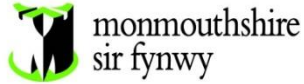


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Neuadd y Sir
Y Rhadyr
Brynbuga
NP15 1GA

County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
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Tuesday, 12 May 2026

Dear Councillor

CABINET

You are requested to attend a **Cabinet** meeting to be held at **Steve Greenslade Room, County Hall, Usk** on **Wednesday, 20th May, 2026**, at **4.30 pm**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 21st April 2026 1 - 8
4. COMMITTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING S106 CONTRIBUTIONS 9 - 26

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To brief Cabinet on the status of Affordable Housing S106 contributions.

To recommend options to commit and spend the funding.

Author: Louise Corbett, Strategy and Policy Officer

Contact Details: louisecorbett@monmouthshire.gov.uk

5. PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT 27 - 58

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To provide Cabinet with the Panel Performance Assessment report and the authority's draft response to the recommendations to enable Cabinet to consider the response ahead of it being presented to Governance and Audit Committee and Council in June.

To provide an update on the annual self-assessment process that will be followed to produce a draft evaluation of the council's performance due to be considered by scrutiny committees in July and presented to Council in

September.

Author: Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships

Contact Details: matthewgatehouse@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

CABINET PORTFOLIOS

County Councillor	Area of Responsibility	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	<p>Leader Lead Officers – Paul Matthews, Matthew Gatehouse, Peter Davies, Will Mclean</p> <p>Whole Authority Strategy and Direction Whole authority performance review and evaluation, including DDAT Relationships with Welsh Government, UK Government and local government associations Regional Relationships including CJsCs. PSBs and cross boarder Emergency Planning</p>	Llanelly
Paul Griffiths	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader Lead Officers – Will McLean, Craig O'Connor</p> <p>Economic Strategy Skills and Employment Replacement Local Development Plan Placemaking and the development of market and affordable housing Placemaking and Transforming Towns Car parking and civil parking enforcement Development Management Building Control</p>	Chepstow Castle & Larkfield
Ben Callard	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources Lead Officers – Peter Davies, Matt Gatehouse</p> <p>Finance including MTFP and annual budget cycle Revenue and Benefits Human resources, payroll, health and safety Land and buildings Property maintenance and management Strategic procurement</p>	Llanfoist & Govilon
Laura Wright	<p>Cabinet Member for Education Lead Officers – Will McLean, Deb Hill-Howells</p> <p>Early Years Education All age statutory education Additional learning needs/inclusion Post 16 and adult education School standards and improvement</p>	Grofield

	<p>Community learning Sustainable communities for learning Programme Youth service School transport</p>	
Ian Chandler	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services Lead Officer – Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Children’s services Fostering & adoption Youth Offending service Adult services Whole authority safeguarding (children and adults) Disabilities Mental health Wellbeing Relationships with health providers and access to health provision</p>	Llantilio Crossenny
Catrin Maby	<p>Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment Lead Officers – Debra Hill-Howells, Craig O’Connor,</p> <p>Decarbonisation Transport Planning Highways and MCC Fleet Waste management, street care, litter, public spaces and parks Pavements and Back lanes Flood Alleviation Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and River health</p>	Drybridge
Angela Sandles	<p>Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement Lead Officers – Matthew Gatehouse, Paul Matthews, Jane Rodgers, James Williams</p> <p>Community development, inequality and poverty (health, income, nutrition, disadvantage, discrimination, isolation and cost of living crisis) Citizen engagement and democracy promotion including working with voluntary organisations Citizen experience - community hubs, contact centre, and customer service and registrars, communications, public relations and marketing Leisure centres, play and sport Public conveniences Electoral Services and constitution review Ethics and standards Welsh Language Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Public Protection, and Licencing</p>	Magor East with Undy

Sara Burch	Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism Lead Officers – Craig O'Connor, Jane Rodgers Local Food production and consumption, including agroforestry and local horticulture Homelessness, Temporary accommodation, private sector housing, (empty homes leasing schemes, home improvement loans, disabled facilities grants and adaptive technology), Allocation of social housing Broadband connectivity Active Travel Countryside Access and Rights of Way Tourism Development and Cultural Services	Cantref
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Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 21st April 2026

Report Item 4: The Development of Children's Residential and 16+ supported Accommodation Placements – Progress Update

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues for the Cabinet Member's consideration:

Key points raised by the Committee:

Delivery timescales and blockers (Placement Development Strategy)

- Whether the two remaining schemes will complete by October 2026.
- What the main blockers are (beyond finding suitable buildings).
- How future slippage will be avoided (earlier due diligence and improved commissioning).

Response: The two remaining schemes remain on track for completion in October 2026. Previous delays were largely procurement/commissioning timescales and identifying properties meeting legal/regulatory requirements; earlier legal and land registry checks have been introduced to reduce future delay risk.

Managing mixed-age placements and changes in household dynamics

- How mixed-age dynamics are identified and managed safely.
- How compatibility is assessed and issues managed day-to-day.
- How stability is maintained when residents move on and new children arrive.
- What safeguards support stability (key workers, staffing continuity, responsive plans).

Response: Matching is based on assessed needs, personalities and circumstances, supported by stable staffing and named key workers. Transitions (move-ins/move-ons) are planned with active monitoring and care plans adjusted promptly to maintain stability and wellbeing.

Location criteria: town-based versus rural settings

- Whether location is assessed as well as building design.
- How amenities/independence are balanced against a need for quieter settings.
- How the statement of purpose/cohort affects location choice.
- Whether there is a preferred model or a purely needs-led approach.

Response: Location is considered alongside design through each home's statement of purpose and the needs of children. Town locations can support independence and amenities access; rural/smaller settings can be appropriate for higher support needs, quieter environments and higher staff-to-child ratios—there is no single preferred model.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Evidence of improved outcomes from in-house provision and how these are monitored

- What evidence shows improved outcomes vs external placements.
- How outcomes are monitored over time.
- What oversight provides assurance (reviews, visits, key-worker input).
- How longer-term outcomes into adulthood are assessed.

Response: Outcomes are tracked through a suite of qualitative and ongoing indicators (attendance/engagement in education, wellbeing and emotional regulation, relationships, stability, participation, family contact where appropriate). Monitoring occurs via statutory LAC reviews, social worker visits and key-worker engagement, and is considered over time into young adulthood (EET pathways).

Reduction in original target numbers for residential/supported accommodation

- Why targets have been reduced since the strategy was agreed.
- Whether this reflects demand, capacity, or both.
- How stabilised numbers have influenced the revised targets.
- Impact of the UASC model on local supported accommodation need.

Response: Targets were adjusted due to stabilised demand and an improved delivery model for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, with some young people preferring placements outside the county. Sufficiency remains under review and may change if demand changes.

Value for money and assurance decisions remain child-centred (not convenience-led)

- How in-house provision improves both outcomes and costs.
- Safeguards to keep decisions child-centred.
- How cost and quality are assessed together.
- How learning feeds into future sufficiency planning.

Response: The primary objective remains improved, stable outcomes as corporate parents. In-house provision supports quality, matching and stability and reduces reliance on a high-cost external market; costs and outcomes are monitored together to inform future decisions.

Cost comparisons and whether a member dashboard would support oversight

- Current average weekly cost of external residential and IFA placements.
- Comparison with in-house unit costs (incl. staffing and overheads).
- How members will track cost, demand and capacity trends.
- Whether a simple dashboard could support scrutiny.

Response: Average external residential placements were reported at ~£7k–£8k per child/week (and rising), compared with ~£4k per child/week for in-house provision (inclusive of staffing/building/overheads). A dashboard presenting cost, demand and capacity will be considered to support ongoing member oversight.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Market instability and 2030 regulatory reforms: confidence in sufficiency and provider intelligence

- Confidence the planned in-house scale meets likely demand (next 3–4 years).
- Impact of 2030 reforms on supply, capacity and cost.
- What is known about providers' intentions (exit/convert/continue).
- How often sufficiency is reviewed and how providers are engaged.

