

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

July 2023



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh



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INTRODUCTION

From the Leader of Ceredigion County Council & Portfolio Holder for Performance Management

We recognise that good performance management is crucial to securing improvements in service delivery. It's about good management and ensuring that our community, organisation and team goals are achieved. That's why we have updated our performance framework to ensure it is fit for purpose and supports the delivery of our Corporate Well-being Objectives and the new Self-Assessment based performance regime.

As Leader and Portfolio Holder for Performance Management, I support colleagues across the Council by championing the use of performance management to help identify areas for improvement and taking action to drive up performance.

One of the main ways I do this is by chairing the Quarterly Performance Board that monitors and challenges our performance to ensure our objectives are met. This supportive approach is important in an environment where customers' expectations are rising while capacity is limited.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a window of opportunity to learn from, to

transform services and to bring about sustainable change and improvements. In essence, it allowed us to reconsider the way we work and reorganize it in a way that benefits the customer, the workforce, and has much less impact on our environment.

For example, the new 'hybrid working' model provides more agile and mobile ways of working for staff and resulted in greater efficiency. At the same time, it has also provided the opportunity for us to develop public Information Communication Technology services in order to improve customer contact and ensure we offer customer-focused, well-managed and joined-up services which are easy to access and simple to use. The Council has a track record of innovation, and performance management will play a key role in realising those benefits.

This document is intended to help ensure a consistent understanding of the principles of performance management, and how they are applied in Ceredigion. In recent years we have strengthened our

performance framework and we are looking to further embed a performance culture as our performance journey continues.

The framework has been designed with the help of key Managers and Members, and operates within a continuous improvement cycle. We use it to regularly review progress, check how we are performing and ensure we are delivering the Corporate Wellbeing Objectives and improving outcomes for the people and communities of Ceredigion.

We hope you find this document useful in understanding more about our approach to performance management.

Bryan Davies



Councillor Bryan Davies

Leader of Ceredigion County Council & Portfolio Holder for Performance Management

BACKGROUND

Performance Management

The performance framework operates alongside the overall structure of Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Corporate Well-being Objectives, Annual Governance Statement and Programme/Project Management. It is part of the Council's corporate planning process.

The performance framework exists to support the Council to deliver its organisational goals, set the standards that are to be achieved and for ensuring that people work in ways that deliver that standard.

The framework is important, because we run a complex business so we need to focus our resources and abilities toward the provision of an excellent service and the satisfaction of customers in the areas we have identified as most relevant.

Our Vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives

Ceredigion County Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-27 outlines how it intends to deliver its four Corporate Well-being Objectives or Strategic Priorities.

The core purpose of the Corporate Strategy is to illustrate how the authority will support and promote sustainability and the wellbeing of the citizens of

Ceredigion, through its long term Vision and its Corporate Well-being Objectives.

The Corporate Well-being Objectives will enable the delivery of services that will enhance the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being for the citizens and communities of Ceredigion. They have been identified through public engagement, the Ceredigion Assessment of Local Well-being and the ambitions of the new political administration. The Corporate Well-being Objectives are outlined in the diagram opposite.

The Council's vision is:

"Ceredigion County Council delivers value for money, sustainable bilingual public services, that support a strong economy and healthy environment, while promoting well-being in our people and our communities"

To ensure we achieve this, we have a Performance Management Framework in place which allows us to regularly review and track progress, check how we are performing and ensure we are delivering the Corporate Wellbeing Objectives and improving outcomes for the people and communities of Ceredigion.

Our Vision:

Ceredigion County Council delivers value for money sustainable bilingual public services that support a strong economy and healthy environment while promoting well-being in our people and our communities

Ceredigion County Council's Corporate Well-being Objectives



DEFINING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

What is Performance Management?

Put simply, performance management is taking action in response to actual performance and predicted performance to make outcomes for the people of Ceredigion better than they would otherwise be.

Why is Performance Management Important to Us?

Performance management is important because it allows us to:

- Ensure our goals are prioritised and that resources are allocated effectively
- Assess short-term needs and long-term sustainability
- Ensure we provide value for money
- Motivate and engage staff and assign accountability
- Provide early warning and rectification of poor performance
- Learn from past performance and improve future performance
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Reflect on current performance and how we do things to identify opportunities for improvement
- Ensure the council and its partners achieve what we have set out to do

- Share good practice across the organisation.
- Improve well-being of local people and maximise our contribution to the seven national well-being goals.

We consider a robust performance management framework to be an integral part of the Council's corporate planning arrangements to govern the Council and ensuring a standardised approach is applied across the organisation. This supports our "One Team" approach, Team Ceredigion, where we work as collectively to raise performance, provide cost efficient services and improve outcomes to the residents of Ceredigion.

Our Performance Journey

Over the last three years, Ceredigion's approach to performance management has been reinvigorated and updated. Since then, good progress has been made in building a strong performance management culture across the organisation and preparing for the new Self-Assessment performance regime introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This is reflected in the new business planning process, the relaunched Performance Board and the positive feedback on the Council's approach to self-assessment. The new legislation emphasizes the importance of embedding a strong

performance management culture and achieving this is the overriding principle of the Council's ongoing performance journey.

The learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has created the opportunity to bring about sustainable change and improvements through new ways of working and investing in new technologies to deliver high quality services in an efficient and environmentally friendly way.

The Council has a track record of innovation and over the next five years it will continue to develop this innovative approach and move to more agile and smarter ways of working. Performance management will play a key role in this transformation.

Who is Responsible for Performance Management?

Performance management is everyone's responsibility – everyone has a role to play in delivering business plan objectives, tasks and measures which support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Well-being Objectives and its overall vision. Table 1 shows who is responsible for what.



We are One Team: 'Team Ceredigion'

Performance Management
supports our One Team
approach

It supports collaborative working
to help us join-up thinking,
learning and intelligence to raise
performance and secure
efficiencies

The One Team approach is part
of the Council's culture and is
integral to its new ways of
working

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PERFORMANCE

WHO	RESPONSIBILITY
Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure effective governance arrangements to support performance management are in place, robust and effective Evaluate and challenge Portfolio Holders on performance against agreed priorities and objectives On exceptions, be satisfied that remedial actions will effectively improve performance in line with outcomes set out in the Corporate Strategy
The Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the Leadership Group on strategic or operational matters of significance and hold Corporate Directors to account Own the Council vision, providing clear leadership and direction throughout its life and agree a programme to meet the outcomes and set expectations for delivery Secure the investment required to deliver the Corporate Strategy so that the agreed outcomes are achieved
Performance Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and challenge current performance levels against the Level 1 Business Plans each quarter Hold Corporate Lead Officers and Portfolio Holders to account Identify areas for further scrutiny Request amendments/suggestions for further monitoring in Level 1 Business Plans
Governance and Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and make recommendations on the conclusions drawn in the Council's draft Self-Assessment Report Receive the final version of the Council's Self-Assessment Report as one of the statutory recipients as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Review the Corporate Risk Register quarterly
Leadership Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead and oversee the delivery of the Council's performance against the council's Corporate Strategy Evaluate and challenge effectiveness of arrangements to deliver strategic outcomes as directed by Cabinet On exceptions, prepare remedial actions for Cabinet approval

