

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2025

REFERENCE FROM JOINT PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
16TH JULY, 2025

“192 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT 2024-25
(REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 3rd July, 2025 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources, who presented an overview of the statutory requirements and the framing of the session around the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act.

Performance

The Chief Executive introduced the performance aspect of the annual report and identified that the Council considered itself as “Good,” based upon the framework of over 85% of activities being on target and delivered. They shared that, of the 689 actions and performance measures, 441 (85.3%) were green and 76 (14.7%) were red, with the remaining performance measures being either no target as not appropriate to target or new measure. They also noted that each Directorate had also identified as “Good” during the self-assessment process.

Councillor Dr. Johnson indicated that due to the volume of measures, it would not be possible to discuss individual actions and measures in significant detail but noted that there was a closeness between the attained figure of 85.3% and target of 85%, and the impact just 2 measures would have had upon this achievement. They further sought assurance surrounding the process of reaching this stage and that any moderation had not impacted upon the final figure, to which the Chief Executive responded that the process was completed transparently, and that they were looked at in detail at a departmental level, including audits, to ensure the process had been undertaken robustly and comprehensively. Councillor Dr. Johnson further noted around the challenges of the Council assessing its own performance and sought further explanation as to if/how changes happened for transparency’s sake, which the Chief Executive agreed to provide following the meeting.

The Leader explained that all Scrutiny Chairs attended the challenge events held with Directorates, and that it did no good to be inaccurate in self-assessment, whilst noting that external regulators and the performance panel assessment, an objective viewpoint, suggested there was an openness in terms of success and areas for improvement.

Councillor Champion sought to understand how the rating of “Good” compared to other Local Authorities in Wales, to which the Director of Corporate Resources

responded that it was difficult to compare as each had their own performance frameworks and approaches to self-assessment but noted that where possible measures had been benchmarked against Local Authority comparators.

Resources

The Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources provided an overview of the Council's self-assessment when considering the use of resources, which contained people, finance, commissioning and procurement, assets, performance and risk, and engagement and insight, and the Council's overall assessment of being "Good."

They shared how each of the areas were considered at an individual Directorate level and noted there were a range who had judged certain areas to be "Fair". This information was used to inform an overall position, which was available to compare over time including:

- People being deemed as "Good," with no change from the previous year;
- Finance, Commissioning and Procurement being deemed as "Fair," with no change from the previous year;
- Assets being deemed as "Fair," changing from "Good" the previous year;
- Performance being deemed as "Good," with no change from the previous year;
- Risk being deemed as "Good," with no change from the previous year;
- Engagement and Insight being deemed as "Good," with changing from "Fair" from the previous year.

Councillor Franks reflected upon assets, and asked if the condition of school buildings, including snagging and maintenance, was related to the specification being provided to contractors, to which the Chief Executive replied that the specification for new build schools in Wales was very high as part of Sustainable Communities for Learning, and considers elements such as being zero-Carbon, but due to the footfall, all Schools required regular maintenance. They further shared that condition surveys had been taken to understand where the challenges existed, but it was the older school buildings which had been biggest maintenance challenges.

Councillor Dr. Johnson asked what lessons had been learned to move from "Fair" to "Good" when considering "Finance, Procurement and Commissioning," and if the overall change in position was due to a change in performance or reflection upon previous perceptions. The Chief Executive responded that to be "Good" would entail meeting savings targets, increasing savings from transformation and not service reductions, minimising the use of reserves, and adopting and implementing the procurement strategy. They also shared that these elements were all becoming harder year on year, and that approximately 10 years of savings had meant they were becoming increasingly challenging.

Councillor Protheroe reflected that the recent Task and Finish looking at circular economy and social value in procurement would create change, but in order to create savings that did not mean service reductions there needed to be a focus on

managing spend. Savings had been coming from service reductions and transformation but given the current challenging financial climate, procurement exercises should have a savings target attributed to them. Also, publishing a capped maximum price on the Council's procurement exercises would help to control tender prices. This approach had been taken by a neighbouring Authority and had worked to manage budgets.

The Director of Corporate Resources advised there was a target related to savings from procurement, that a workshop was being bought together to look at a forward procurement, but they would consider how to look at the maximum price member approach moving forward.

Councillor Dr. Johnson also sought increased information surrounding the "Risk" section of the report, to which the Chief Executive responded that this related to the Strategic Risk Register, which was monitored via Senior Leadership Team and Governance and Audit Committee, with the "Fair" assessment in the Place Directorate being attributed the management of large projects and in the Learning and Skills Directorate being attributed to how the Council managed requests for support.

Councillor Dr. Johnson noted that the percentage of "Red" areas for well-being objectives 1 and 2 were quite high (57.4% and 34.5% accordingly) and challenged the methodology as denoting an area as "Red" which was possibly nearly achieved was a challenge, and it would be useful to understand how close to completion an action was. The Director of Corporate Resources responded that the Council's new Corporate Plan, Vale 2030, had fewer actions, which was deliberately done with the desire to improve the quality of future reporting, and highlighted that the appendices contained supporting commentary which gave a narrative as to this kind of status.

