

Report



Governance and Audit Committee

Part 1

Date: September 2023

Subject Annual Corporate Plan Self-Assessment Report 2022/23

Purpose For the Governance and Audit Committee to review and consider the process undertaken to complete the annual Corporate Plan 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 Newport City Council is required to self-assess the extent to which it has met the performance requirements under the Local Government and Elections Act and also the progress it has made in delivering against its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives (Well-being of Future Generations Act). This Annual Report provides an overview of the Council's 2022/23 performance and the governance / performance arrangements in place. In compiling the assessment the report has considered other strategic and statutory reports published by the Council for 2022/23.

In the Council's overall conclusion the Council has assessed that it has made good progress against 2 out of 4 of its Well-being Objectives (Objectives 2 and 4) but challenges remain in the delivery of Well-being Objectives 1 and 3. The Council has also assessed its governance and performance arrangements to be effective in the use its resources economically, efficiently and effectively through its Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Accounts, Internal Audit and External Regulatory activity.

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 Council in November for approval.

Proposal For the Council's Governance and Audit Committee to be provided with an overview the Council's Annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2022/23 and for the Committee to make any recommendations for 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

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires local authorities across Wales to conduct an annual self-assessment of performance to:

- 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.

Local authorities are also required to publish an annual report on the self-reflection / assessment of its performance and progress in the delivery of its Well-being Objectives as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act guidance from Welsh Government suggests local authorities may wish to consider opportunities to integrate its self-assessment report with reports on other duties such as Well-being of Future Generations. Last year the Council presented a report to Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee outlining its preferred approach to integrate its annual self-assessment report with its assessment of its progress against the Council's Well-being Objectives.

Role of The Governance & Audit Committee

As outlined in the Act and [guidance](#) it is required that the draft report is reviewed by the Council's Governance & Audit Committee and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or action(s) the Council intends to take. If the Council does not make a change recommended by the Governance & Audit Committee, it must set out in the final Self-assessment report the recommendation and the reasons why the Council did not make the change.

The final report will be presented to Full Council in November 2023 following presentation at the Council's Overview Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) and Cabinet in October 2023.

Newport City Council Annual Corporate Plan Self-Assessment Report 2022/23

This year's annual Corporate Plan Self-Assessment Report 2022/23 (Appendix 1) provides a self-assessment on the progress of delivery against the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 and the effectiveness of the Council's governance and performance arrangements to ensure it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. Self-reflecting back to last year's report, this year's report has considered the recommendations and comments raised by the Council's Governance & Audit Committee and Overview Scrutiny Management Committee.

In November 2022, the Council approved its 5 year Plan to deliver an '*Ambitious, Fairer and Greener Newport for everyone*' with four Well-being Objectives focusing on the Economy, Education and Skills; Environment and Infrastructure; Quality Social Care and Community Services; and an Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council. To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan the Council's 11 service areas developed their service plans outlining the programmes and projects, objectives and actions which will be supporting each Well-being objective(s) and its strategic priorities; and delivering continuous improvement. These supporting documents are also published.

To self-assess the progress against the Well-being Objectives and the governance & performance arrangements, the Council examined the position reported by the Council's 11 service areas at the end of 2022/23 which were reported to the Council's Performance Scrutiny Committees in July 2023. Additionally, the report also referred to several annual reports on the delivery of specific strategies and statutory duties such as the Director of Social Services Report, annual Equalities and Welsh Language reports and Climate Change reports. A full list of reports considered are included in the annual report.

To assess the effectiveness of the Council's Governance and Performance arrangements, the report referred to the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS), Statement of Accounts, Internal Audit and External Regulatory reviews completed by the Council's 3 regulators: Audit Wales, Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales. A progress update against the recommendations raised in the 2021/22 Annual Report have also been included in the report.

In relation to the progress made against the 14 actions raised in last years Annual Report, the Council has 7 completed actions with 7 actions still in progress. The actions still in progress at the end of 2022/23 have been carried forward into 2023/24 action plan. The Annual Report has also been subject to review by the Council's Executive Board and senior officer group Corporate Management Team.