WHO	RESPONSIBILITY
Corporate Lead Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead on and ensure effective delivery of the Council's performance against the Corporate Strategy and Business Plans Undertake quarterly reviews, collecting data and quality assurance information, challenging the effectiveness of arrangements to deliver strategic outcomes and ensure matters of significance are escalated promptly to the Corporate Directors and/or Portfolio Holder On exceptions, suggest remedial actions for Leadership Group consideration
Corporate Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead on defined service area performance whilst also ensuring staff are aware of the role their contribution makes to performance Supporting Corporate Lead Officers in delivering the Corporate Strategy On exceptions, suggest remedial actions for Corporate Lead Officers consideration
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be responsible for own individual performance management, continually seeking to improve and taking positive personal action

The Golden Thread

The framework also ensures that everybody is clear about how they are helping to achieve the council's vision. The Council's 'Golden Thread' shows the links between its key strategies and plans. It describes the flow of information from national and regional priorities for improvement contained in the Local Well-being Plan and Corporate Strategy, through to individual services, teams and members of staff in the Council responsible for delivering them.

A strong Golden Thread is important as it shows how each level of planning and action contributes to the next level, and how each role within the Council contributes towards achieving Ceredigion's Corporate Well-being Objectives.

The Corporate Strategy sets the vision and direction for the Council which flows down through our business plans through to individual appraisals and development plans. The steps to deliver the Corporate Well-being Objectives flow up from the individual members of staff and teams that contribute to the Council's Strategy and Vision. ►

THE GOLDEN THREAD



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

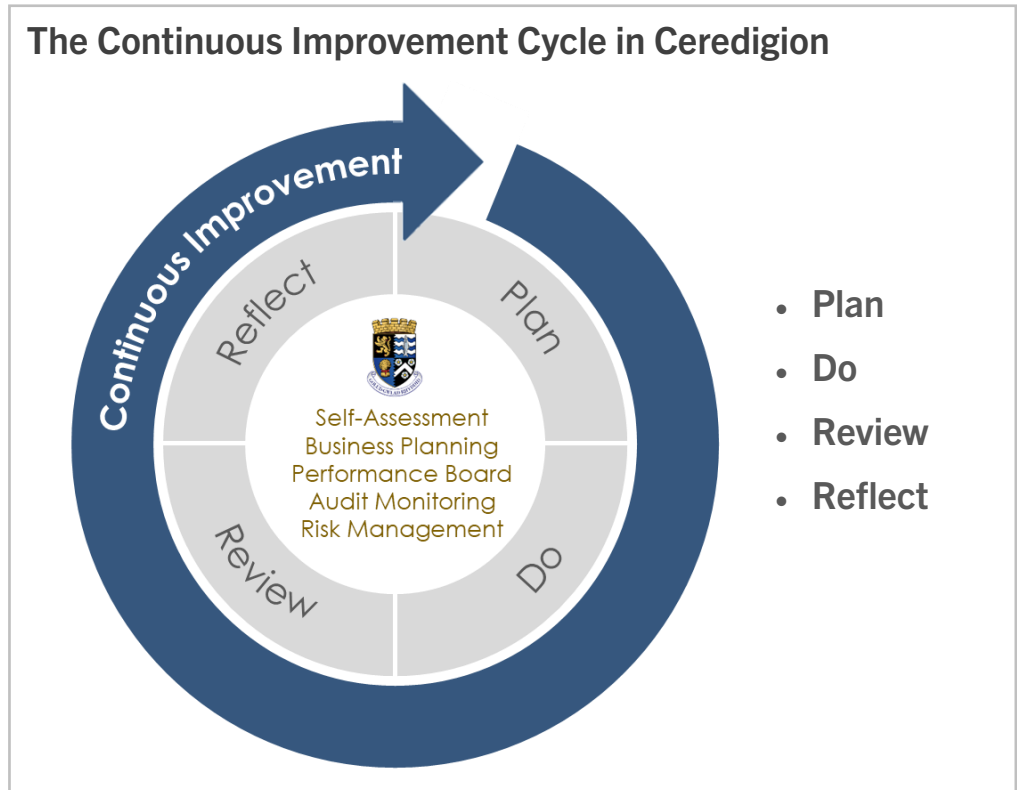
The Continuous Improvement Cycle

Our overall approach to performance management is based on a continuous cycle of improvement, following the industry recognised Plan-Do-Review cycle as shown in the diagram below. This cycle is underpinned by the following steps:

- **Plan** our activities to deliver our vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives
- **Do** or deliver the activities

- **Review** our progress regularly to assess whether we are delivering our objectives
- **Reflect** on how we are delivering our activities to identifying opportunities for improvement, efficiencies, or both

Performance Management is a high priority in Ceredigion. The Council is committed to continuous improvement, regularly seeks citizen's views and undertakes self-evaluation to identify opportunities for improvement. Pages 7 to 14 outline each of these steps.



STEP 1: PLAN

What is the Planning Stage?

Effective planning is crucial to delivering successful outcomes. It informs our decision-making and prioritisation, and is also the prerequisite for the ongoing monitoring of our performance.

The essential foundation of effective performance management is effective planning. The purpose of planning is to translate our high-level objectives into management action and linked performance measures. The planning process is undertaken at all levels in the Council, producing a hierarchy of plans that link together as part of the Golden Thread, aligning the Council and its partners to achieve the agreed overall vision for the County.

The Planning Structure in Ceredigion is outlined in the diagram opposite, aligning the vision of the Council through to employees' individual appraisals and development plans. It also shows the main influences that affect the development of Council's plans, and the key ways in which our performance is monitored.

Vision Statement

Our vision statement sets out our mid and longer-term goals, describing what we want the organisation to be and acting as a goal to strive toward.

Corporate Strategy

Our Corporate Strategy 2022-27 sets out the Council's vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives (corporate priorities) and steps to