Councillor Goodjohn questioned if all Directorates were good at engagement and insight and referenced the upcoming Task and Finish Scrutiny Group reviewing the Council's Communications Strategy. The Chief Executive responded that as a Council, they had the largest response to a survey through the "Let's Talk Life in the Vale" survey, which had been used to inform Vale 2030 and the plans to re-run the survey this year. They also referenced other initiatives which had improved in recent times such as the Council's engagement with Barry Waterfront, Towns when developing Placemaking Plans and Youth Services, all of which were significantly above statutory engagement activity.

The Director of Social Services shared that their Director's Annual Report contained an overview of engagement undertaken including the outcomes, but shared examples of service user engagement including Day Services, Flying Start and Direct Payments, which led to positive outcomes for service users.

The Leader reflected that when speaking with others across the UK, the "Let's Talk Life in the Vale" survey, which was used as an information source for decision making, was sector leading, and working alongside Data Cymru, 19 of 22 Local Authorities in Wales were now running similar surveys.

Councillor Ewan Goodjohn welcomed the update surrounding the second iteration of the “Let’s Talk Life in the Vale” survey and commended the work of Social Services, but wondered if there was a disconnect between what the Council benefits as positive engagement versus residents perceptions, such as Waterfront and C1V waiting times.

Councillor Cowpe queried surrounding communication, and if there were opportunities for C1V, the Council’s contact centre, to produced standardise response and improve communications, so people were aware of next steps, citing potholes as an example. She also noted that the Council had many posts on Facebook, to which there were a range of comments from the public, to which the Council did not respond, when there was an opportunity to correct inaccurate information. She finally noted that there was a perception of fly tipping not being tackled due to lack of visibility surrounding enforcement, which she felt not to be true in her experience.

The Chief Executive responded that they agreed, and that people just wanted to be acknowledged and understand what had happened to their queries, and that the Council was looking at its “Top 20 Customer Journeys” to look at standardisation and automation of processes to enhance the customer’s experience. They also noted that sometimes comments were responded to on social media, but that this could sometimes stimulate even further comments, so this needed to be managed carefully.

The Director of Environment and Housing reflected upon the duties of the Council for managing fly tipping, and that they were felt to be one of the better Councils in Wales in this area. He reflected that there was little influence in terms of what could be done on private land, unless creating health and safety or environmental risks for example but would also encourage people to report. They also stated it was difficult to prosecute as there was often a lack of evidence to identify those responsible.

Councillor Emma Goodjohn questioned if C1V contact details were on the webpage, particularly for mobile devices.

Governance

The Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources provided an overview of the governance section of the Council’s Annual Self-Assessment report, and how it had identified a “Reasonable” judgement, meaning there was a sound system of governance, risk management and control in place but there were some issues of non-compliance or scope for improvement that had been identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited. They emphasised that the scoring approach was aligned to that of internal audit.

Councillor Dr. Johnson asked if it was possible to further understand the details surrounding the CIPFA Code of Practice, where the Council complied with 5 of 6 areas, and also queried if governance was being implemented as described in frameworks, as there were lots of challenges in terms of overspending, including Oracle system and potential WCCIS replacement.

The Director of Corporate Resources indicated that a report was being taken to Governance and Audit Committee to share lessons learned from Oracle system and WCCIS replacement in support future implementations. Alongside this, he shared that they had strengthened project management arrangements within Digital Services to support commissioning and implementation of new systems. They finally shared that the Council's Annual Governance Statement was being presented to Governance and Audit Committee shortly, which contained the details relating the CIPFA principles.

Councillor Goodjohn indicated that following the Reshaping Scrutiny changes made by the Council, it would be useful to understand the effectiveness of political governance within this report.

Councillor Protheroe outlined the next steps for the Council's Annual Self-Assessment, including Governance and Audit Committee, and Cabinet, ahead of approval by Full Council in September.

With no further questions or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Council considers the consideration of additional information surrounding how the self-assessment process was undertaken internally to provide additional assurance to the public, Councillors, and regulators.
- (2) T H A T the Council considers including a capped maximum price on all of its tenders to control spend within available budgets.
- (3) T H A T the Council reviews its performance methodology to consider how it articulates actions which are near completion (but identified as red).
- (4) T H A T the Council reviews how C1V contact information is presented on the website, with particular consideration towards mobile devices
- (5) T H A T the Council explores integrating the Annual Scrutiny Report within future iterations of the Annual Self-Assessment to understand the impact of this element of political governance on the performance of the Council.

Reason for recommendations

(1-5) Having regard to the content of the reference and report, and to discussions at the meeting.”