Response: The position is uncertain nationally and locally. The Council is engaging with providers and commissioning partners to understand intentions ahead of reforms (exit/convert/continue) and will keep sufficiency under regular review, recognising the evolving market.

High refurbishment costs, slippage, and whether purpose-built provision should be considered

- Key drivers of refurbishment costs (compliance, safety, fit-for-purpose design).
- Whether there has been slippage and the main causes.
- How capital value for money is assured.
- Whether purpose-built homes should be considered longer-term.

Response: Costs reflect compliance with stringent regulatory/safety requirements (including fire safety and sprinklers) and adapting older buildings to children's needs and staff accommodation. Capital spend is funded through the Housing with Care Fund and subject to Welsh Government scrutiny. Slippage was mainly procurement-related; purpose-built options can be considered longer-term, but the current programme prioritised adapting suitable existing properties to deliver at pace.

Impact of slippage on children and how care plans were adjusted

- How many children were affected by slippage.
- What changes were made to care plans.
- Whether delays led to any negative outcomes and how risks were managed.
- Whether delays supported better preparation/transition.

Response: Only a small number of children were affected. Alternative plans were implemented (moves to other placements or longer in existing placements) without negative outcomes; in some cases extra time supported smoother transition and relationship-building.

Formal mechanisms to alert members to material changes in demand/sufficiency

- How material demand changes are identified and reported.
- How sufficiency is monitored (annual reviews, statutory reporting, performance cycles).
- When members/scrutiny will be updated as plans change.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Response: Sufficiency and commissioning plans are reviewed annually and reported through statutory routes (e.g., Director's Annual Report and Welsh Government returns), alongside regular internal performance monitoring. Scrutiny will receive further updates as remaining schemes progress.

Financial impact of external market inflation and reflection in the Medium-Term Financial Plan

- Current budget impact of rising external placement costs.
- Whether this is reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- How planned in-house provision will reduce costs over time.

Response: Rising external placement costs are built into children's services budget planning and reflected in short-term and medium-term planning, alongside anticipated savings as in-house provision increases.

Communication and engagement with children and young people in care regarding strategy changes

- How changes are explained to children and young people.
- How engagement varies by age and need.
- What practical support is used for transitions.

Response: Engagement is age- and needs-appropriate: older young people through corporate parenting structures and involvement in strategic discussion; younger children through child-friendly preparation, visual materials, life-story work and relationship-building to support transitions.

Engagement with local residents before/after homes open

- How residents are engaged before opening.
- Ongoing communication once homes are operational.
- Whether there is a clear local point of contact.
- How concerns are monitored and escalated.

Response: Early engagement via meetings/information events is undertaken prior to works/opening, with ongoing updates and a named local contact. Concerns are addressed early, with continued oversight through statutory visits and feedback mechanisms.

Rationale for a mixed delivery model (local authority residential + third-sector supported accommodation)

- Why a mixed model is used rather than one approach.
- How placement routes are chosen for different cohorts/needs.
- How quality/control is balanced with external capacity.
- Whether the model will be reviewed as demand/markets change.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Response: Third-sector supported accommodation provides flexibility for 16–17-year-olds and builds on a stronger, established market; in-house residential provision offers greater control over quality, matching and workforce development in a more costly/less developed external market. The mixed model reduces reliance on a single approach and remains under review.

Private children’s homes in-county and potential impact on perceptions of local authority provision

- Number of private children’s homes in-county and trend.
- Risk to public perception of all children’s homes.
- What influence the Council has when concerns arise.
- How concerns are escalated (safeguarding/community safety/police).

Response: Officers hold information on private provision (previously reported as nine, with indications this has increased). Communities may not distinguish between provider types; where issues arise, the Council shares concerns with placing authorities and regulators and escalates via safeguarding/community safety/policing routes as appropriate, recognising limits on direct enforcement.

Further steps to support community cohesion where private provision causes concern

- What more the Council can do regarding private provision.
- How intelligence is shared with regulators/placing authorities.
- How safeguarding duties apply, given limited enforcement powers.
- Importance of early communication and escalation.

Response: While powers are limited, the Council will continue liaison and information-sharing with regulators and placing authorities, and apply statutory safeguarding duties where risks are identified, focusing on early communication, coordination and escalation where needed.

Points requiring a further response by the Cabinet Member:

None raised.

Report Item 5: Investment & Commercial Portfolio – 12 Month Performance Update

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues for the Cabinet Member’s consideration.

Key points raised by the Committee:

Castle Gate Business Park – strategic rationale vs underperformance:

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

- How strategic is the Council's continued ownership of Castle Gate Business Park, and at what point should it be regarded as an underperforming asset rather than a strategic one?

Response: Officers acknowledged market challenges post-pandemic; occupancy is improving and remains competitive for out-of-town space. The location is strategically important for future development; any long-term decision must consider tenants, jobs and wider economic benefits.

Added value of Council ownership:

- What additional benefits does Council ownership of Castle Gate Business Park deliver compared with private sector ownership?

Response: Ownership enables a flexible approach balancing income with wider outcomes (e.g., flexible workspace initiatives, temporary accommodation for local organisations during refurbishments, and community/charitable use) while still prioritising occupancy and income growth.

Letting strategy and competitiveness:

- Has the Council tested whether its letting strategy and terms at Castle Gate Business Park remain competitive in the current market?

Response: Terms have been reviewed with multiple commercial agents and were confirmed as competitive; the Council will continue proactive marketing and tenant engagement.

Risk reduction and portfolio stability:

- Are there any recent developments that reduce risk within the investment portfolio?

Response: A key Castle Gate lease renewal has been secured (a major tenant committed to a minimum further five years), improving income stability and reducing short-term risk.

Disposal criteria and capital release:

- What criteria would trigger a decision to dispose of an investment asset rather than retain it for long-term income, and has the Council considered whether releasing capital could better support core services?

Response: No single trigger; decisions weigh performance, income potential, market conditions, risk, and economic/community impacts (including employment and regeneration). Capital release is considered alongside the long-term revenue and influence benefits of ownership.

Frequency of review and exploring alternative uses:

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

- How often are investment assets reviewed, and how frequently are alternative approaches or future uses considered?

Response: Continuous review with formal monthly meetings with managing agents covering performance, occupancy, risks and market intelligence; wider strategic forums (including regional engagement) also explore future opportunities.

Cardiff Capital Region engagement:

- What does engagement with the Cardiff Capital Region mean in practice for Castle Gate Business Park, and how does it influence future planning?

Response: Castle Gate is positioned within the region's investment context to attract appropriate sectors (notably those aligned to the compound semiconductor cluster); Council ownership supports influence over tenant mix and promotion through regional prospectuses.

Alternative uses/development and planning constraints:

- Are there opportunities for alternative uses or additional development at Castle Gate Business Park (e.g., renewables, transport uses, alignment with the Replacement LDP), and are local businesses being prevented from accessing space?

Response: Options are being explored (including better utilisation of space and the car park), but must align with planning policy, employment land protections and safeguarding town-centre vitality. Restrictions apply where proposed uses fall outside permitted classes; flexibility may be considered case-by-case to avoid businesses leaving the county.

Governance and checks on investment decisions:

- What governance, checks and balances are now in place to oversee investment decisions and avoid past acquisition risks?

Response: The Council no longer pursues large-scale/out-of-county acquisitions; oversight sits within established governance, with performance/risk reported through scrutiny and any acquisition/disposal requiring formal approval.

Rent collection and arrears management:

- How are rental income and arrears monitored, and when is action taken against tenants who fall behind on payments?

Response: Automated systems and regular managing-agent engagement provide monitoring and early-intervention trigger points; enforcement/termination decisions are taken case-by-case, and forfeiture/re-letting has occurred where necessary.

