1 Budget setting process		
6.11 Optimising achievement of intended outcomes - ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints	See above 6.9.1 Budget setting process		

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
6.12 Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term	See 6.9.1 Budget setting process		
6.13 Ensuring the medium-term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage	See 6.9.1 Budget setting process		

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
6.14 Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is "the additional benefit to the community….over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes"	See 2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019		

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
7.1 Developing the entity's capacity - reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness	See 1.2.2 The purpose, vision and values of the council are contained within the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027, along with key objectives and priority actions for the next twelve months. The Strategic Workforce Plan, The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 is aligned to the Corporate Plan.	The Strategic Workforce Plan identifies the key challenges and priorities for our employees over the next 5 year period, as set out in the Corporate Plan objectives and priorities, Medium Term Financial Plan, Digital Strategy and the Risk Register. The 12 month Delivery Plan appended to this strategy sets out how the council will address these challenges, and to ensure that the council has the right number of people, with the right skills and attitudes, in the right place, at the right time, and in order to deliver its services and functions. The Delivery Plan will be reviewed every 12 months.	None identified
7.2 Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently	7.2.1 There are a number of examples of research and benchmarking exercises undertaken across the council: See 6.1.1 Corporate Self-Assessment	The Corporate Policy team has key performance contacts in a number of authorities who periodically meet and discuss best practice in relation to planning and performance management. The Corporate Policy Team are members of Data Cymru's Corporate Performance Data network (CPDn). Its purpose is to inform and support the development of the self-assessment performance dataset (SAPD). The current SAPD data tool holds	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
		data across range of services/themes and can be used to compare against other authorities. The link to this data has been shared with strategic officers, all service mangers and performance leads. A number of services benchmark via APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). A number of service areas also benchmark data with other services from other local authorities via benchmarking groups/networks/data platforms, some of which are provided by Data Cymru, Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). Examples of benchmarking groups include: • The council's Electoral Services officers participate in the Association of Electoral Administrators network to benchmark electoral administration. • Participation by officers and members in networks facilitated by the WLGA to benchmark and research out best practice across Democratic Services functions in other councils • Wales waste data flow for fly tipping; • County Surveyor Society Wales benchmarking;	

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
		• Road Safety Benchmarking; • Workforce planning benchmarking; Services also use other platforms for benchmarking data such as Welsh Government STATS Wales's website and other platforms provided by Data Cymru. From April 2022, where benchmarking data is available, all services were required to use benchmarking data to inform their self-assessment of performance when they complete their Service Recovery Plans. All services through self-assessment will also have to demonstrate if they are achieving their intended outcomes and delivering value for money. The Service Recovery Plan process helps services reflect on and challenge what they do to help them continuously improve. Benchmarking arrangements within Service Recovery Plan guidance has been further strengthened from April 2023, a link has also been made within the guidance to the SAPD data tool referred to above. Benchmarking data (where available) is included in performance reports provided to members as part of our performance scrutiny arrangements.	

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
7.3 Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved	See 2.4.2 / section 4.6 and 4.7		
7.4 Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources	7.4.1 Social Care Wales Workforce Development Partnership (SCWWDP) See also section 7.1 <u>Future of Work Strategy 2022-2027</u>	The broad aim of the SCWWDP is to ensure partnership working to support social care staff across all organisations, support the ambition of the health and social care workforce strategy and build a digitally ready workforce. In addition, deliver excellent education and learning, provide qualifying and post qualifying social work training and shape and supply the workforce.	None identified
7.5 Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals - developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained	See 1.4.4 The council's Constitution (different responsibilities of Members and Officers / clear job descriptions for all staff).		

