

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

COUNTY COUNCIL

22nd July 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader and Portfolio Holder for an Open and Transparent Powys

REPORT TITLE: Annual Self-Assessment Report

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Annual Self-Assessment

- 1.1. This sets out the first Annual Self-Assessment. The report fully incorporates the annual monitoring of the Council's performance against its Corporate Improvement Plan and Strategic Equality Objectives. Furthermore, it provides a holistic view of the organisation working towards delivering its well-being objectives.
- 1.2. It is important to note that this report is a significant element in Powys County Council's fulfilment of the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The report must be understood as existing in conjunction with the Authority's Annual Governance Statement, the execution of which sets out the required assessment of the organisation's governance processes against the CIPFA principles of good governance.

2. Background

2.1 The LGE (Wales) Act 2021 passed into law in April of this reporting year (2021-22) and places an obligation on local authorities in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is fulfilling the 'performance requirements', meaning that:

- it is exercising its functions effectively
- it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively
- the extent to which its governance is effective for securing the above

2.2 The Act requires the council to develop and publish a self-assessment report once in every financial period. The report should be made available as soon as reasonably practicable after the financial year to which it relates but it is left to the authority to decide how best that can be achieved.

2.3 In addition, Section 90 of the Act outlines the Welsh Government expectation that local authorities will, at least once in every financial period, consult with:

- a) local people
- b) other persons carrying on a business in the council's area
- c) the staff of the council

d) every trade union which is recognised (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (c. 52)) by the council.

These consultations are to be used to elicit feedback on the extent to which the authority is fulfilling the performance requirements.

2.4 The statutory guidance provided by Welsh Government defines self-assessment as ‘a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. Self-assessment is more than stating what arrangements are in place; it is about considering how effective these arrangements are and how they can be improved.’ (pp. 15-16)

2.5 Existing reporting channels that contain evidence that is aligned with the Self-Assessment Report include, but are not limited to:

- CIP/SEP Annual Performance Report (now superseded by the Self-Assessment Report)
- Annual Governance Statement
- Partnership reporting
- Regulatory and Audit Reports
- Self-assessments (Quarterly Performance Reports, Integrated Business Plans, Service Improvement Board Reports, Transformation Board Reports)
- Scrutiny Evaluations
- Staff engagements
- Other consultation and engagement forums
- Compliments and complaints
- Comparative performance information.

Welsh Government guidance for the fulfilment of the requirements of the Self-Assessment Report presupposes that all previous reporting responsibilities are already being fulfilled and that the conclusions contained therein are available to support the drafting of the Self-Assessment Report.

2.6 The Self-Assessment Report therefore presents those conclusions supported by the Council’s Performance Self-Assessment 2021-22 and provides an overview of the Authority’s end of year analysis of its progress against the key performance objectives (i.e. our Corporate Plan priorities and Strategic Equality Plan priorities). This reporting also fulfils the Authority’s obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act., the Equality Act 2010 and the Wales Measure 2011 (which includes the Socio-Economic Duty), thereby negating the requirement to publish the Powys County Council Annual Performance Report.

2.7 In addition to presenting the Council’s annual performance against what may be summarised as its Wellbeing of Future Generations Act objectives, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires that the Authority reports its conclusions regarding the validity and effectiveness of its governance processes during the previous financial year. This material is covered by the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and it was initially hoped that the AGS might be integrated and the material brought under the aegis of the Self-Assessment Report. Welsh Government has,

however, indicated that it wishes the Self-Assessment Report to be a short document (ideally under fifty pages) and this would not allow sufficient space to adequately address the concerns of both documents. The AGS will therefore remain a stand-alone document and is sign-posted by the Self-Assessment Report as providing the underlying evidence that supports the judgements included regarding our governance processes. Workshops surrounding the AGS are due to take place in July, ahead of publication in September alongside the Statement of Accounts.

2.8 Where possible, any duplication that has previously existed between the Annual Performance Reports and the Annual Governance Statement has been removed to improve ease of use.