Incentives and tenant retention:

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

- How dependent is improved performance at Castle Gate Business Park on tenants remaining long-term, given that incentives may be required to attract new tenants?

Response: Retaining existing tenants supports stability; incentives (e.g., rent-free periods) may be needed in current market conditions and are balanced against long-term income and occupancy.

Renewables and decarbonisation (including EV charging links):

- Is the Council expanding renewable energy generation across its commercial estate (including solar canopies), and can this be integrated with EV charging? How does decarbonisation work at Castle Gate link to financial performance and tenant affordability?

Response: Solar and other renewables are being expanded where feasible (including solar canopies); integration with EV charging is being explored. Castle Gate is a pilot site in a regional decarbonisation programme considering measures such as improved building management systems, LED lighting and renewables to reduce running costs for both the Council and tenants.

Other assets – Newport Leisure Park and Monmouth Market Hall:

- Is the current return on investment at Newport Leisure Park meeting expectations, and how does it compare with the target rate? What is the longer-term vision for Market Hall in Monmouth once the museum vacates the space?

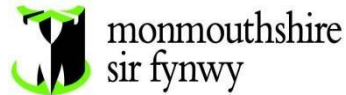
Response: Leisure Park ROI is ~1.8% (improved, slightly below 2% target) with letting activity expected to increase returns to ~2.4% in 2026–27. For Market Hall, space will be marketed for complementary uses to increase footfall; marketing will begin in advance to minimise void periods.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and responses. The Committee noted the importance of the investment and commercial property portfolio to financial resilience, while recognising continuing market challenges, particularly at Castle Gate Business Park. Members welcomed improved occupancy, proactive asset management, strengthened governance and lease renewals that have reduced risk, and emphasised the need for ongoing monitoring of performance and opportunities (including decarbonisation and regional partnerships), with further updates as the position develops.

Points requiring a further response by the Cabinet Member:

None raised.



SUBJECT: COMMITTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING S106 CONTRIBUTIONS
MEETING: CABINET
DATE: 20 MAY 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To brief Cabinet on the status of Affordable Housing S106 contributions.
- 1.2 To recommend options to commit and spend the funding.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To agree to committing and spending S106 contributions linked to affordable housing as follows:

- **Chepstow & Caldicot Housing Market Area:**
Severn View, Chepstow – up to £260,720 S106 contributions are applied to costs linked to the conversion and refurbishment of Severn View.
- **Abergavenny Housing Market Area**
9 Park Crescent, Abergavenny – up to £250,000 S106 contributions are applied to the balance of costs of acquiring and refurbishing Park Crescent.

Acquisitions – £193,100.51 S106 contributions are applied to the cost of purchasing a suitable property off the open market.
- **Monmouth Housing Market Area**
Nailers Lane, Monmouth – £28,556.34 S106 contributions are applied to the redevelopment of Nailers Lane.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 It is a principle of the Council's Planning Policy that all residential developments of between 1 – 4 dwellings should contribute to the provision of affordable housing, irrespective of whether the size of the development falls below the threshold for onsite provision. There are some exemptions linked to residential conversions, but this approach has enabled the collection of monies to support affordable housing delivery.
- 3.2 As of July 2025, the total amount of affordable housing contributions held was £905,458.37. This sum is made up of contributions generated following development in one of the Housing Market Areas (HMA) of Abergavenny, Chepstow & Caldicot or Monmouth and will have a date of expiry whereby the monies must be spent. Financial contributions gathered by the Council must be used to deliver affordable housing in the HMA from which they are collected. The Council can combine financial contributions from different sites and will spend contributions in the way that best achieves the Council's priorities for affordable housing, which could include new build, purchasing an existing home, converting existing buildings or bringing an empty home back into use.

The total amount of financial contributions held for each of the HMA is listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Total Contributions

Abergavenny	£474,351.86
Chepstow & Caldicot	£398,157.17
Monmouth	£32,959.34
Total	£905,458.37

3.3 Further analysis of the contributions indicates a range of timescales for spend, with some contributions already reaching their original spend dates, others expected to do so by 31 December 2026 with the remainder extending into 2027 and beyond.

Table 2: Contributions by Spend Time Frame

	Short term spend period - before 31.12.25	Medium term spend period - before 31.12.2026	Longer term spend period - 2027 onwards
Abergavenny	£179,616.00	£263,484.51	£21,292.15
Chepstow & Caldicot	£223,391.88	£37,328.87	£139,540.72
Monmouth	£28,556.34	£0	£12,249.00
SUB TOTAL	£431,564.22	£300,812.38	£173,081.87
TOTAL	£905,458		

3.4 It is proposed that £732,376.60 of the contributions are prioritised for commitment to the following projects, reflecting contributions with shorter and medium term spend timescales up to 31 December 2026.

- Chepstow & Caldicot Housing Market Area**
Severn View, Chepstow - Severn View is a former residential home which has been converted to accommodation for homeless households and accommodates up to seventeen single persons. The conversion and refurbishment of this property was recently undertaken with final costs expected to be in the region of £350,000. It is proposed that up to £260,720.75 in S106 contributions are applied to costs linked to the conversion and refurbishment of Severn View, this approach would see a significant amount of S106 contributions committed and avoid the need for the Council to fund the whole of the conversion costs.
- Abergavenny Housing Market Area**
9 Park Crescent, Abergavenny - Park Crescent is a newly acquired property by Monmouthshire Council. Purchased with funding from Welsh Government's Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP), it is intended to be converted to a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) for homeless households.

The expected cost of the refurbishment is estimated at £300,000, a proportion of this is committed in this year's TACP programme but there is a shortfall of £250,000 (based on costs of £300,000). This shortfall would usually be covered by Council funds, but it is proposed that £250,000 in contributions are ring fenced to cover the shortfall in costs. Completion of the refurbishment is expected in Autumn 2026. Costs are still to be confirmed and the intention will be to utilise available S106 contributions to cover any costs above the estimate of £300,000.

Acquisitions – Working with a preferred RSL it is proposed to use a proportion of contributions to the value of £193,100.51 to support acquiring one or two properties off the open market in Abergavenny. These properties would be available for social rent and allocated to households with a recognised housing need. It is likely that the cost of acquisition and any refurbishment required to meet housing standards will have to be supplemented by Social Housing Grant (SHG) and built into the Council's Programme Development Plan (PDP).

- **Monmouth Housing Market Area**

Nailers Lane, Monmouth – Housing Strategy are working in collaboration with Hedyn to bring forward the development of Nailers Lane. The intention is to deliver four one-bedroom apartments, upon completion the council will lease this accommodation from Hedyn for use for homeless households. This development will be in receipt of Social Housing Grant (SHG) and is projected to draw funding this financial year (2026/27). It is proposed that £28,556.34 of SHG is substituted with S106 contributions. This will free up £28,556.34 of SHG to support new delivery elsewhere.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING

4.1 The following is an overview of the evaluation, a more detailed breakdown can be found at **Appendix One**: There are no negative financial implications associated with the proposal as the funds have already been received by the Council. There are significant positive impacts especially around health and wellbeing goals by contributing to a “healthier Wales” and a “more equal Wales”. The proposal meets the sustainability goal by its contribution to the following principles “Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future”.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 An options appraisal has been undertaken – see Table 3.