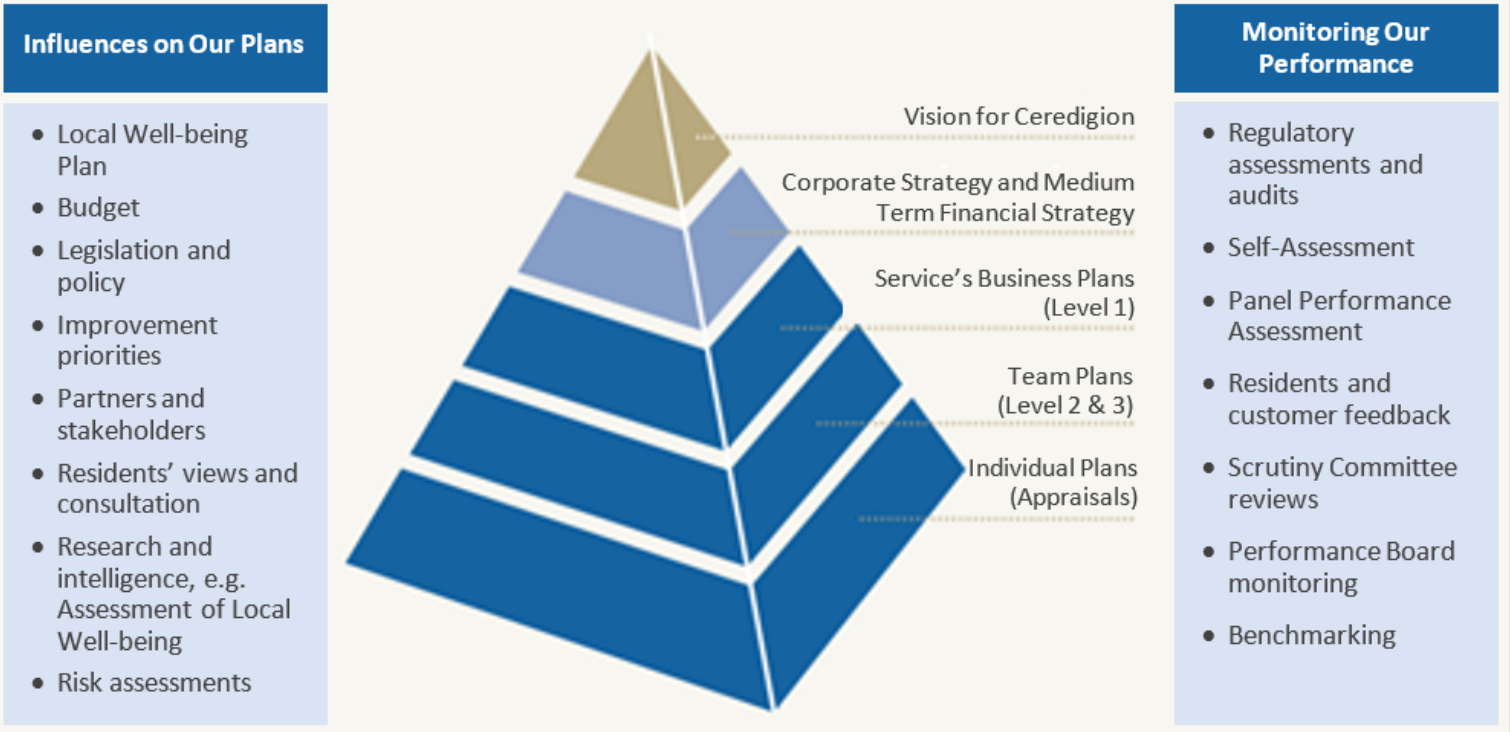
achieve them. The Chief Executive and the Leadership Group are responsible for developing the Corporate Strategy, taking into account the Sustainable Development Principle under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Plan is scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, endorsed by Cabinet and approved by Council. The Corporate Well-being Objectives are reviewed annually as required by the Act.

Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides an integrated planning and financial framework for the next four years, including the detailed budget strategy for the next financial year. The annual revenue budget and forward financial planning together with the capital programme enable the Council to align its financial resources with its Corporate Well-being Objectives.

The Corporate Lead Officer for Finance and Procurement (Section 151 Officer) is responsible for developing the MTFS to ensure the MTFS supports the Council's priorities and secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's use of resources. The MTFS is scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, endorsed by Cabinet and approved by Council.

The Corporate Planning Structure in Ceredigion



Programme and Project Plans

Effective planning ensures key elements of a programme/project are considered at an early stage. It plays an essential role in helping achieve desired goals, reduce risks, and ultimately deliver the agreed product, service or outcome.

All new projects in Ceredigion are reviewed by the Council's Corporate Project Management Panel (CPMP), which provides an independent review of the proposed project to ensure arrangements are robust and will benefit Ceredigion. The Panel includes expertise in finance, procurement, legal and human resources.

The Corporate Project Management Brief Template records the necessary details of the project, such as objectives, scope, timescales, deliverables and outcomes. This shows a clear roadmap, ensures the resources are available, and holds everyone accountable from the start. It is signed off by the appropriate Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).

Appointed programme/project managers are responsible for creating plans and other required documentation. They are also responsible for seeking the advice of the Corporate Project Management Panel and the approval of Leadership Group to proceed. In some cases, such as large scale projects, separate governance structures will be in place, such as a programme board and individual workstream groups.

To ensure that risk management is handled in the most efficient way within the Council, risk is included as part of Corporate Project Management process and are considered by the Corporate Project Management Panel. This is outlined in the Council's Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Framework.

Level 1 Business Plans

Level 1 business plans are the action plans to deliver the Council's Corporate Strategy. They are the engine for success. Each plan outlines the contribution that the service will make to achieve the Council's priorities and outcomes. It sets out the objectives and tasks to carry out the Council's commitments, and defines performance measures and targets.

Our integrated business planning process provides the opportunity to make rational and coordinated decisions about levels and types of provisions and how and where to use resources: finance, people, skills and assets. It is also a key process for assessing risks to achievement and how to manage those risks.

The business planning process starts in January of each year, with new plans published in April for the start of the new financial year. Monitoring takes place through the Quarterly Performance Board which also feeds the work programme for scrutiny committees. The four steps in the business planning process are outlined in the diagram to the right, starting with an opportunity to review where the service is through a self-assessment, setting objectives, tasks and measures, identifying risks and ongoing monitoring.

Corporate Lead Officers are responsible for developing their level 1 business plans, which are reviewed and signed off by the Corporate Director and Portfolio Holder.

Level 2 and 3 Business Plans

Level 2 (Corporate Manager) and Level 3 (Team) business plans translate the Level 1 objectives into service targets and operational activity, aligning with the Corporate Well-being Objectives.

Corporate Managers and Team Managers are responsible for producing their Level 2 and 3 plans respectively. These are monitored through service / team meetings.

Individual Plans (Staff Appraisals)

Individual plans (staff appraisals) translate service's business plan objectives into practical working measures and targets for all members of staff within the Council. They ensure employees understand their contribution and accountability towards meeting the Council's vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives.

An appraisal for every member of staff is carried out on an annual basis, which includes an opportunity to review progress over the previous year, agree objectives for the forthcoming year and to identify learning and development requirements. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the future demands for the service, and the career aspirations of the employee.

The annual appraisal is essential for all employees and it provides valuable information to the organisation in relation to workforce planning and objective progress.

The Key Steps in the Business Planning Process



STEP 2: DO - IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR OUR PLANS

What is the Doing Stage?

The 'do' stage of performance management is about carrying out our actions and monitoring performance in delivering our plans. It is also about ensuring that there are proper systems and processes in place to support the achievement of our plans and ensuring that we use these systems and processes effectively.

On-going performance monitoring is vital to achieve our objectives, as it allows for responsive action at all levels of the Council.

Delivering Business Plans and Corporate Well-being Objectives

Business Planning is the mechanism we use to enable service delivery, and includes all of the objectives, tasks and measures that contribute to achieving the Council's Corporate Well-being Objectives. Business Plans are held in the Inphase Performance Management System in the form of a performance dashboard. This enables managers to have a single action plan to monitor and report against, making the process of monitoring more efficient.

