

# Report

## Governance and Audit Committee

---

### Part 1

Date: 27 October 2022

**Subject** Annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

**Purpose** For the Governance and Audit Committee to review and consider the process undertaken to complete the annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report and to make recommendations as necessary for Cabinet to consider.

**Author** Director of Transformation and Corporate  
Head of People, Policy and Transformation

**Ward** All

**Summary** The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires local authorities in Wales to undertake a Self-Assessment of its governance and performance.

Newport City Council has integrated its Annual Report with its annual Well-being Report to provide an overview on the effectiveness of the Council's Governance and Performance arrangements to deliver its Corporate Plan and services. The Council's Self-Assessment requirements has also considering the findings and assessments completed in other statutory annual reports.

The role of the Council's Governance and Audit Committee is to ensure the self-assessment has been completed in accordance with the Act; review the draft report with its considerations and actions; and propose recommendations for change. The final report will be presented to Cabinet in November for approval.

**Proposal** To provide the Governance an Audit Committee with an overview the Council's Corporate Annual Report 2021/22 and to make any recommendations for improvement to the report.

**Action by** Executive Board  
Corporate Management Team

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Executive Board
- Corporate Management Team

**Signed**

**Background**

In February 2021, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 replaced the improvement duty for Councils set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Act provides a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance. One of the requirements of the Act is for local authorities in Wales to:

- Conduct an annual self-assessment of performance and;
- Conduct periodic review to provide an external, expert perspective on performance

To support the implementation of these requirements, Welsh Government published guidance for local authorities to consider that will suit its own governance and performance monitoring requirements. Welsh Government guidance can be found [here](#). The requirements are set out as:

**1. Keep performance under review** – ensuring that the Council is exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively; and that governance arrangements are effective for securing these areas.

**2. Duty to consult on performance** – ensuring that Councils consult with local people, businesses operating in Newport, Council staff and Trade Unions.

**3. Duty to report on performance** – demonstrating the extent to which the Council has performed in the previous financial year, the action it intends to take or has taken to meet and increase upon performance requirements.

In [May 2022](#), the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) received a report informing the proposed approach that the Council was going to undertake the Self-Assessment. The agreed approach was to combine the Self-Assessment with the Council's existing annual Well-being report and to integrate the reporting of other annual performance reports.

## **Role of The Governance & Audit Committee**

One stipulation in the Act is that the Self-Assessment is reviewed by the Council's (GAC) and that it is formally approved by the Council's Cabinet. The role of the Council's GAC is to ensure the self-assessment has been completed in accordance with the Act; review the draft report with its conclusions and actions; and proposing recommendations for change before the report is presented at Cabinet.

## **Key Findings of the Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2021/22**

The Annual Report 21/22 (appendix one) provides an overview of the progress Newport City Council made towards delivering its Well-being Objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 17-22. The Report examines its corporate governance, financial performance, risk management and other annual performance reports which are reported through the Council's Scrutiny and Cabinet / Cabinet Member process. In addition to this, the Report also provides an overview of how it has engaged and involved residents, public, staff and trade unions in its decision making throughout 2021/22.

In 2021/22 the Council's Corporate Plan was focused on the following four Well-being Objectives:

1. To improve skills, education, and employment opportunities.
2. To promote economic growth and regeneration while protecting the environment.
3. To enable people to be healthy, independent, and resilient.
4. To build cohesive and sustainable communities.

For most of 2021/22, Covid restrictions remained in place for communities and businesses in Newport. Across the Council, teams have been working hard to deliver services and ensure its citizens receive support and access to its provisions. The Corporate Annual Report highlights the achievements made by the Council in the year and the following has been successfully delivered by Newport City Council:

### **Well-being Objective 1- Education, Skills and Employment**

- Remote learning was a challenge during periods of school closures. Using funding from Welsh Government EdTech fund, 6,587 Chromebooks, 1,146 laptops, 766 Apple devices and 146

charging trolleys were delivered to schools to support pupils. The funding was also used to support pupils to access internet with 504 MiFi devices up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021.

- The Council's Neighbourhood Hubs and Community Centres have been supporting communities to access digital services and adult learning jobs in the city.

### **Well-being Objective 2- Economic Growth Whilst Protecting the Environment**

- In March 2022, the multi-million pound regeneration scheme Newport Market was completed and opened to the public. The large and vibrant indoor market has a host of new traders, a food court and event spaces.
- Newport City Council declared an Ecological and Climate Emergency. Climate Change is one of the biggest challenges of our generation and there is an urgent need for us to act and limit global temperature rise. As an organisation the Council has taken positive steps to reduce our carbon emissions in line with the Carbon Management Plan.

### **Well-being Objective 3- Health and Well-being of citizens**

- Children Services have been involved in a number of key projects throughout 21/22. Newport Council has been a strong supporter for Maethu Cymru/Foster Wales work to promote and encourage people to become Foster Carers in Newport.
- Newport City Council is committed to improving the city's transportation network to make walking and cycling more appealing and safe option for people. Over the past year, the Council has been delivering various schemes across Newport such as Monkey Island Active Travel, new links through Tredegar park and the new Devon Place Footbridge.

### **Well-being Objective 4- Cohesive and Sustainable Communities**

- The Welsh Language standards continues to drive the Council to continually improve the delivery of bilingual public services to businesses. In September 2022, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) will set out the Council's ten-year ambitious plan.