Table 3: Options Appraisal

Option	Benefit	Risk
1. The preferred option: Allocate/Spend the short and medium term spend period funds as set out.	It is a priority of the Council to increase the provision of affordable housing in Monmouthshire.	£431,564.22 of contributions have passed the spend date. This could be open to challenge and could result in the contribution needing to be

	<p>Majority of proposal focuses on the delivery of single person temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Reduces capital outlay for the Council and revenue loan repayments.</p> <p>Ensures full commitment/spend of affordable housing S106 contributions which are time sensitive.</p> <p>It complements other available capital funding for affordable-housing.</p>	<p>returned/repaid.</p> <p>Severn View, Chepstow use as temporary accommodation, at present is a temporary arrangement of 5 years.</p>
<p>2. Not spend the S106 contributions and only allocate/spend those with a longer term spend period.</p>	<p>No risk of challenge</p>	<p>This option does not support the Council's priority to increase the provision of affordable housing.</p> <p>Capital outlay and revenue loan repayments for the Council remains the same as it does now</p> <p>Potential reputational risk/poor publicity if unspent monies are returned at a time when the Council has identified unmet social and homeless housing need.</p>

6. REASONS

- 6.1 This proposal supports the objective in the Community and Corporate Plan to 'increase the supply of good quality affordable housing.'
- 6.2 The council has received the S106 contributions listed in this report and further action is required as per the individual S106 agreements.
- 6.3 The proposed allocation and spend supports the delivery of affordable accommodation, with the use of the projects contained in this report being concentrated on accommodation for homeless households or other households with a recognised a housing need.
- 6.4 The Council has a duty to prevent and respond to homelessness under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 6.5 The Council is expected to support Welsh Governments homeless policy vision that homelessness should be rarer, brief and non-recurring.

6.6 The proposal also supports the Council to meet the Welsh Government requirement to adopt a Rapid Rehousing approach to homelessness as per the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan approved by [Cabinet 5 April 2023](#) whilst also addressing other relevant policy documents such as [Homelessness Strategy GOV WALES, Ending Homelessness in Wales: a high level action plan 2021 to 2026 \(gov.wales\)](#) and [Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping: July 2022 GOV.WALES.](#)

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The S106 monies referenced in this report have already been received and must be used to support the delivery of affordable housing. The suggested use will not have a negative impact on capital budgets.

7.2 In the case of Severn View and 9 Park Crescent, the proposal would reduce the Council's financial capital commitment as it suggests substituting Council funding with S106 monies.

7.3 For Nailers Lane, an allocation has already been made within the Social Housing Grant programme, and the proposed use will result in an element of the ring-fenced grant funding being made available to support affordable housing elsewhere.

8. CONSULTEES

Cabinet; Senior Leadership Team; Social Care DMT; Housing & Communities Management Team; S106 Working Group.

8.1 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing (Wales) Act 2014; Welsh Government, Phase 2 Homeless and Housing Support Planning Guidance, 2021; Welsh Government, Ending homelessness in Wales: a high level action plan 2021 to 2026; Welsh Government, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans: Guidance for Local Authorities & Partners, 2021; Monmouthshire Council, Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022; Monmouthshire Council, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and Action Plan, 2023; Welsh Government, White Paper on Ending Homelessness 2023; S106 Agreements.

9. **AUTHOR:** Louise Corbett, Strategy and Policy Officer

10. **CONTACT DETAILS:** louisecorbett@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty)

<p>Name of the Officer completing the evaluation</p> <p>E-mail: louisecorbett@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</p> <p>Committing Affordable Housing S106 Contributions</p>
<p>Name of Service area</p> <p>Housing & Communities</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>7th May 2026</p>

1. **Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	This proposal has the potential to support people of all protected characteristics by virtue of seeking to make more affordable accommodation available in Monmouthshire.	No impact identified at this stage	No impact identified at this stage
Disability	As above	As above	As above

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Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	As above	As above	As above
Marriage or civil partnership	As above	As above	As above
Pregnancy or maternity	As above	As above	As above
Race	As above	As above	As above
Religion or Belief	As above	As above	As above
Sex	As above	As above	As above
Sexual Orientation	As above	As above	As above

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

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Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	<p>It is recognised that lack of suitable housing and homelessness is often characterised by issues such as low income; affordability; impact of childhood trauma; substance misuse; accessing employment / training opportunities; barriers to accessing mental health and lack of independent living skills.</p> <p>The provision of affordable accommodation therefore can benefit those experiencing socio economic disadvantage. Good quality affordable accommodation also supports wider priorities such as health and well-being, poverty, employment opportunities etc.</p>	There are no negative impacts associated with this proposal	Housing and homelessness are a cross cutting priority of the Corporate and Community Plan with a multi-agency involvement.
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3. Policy making and the Welsh language

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably	Neutral impact	No impact identified at this stage	No impact identified at this stage
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	Neutral impact. The Council encourages the appointment of Welsh Language speakers and offers staff Welsh Language training	The Council struggles to employ Welsh speaking staff	Actively promote roles and make sure they reach Welsh speaking candidates through Welsh Language recruitment sites.
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	Neutral impact	No impact identified at this stage	No impact identified at this stage

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4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>Positive: Positively contributes to increasing housing options in Monmouthshire. Potentially helps to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation if utilised as temporary accommodation. Any remodelling and refurbishment work required will not only need to maximise energy efficiency but will also support the local construction sector and wider economy</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	<p>If used for temporary accommodation it supports the on-going priority for the Council to increase the provision of self-contained temporary accommodation and reduce reliance on bed & breakfast accommodation.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g., climate change)</p>	<p>Positive: None identified at this time</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	<p>The energy efficiency standards of the properties will be enhanced where possible.</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Positive: Positively contributes to the health and well being of people in need of suitable housing. Safe and secure housing supports well-being.</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	<p>The proposal has the potential to align with the Housing Support Grant programme to enable residents to access housing support and help to maintain their accommodation.</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p>	<p>Positive: Positively contributes by effectively increasing housing supply thereby helping</p>	<p>None identified at this time</p>



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Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	<p>local people remain in their home communities.</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>Positive: Positively contributes to the health of households and households in need of suitable housing. Any remodelling and refurbishment work required will also need to improve and maximise the energy efficiency of the properties to reduce future energy costs and loss.</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	None identified at this time
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation</p>	<p>Positive: None identified at this time</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	None identified at this time
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>Positive: The proposal both strengthens the quality and availability of accommodation. This helps to increase the stability in people's lives improving opportunities in respect of personal finances; employment; training etc</p> <p>Negative: None identified at this time</p>	None identified at this time

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Long Term Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>The proposal is about sustainable housing solutions and maximising the potential to set people up to succeed.</p>	<p>The provision of this temporary accommodation may result in temporary accommodation elsewhere in the County is being reduced as some properties could be returned to the private sector.</p> <p>The Council is moving towards a Rapid Rehousing Approach as required by Welsh Government</p>
 <p>Collaboration Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>The proposal supports Health (good accommodation contributes to well-being etc) and Social Care (good accommodation supports families, care leavers and corporate parenting etc)</p>	<p>Arrangements already exist with housing associations and private landlords.</p>
 <p>Involvement Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>Housing and Communitie have all been consulted regarding this proposal.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Prevention</p> <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>The proposal is about strengthening and improving accommodation availability to offset the need to use inappropriate accommodation and reduce the budget deficit.</p>	<p>Resources are already being directed towards mitigating against homelessness through trying to prevent homelessness and acquiring accommodation in Monmouthshire. If utilised as temporary accommodation, it will support the objective above.</p>
 <p>Integration</p> <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>The proposal indirectly positively impacts on well-being e.g., potential for additional good quality accommodation supports well-being.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	If used as temporary accommodation it will support households where there could be safeguarding issues by providing safe and secure temporary accommodation.	None identified at this time	None identified at this time
Corporate Parenting	If used as temporary accommodation the proposal supports Corporate Parenting by potentially providing safe and secure accommodation.	None identified at this time	None identified at this time

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

<p>Evidence has been gathered in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of current pressures being faced by Housing Options as a result of the statutory duty to accommodate all homeless households; • Housing needs data e.g. housing waiting lists, numbers in temporary accommodation, demand for different types of accommodation <p>The legislation and good practice which have informed the policy revisions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Act 1996 • Housing (Wales) Act 2014 • Welsh Government's Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness • The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility)(Wales) Regulations • Welsh Government Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support.
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- Welsh Government, Developing a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2022-2027