In Ceredigion, we use performance dashboards for corporate and service levels of reporting. Level 1 Business Plan dashboards are used to monitor performance at a service level during Performance Board, while the Corporate Strategy Dashboard presents a high level overview of progress against our Corporate Well-being Objectives.

Performance Measures

The Council has adopted a set of performance measures across all business plans that are used to monitor performance on a quarterly basis. The measures align to business plan objectives, which in turn, align with the Corporate Well-being Objectives. The Council views them as a key learning tool and reports them regularly to the Performance Board. Elected members have an important role to play in monitoring performance and how well the Council is achieving its Corporate Well-being Objectives. They challenge officers on service performance to ensure that priorities are delivered and the needs of local communities are being met.

Performance measures are reviewed every year during the business planning process to ensure that they remain relevant and that targets are challenging. There is an ongoing programme of work to support Corporate Lead Officers and their services with the development of their measures, the main focus of which is to ensure the Council's suite of measures are relevant, challenging and outcome focused.

Monitoring

Measures are used to monitor service-delivery in practice and to help focus attention on areas in need of attention. For this to be effective the Council must have a good understanding of how it is performing and have access to good quality data. Performance dashboards and measures provide this data and demonstrate the outputs and outcomes being achieved.

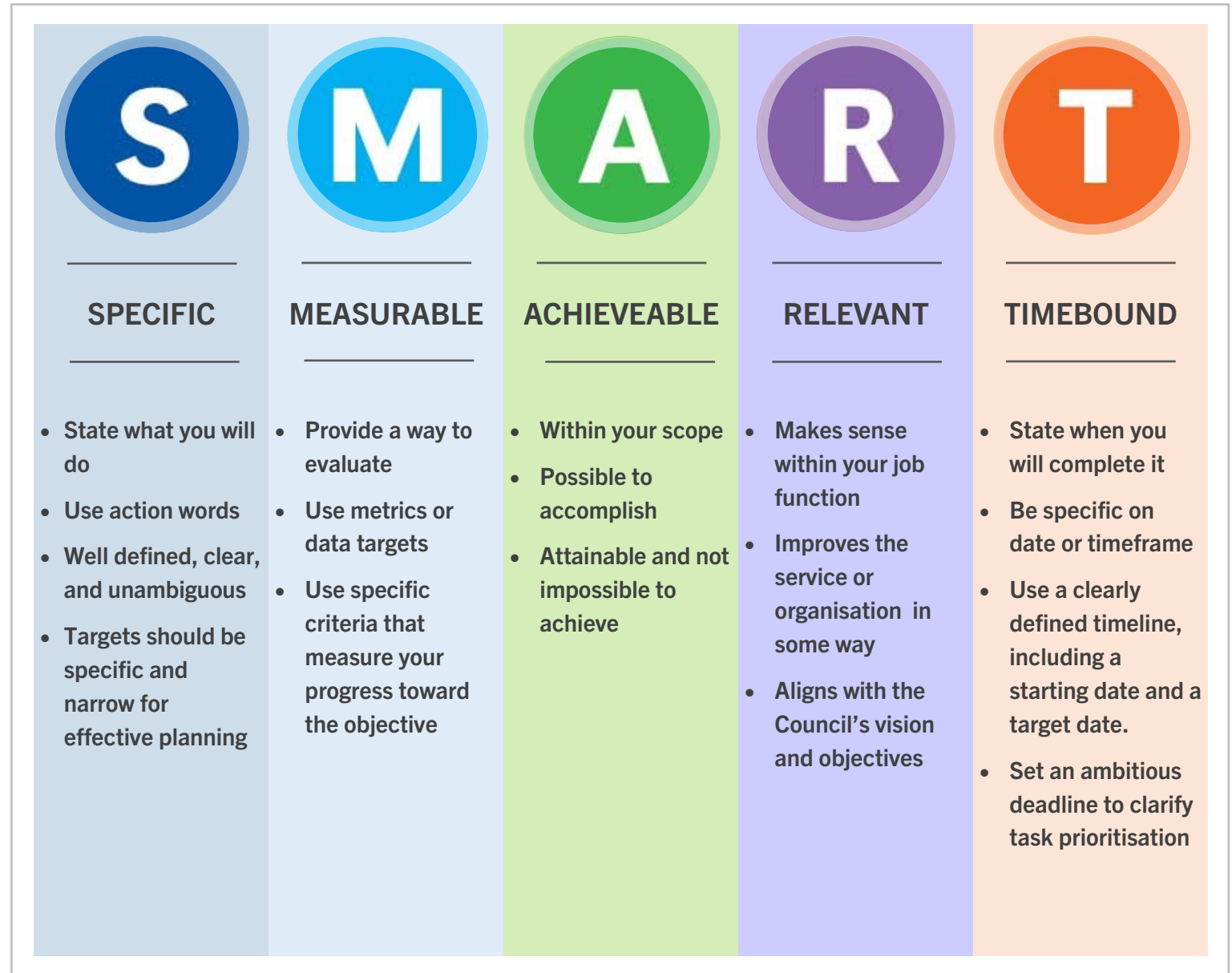
Access to timely performance data can alert Leadership Group and Cabinet to areas of concern and corrective action taken. The dashboard provides current performance levels compared to target, the year to date position and trend analysis to assist in monitoring. Having the right measures in place ensures that we are not only focusing our efforts in the right areas, but also allowing us to more effectively identify areas for attention.

Ensuring targets are SMART

Objectives and targets are part of every organisation and provide a sense of direction, motivation, a clear focus, and clarify importance.

By setting goals, we are providing ourselves with a target to aim for. A SMART target is used to help guide goal setting. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. Therefore, a SMART goal incorporates all of these criteria to help focus our efforts and increase the chances of achieving your goal.

We use SMART targets in the setting of our Objectives, Tasks and Measures to monitor performance. The diagram to the right summarises each of the criteria. ►



STEP 3: REVIEW

What is the Review Stage?

The review stage assesses whether or not we are on course to deliver our objectives and meet targets. It also identifies opportunities for improvement. This stage focuses on *evaluating* performance rather than *monitoring*. There are a number of mechanisms in place to support the review stage as shown in the table right.

The Council has a responsibility to provide the best possible services for local people and to demonstrate how we are performing and providing value for money in a transparent way. This will inform the public of the standard of service they can expect and improve openness and public accountability.

Based on our evaluation of performance, revisions can be made. These may include a redistribution of resources, revised plans and timescales, or even amendments to our Corporate Well-being Objectives and Business Planning objectives in the next round of planning.

Review Mechanisms

Panel Performance Assessment (PPA)

Panel Performance Assessments are conducted once in every election cycle, and provide an independent and external perspective of the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It involves a wide range of Members, Officers, Partners and Residents. The Review Panel publish a report of their findings and recommendations.

Self-Assessment

The Self-Assessment process provides an ongoing organisation-wide review of the Council's progress, including the delivery of its Corporate Well-being Objectives. This is published annually in the Council's Self-Assessment Report. It is reviewed by Governance and Audit Committee and approved by Council.