Overall Conclusion and Self-Assessment of NCC Governance and Performance Arrangements in 2022/23

The overall conclusion made by the Council is that it has made an encouraging start to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27. Good progress has been made by the Council in 2 out of 4 Well-being Objectives (Well-being Objective 2 and 4). But significant challenges remain across the Council's Social Services, Housing, Infrastructure and Education on the long term sustainability to meet the demands of residents in Newport within the financial and legislative pressures. Additionally, the governance and performance arrangements of the Council as outlined in the Council's Annual Governance Statement report remain effective but further actions are needed to improve existing arrangements to ensure the Council remains transparent in the delivery of its services and ensure key stakeholders are involved in decision making.

Including the actions carried forward into this year's Annual Report, the Council has raised a further 2 actions bringing the overall total to 9. Progress against these will be monitored and reported through the Council's Directorate Management Teams and Executive Board through service plan delivery.

Below is a summary of the Council's assessment including its achievements and challenges the Council has faced in 2022/23 and a summary of the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2022/23.

		2022/23 RAG Assessment Status
Well-being Objective 1- Education, Skills and Employment		
Key Achievements 2022/23	Key Challenges 2022/23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery key regeneration projects including Marriott Hotel, Central Library & Museum. • No schools in special measures at the end of 22/23 with Newport High school and Malpas Church in Wales Primary school coming out of special measures. • Delivery of Ysgol Gwent Is Coed school redevelopment through Communities for Learning programme. • Delivery of key adult and youth learning through initiatives such as Newport Youth Academy, job fairs and Adult Learning. • Aspire alternative learning programme supporting 36 learners to achieve recognised qualifications. • Led and supported over 30 events across Newport including the Food Festival, and Newport Marathon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term sustainability school finances, buildings and assets to meet the needs of communities. • Improving visitor figures to Newport to pre-pandemic levels. • To progress key strategies and initiatives from the Corporate Plan including Placemaking Plan, Cultural Strategy, and Sports Strategy. • Regeneration Projects delivery managing inflationary costs. • Managing increase demand and provision for children with Additional Learning Needs. 	

		2022/23 RAG Assessment Status
Well-being Objective 2- Environment & Infrastructure		
Key Achievements 2022/23	Key Challenges 2022/23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing good progress against waste performance targets and improvement on graffiti and gum litter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress towards delivery Net zero carbon by 2030. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of key Active Travel projects including Newport train station footbridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable and sustainable housing in Newport to meet the housing demand needs. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the Council's Digital Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing deterioration of highways assets, especially within the carriageway and bridge asset groups. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous work of regulatory services to comply with environmental and regulatory requirements. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing achievements and recognition for the Council's parks and bio-diversity. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric Vehicle procurement, charging points and solar panel installations. 		

		2022/23 RAG Assessment Status
Well-being Objective 3 – Quality Social Care and Community Services		
Key Achievements 2022/23	Key Challenges 2022/23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Services recognised for Bronze Quality Mark. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing and Homelessness demands on the Council and impact on other front line services such as Social Services and Education. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting the demand to support Ukrainian refugees in Newport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate Programme and remove profit from the care of children. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing Cost of Living Delivery group collaborating with health, GAVO, charities and other not for profit organisations providing advice and support such as 'Warm Spaces' during winter period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stability of social care providers and provision of residential / domiciliary care. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and approval of the Pillgwenly Master Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressures on Adult and Children services to meet demand. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of the Council's Flying Start offer to residents in Newport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve Safeguarding training provided to Members and staff through the roll out of the National Safeguarding training standards and ensure compliance. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention & Inclusion grant funding from Welsh Government. 	