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

.This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template

Positive

The positive impacts of this proposal are:

- Additional good quality affordable accommodation
- Additional accommodation provides an opportunity to factor in carbon reduction measures by improving quality and energy efficiency
- Delivers positive impacts to those with protected characteristics
- Support of wider priorities such as responding to levels of homelessness and safeguarding
- Contributes to individual's health and well-being

Negative

None identified at this time

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

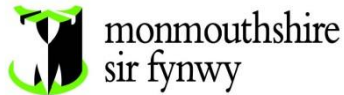
What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible

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10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision-making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built-in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1.	DMT	December 2025	
2.	Cabinet	20 th May 2026	

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SUBJECT:	PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	20 May 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with the Panel Performance Assessment report and the authority's draft response to the recommendations to enable Cabinet to consider the response ahead of it being presented to Governance and Audit Committee and Council in June.
- 1.2 To provide an update on the annual self-assessment process that will be followed to produce a draft evaluation of the council's performance due to be considered by scrutiny committees in July and presented to Council in September.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the Panel Performance Assessment report attached at appendix 1.
- 2.2 That Cabinet endorse the draft response to the recommendations (appendix 2) ahead of presentation to Governance and Audit Committee and a subsequent decision by full Council.
- 2.3 That Cabinet note the process being followed to produce the annual self-assessment and propose any further adjustments to ensure the approach leads to a robust evidence-based evaluation of the authority's performance.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In February 2026 the Council underwent a peer Panel Performance Assessment that followed a scope agreed by Cabinet in November 2025. Following the conclusion of the Assessment, an independently chaired group of peers concluded that:

"Monmouthshire is an ambitious, well-run Council with communities at its heart and a reach that transcends boundaries."

- 3.2 This report provides Cabinet with the full report of the panel. This provides the opportunity for Cabinet to consider the recommendations and the Council's response to the panel's findings ahead of these being considered by the Governance and Audit Committee in June 2026.

- 3.3 For our organisation to be successful it's important that we are clear about what we are aiming to achieve, make sure it's delivered and has the desired impact. The council's unifying purpose is for Monmouthshire to be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. This is set in the Community and Corporate Plan along with six underpinning objectives.
- 3.4 We have clear and established performance management framework in place to ensure we can deliver our agreed purpose and be held to account. These arrangements are overseen by the independently chaired Governance and Audit Committee with oversight from regulators including Audit Wales. The legislative basis for performance management in Welsh local authorities is set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This establishes specific performance requirements. These include:
- Duty to produce an annual self-assessment report assessing how effectively we exercise our functions, use resources efficiently, and ensure effective governance.
 - Requirement to arrange a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) to conduct a statutory evaluation at least once per electoral cycle to examine how the council is meeting its performance requirements.

These are part of the Council's ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability for councillors and residents.

The Panel Performance Assessment

- 3.5 Monmouthshire's first peer panel assessment since the enactment of the legislation took place between 24th – 27th February 2026. The panel was chaired by Bev Smith, a former local authority chief executive who has subsequently held a number of non-executive roles. Details of other members can be found within the report.
- 3.6 The panel worked to a scope developed by Cabinet and approved at its meeting on 27th November. The scope was:
- how well does the council align across directorates to optimise delivery of the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan?
 - what opportunities are there to further develop the council's emerging person centred and preventative approaches to working with its communities, local businesses and other stakeholders, (including town and community councils)?
 - how well are we able to demonstrate the intended outcomes and emerging impacts of our Community and Corporate Plan and, how well do we communicate them to councillors, residents and other stakeholders, including town and community councils and local businesses?
- 3.7 The legislation that guides the assessment also requires the panel to assess the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements specified in the Act. Namely:

- exercising its functions effectively;
 - using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
 - having effective governance in place for securing the above.
- 3.8 The panel met with more than 120 people over the course of the week including: a politically balanced focus group of backbench councillors nominated by group leaders; focus groups of officers at all tiers of the organisation; volunteers; business leaders; town and community councillors; trade unions; leaders of other public sector organisations and most importantly focus groups of local people. They also considered the results of the 2025-26 residents' and staff surveys.
- 3.9 Their findings have been included in a report which is attached as appendix one. The headline conclusion was:
- Monmouthshire is an ambitious, well-run Council with communities at its heart and a reach that transcends boundaries.*
- 3.10 The panel made the following recommendations:
- Prioritising major opportunities to deliver better outcomes for residents at lower costs.
 - Strengthening community resilience and shared understanding.
 - Completing the development of Workforce and Succession Planning.
- 3.11 The authority cannot amend the panel's report but does get the opportunity, and is required to, produce a response to it. This must include:
- The extent to which it accepts the conclusions in the report;
 - The extent to which the council intends to follow any recommendations contained in the report; and
 - Any actions it proposes to take to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements.
- 3.12 The council must make a draft of its response to the panel performance assessment available to its governance and audit committee, which must then review the draft response and may make recommendations for changes. The panel's report and the authority's response to it will be presented to full council ahead of formal publication.

Self-Assessment

- 3.13 The council also produces an annual self-assessment report evaluating its performance in the previous financial year. As well as being an incredibly useful tool for councillors and officers, the production of a self-assessment is a legal requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Act requires each local authority in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements defined in the Act. This means the extent to which: it is exercising its functions effectively; is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and its governance is effective for securing these as set out in para 3.7 above.

- 3.14 Monmouthshire’s approach to self-assessment is well-established and is embedded as part of the performance management framework. This ensures it can help the council continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce.
- 3.15 The assessment follows a set process that has been developed and adjusted over recent years informed by a range of feedback, including from regulators, scrutiny committees and the Governance & Audit Committee. Our assessment commences with a desk-based evaluation of a wide range of available evidence including service business plans, scrutiny findings and audit and inspection reports. The initial evidence is tested and performance challenged through a series of workshops with Directorate Management Teams before being subject to challenge by Strategic Leadership Team. The draft assessment along with the scores for each of the objectives is presented to Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee and Governance and Audit Committee to scrutinise the robustness of the process and the council’s performance against its objectives. The final assessment is subject to approval by full council.
- 3.15 We continue to develop the process year-on-year, learning from what has worked well, feedback received, alongside best practice from other organisations. The adjustments that will be made to the process this year are:
- Continuing to strengthen the evaluation of the impact and outcome of the Council’s work, including the use of residents’ views and case studies to assess lived experience.
 - Sharing findings with Cabinet Members individually to inform their role in reviewing the performance of services in their portfolio.
 - Increase resident involvement in the process through sharing the draft report with the *Let’s Talk* resident forum.
 - Enhance trade union involvement in line with our commitment to embedding the social partnership duty.
 - Build on the summary versions developed in recent years to ensure the assessment is accessible to residents.
- 3.16 The outline timetable for completion of this work is:

April	Collation of performance data and other evidence to prepare for workshops
May-June	Workshops in each directorate
16 th June	SLT workshop
17 th June – 26 th June	Individual Cabinet member and Chief Officer performance sessions
29 th June	Joint Advisory Group Consultation
30 th June	SLT sign-off of the draft assessment
7 th July	Business Cabinet sign-off of draft assessment
Date tbc	Resident Engagement through <i>Let’s Talk</i> forum
Date tbc	Performance and Overview Scrutiny

23 rd July	Governance and Audit Committee
August	Refinement to assessment to reflect input of committees and residents
24 th September	Council

3.17 The Panel Performance Assessment findings will inform the Self-assessment process. These two processes enable councillors, residents, regulators and Welsh Ministers to form a clear view of how the organisation is seeking to continuously improve and deliver the best possible outcomes for the residents and businesses of Monmouthshire.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 A full impact assessment is not required for this decision. The Panel Performance Assessment is expected to have a positive impact by strengthening accountability and supporting better outcomes for all residents, including future generations.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Not conducting a Panel Performance Assessment was not an option as it is a statutory requirement. The process has identified recommendations which are shown in para [add number]. The learning has generated of options related to both performance management and service delivery with the final options being subject to a future decision of Council.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The effectiveness of For Purpose, On Purpose will be overseen by the Project Assurance Board Chaired by the Chief Executive. The Board will oversee the development of a benefits realisation framework. This will include:

- Financial: Operational cost savings: Cost avoidance / liability reduction; Income generation / improved recovery
- Service & Customer Experience: Service performance; Accessibility & inclusion; Customer satisfaction & trust
- Environmental & Social Value: Environmental impact; Social/community impact Strategic: Regulatory and policy compliance; Operational and organisational resilience; Sustainable organisational capability; Positive effects on staff capacity and moral.