Leadership Group Reviews

The Council's Leadership Group review performance on an ongoing basis in order to ensure the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and Corporate Well-being Objectives.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Reports

The evaluation of the Council's performance is used to help set the agenda for the Council's Scrutiny Committees. They examine the Council's performance on an ongoing basis and call-in areas that require attention. Either the Performance Team or the service is responsible for supplying any requested performance information.

Performance Board / Business Plans

Performance Board is held quarterly and reviews progress against the Level 1 Business Plan objectives, tasks and measures, along with the latest budget monitoring and the delivery of the Corporate Well-being Objectives.

Corporate Risk Register

Risk management is a standing item on Leadership Group agendas. The Corporate Risk Register is updated and reviewed by Leadership Group and Governance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

Programme and Project Review

The Council's programmes and projects are reviewed by the Programme Boards and Project Teams on a regular basis, as determined by the governance arrangements of each board. It is the Programme and Project Manager's responsibility to provide necessary performance information for the review.

Service / Individual Performance Review

Non-structured review is undertaken at the service and team level in the form of service or team meetings. It is the responsibility of the Corporate Managers and their Team Managers for effective review at the service or team level. Managers responsible in ensuring that staff appraisals occur within the require timescales.

Management Response Forms

Management Response Forms (MRFs) record progress on the delivery of audit recommendations, both local and national. These are reviewed as a standing item on Governance and Audit Committee.

Assessing Performance

















We assess the performance of our objectives, measures and tasks against their agreed targets and use a standardised Red-Amber-Green (“RAG”) traffic light system to categorise them. The definitions and thresholds for the RAG system are explained in the diagram to the right. ►

Benchmarking

Performance is periodically benchmarked against other local authorities, to help in the evaluation of our performance. It helps us identify opportunities to increase efficiency and quality of services by identifying best practice. There is no ‘one-size fits all’ with benchmarking - for some comparisons we compare against all Wales, for others we compare against our nearest neighbours.

We also publish benchmarking data annually in the Council’s Self-Assessment Report and are working proactively with Data Cymru in the development of their benchmarking data tool which supports all local authorities nationwide through the provision of performance data across a range of services.

Assessing the Performance of Objectives, Tasks and Measures

OBJECTIVES	MEASURES	TASKS
 Red Start date passed but not started or end date passed but not complete	 Red 15% or more off-target	 Red Start date passed but not started or end date passed but not complete
 Amber In progress but behind schedule or in progress on schedule but not meeting target	 Amber Between 0 and 15% off-target	 Amber In progress but behind schedule or in progress on schedule but not meeting target
 Green In progress on schedule and meeting targets	 Green On target	 Green In progress on schedule and meeting targets
 Green with tick Complete	 Upward trend Performance improving compared to last quarter	 Green with tick Complete
 Progress bar Shows how far the objective has progressed and how close it is to bein complete	 No change trend Performance is the same compared to previous quarter	 Progress bar Shows how far the objective has progressed and how close it is to bein complete
	 Downward trend Performance decreasing since last quarter	

STEP 4: REFLECT

Reflective Practice

This stage is about reflecting on current and past performance to identify opportunities for improvement. It is different to the “Review” stage because it is about reflecting on *how we do things*, not just *what we do*. This distinction is crucial, as there is considerable learning to be gained from looking at how services are delivered, the processes in place and reviewing the way things have always been done.

This stage is also about analysing and learning from the information we have gained during the ‘Review’ stage and from various other sources, including service users’ feedback, our own performance results and the findings of external inspections and audits. It allows us to seek options for change through analysing what has and has not worked.

There are three mechanisms for conducting reflective practice in place – the **reflective practice toolkit** which can be applied at any time for any situation, the annual **business planning process** and the organisation-wide **self-assessment process** (see opposite page).

Reflective practice is not new in Ceredigion. We recognise the opportunity for self-reflection and constructive challenge. It is a core element of Ceredigion County Council’s overall

performance management approach and integral to business planning and the organisation-wide self-assessment. By focusing on evaluating how we do things as well as what we do, we can learn from our experiences and tap into the innovation and creativity that exists to identify opportunities to improve our performance, whether that’s through raising performance levels, identifying efficiencies or improving customer satisfaction.

In a fast-paced environment where resources are limited and customer expectations increasing, we recognise the importance of setting time aside to undertake this reflection and actively encourage it. It is part of our positive culture of improvement where we proactively look for opportunities to improve.

The reflective practice cycle in Ceredigion is shown in the diagram to the right, along with a brief description of each stage. These stages are applied to each reflective practice exercise undertaken.

The Reflective Practice Cycle



1 Description

Set the scene - describe where we are now, how we currently deliver services and how we are currently performing.

2 Evaluation

Evaluate the situation - what is working well, what are the challenges we face, what are we worried about and what are our ambitions for the Council’s performance journey.

3 Analysis

Make sense of where we are - where do we want to be, what do we need to achieve, why are we doing things as at present, what do we need to do differently to improve performance or efficiencies or both.

4 Conclusions

Summarise the conclusions - what have we learnt from reflecting on current performance.

5 Action Plan

Summarise the learning and the actions we will take as a result and build these into Business Plans or the Self-Assessment Action Plan

Supporting the Corporate Well-being Objectives

Reflective practice supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Well-being Objectives by helping us identify opportunities for improvement to ensure the long-term sustainability of services, to tap into the innovation and creativity that already exists and sharing that learning across the organisation. Specifically, these benefits are:

- Acquisition of new knowledge.
- Refinement of existing knowledge, for example by correcting current misconceptions.
- An improved understanding of the rationale behind our actions, i.e. why we do what we do, and why we do them in a certain way.
- Improvement of our goals and of the rules that you use for decision-making
- A better understanding of the organisation, such as understanding our strengths, challenges and opportunities.
- Increased feelings of autonomy, competence, and control.
- Improved performance, for example due to learning how to take action in a more effective way, or due to having more motivation to take action.
- Supporting a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of our work performance.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TOOLKIT



The Reflective Practice Toolkit is a simple set of guidance developed to help services and teams conduct reflective practice at any stage during the year. It is loosely based on the "Signs of Safety" model used in Social Care environments and in essence asks three very direct and pertinent questions of any services or team's performance – what's working well, what are you worried about, and what needs to happen. By answering these questions and mapping the answers it has proved to be an effective tool in conducting an honest and informative evaluation of an event or situation, and identifying if there was a better approach that could be applied in the future.

BUSINESS PLANNING



The Business Planning process takes place between January and March each year to set the Objectives, Tasks, Measures and Risks for each service.

The first stage in setting the business plan is a self-assessment exercise to reflect on past and current performance and what's working well, what concerns exist and what do we need to do in order to improve performance and tackle the challenges we face.

Reflecting in this way provides a strong foundation from which to build the plan and ensure we have considered both the challenges and opportunities that exist.

We all recognise that capacity is at a premium, and as a result effective business planning has never been so important to ensure we are delivering 'the right services in the right way'. Having the opportunity to 'reflect' on past and current performance is crucial to understanding our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. In this way, reflective practice is critical in helping us determine our actions and priorities for the year ahead.