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
7.6 Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body	7.6.1 List of officer delegation	The Constitution requires the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to keep a list of all officer delegations made in accordance with the Constitution. The work to review all proposals and to keep a central electronic list of delegations is ongoing. Work with individual Directorates to gather evidence of delegations is continuing with the aim of a report to Corporate Governance Group on methods of record keeping.	None identified
7.7 Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure, whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority.	7.7.1 Cross party panel	The panel which is made up elected Members (and chaired by the Leader) undertakes the Chief Executive's appraisal and agrees the objectives for year ahead and personal learning.	None identified
	See 1.4.4 The council's Constitution sets out the different responsibilities of Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff highlight roles and responsibilities.	The Monitoring Officer oversees the council's Constitution and ensures it is kept up to date.	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
7.8 Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: • Ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged • Ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis • Ensuring personal, organisation and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from both internal	7.8.1 Member support and development.	The Local Government Elections took place in May 2022 and the main focus for the year was their induction. Members were invited to undertake the following sessions as part of their induction: • Introduction to the Council, its role, Corporate Governance, Corporate Plan, Wellbeing Goals • Code of Conduct and Ethics (including civility and respect) • Health and Safety • Replacement Local Development Plan • Service Area Introductions • Community Leadership and Casework • Budget and Financial Management • Treasury Management • Committee Procedures and the role of Scrutiny and how to be an effective Scrutiny Member • Equalities, Diversity and the Socio-Economic Duty • Safe Data Management and GDPR • Freedom of Information (FOIs) • Welsh Language • Corporate Parenting • Social Media • Safeguarding • Housing	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
and external governance weaknesses		• Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and sexual violence • Member Officer Relations • Women's Rights/Gender Equality • Public Speaking and Working with the Media (Cabinet Members only) • The role of members in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. To include sustainable development. • The role of members in relation to the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act • Climate Change, mitigation and decarbonisation Members undertook committee specific training depending on their committee allocations, with particular mandatory training for members of the Licensing, Planning, Governance and Audit, Standards and other regulatory committees. Chairs and Members of Scrutiny also undertook targeted training by external providers. Member Seminars were also presented on the following topics: • Biodiversity • Waste Strategy Review	

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
		- UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Cost of Living 20mph Speed Limits - NPT Green Infrastructure - Budget Review - Scams, caller blockers & trader approval schemes - Draft budget proposals out for consultation - Swansea Bay University Health Board Updates - Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) - Strategic School Improvement Plan - EFC Carers Induction - RLDP - Major Incidents - Introduction Voter ID and other election act reforms	
	7.8.2 Reviewing individual member performance	This is done on a regular basis taking account of their attendance and considering any training or development needs.	None identified
	7.8.3 Officer support and development	The training available for officers is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure they can fulfil their roles and responsibilities.	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
	7.8.4 Reviewing individual officer performance: See also 1.1.3 An induction programme for Members 1.1.4 Staff: the Induction Checklist, (which contains information about the expected standards) 1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process 1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff		
7.9 Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation	See section 4.4.4 and 4.5		

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
7.10 Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections	7.10.1 External regulator inspections	Reports and reviews undertaken by Audit Wales including the Annual Report and Assurance Risk Assessment reference the council's leadership approach and provide improvement recommendations where necessary. Both Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales have a programme of inspections based on their annual performance evaluation. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 also contains a requirement for Panel Assessments (Peer reviews) to be undertaken once every electoral (ordinary) cycle. Public Services Ombudsman for Wales undertakes regular 'own initiative' pieces of work which investigate service provision linked to particular areas across the public sector.	None identified
	7.10.2 Internal Process See also 6.1.1 Self-Assessment	The Strategic Workforce Plan, The Future of Work Strategy 2022 – 2027 sets out actions for the development of leadership and management across the council which are being implemented in 2023.	
7.11 Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which	See 1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process	The majority of employees within the council have regular 1:1s or supervision sessions with their	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement /action**
take account of training or development needs		manager to address their performance and to discuss training and development needs.	
7.12 Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing	See 1.2.2 The Future of Work Strategy - Strategic Workforce Plan 2022-2027 Maximising Attendance at Work Procedure Health and Safety	The council has signed the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge. We have in place an action plan which contains initiatives to support employees across the council with mental ill health. Progress on the action plan is reported annually to Personnel Committee. As part of the Future of Work Strategy we have set out an intention to develop a Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Council has a dedicated Occupational Health & Safety & Well-being Team providing advice, support and expertise in relation to the health, safety and well-being of our employees. The council has a number of policies and procedures to support the health and well-being of employees, including the Maximising Attendance at Work Procedure and the Rehabilitation Procedure, as well as a suite of Health and Safety at procedures all aiming to protect the health and safety of people in our workplaces.	None identified

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
8.1 Managing risk - recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making	See 5.4.1 / 5.4.2 and section 6.5		
8.2 Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively			
8.3 Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated			
8.4 Managing Performance - monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post-implementation review	8.4.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework Our interim CPMF outlines our current evaluation, planning, risk and performance measurement arrangements at corporate, service and individual level. These arrangements will be reviewed during 2023/24. See also 5.1.1 Corporate Performance and Risk Management system (CPMS) We have a range of performance indicators that enable the council to measure performance of services. To support the delivery of the framework, there is a corporate performance management team as well as directorate performance management teams.		