6.2 The evaluation of the community resilience actions will initially form part of the measurement framework for F-POP. The evaluation of workforce and succession planning will form part of the evaluation of the People Strategy which is embedded in the whole authority self-assessment. This includes key metrics from the staff survey.

7. REASONS:

7.1 To provide independent assurance on the Council's ambitions and delivery, support continuous improvement, and meet the statutory requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The costs associated with the panel were be met by The Welsh Local Government Association. There are no direct costs associated with the assessment.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Statutory Guidance - <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/performance-governance-of-principal-councils.pdf>

11. AUTHOR:

Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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E-mail: matthewgatehouse@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Monmouthshire County Council response to Panel Performance Assessment Report February 2026

The statutory guidance under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the council to complete a response to the panel performance assessment report. In its response, the council is required to state:

- the extent to which it accepts the conclusions in the report;
- the extent to which the council intends to follow any recommendations contained in the report; and
- any actions it proposes to take to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements.

This action plan sets out the council's response to each of the recommendations in the Monmouthshire County Council Panel Performance Assessment Report February 2026.

Ref	PPA Recommendation	Council response & action	Timescale & responsibility holder
1.	<p>Prioritising major opportunities to deliver better outcomes for residents at lower costs.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Council focus and prioritise major opportunities that will deliver better outcomes for residents at a lower cost. The Council must establish a clear mechanism to identify, assess and exploit these opportunities, supported by a structured plan to be completed by the end of 2026/27.</p> <p>The plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust assessment of the investment required; • Consideration of organisational capacity to deliver; • Expected returns, including both financial savings and improved outcomes; • Alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). 	<p><u>Context</u></p> <p>For Purpose, on Purpose (F-POP) provides the council's clear mechanism to identify, assess, prioritise and govern major change opportunities to deliver better outcomes and/or lower costs.</p> <p>The Programme Assurance Board oversees the whole change portfolio ensuring it is aligned with our purpose. This includes: identifying and scoping challenges and opportunities, developing business cases, managing risks and dependencies, ensuring organisational readiness, monitoring benefits/value realisation, and ensuring alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).</p>	Chief Executive

	<p>Realising these opportunities requires discipline, sequencing and a strong organisational narrative linking change to outcomes and financial resilience</p>	<p>A structured delivery plan has been developed and is overseen by the Programme Assurance Board.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain a single, live change portfolio within FPOP (including major opportunities), with clear entry criteria, stage-gates and decision papers routed via the Programme Assurance Board (PAB). • Apply the FPOP Benefits and Value Framework to assess investment required, organisational capacity, expected returns (financial and non-financial) and delivery confidence; use this to prioritise opportunities and sequence delivery. • Strengthen programme management discipline through the FPOP Programme Management Office (PMO), including consistent templates, reporting, risk management and a portfolio dashboard to support early intervention where delivery is off-track. • Ensure opportunities that require Member decisions progress through existing approval routes (Cabinet/Council) with clear business cases and benefits realisation expectations. 	<p>Short Term: now – September 2026</p> <p>Short Term: now – September 2026</p> <p>Medium Term: October 2026 – March 2027</p> <p>Long Term: April 2027 – December 2027</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Strengthening Community Resilience and Shared Understanding. The Panel recommends that the Council works with communities and partners to develop a shared understanding of “community resilience” within the Monmouthshire context. This shared definition will enable better measurement of impact and help clarify the difference the Council and its partners aim to make.</p> <p>Key points include:</p>	<p><u>Context</u> We will adopt Resilient Communities as a single, consistent framing for this work. This provides a shared and strengths-based narrative aligned to the council’s values and responds directly to the PPA’s call for a clear, Monmouthshire specific understanding of community resilience.</p>	<p>Head of Customer, Communication and Engagement.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using community insight to understand impact and well-being outcomes; • Ensuring prevention plans maximise social capital, which stakeholders identified as a major strength; • Strengthening purposeful communication and engagement with communities, drawing on the placemaking model; • Ensuring all communities - particularly in a large rural county - have a voice in shaping local priorities. <p>Stakeholders are ready and willing to work with the Council and that co-design is essential for meaningful progress.</p>	<p>The approach complements the Living Well Strategy by providing the community level conditions that support prevention, early help and independence.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-produce a clear, practical definition of Resilient Communities with communities, partners, Town and Community Councils and frontline officers, with equity embedded throughout the process. • Undertake proportionate mapping of existing community assets, networks and activity, focusing on strengths and gaps that matter for prevention. This will include a digital community asset map, supported by local points of contact for residents who are less digitally enabled. • Move from broad engagement to targeted action by identifying a small number of priority places and/or themes where strengthening Resilient Communities can deliver the greatest preventative and equity benefit. • Establish a Resilient Communities Network to support alignment, shared learning and reduced duplication across the Council, partners, health, the voluntary sector and Town & Community Councils. • Use a proportionate mix of lived experience, qualitative insight and proxy measures to demonstrate progress, reflecting the PPA’s expectations for meaningful short and medium term evidence. <p><u>FPOP linkage</u> Where the Resilient Communities approach translates into specific change projects (e.g., digital community</p>	<p>Short Term: now – September 2026</p> <p>Medium Term: October 2026 – March 2027</p> <p>Long Term: April 2027 – December 2027</p>
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		asset map, priority place-based interventions), these will be captured within the FPOP change portfolio so progress, risks and benefits can be tracked consistently through corporate governance.	
3.	<p>Workforce and Succession Planning</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Council complete the development and implementation of its workforce and succession plan to underpin future delivery and organisational resilience.</p> <p>The emphasis is on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the Council has the skills and capabilities required for future challenges; • Addressing identified workforce gaps; • Supporting leadership development and retention of critical knowledge; • Strengthening organisational capacity to deliver its priorities. <p>Workforce planning is essential to sustaining improvement, reducing single points of failure, and supporting innovation.</p>	<p><u>Context</u></p> <p>We established a commitment to embed workforce planning across the organisation in the People Strategy and accompanying action plan approved by Cabinet in June 2024. The actions relating to workforce development were scheduled to commence once other building blocks has been put in place. These include: the development and launch of a new employee review and development scheme, conducting a training needs analysis and establishing a training budget. With these now in place, or in the process of being rolled out, work has commenced on workforce planning, which is being taken forward under the heading of a Future Focused Workforce.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run a development session for managers on succession planning with the LGA • Upskill HR Business Partners in strategic workforce planning' • Produce a workforce development plan to sit underneath the People Strategy to provide clarity on the steps that need to be taken to ensure a future focused workforce • Implement the workforce of the future through expanding talent entry points, including work experience, apprenticeships, traineeships and graduate opportunities 	<p>Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships. December 2026</p> <p>Short Term: now – September 2026</p> <p>Medium Term: October 2026 – March 2027</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a training pathway for all job roles to ensure existing staff are developed to maximise their capability • Undertake research to understand the future skill requirements across the authority and develop or commission training to future proof our workforce <p><u>FPOP linkage</u> Workforce and succession planning will be treated as a core organisational readiness enabler within the FPOP change portfolio, supporting delivery capacity, reducing single points of failure and strengthening the Council's ability to deliver its priorities. Progress will be tracked through the same programme reporting discipline.</p>	
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monmouthshire
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Monmouthshire County Council Panel Performance Assessment (PPA)