SELF-ASSESSMENT



Self-Assessment is the new performance regime for principal councils introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Council's self-assessment process has reflective practice at its core. The Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) used to evaluate performance includes a series of reflective questions designed to identify where we are performing well, what are our biggest challenges, where we want to be, what we need to do to get there and what will tell us we have got there. By answering these questions, it provides a comprehensive picture of our current performance, our ambitions, the challenges we face and what we need to do in order to deliver our ambitions.

Self-Assessment is not new to Ceredigion, and the Council has a long history of using it to good effect in identifying innovative ways of delivering services, most recently in the 'Through Age Well-being Programme' being implemented to transform the delivery of social care in the County over the next five years.

SELF-ASSESSMENT & PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new regime for monitoring the performance of all local authorities, based on self-assessment.

The new performance regime defines principal councils as 'self-improving organisations' through a system based on self-assessment and panel performance assessment. The new approach is intended to build on, and support, a culture in which councils continuously challenge the status quo and ask questions about how they are operating and how they can learn from best practice. A transparent and open self-assessment of a council will form a fundamental part of this approach.

Effective self-assessment provides reliable assurance both internally and externally to regulators and inspectorates and above all helps councils to continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and their own workforce.

There are five specific duties introduced by the Act:

1. **Duty to keep performance under review**
Ceredigion County Council has a duty to keep under review the extent to which it is fulfilling its performance requirements by determining the extent to which it is:
 - Exercising its functions effectively
 - Using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively
 - Ensuring its governance is effective for securing the above
2. **Duty to consult on performance**
Councils must consult a range of people at least once in every financial year about the

extent to which they are meeting their performance requirements. The statutory consultees are:

- Local people
- Other persons carrying on a business in the County
- The staff of the Council
- Every Trade Union which is recognised by the Council

3. **Duty to report on performance**
The Council must produce a self-assessment report each financial year. The report must set out its conclusions on the extent to which it met the performance requirements, and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken to further improve.
4. **Duty to arrange a panel performance assessment**
At least once in each election period, the Council must arrange for an independent panel to undertake an assessment of the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements and report its results.
5. **Duty to respond to a panel performance assessment**
The Council must prepare a response to a Panel Assessment Report setting out
 - The extent to which it accepts the conclusions in the report
 - How it intends to follow any recommendations
 - Any further actions the Council intends to take to improve performance

The purpose of the performance and governance provisions in the Act is to build on and support a developing culture in which councils actively seek and embrace challenge, whether presented from within the council, for example through scrutiny procedures, or externally. The provisions are designed to develop a framework which supports councils, through an ongoing process of review, to think about their performance and effectiveness now and for the future; to encourage more inquisitive organisations willing to challenge themselves to do more; and to be more innovative and more ambitious in what they do.

Integration into the Council's Performance Framework

Self-assessment is not a standalone process, rather it is integrated as part of the Council's on-going performance

management arrangements. The diagram below demonstrates how self-assessment fits into our overall performance framework.

It is integral to driving Business Planning and Risk Management, and in turn draws on the outcomes from monitoring business plans and the corporate risk register to evaluate our current performance and complete the self-assessment.

The timing of Self-Assessment is also important. It has been timed to transparently inform and influence the Council's strategic planning, financial management and budget process, risk management reviews, improvement planning and ongoing performance management. For example, the publication of the Self-Assessment Report in January ensures it is prepared in time to drive the annual business planning and target setting process in the final quarter of each year between January and March.



HOW WE CONDUCT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Our Approach to Self-Assessment

Our approach to Self-Assessment is based on assessing ourselves against a set of Key Lines of Enquiry. “KLOEs” as they are sometimes referred to, are a series of relevant key questions that we ask ourselves as we work through the Self-Assessment.

The Key Lines of Enquiry approach is a tried and tested approach to conducting self-assessments in Local Government and across the wider public sector. It ensures we remain focused on the corporate or 'holistic' view of the Council's performance as required by the Act. It also provides the clarity of self-evaluation needed to help us identify opportunities for improvement, and in doing so, provides a strong audit trail to explain the actions we have undertaken in response.

The findings are recorded in our Self-Assessment Matrix document. The Matrix records the evidence demonstrating how we are currently performing, our ambitions for the future and the actions we need to take in order to achieve those ambitions. This document is used to identify the opportunities that exist for improvement and is used to develop our Self-Assessment Action plan. The Self-Assessment Matrix is available on request.

Continuous Cycle

Self-Assessment is an ongoing process of improvement - throughout the year we conduct consultation in support of self-assessment, we collate evidence to inform our workshops, we deliver the actions in our Self-Assessment action plan and we monitor their progress towards completion. The Self-Assessment Report is the key output from the

process but the work on improving outcomes is an ongoing year round activity.

The diagram below summarises the main steps and timescales involved in conducting the Self-Assessment and the production of the Self-Assessment Report.

Evaluation, Reflection and Identifying Opportunities

During April each year we bring together a wide variety of evidence to help us in assessing our current performance. This includes internal performance monitoring such as performance dashboards and complaints reports, regulatory reports from inspections and the results from consultation and engagement activities.

We undertake an exercise of reviewing the evidence to identify key findings - where performance has improved, where there are opportunities for improvement and what the key themes are from our consultation.

The findings from this exercise are

presented to Self-Assessment Workshops with the Council's Leadership Group and Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee to help in assessing our performance.

The workshops are where we re-assess ourselves against the Key Lines of Enquiry, updating our evidence for each question and using this to identify actions for improvement. They review the evidence available to them and add their own perspective to provide updated scores for each question.

The findings workshops are collated by the Performance and Research Team. They produce the draft Self-Assessment Report by drawing on the evidence matrix, scores and the improvement actions identified in the workshop, along with other key sources such as key strategies and inspection reports.

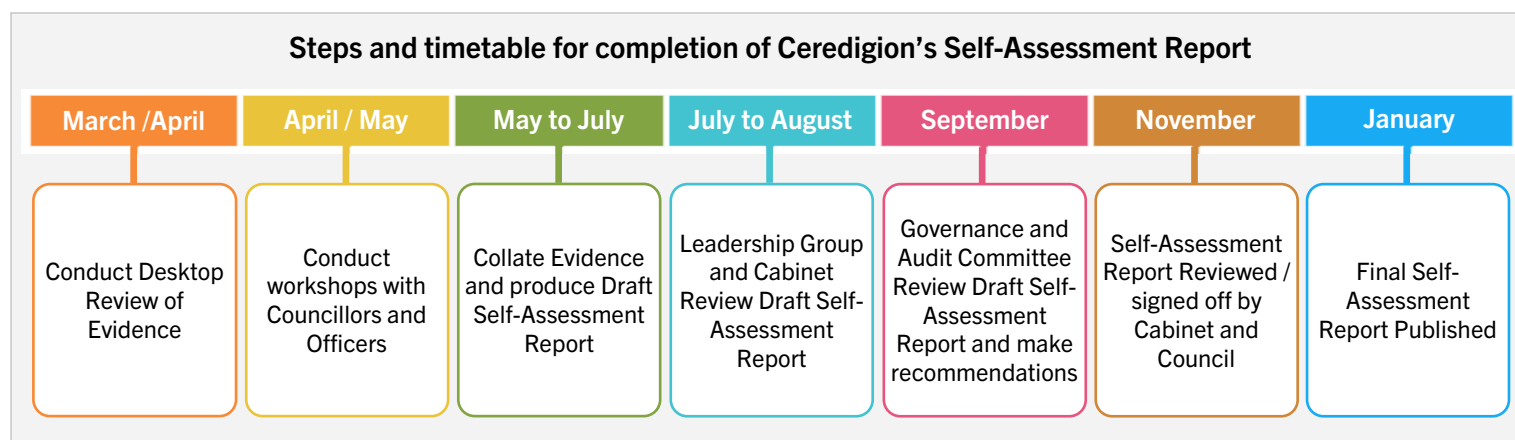
Part of the collation includes cross-checking the scoring with the evidence provided and seeking clarity on our conclusions where necessary. Gaps in evidence and understanding of our performance are also