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
8.5 Making decisions based on relevant, clear, objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook	See also 1.4.4 The council's Constitution The Constitution sets out how the council operates and the process for policy and decision-making. Within this framework all the decisions are taken by Council, Cabinet or Cabinet Boards. The decisions are presented in a comprehensive written format in a standard template. The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee considers any decisions directly before the Cabinet meets. This is referred to as contemporaneous scrutiny. A record of decision-making and supporting materials are published (publically accessible reports only) on the council's website via Modern.gov.		
8.6 Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made, thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible	8.6.1 Scrutiny Committees	The role and responsibility for scrutiny has been established and is clear. Annual forward work programme sessions are arranged to identify items for the committees to focus on in the new civic year. Throughout the year scrutiny Members also undertake specific training to enhance their skills (e.g. Chair and Vice Chair training).	None identified
8.7 Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement	See 4.1.4 Council Meeting Cycle The cycle of meetings sets out a calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely performance reports.		

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
8.8 Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post-implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements)	8.8.1 Financial standards, guidance and regulations	The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring there are proper arrangements in place for the administration of the financial affairs of the council. Corporate Directors are responsible for the financial management of their respective services and are supported by regular financial management information, which includes monthly financial monitoring reports.	None identified
8.9 Robust internal control - aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives	See also 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy		
8.10 Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis	See 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy		
8.11 Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place	See 1.4.1 The Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy		

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
8.12 Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor	8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement See also 9.9.1 Internal audit service	The Annual Governance Statement reports on the extent of the council's compliance with its principles and practices of good governance, including how the council has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year. The Annual Governance Statement is reviewed every year and updated to reflect the improvement work undertaken during the year.	None identified
8.13 Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment and that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon	Governance and Audit Committee (Terms of reference, Membership and Training)	Governance and Audit committee complies with best practice (Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA 2022) and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Three new external Lay Members have been appointed to the Committee and took up their roles at the first meeting on the Committee held on 27th September 2022.	None identified

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
8.14 Managing Data - ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data	8.14.1: Data management framework and procedures / data protection officer / policies and procedures	The Information Governance (IG) Team provide support to the Information Asset Owners who have local responsibility for Information Management in their area.

The team develop, implement and maintain information management and information security policies and guidance. Providing operational support, training, expert advice, guidance on these areas.

The Information Governance team provide additional assurance through the undertaking of information governance and information security audits and information risk assessments with Information Asset Managers and key stakeholders.

The Information Governance Strategy Group provides overview and scrutiny of IG arrangements. Making recommendations to both the Head of Legal & Democratic Services as the council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) with responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Chief Digital Officer as the council's Senior Information | A review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing work to be undertaken by the Information Governance team.

A number of actions have been completed as part of the information governance work including registers of the relevant agreements and assessments, with procedures to identify new processing and sharing.

Assurance is in place through information audits and the Information Asset Audit for the Information Asset Register. |

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
		Risk Owner with responsibility for information risk and security. The DPO and SIRO report directly to the Corporate Governance Group on information governance and security matters.	
8.15 Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies	See 8.14.1		
8.16 Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring	See 9.9.1 Internal audit service		
8.17 Strong public financial management - ensuring financial management supports both long-term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance	See 3.2.1 The CIPFA Financial Management Code 2019 (FM Code) was introduced during 2020/2021, to improve the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced standards of financial management.		
8.18 Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls	See 3.2.1		

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
9.1 Implementing good practice in transparency - writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate	See 4.3.1 Modern.gov system		
9.2 Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand	See 4.1.1 The council produces a number of annual reports throughout the year to give assurances to our governance arrangements.		
9.3 Implementing good practices in reporting - reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources			
9.4 Ensuring members and senior management own the results	See 1.4.4 The Constitution		

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
9.5 Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement)	9.5.1 Corporate Governance Group	The Corporate Governance Group ensure that the governance arrangements of the council are robust and fit for purpose. The group oversee any risks identified to governance arrangements and meet on a regular basis and have terms of reference to fulfil their role.	Work to deliver governance awareness training across the council is ongoing and will continue during 2023/2024 to ensure appropriate training takes place with council officers.
9.6 Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate	See 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement		
9.7 Ensuing the performance information that accompanies the financial statement is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations	See 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement		
9.8 Assurance and effective accountability - ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon	9.8 External audit / regulatory reports		

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
9.9 Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon	9.9.1 Internal audit service	The annual Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Governance & Audit Committee at their first meeting on 27th September 2022. Members also approved the revised Internal Audit Charter at the September meeting. The Governance & Audit Committee received quarterly updates of progress against the Internal Audit Plan and details of any factors affecting achievement of the plan. Members were provided with the assurance rating of each completed audit. All recommendations made by auditors were accepted by the service managers and implementation will be confirmed during the post audit review process. Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of internal Audit (2019). Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.	None identified
9.10 Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations	See 9.8		

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	**Evidence of key systems, documents and processes**	**Assurance of arrangements in place**	**Suggested improvement / action**
9.11 Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement	See 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement		
9.12 Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met	See 2.4.2 Governance arrangements are in place for each partnership we are involved in.		