		2022/23 RAG Assessment Status
Well-being Objective 4 – An Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council		
Key Achievements 2022/23	Key Challenges 2022/23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the Council's new Digital Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sickness and Check In performance did not achieve its intended targets 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencement of the Asset Rationalisation programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress towards delivery Net zero carbon by 2030. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory budget programme supporting community and charity organisations across Newport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing and supporting the number of staff from disabled, minority ethnic and LGBTQ+ communities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the Council's Participation strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy / and customer contact. 	

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

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 October and Council in November 2023.

Following approval the 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.

Appendix 1 – DRAFT Annual Corporate Plan Self-Assessment Report 22/23

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 and Well-being for Future Generations Act.	M	L	The approach outlined in the report will mitigate against non-compliance with the Acts.	Director for Corporate and Transformation

*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Corporate Plan 2022-27

Annual Governance Statement

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 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 and assurances to support the Council's overall self-assessment conclusion.

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

As the report states, there are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The Annual Governance Statement is referenced within the report and this document provides a clear position of the Council's overall control environment, including areas where further action is required.

Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from the report, it does highlight a number of areas where challenges remain, many of which will or could have a financial consequence, in either revenue or capital terms. Examples include the demand pressures being experienced within Children's Services and the ongoing growth in the challenge surrounding homelessness. Both of these are impacting significantly upon the Council's in-year financial position and are likely to in the future. As result, these pressures have been incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and form part of the budget gap to be addressed as part of setting the 2024/25 revenue budget.

These examples highlight the need to ensure that there remains a clear ongoing link between the Council's Corporate Plan, performance and risk management, and financial management. Any new or ongoing challenges which also present a financial risk will need to be appropriately reflected as part of medium term financial planning, to ensure that any unavoidable financial consequences are reflected in future revenue and capital budgets. In addition, where relevant, certain financial matters will be reported through the annual Statement of Accounts.

The need for this clear link is heightened whilst the Council, like all local authorities, continue to operate within significantly constrained financial parameters. Because of this, there is a requirement for clear prioritisation of aims and objectives, to ensure that the most critical are afforded as part of future financial plans.

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

This is the first annual report on the progress the Council is making in the delivery of its Corporate Plan 2022-27 Well-being Objectives and the effectiveness of the governance and performance arrangements to achieve these. Following the first Annual Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2021/22, the feedback from the Governance & Audit Committee and Overview Scrutiny Management Committee have been taken into consideration to improve the self-assessment of the Council's arrangements. Throughout the last

financial year, the Council has made significant progress in improving the governance and performance arrangements across the Council to ensure officers, Cabinet Members and elected members are provided with timely and evidence based information to make well informed decisions.

As the Annual Report highlights, the Council has significant challenges across key front-line areas of the Council and challenging decisions will need to be made over the term of this Plan to ensure services remain sustainable and meet the needs of the city.

Prior to the report being published, we will consider the feedback and recommendations of the Governance & Audit Committee and Overview Scrutiny Management Committee.

Scrutiny Committees

The scrutiny of the 11 Service area plans were completed by the Council's Performance Scrutiny Committees in July 2023. Links to the Performance Scrutiny Committees are included in the table below and can also be found in the Annual Report attached.

Performance Scrutiny Report (Please click the link)	Service Area (Please click the link)
People Scrutiny Committee – 11th July 2023	Education Services
People Scrutiny Committee – 25th July 2023	Adult Services Children Services Prevention & Inclusion Service
Place & Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 10th July 2023	Environment & Public Protection Housing & Communities Infrastructure
Place & Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 24th July 2023	Finance Law & Standards People, Policy & Transformation Regeneration & Economic Development

This report will be presented to the Overview Scrutiny Management Committee on 9th October 2023. The recommendations from GAC and OSMC will be included in the October Cabinet report and final report to Council 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 2022-27](#)

[Cabinet Report – NCC approach to the Self-Assessment, April 2022](#)

[Governance & Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22](#)

[Overview Scrutiny Management Committee Annual Report 2021/22](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations Act](#)

[Welsh Government Self-Assessment Guidance](#)

Dated: 20th September 2023