highlighted, all of which is designed to ensure the process is robust.

By focusing on this, we can learn from our experiences and tap into the innovation and creativity that exists in the Council to identify opportunities to improve our performance, whether that's through raising performance levels, identifying efficiencies or improving customer satisfaction.

The Council's Governance and Audit Committee play a key role in the Self-Assessment process. They are responsible for reviewing the draft Self-Assessment Report and making recommendations for changes to the conclusions drawn or the actions the Council intends to take. The draft Report is reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee in September.

The Self-Assessment Report is updated following the Committee's recommendations and the final report published in January and submitted to the statutory recipients.



CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL WELL-BEING GOALS

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by requiring public bodies to work together to create a sustainable Wales. It is intended to help to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. There are 7 national well-being goals that set out a shared vision for all public bodies to work towards.

Ceredigion County Council works collaboratively with its local and regional partners to create the Ceredigion that we want. A good example of this is the Ceredigion Public Services Board which brings together the County's public service leadership and decision-makers. The Board's new 5-Year Local Well-being Plan for 2023-28 has recently been published setting out the shared vision for Ceredigion.

Like the Council, its priorities were developed using the evidence and engagement feedback from the Ceredigion Assessment of Local Well-being and a variety of other key sources. It is evidence based and monitored regularly by the Board. This ensures that both Ceredigion County Council and Ceredigion Public Services Board's Well-being Objectives are aligned to focus on the priority needs of the County, and maximise the contribution to the national Well-being Goals.

The Performance Framework provides the mechanism by which we review and assess our progress and identify opportunities for improvement. We apply the same high standards of performance management in order to achieve these shared outcomes. In this way, the framework supports the delivery of all of the national well-being goals summarised in the diagram opposite.

Summary of the Duties on Public Bodies in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act gives us the ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

It requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

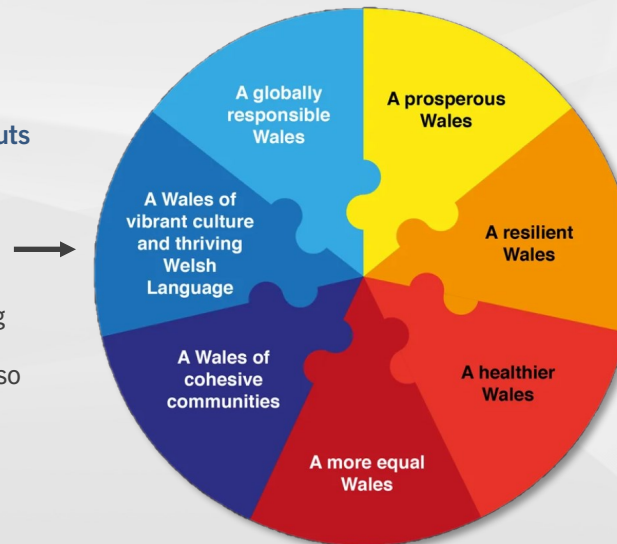
How the Performance Framework helps to maximise the Council's contribution to the National Well-being Goals

National Well-being Goals

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts in place 7 Well-Being Goals

All public bodies must work to achieve all the goals

The steps we plan to take to achieve our Corporate Well-being Objectives will help us improve outcomes for local people and also maximise our contribution to the national Well-being Goals.



The Performance Framework

The Performance Framework provides the mechanism by which we review and assess our progress and identify opportunities for improvement






All objectives, tasks and measures we undertake are linked to one or more of the national well-being goals, allowing us to track their contribution to the appropriate goal.

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE

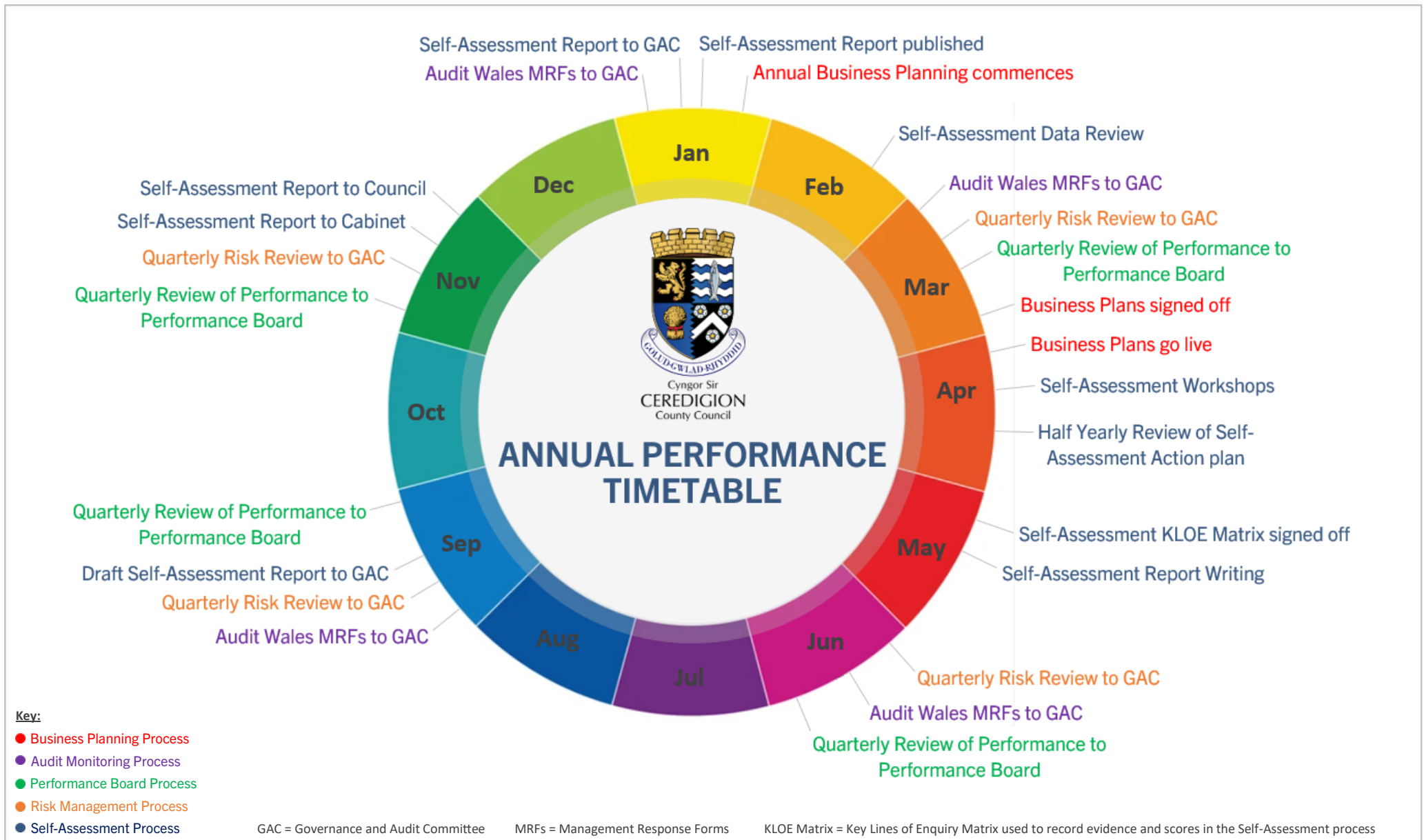
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also introduced the Sustainable Development Principle and outlines the 5 Ways of Working that all public bodies must adopt. Sustainable development is the central organising principle that shapes what we do and how we do it.