Review of Effectiveness

The council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Chief Officers and the Internal Audit Service who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. A Corporate Governance Group, reporting to the Corporate Directors Group ensures that improvement work is scheduled, resourced and monitored. The council uses a number of ways to review and assess the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, the table below highlights the different mechanisms during 2022/2023:

Governance Arrangements	Update for 2022/2023
Constitution Review & Monitoring	The Constitution is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is up to date and amendments taken through the decision making process as and when required. Amendments took place in summer 2022 to reflect decision making structures within the council and the changes proposed by the new administration. Reports are taken as and when necessary to ensure the Constitution is up to date and Democratic Services Committee have been tasked to work with the Monitoring Officer to review arrangements as and when necessary. Formal reports by s151 or Monitoring Officer – no reports were issued by the s151 or Monitoring Officer in 2021/22.
Internal Audit Service	The focus of Internal Audit work in 2022/2023 was on auditing areas considered to be a high risk. Overall 85% of the plan was completed and 82% of high risk audits undertaken, the remaining high risk audits completed during the early part of 2023/24. The Head of Internal Audit's opinion is that the council's internal control environment and systems of internal control in the areas audited are satisfactory and reasonable assurance can be given that

	there have been no major weaknesses noted in relation to the internal control systems operating within the authority.
Governance & Audit Committee	Approved the Council's Internal Audit Plan in 27th September 2022 Monitored Internal Audit performance against the plan. Monitored External Audit Performance and received update reports from Audit Wales. The Committee received Treasury Management Progress Reports in order to fulfill their obligations in relation to the Scrutiny of Treasury Management activity.
Standards Committee	On signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Members are required to give an undertaking to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct. A detailed member induction programme took place following local government elections in May 2022. This included specified training relating to the member code of conduct, social media issues, gifts and hospitality and officer/member protocols. By the end of June 2022, all 60 elected members had attended and received this training. Refresher training takes place on an annual basis to enhance member's compliance with the Members Code of Conduct and to ensure members are aware of the responsibility to act ethically and with integrity throughout the year, with advice provided on a variety of matters throughout year on interests and predetermination matters. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provided an additional duty on group leaders to ensure members within their political group also comply with the Members Code of Conduct and ongoing support will be provided on this function via the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee were pleased to note the approach that Group Leaders take in promoting standards and the personal commitment they have to encourage members within their groups to embed ethical processes in their day to day activities. Of interest particularly to the Standards Committee was how Group Leaders deal with the "thick skin" ideology that the Public Service Ombudsman and other regulatory bodies adopt and the views that all Group Leaders have that often this is an inappropriate test and it is not something that any elected member should have to have if they face abuse from members of the public, particularly in a social media setting.

	The Standards Committee are required to conduct an assessment of how political group leaders have complied with their new duty to promote high standards of conduct and the Standards Committee are able to confirm that throughout 2022-2023, Group Leaders have discharged their duty, in the views of the Standards Committee, and that there were no ethical concerns arising. The Standards Committee published their Annual Report in April 2023 for the work of the previous finance year.
External Auditors	In the Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2022, which detailed the work completed since the council's last Annual Audit Summary, the Auditor General provided an unqualified true and fair opinion on the council's financial statements on 12th January 2022, in line with the statutory deadline. The Auditor General also certified that the council has met its legal duties for improvement planning and reporting, and believes that it is likely to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 during 2022/2023.