February 2026



1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In accordance with the performance duties under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Monmouthshire County Council (Cyngor Sir Fynwy) commissioned a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) via the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).
- 1.2 The onsite assessment was completed over a four-day period concluding on 27th February 2026 with a feedback presentation provided to the Council outlining the key findings detailed within this report.
- 1.3 The assessment was undertaken based on the Council's agreed scoping document and the WLGA's PPA methodology, which was developed with the sector. The PPA methodology provides an overarching framework: the lines of enquiry are not prescriptive but provide guidance to the Panel on the areas that could be explored to meet the statutory duty. However, the extent to which the Panel explores those areas should be proportionate to the Council's scope but sufficient to enable the Panel to form a conclusion.
- 1.4 In accordance with the statutory guidance the PPA is not an audit or an inspection and does not seek to duplicate work undertaken by regulators and other bodies. Whilst the Panel has undertaken a corporate assessment, this assessment was not in-depth and should be considered alongside other sources of assurance such as the Council's own self-assessment, internal audit reviews, external audit, and regulatory reviews.
- 1.5 In preparing for the PPA, the Council scoped their requirements to maximise the value and impact of the assessment to the Council. The specific areas of focus identified by the Council are reflected in paragraph 3.2.
- 1.6 This report provides a summary overview of the conclusions of the Panel reported by exception.

2.0 Peer Team

- 2.1 The following Peers were commissioned by the WLGA to undertake the assessment. Selection of the Peers was agreed and at the discretion of the Council, based on suitability of skills and experience.
 - Independent Chair: Beverley (Bev) Smith, Former Chief Executive of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire and North West Leicestershire, former Chair of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru and current Chair of the Local Boundary Commission for England.
 - Senior Member Peer: Cllr Darren Price, serving Councillor and former Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council.
 - Serving Local Government Senior Officer: Louise Davies, Director of Community Services, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.
 - Peer from the wider public, private, voluntary sector: Chris Naylor, Consultant, Managing Director and former Chief Executive of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

2.2 The Panel was supported by, Cerith Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Improvement – Democratic Services) and Sarah Evans, Senior Support Officer (Improvement) from the WLGA's Improvement Team.

3. Scope and Approach

3.1 The Panel is required to assess the extent to which the Council:

- Is exercising its functions effectively.
- Is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively; and
- Has effective governance in place for securing the above.

3.2 The Council identified the following three areas where peer insight would be valued as part of the Panel assessment:

- **Area of local Focus 1** - How well does the Council align across directorates to optimise delivery of the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan.
- **Area of local Focus 2** - What opportunities are there to further develop the Council's emerging person-centred and preventative approaches to working with its communities, local businesses and other stakeholders, (including Town & Community Councils).
- **Area of local Focus 3** - How well is the Council able to demonstrate the intended outcomes and emerging impacts of its Community and Corporate Plan and, how well does it communicate them to Councillors, residents and other stakeholders, including Town and Community Councils and local businesses.

3.3 To prepare for the onsite assessment, the Panel first conducted a desktop review of Council documentation, data, external reports, and other relevant intelligence. The Peers also participated in preliminary online meetings.

3.4 The desktop review also included analysis of recent staff and resident survey results, which provided valuable insight into organisational culture, staff engagement and public perception. These positive survey findings offered an additional evidence base that complemented the document review and the views gathered through interviews and focus groups, further strengthening the triangulation of the Panel's assessment.

3.5 The Panel spent approximately 240 hours plus, during the onsite stage of the review involving a series of individual meetings and focus groups with the following stakeholders:

- Leader of the Council
- Chief Executive Officer
- Combined Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet (Opening and Closing sessions)
- The Cabinet – Focus Group
- Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development
- Leader of the Opposition Group
- Group Leader, Green Independents

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- Group Leader, Independent
- Elected Members - non-executive – Focus Group
- Scrutiny Chairs – Focus Group
- Independent Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee
- Independent Chair of the Standards Committee
- Strategic Leadership Team – Focus Group
- Deputy Chief Executive & Strategic Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)
- Chief Officer - People, Performance and Partnership
- Chief Officer Place and Community Wellbeing
- Chief Officer Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
- Chief Officer Infrastructure
- Strategic Director - Children, Learning, Skills & Economy
- Strategic Director - Social Care & Safeguarding
- Chief Internal Auditor
- Head of Customer, Communication & Engagement
- Head of Strategic Change, Partnerships & Procurement
- Local Democracy Manager
- Heads of Service - Staff Focus Group
- Middle Managers - Staff Focus Group
- Frontline/Operational staff – Focus Group
- Youth Council Representatives – Focus Group
- Chief Constable of Gwent Police
- Leader of neighbouring Local Authority – Torfaen County Borough Council
- Leader of neighbouring Local Authority – Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Leader of neighbouring Local Authority – Newport City Council
- Chief Executive Officer of neighbouring Local Authorities – Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Councils
- Chief Executive Officer of neighbouring Local Authority - Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Executive Director of Public Health and Strategic Partnership at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and President of the Faculty of Public Health
- Town and Community Councils – Focus Group

- Trade Unions – Focus Group
- Business Community – Focus Group
- Voluntary Sector – Focus Group
- Older People - Stakeholder Focus Group
- Visit to Abergavenny Town Hall – Community Hub

4. Overall Conclusion

- 4.1 The Panel concluded that Monmouthshire is an ambitious, well-run Council with communities at its heart and a reach that transcends boundaries.
- 4.2 This conclusion is based on a comprehensive and triangulated assessment process, drawing on multiple sources of evidence. The Panel reviewed extensive documentation provided by the Council, including strategic plans, performance data, financial information and external audit findings, surveys, alongside insights gathered through the wide-ranging programme of interviews, focus groups and engagement sessions with internal and external stakeholders. This included elected members, senior officers, frontline staff, partners, community representatives, local businesses and Town and Community Councils. The breadth and consistency of feedback across these groups provided a robust foundation for the Panel's judgement and offered strong assurance of the reliability and validity of the findings.

5. Local Context (Source: PPA Scoping Document)

Overview of Place

- 5.1 Located in South-East Wales, Monmouthshire is strategically positioned between major centres in Wales and England. It covers around 880 km², with only 3% classed as built on land. It borders several Welsh and English authorities and contains four primary settlements - Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot and Chepstow - along with the towns of Usk and Magor with Undy. These settlements serve as historic market towns with strong links to their surrounding rural areas.
- 5.2 The county's population is 92,961, with an older age profile than the Welsh average. Around 26% of residents are over 65, and the proportion of older age groups is growing more quickly than across Wales. The demographic challenge of retaining and attracting younger people is a key issue identified in the replacement Local Development Plan.
- 5.3 Economically, Monmouthshire benefits from strong transport connections and proximity to Cardiff, Bristol and the Midlands. It has one of the most competitive economies in Wales, a highly qualified workforce, strong economic activity levels, and the highest rate of active enterprises per 10,000 population in Wales. Limited developed space for economic activity is a growing constraint.
- 5.4 Housing affordability is a significant local challenge, with some of the highest house prices in Wales - averaging 8.5 times local incomes. High costs drive outward migration, and more than 3,800 people are on the housing register, including over 2,000 identified as needing affordable housing.