2.9 From an early stage of development, the Authority's Scrutiny functions have been involved in the production of the Self-Assessment Report and have provided significant contribution. Sessions were facilitated for the Committees in Spring 2022 to allow a self-assessment of both the scrutiny function itself, and how the committee members feel the organisation is delivering against its well-being objectives. This information has been used alongside the information provided by Officers to form a significant proportion of the evidence base on which the report rests.

2.10 The criteria against which the Council's performance is assessed are as follows:

a) The well-being objectives as set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan:

- We will develop a vibrant economy (including equality objectives 1 and 2)
- We will lead the way in providing effective, integrated health and care in a rural environment (including equality objectives 3 and 4)
- We will strengthen learning and skills (including equality objective 5)
- We will support our residents and communities (including equality objective 6)

b) The Strategic Equality Objectives:

- Equality Objective 1) By 2024 we will enable people with a disability to have improved opportunities for valued occupation including paid employment.
- Equality Objective 2) By 2024 we will create equality of opportunity for all our staff and take action to close the pay gap.
- Equality Objective 3) By 2024, we will improve the availability of accessible homes, adaptable homes and life-time homes, that provide suitable and sustainable accommodation for future generations
- Equality Objective 4) By 2024, we help people to get the support they need to prevent homelessness
- Equality Objective 5) By 2024, we will improve opportunities and outcomes for children living in poverty.
- Equality Objective 6) By 2024, we will improve opportunities for our residents and communities to become more digitally inclusive. This will enable them to easily access the services they need and participate fully in everyday life.

c) The CIPFA Principles as used to assess good governance practices in the AGS:

- **Principle A:** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- **Principle B:** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- **Principle C:** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social, and environmental benefits
- **Principle D:** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- **Principle E:** Developing the organisation's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- **Principle F:** Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- **Principle G:** Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

2.11 The Self-Assessment Report must be published 'as soon as reasonably practicable' following the end of the financial year to which it refers. Material that has previously been sited within other reports, however, is subject to the following deadlines for publication:

- Strategic Equality Monitoring must be published by 31st March following end of financial year but it is considered good practice to publish by July.
- The AGS (which although not now sited within the Self-Assessment Report is closely enough aligned to require a co-ordinated timeline) is generally published by July following the end of the year to which it refers.

3 **Advice**

3.1 That the Cabinet satisfies itself that the above criteria have been fulfilled by the Self-Assessment Report and associated appendices.

3.2 That the Cabinet approves the Self-Assessment Report for publication.

4 **Resource Implications**

4.1 The self-assessment report has been undertaken within existing resources, based upon the Council's current Integrated Business Plans and the Corporate Improvement Plan.

Any actions identified for delivery are to be considered by the organisation, and to be embedded within Service's Integrated Business Plans as part of the Council's strategic planning cycle.

Additional resource is not being sought to implement these recommendations; it is anticipated that these recommendations will be considered utilising existing resources within the Council.

4.2 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the resource implications above.

5 Legal implications

5.1 Legal: the recommendations can be accepted from a legal point of view

5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: “ I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report”.

6 Data Protection

6.1 Not applicable

7 Comment from local member(s)

7.1 Not applicable.

8 Impact Assessment

8.1 An Impact Assessment (IA) is not required for this report as the report does not include any formal proposals or policy changes.

8.2 All actions within the report will be taken forward by responsible officers as part of the strategic planning process, which will have the relevant Impact Assessments as required as part of this process.

10. Recommendations

10.1 That the Council considers the report presented and satisfies itself that the following criteria have been met:

- That the Self-Assessment Report fulfils the Authority's obligations under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- That the conclusions presented in the Self-Assessment Report are considered corporately to be a fair and accurate evaluation of the Authority's performance in 2021/22.
- That the self-assessment report offers an open, balanced, and realistic picture of the Council's achievements and challenges over the previous year.
- That the document is clear and provides the right level of information to make it meaningful and relevant to all audiences.

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