Governance Improvement Areas

Table 1 – Governance Improvement Action Plan Update - 2022/2023

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2022/2023	Responsible Officer	Progress During 2022/2023
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law			
A3.2.1	Complete the review of Accounting Instructions.	Chief Finance Officer	All Accounting Instructions have been reviewed and updated.
Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
A5.1.1	Develop and implement a revised Corporate Performance Management Framework that meets the new duties under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support	An interim Corporate Performance Management Framework has been developed. The council's first Corporate Self-Assessment was approved by Cabinet on 22nd February 2023. 100% (86 of 86) of SRPs that were required to be completed by Accountable Managers for 2022/2023 have been completed and include the requirement to undertake an ongoing self-assessment at the service level.
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
A5.4.1	Complete the review of the council's Risk Management Policy and ensure the Council's Risk Register is updated regularly.	Chief Finance Officer / Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support	The review of the Corporate Risk Management Policy was completed in 2022-2023. The policy was approved by Cabinet on 23rd March 2023. The policy outlines the frequency that risk registers need to be reviewed and reported to Corporate Directors and Cabinet, along with escalation process.

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2022/2023	Responsible Officer	Progress During 2022/2023
A6.9	Develop a Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Chief Finance Officer	Work is ongoing to develop a medium term financial strategy. The technical work regarding identifying the funding gap over the period is almost complete. Work has also commenced on developing appropriate strategic interventions with the intention of closing the estimated funding gap.
Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability			
A9.5.1	Work to deliver governance awareness training across the Council is ongoing and will continue to ensure appropriate training takes place with Council officers.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	As part of the Member Induction sessions, following local elections in May 2022, officers have provided a series of training sessions for members on governance processes such as decision making, officer/member protocols and code of conduct.

Similar training sessions have been provided to officers, for example a series of training on the importance of the member/officer protocol was provided to all Environment Accountable Managers in June 2022.

Further training sessions and ad hoc advice notes to officers continues on a regular basis to officers to ensure they are kept abreast of all new legislative and governance matters. |

Table 2 – Governance Improvement Action Plan - 2023/2024

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2023/2024	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law		
1.1.3	I. All members ensure they attend annual refreshers in respect of the Members Code of Conduct undertaken by the Monitoring Officer; II. All Group Leaders make Standards and Ethics a standing item on their political group meeting agendas; III. All members ensure they are completing their declarations of gifts and hospitality, including where such gifts and hospitality are declined; IV. Group Leaders consider bi-annual meetings with the Monitoring Officer to discuss standards and ethics and how they can work together to promote standards within their political groups; V. Steps be taken to promote the Member Officer Protocol to all elected members and officers of the Council, with training provided as appropriate; VI. A series of guidance documents to be circulated to all members in respect of key conduct matters such as declarations of interest, predetermination, conduct case studies and key information for members.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
1.3.4	Continue with future training of officer groups in the significance of the member and officer relations protocol.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
2.1.1	Corporate Procurement to monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt. Head of Legal & Democratic Services to report annually to the Corporate Governance Group.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2023/2024	Responsible Officer
Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement		
4.4.3	Review the Citizens' Panel and further develop in line with the action plan in the Public Participation Strategy	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
4.6.1	Commence the review of the Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the council and the voluntary sector (to be completed by September 2024)	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
4.6.3	Commence the review of the Charter between the council and Town and Community Councils (to be completed by September 2024)	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits		
5.1.1	Review business planning and performance management arrangements across the council	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
5.4.1	Ensure all strategic risk are embedded and further refine Directorate (operational) Risk Registers	Chief Finance Officer / Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
5.5.1	Revisit the Let's Talk campaign during 2023/2024 to inform priorities for 2024/2025.	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
6.1.1	Further refine the council's annual self-assessment process.	Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support
6.9.1	Further development of a medium term financial strategy.	Chief Finance Officer

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2023/2024	Responsible Officer
Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
8.14.1	A review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing work to be undertaken by the Information Governance team.	Chief Digital Officer
Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability		
9.5.1	Work to deliver governance awareness training across the council is ongoing and will continue during 2023/2024 to ensure appropriate training takes place with council officers.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services

Signed: Karen Jones

Chief Executive: Karen Jones

Date: 4th July 2023

Signed: S. K. Hunt

Leader of the Council: Cllr Steve Hunt

Date: 4th July 2023

Financial Management Code of Self-Assessment

CIPFA issued a new code, The FREM, which sets out the standards of financial management for local authorities. Adoption of the Code commenced in April 2021. This appendix provides a self-assessment which has been approved by Corporate Directors Group and provides assurance that the financial management of the council are being met.