In essence, it means we must strive to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We have embedded the principle across the Council and adopted the principle in the planning and delivery of our Corporate Well-being Objectives and in our approach to performance management.

The principle is fully integrated into the Performance Framework, and some examples of how it applies each of the 5 Ways of Working are highlighted in the table opposite.

Way of Working	How the Performance Management Framework supports the 5 Ways of Working
 <p>Long Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measures monitor the short and long-term objectives of the Council. • Self-Assessment considers the longer-term opportunities and challenges as part of its role in ensuring high quality sustainable services. • The Council's performance framework monitors progress against the Corporate Well-being Objectives which have been set based on a comprehensive review of evidence including longer-term trends as highlighted in the Ceredigion Assessment of Local Well-being. • The Council's use of reflective practice inherently looks at the longer-term ambitions, opportunities and challenges that exist.
 <p>Integrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance management framework covers all Council services and applies a standardised methodology to ensure we all learn from best practice. • Ideas and suggestions for further development are welcomed from anyone in the Council. • Agreement from all services is required before the performance framework is approved. • The performance management framework is an integral part of the Council's corporate planning arrangements. • Business planning clearly shows the golden thread, i.e. the links between business plans, Corporate Well-being Objectives and Self-Assessment, and individual measures and tasks.
 <p>Involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance management framework has been designed from the 'ground-up' based on conversations with key officers and members over the last three years, culminating in its final version that reflects the Council's ambitions for its performance journey over the next five years and beyond. A good example of this is the inclusion of reflective practice as one of its core principles and was identified by the Council's leadership as a robust way of identifying and recording learning across the organisation. • The performance management framework has been reviewed and approved by a range of groups across the Council – Leadership Group, Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, Cabinet and Council. • The stakeholder consultation in support of Self-Assessment asks specific questions on the way in which performance is monitored. • The performance management framework is a published document and anyone is welcome to review and feedback on the document. • The Council regularly updates colleagues in Audit Wales with its performance journey which includes development of its approach to performance management.
 <p>Collaborative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to achieve the overall vision for the County we need to collaborate effectively with our partners to create an integrated approach to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the County by strengthening joint working across the County's services. • We apply the same high standards of performance management in order to achieve these shared outcomes. This includes setting appropriate measures to enable partners and the public to assess progress. • The Performance Board includes a range of Members from various Committees of the Council – Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Governance and Audit Committee. • The Corporate Well-being Objectives align with the Ceredigion Public Services Board's Well-being Plan.
 <p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing on the evidence, our Corporate Well-being Objectives and steps are designed to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse. • The framework supports the delivery of specific programmes based on prevention, such as the Through Age Well-being Programme that is transforming the delivery of social care in the County.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE TIMETABLE



TEIFI PERFORMANCE, DATA QUALITY AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Teifi Performance Management System

The Teifi System is the Council's electronic Performance Management System and is the tool we use to track and monitor performance. It operates in real-time and allows us to quickly identify areas of concern and where action needs to be taken.

It automates much of the monitoring and reporting to allow us to focus on the issues that really matter, i.e. understanding the root causes and finding solutions to drive-up performance.

The responsible officer or 'owner' is responsible for updating their objectives, tasks, performance measures and risks with current progress along with any evidence to support the result. This is a key part of the Council's governance arrangements. All users of the system receive training when they join the organisation and refresher training is provided annually.

Corporate Lead Officers review the results and dashboards on the Teifi system and are ultimately responsible for their service's level of performance. The dashboards from the Teifi system are presented to Performance Board quarterly for scrutiny.

Data Quality

Every stage of the performance management process relies on evidence and data to allow the Council to make judgements on what Ceredigion's needs are, what its customers' needs are, what it has achieved, and how it compares. It is therefore vital that all this information is founded on high quality, reliable, and timely data to ensure that the judgements that based upon it are sound.

In general terms, every council officer that records data in a council system needs to be aware that they are responsible for, and have an impact upon, data quality. For performance measures reporting, there is an additional responsibility on those who calculate measures (and their line managers) to ensure that definitions are applied correctly and consistently and that calculations are properly verified.

This is important because Ceredigion strives to be an evidence based and data-driven organisation.

The performance framework supports this by helping to ensure the provision of complete, accurate and timely data used in internal monitoring and published externally to communicate the Council's progress in delivering its vision and Corporate Well-being Objectives to the public and stakeholders.

It is important in supporting not only excellence in customer service but also corporate governance, business planning and increased accountability. This is

achieved by using standardised performance reporting processes and data quality checks, including:

- The Teifi Performance System includes validation of quarterly performance results and automatically assigns status based on pre-defined parameters.
- Missing performance data is flagged-up automatically by the Teifi Performance System.
- The Teifi Performance System standardises the quarterly performance updates process.
- Sense checks are performed by the Performance and Research Team before each Performance Board dashboard is published.
- A debrief is conducted after each Performance Board which considers any issues relating to the quality of performance information presented, such as improvements to measures.
- Questions/issues raised at Performance Board or other forums in relation to data are followed up by the Performance and Research Team.
- There is an ongoing programme of work to strengthen the set of performance measures in use, to ensure not only relevance but accuracy.
- The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer regularly liaises with CLOs/CMs between Performance Boards to keep the dashboards up to date.

Related Documents

This document should be read in conjunction with the following key policies and strategies that form the Council's corporate planning process:

- Corporate Strategy 2022-27
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Framework
- Annual Governance Statement
- Corporate Project Management Panel Brief Template
- Ceredigion Self-Assessment Report
- Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan

Copies of these documents can be downloaded from the Council's website (www.ceredigion.gov.uk) or are available from the Performance Team.

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