The report also highlights where the Council is underperforming in relation to its performance measures and the action being taken to improve performance across the Council.

The second part of the report focuses on the Council's corporate governance and performance arrangements referring to other annual reports published by the Council e.g Welsh Language, equalities, compliments, comments and complaints report, Information risk report as some of the examples highlighted. The Report also provides an overview of where the Council has consulted, engaged and involved residents, businesses, staff and trade unions in matters relating to its decisions and performance.

In the Council's overall conclusion, the Corporate Governance and performance arrangements remained effective in managing its overall corporate governance, internal control and risk management arrangements. This is supported by the Council's Annual Governance Statement. In addition to this, 15 recommendations and actions have been identified to improve existing governance and performance arrangements which will be integrated into the relevant service area plans for monitoring and reporting.

### **Next Steps**

The conclusions and recommendations by the Council's GAC will be considered alongside the recommendations of the Council's Overview Scrutiny Management Committee before it is presented to Cabinet in November 2022.

The agreed report will be shared with Welsh Government, and its three Regulatory bodies (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn). A final published version will also be made available on the Council's website in Welsh and English.

As this is the first year of the Self-Assessment, we will review the process undertaken considering views of stakeholders, and learning from other local authorities.

## Financial Summary

There are no direct costs associated with this report.

## Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Non-compliance with the Local Government & Elections Act	M	L	The approach outlined in the report will mitigate against non-compliance with the Act.	Director for Corporate and Transformation

\*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

## Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Corporate Plan 2017-22

## Options Available and considered

1. Governance and Audit Committee to provide comments and recommendations on the Council's approach to the Annual Report note the contents of this report and the approach that the Council will undertake to comply with the new requirements set in the Local Government & Elections Act 2021.
2. Governance and Audit Committee do not accept the contents of the report and require further information to support the Council's approach proposed.

## Preferred Option and Why

1. Option 1 is the preferred option and Officers will consider any feedback received in relation to report presented.

## Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report. The report highlights the impact of COVID and cost of living crisis through 2021/22 and the ongoing financial pressures that had been managed through the Welsh Government Hardship Fund and other specific WG grant funding. The report also highlights the financial aspects of other actions delivered throughout the year.

The Council's Corporate Plan and the delivery of the four Well-being Objectives in 21/22 were reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The report also acknowledges where recovery was supported by Welsh Government grant funding, including the Hardship Fund. The link between the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be monitored and updated as the Corporate Plan progresses. Any necessary changes to the MTFP will be identified and implemented if required. These are reflected in the Council's Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.

As the report highlights, moving forward the delivery of the new Corporate Plan will have to consider new challenges around the cost of living and inflationary pressures and opportunities to improve our services. These will be reflected in the future budget, MTFP and Capital programme.

## Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has removed the previous statutory duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 for

councils to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services. The continuous improvement duty has been replaced by a more flexible performance self-assessment process which requires the Council to keep under review the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and has in place effective governance arrangements to secure these performance requirements. As part of that self-assessment process, the Council is required to produce an annual self-assessment report, setting out its conclusions on the extent to which it has met these performance requirements and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase performance. How the Council develops and publishes the annual self-assessment performance report is a matter for the Council to determine. The agreed approach, as previously endorsed by Governance & Audit Committee, is to combine the performance self-assessment with the Council's existing annual Well-being report and to integrate the findings of other annual performance reports. Therefore, this annual self-assessment report has been prepared on that basis. Governance & Audit Committee have a statutory role under the 2021 Act to review, assess and make reports about the effectiveness of the arrangements the Council has put in place for the performance assessments to meet the requirements of the legislation and can make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions contained in the draft report. However, any comments or recommendations must relate to the effectiveness of the processes and arrangements, and whether they should be more rigorous or comprehensive, not the performance itself. Overview & Scrutiny Committee will consider any performance issues in relation to meeting the well-being and strategic objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

### **Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation**

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires the Council to publish its Annual Report on progress of delivery against the Corporate Plan 2017-22. Additionally, with the Local Government Act this report provides an opportunity to combine its self-assessment to provide a holistic overview of the Council's governance performance arrangements. As the Annual Report highlights, is continuing to make good progress in the delivery of its strategic priorities and continues to improve its governance arrangements. The launch of the new Corporate Plan later this year will build on the Council's lessons learned and strengthen its arrangements. The Council recognises continuous improvement needs to be made and will consider the recommendations of both the GAC and scrutiny before it is presented to Cabinet in November.

### **Scrutiny Committees**

This report will be presented to the Overview Scrutiny Management Committee at the end of October and its recommendations will be considered as part of the final report to Cabinet in November.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

As this is an information only report there is no requirements to complete an Equalities Impact Assessment.

The Annual Report provides a summary of the Council's Equalities Annual Report which provides an overview of activities undertaken in relation to equalities, consultations and engagement.

The final version of the report will be published in Welsh and English.

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The Annual Report has considered the five ways of working principles in the delivery of the Well-being Act.

### **Consultation**

Considered by Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet.

### **Background Papers**

Corporate Plan 2017-22

Well-being of Future Generations Act

Welsh Government Guidance on Performance and Governance Self-Assessment

Dated: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022