Section 1: The Responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer and the Leadership Team

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
A	The Leadership Team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money.	The Auditor General examines whether the council has put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and has to be satisfied that it has done this. The 2022 Annual Audit Summary issued by Audit Wales identified no issues in relation to value for money. **RAG Rating = Green**
B	The authority complies with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government.	We comply with the requirements of the code. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is a CIPFA qualified accountant with over 20 years of local government experience. Reports directly to Chief Executive Officer and sits on the Leadership Team, influencing material decisions and ensuring financial implications are provided in all reports. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for maintaining and resourcing an effective Internal Audit service and leads on risk management. **RAG Rating = Green**

Section 2: Governance and Financial Management Style

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
C	The leadership team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control.	The council adopts the Nolan principles as can be evidenced in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS was signed off by Audit Wales as part of the accounts audit process. **RAG Rating = Green**
D	The authority applies CIPFA/ SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016.	The Governance & Audit committee reviews the adequacy of Governance arrangements of the authority, reviewing the AGS and receiving risk management updates. An independent review of governance arrangements commissioned and reported upon in 2021/22 recommended period internal audit of the action plan produced from the review. During 2022/23 confirmation that all recommendations of the external review had been implemented was reported to Governance & Audit committee. **RAG Rating = Green**

Standard Reference		Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
E	The financial management style of the authority supports financial sustainability.	Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary for 2022 concluded that the council is financially stable, helped recently by additional Welsh Government funding, but needs to develop a sustainable plan to address cost pressures and close its medium-term funding gap in an increasingly challenging financial climate. **RAG Rating = Amber**

Section 3: Long to Medium-Term Financial Management

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
F	The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment.	The budget setting for 2022/23 includes a statement relating to the robustness of the estimates used in calculating the budget requirement and indicates the budget process has been prepared in conjunction with officers. It also identifies the risk areas that will be actively managed during the financial year. **RAG Rating = Green**
G	The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members	The Council has developed a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2027/28 and are in the process of finalising the 2028/29 MTFP. **RAG Rating = Green**
H	The authority complies with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities	The authority complies will all elements of the Prudential Code. **RAG Rating = Green**

	The authority has a rolling multi-year financial plan with sustainable service plans	During 2021/22 the Council developed its medium-term financial plan, work is ongoing in finalising 2028/29 MTFP. Service recovery plans have been developed and are being monitored and updated annually. **RAG Rating = Green**
I		

Section 4: The Annual Budget

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
J	The authority complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process	The council complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process as set out in the Local Government Finance Act (1992). A legal and balanced budget set by the council by the statutory deadline was approved by Council on 2 March 2023. The council is aware of the circumstances under which a S114 notice should be issue. **RAG Rating = Green**
K	The budget report includes a statement by the chief finance officer on the robustness of the estimates on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.	The budget setting report comments upon the robustness of the estimates included therein and a balanced affordable budget has been set. The reserves are reported within the budget setting process and monitored throughout the financial year. The council agreed a general reserves policy which states reserves should be maintained at circa 4% of the net revenue budget. **RAG Rating = Green**

Section 5: Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
L	The authority has engaged with key stakeholders where appropriate in developing its long term financial strategy, medium term financial plan and annual budget.	Key stakeholders are consulted on key projects for example stakeholder views were sought when developing the corporate plan. Member workshops are run at budget setting. Cabinet approved the consultation process with stakeholders on the draft budget. Consultation responses are reported to Council. **RAG Rating = Green**
M	The authority uses an appropriate documented option appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions.	An investment proposal template has been created and utilised. More work is needed to refine the processes around agreement and priority of the investment appraisals put forward. **RAG Rating = Amber**

Section 6: Monitoring Financial Performance

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
N	The leadership team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability.	Monthly reports are considered by budget holders and reported to the Corporate Directors Group. Quarterly Finance revenue and capital reports are presented to Cabinet. Treasury management reports are taken to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, any significant issues identified are reported to Senior Management Team **RAG Rating = Green**
O	The leadership team monitors the elements of its balance sheet that pose a significant to its financial sustainability.	The balance sheet is monitored by the relevant service department accountants as part of the budget monitoring process. With the balance sheet being reviewed by the Chief Finance Officer as part of the closure of accounts process. **RAG Rating = Green**

Section 7: External Financial Reporting

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
P	The chief finance officer has personal and statutory responsibility for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with	The Chief Finance Officer's responsibilities are set out in the "Statement of responsibilities" within the Statement of accounts. This clearly sets out that the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the council's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. The annual audit letter confirms that the statement of accounts have been prepared on time and in accordance with the code of practice. **RAG Rating = Green**

	the Code Practice in Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.	
Q	The presentation of the final outturn figures and variations from budget allows the leadership team to make strategic financial decisions.	The outturn figures are reported to Corporate Directors Group and Cabinet and is included in the narrative report of the Statement of Accounts. **RAG Rating = Green**