

CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of meeting:	26 March 2025
Title:	Final Panel Performance Assessment Report and the Council’s Response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report
Purpose of the report:	1) To receive the final Panel Performance Assessment Report 2) To review the Council’s Response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report and make recommendations, if necessary, to Cabinet
Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member	Councillor Bryan Davies - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance

Introduction

Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a new Self-Assessment based performance regime for Principal Councils. Part of the new regime is the duty to undertake a Panel Performance Assessment once in every election cycle.

Panel Performance Assessments are intended to 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, these are whether:

- it is exercising its functions effectively;
- it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- its governance is effective for securing the above.

The aim is to support councils to achieve their aspirations through developing an understanding of how they are operating and how they can ensure they are able to deliver effective services long-term.

The Assessment is undertaken by a panel of trained peers from across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Ceredigion’s first Panel Performance Assessment took place between 30 September and 3 October 2024.

The final version of the Panel Performance Assessment Report, which includes the Panel's conclusions and recommendations, has now been received and is attached as Background Paper 1.

The Governance and Audit Committee have a statutory role to play in the Panel Performance Assessment process, namely to:

- Receive the final Panel Performance Assessment as one of the statutory recipients.
- Review the Council's draft Response to the Panel Performance Assessment.
- Make any recommendations, if necessary, for changes to the Response to the Panel Performance Assessment.

Current Position

The Panel Performance Assessment was a success for the Council and this is reflected in the positive experience of the Panel and the conclusions drawn in their final report.

The Panel's overall conclusions are that:

- Considering the current high service demands and very challenging financial pressures, Ceredigion County Council is a well-run local authority.
- The Council has clear and effective leadership with strong relationships across the political and officer executive and wider structures and that the Council is delivering its functions effectively in-light of the significant financial, strategic and operational pressures the Council is dealing with on a daily basis.
- The Council has effective governance and reporting arrangements in place but there is an opportunity to further strengthen the relationships between the Council's executive and back bench members in the decision-making processes and priorities the Council will need to take going forward.
- The Council has established and developing areas of innovation including Well-being Centres, ICT, and hybrid working.
- Opportunities for improvement have been identified, which will enhance the arrangements in place, to support effective communication, relationship management and collective ownership of current and future challenges.

In addition to assessing the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Panel are also required to identify any recommendations that the Council could take in order to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements of the Act. The Panel identified the following eight recommendations within the report:

1. The Council will need to consider how best to consult on potential budget cuts given the narrow timetable for consultation due to the statutory budget setting deadlines.
2. Council has, to date, been able to provide significant additional funding for the provision of social care, and it will need to consider how sustainable this is going forward given the financial pressures.
3. The Council should consider the opportunities for further partnership working.
4. There is an urgent need for the Council to revisit whether their current strategy for social work recruitment is effective and to explore alternatives.
5. The Council should consider how to address a recurring theme of ineffective communication across the authority particularly with partners and residents and the effectiveness of "Clic".
6. There is something of a disconnect between backbench members and the executive/senior leadership teams which need to be addressed.
7. The relationships between scrutiny function and the executive needs to be further developed.
8. The performance management system is comprehensive but there needs to be more of a focus on outcomes.

The Council's Response to the Panel Performance Assessment has now been drafted and is attached as Background Paper 2.

The Council has welcomed the Panel Performance Assessment Report and thanked the Panel for their work in providing an independent and external perspective of the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements. The Council accepts and acknowledges the report and notes the positive conclusions and the opportunities for improvement. The draft Response includes commentary against each of the recommendations and the actions that the Council intends to take.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why

No, the Panel Performance Assessment does not introduce any new policies or strategies.

Summary:

Long term:

Collaboration:

Wellbeing of Future Generations:

Involvement:

Prevention:

Integration:

Recommendations (s):	That Governance and Audit Committee receives the final Panel Performance Assessment Report
	That Governance and Audit Committee reviews the draft Response to the Panel Performance Assessment and makes any recommendations, if necessary, to Cabinet to change the draft Response
Reason for decision:	To ensure compliance with Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
Overview and Scrutiny:	N/A.
Policy Framework:	Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Corporate Well-being Objectives:	All, the Panel Performance Assessment looks at the Council's overall performance.
Finance and Procurement implications:	The WLGA have borne the cost of the Panel Performance Assessment.
Legal Implications:	The Council has a duty under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to undertake a Panel Performance Assessment at least once in each electoral cycle.
Staffing implications:	The Panel was supported by the Council's Performance Team in the preparation, during and after the Assessment.
Property / asset implications:	N/A
Risk(s):	The final Panel Performance Assessment Report is not published by the Council leading to a failure to comply with legislation (Part 6 of the Local Government Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Statutory Powers:	N/A.
Background Papers:	1 Final Panel Performance Assessment Report 2 Draft Response to the Panel Performance Assessment
Appendices:	N/A.

Corporate Lead Officer: Alun Williams (Corporate Lead Officer Policy, Performance and Public Protection)

Reporting Officer: Alun Williams (Corporate Lead Officer Policy, Performance and Public Protection)

Date: 14 February 2025