Political and Organisational Leadership

Political Representation

- 5.5 Monmouthshire has 46 councillors representing 39 electoral divisions. The political representation is:
- Labour: 21
 - Conservative: 19
 - Independent Group: 4
 - Green Independent Group: 2 (one Green, one aligned independent)
- 5.6 The local government elections of May 2022 resulted in no political party having overall control of the Council. The Labour party was the largest party and formed a new cabinet without an overall majority. A coalition agreement was subsequently reached between the Labour group and the Green Councillor. This means some decisions at full Council may be decided by the chair's casting vote. The scrutiny call-in process ensures checks and balances in the democratic process and has been used a number of times during this electoral term.
- 5.7 The Council uses a Leader and Cabinet (Executive) governance model. The Council appoints the Leader of the Council annually. The Leader of the Council is Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby, and the Deputy Leader is Councillor Paul Griffiths. The Leader decides the size and membership of the Cabinet i.e. the role of individual members of the Cabinet and arrangements for the exercise and delegation of Executive Functions. The Cabinet is comprised of 8 elected members, 7 Labour Group Councillors and 1 Green Independent Group councillor, who each have lead responsibility for an area of the Council's business, including the Leader. Cabinet members and their portfolios are:
- Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby – Council Leader
 - Cllr Paul Griffiths – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development
 - Cllr Ben Callard - Cabinet Member for Resources
 - Cllr Laura Wright - Cabinet Member for Education
 - Cllr Ian Chandler - Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
 - Cllr Catrin Maby - Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment
 - Cllr Angela Sandles - Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement
 - Cllr Sara Burch - Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism
- 5.8 The Cabinet have invested a tremendous amount of time in their own team development. Informal cabinet business meetings where things are shared openly and early take place every week, as do briefing sessions with the strategic leadership team. This ensures direct and appropriate conversations take place on a regular basis as part of an engaged and proactive political leadership model.
- 5.9 The Council has four main scrutiny committees:
- People Scrutiny Committee – Chair, Cllr Jackie Strong
 - Place Scrutiny Committee – Chair, Cllr Jane Lucas
 - Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee – Chair, Cllr Alistair Neill
 - Public Services Scrutiny Committee – Chair, Cllr Armand Watts

- 5.10 At the time of the assessment, more detailed information on Cabinet members and their areas of responsibility was available on the Council's website.
- 5.11 The Council determines the Authority's policy framework and budget and other constitutional functions. Below Cabinet and at Council level there are a number of committees and panels that fulfil various scrutiny, statutory oversight and regulatory functions.

Officer Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)

- 5.12 The Cabinet and elected members are supported by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), comprising 8 officers, which is led by the Chief Executive, Paul Mathews. The Deputy Chief Executive is Peter Davies. For management purposes the Council's operations are organised into service areas each of which is headed by a Strategic Director or Chief Officer reporting to the Chief Executive.

- Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director- Resources, Peter Davies
- Strategic Director- Social Care, Safeguarding and Health Jane, Rodgers
- Strategic Director – Children, Learning, Skills and Economy, Will McLean
- Chief Officer - Law and Governance, James Williams
- Chief Officer - People, Performance and Partnerships, Matthew Gatehouse
- Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Debra Hill-Howells
- Chief Officer - Place and Community Wellbeing, Craig O'Connor

- 5.13 Following the departure of the Chief Officer for Communities and Place in September 2024, a decision was made to introduce an interim officer leadership structure to ensure continuity whilst giving the Leader and Chief Executive time to reflect on the best configuration going forward. This coincided with the short-term medical absence of the Chief Executive and subsequent departure of the Chief Officer for Customer, Culture and Wellbeing in March 2025.
- 5.14 In June 2025 the Chief Executive set out a refreshed permanent Strategic Leadership Team design and organisation structure. This aims to improve the operational and delivery capability of the organisation through a clear, permanent design that aligns accountability and responsibility within balanced directorate portfolios that lend themselves well to officer development opportunity across the Council without compromising current delivery. All posts in the established structure have subsequently been filled.
- 5.15 At the time of the assessment more detailed information on the Council's organisational structure, including Cabinet and senior leadership arrangements, was available on the Council's website.

Workforce

- 5.16 The Council employs over 4,100 individuals (2,895 FTE), with payroll costs making up almost half of the revenue budget. People are the Council's most important asset. A healthy and effective organisational culture is essential for it to succeed in delivering their strategies and achieving their purpose.
- 5.17 The People Strategy was approved by Cabinet in May 2024 following engagement with the workforce on what they need to help them succeed in the workplace. This strategy recognises both where the Council wants to be but also the challenges, they face in recruiting new staff, retaining current staff and planning for the future. The results of the staff survey showed high levels of satisfaction and

engagement with 82% of colleagues saying they would recommend the Council as an employer to friends and family and 89% of people saying that they understand the authority's purpose and their contribution to it.

- 5.18 There are positive working relationships with trade unions, with a formal Joint Advisory Group playing a key role in involving the unions in workforce and wider matters. This relationship means the organisation is well placed to deliver the aspirations of the Social Partnership Duty.

6. Strengths and Areas of Innovation

- 6.1 Monmouthshire County Council demonstrates strong, visible leadership with a clear passion for tackling inequality and improving outcomes for communities. The Council is viewed as ambitious, consistently looking beyond its boundaries to secure wider opportunities for residents and businesses. It has developed well established strategic partnerships, recognised regionally and nationally for their effectiveness and collaborative ambition. Elected members bring a diverse array of skills and experiences that, when fully utilised through scrutiny and executive roles, can further strengthen delivery. The county's communities show a strong sense of independence and willingness to work with the Council, presenting an opportunity for deeper collaboration. Staff are seen as loyal, committed, and integral to the Council's culture and delivery model. Staff also reflected on the high level of empowerment they experience, commenting "*I don't have to fit into a box - I am allowed to be different*" and "*we employ adults here!*" reflecting a culture built on trust, maturity and autonomy.
- 6.2 The Council has a deep understanding of its communities and uses this knowledge effectively. It takes a person-centred approach, with a strong commitment to prevention and early intervention, aligned with regional partners. Monmouthshire has in place the building blocks and ethos (For Purpose-On-Purpose, F-POP) needed to respond to future challenges and pivot organisationally as needed.
- 6.3 Staff are one of the Council's greatest assets, demonstrating loyalty and a strong sense of organisational identity. Staff consistently expressed a strong sense of organisational identity and belonging, with one colleague noting that "*we are part of something really special.*" Others highlighted the importance of values, describing it as "*rare to have kindness in values*" and emphasising that this ethos shapes how the organisation works with communities.
- 6.4 The Council also shows a clear commitment to effective communication and engagement with its communities.

7. Local and National Challenges

7.1 Financial Overview – Summary

- 7.1.1 Monmouthshire County Council ended 2024/25 with a small year-end revenue surplus, supported in part by Welsh Government funding. This positive position reflects the Council's continued focus on careful financial management during a challenging period for local government.
- 7.1.2 Like many councils across Wales, Monmouthshire continues to face pressures in key service areas such as Social Care, schools, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Waste, Transport and Homelessness. School budgets, in particular, are under strain, with overall deficits increasing. However, there is a strong and shared commitment across the Council

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and schools to tackle these pressures and put plans in place that support long-term financial sustainability.

- 7.1.3 While the delivery of savings in 2024/25 fell short in some areas, important progress has been made through improved financial controls, increased external income, and careful use of capitalisation where appropriate. The 2025/26 budget had been set on a balanced footing, and in year monitoring shows encouraging signs of stability.
- 7.1.4 Looking ahead, the draft 2026/27 budget proposes targeted investment in essential services alongside responsible council tax planning. A funding gap remains, but the Council has a clear approach for addressing this as part of its ongoing medium-term financial planning.
- 7.1.5 The medium-term outlook continues to be challenging, with projected budget gaps through to 2029/30. However, the Council has strengthened its long-term planning, and Audit Wales has recognised the positive direction of travel. Work is already underway to accelerate improvement plans, sharpen financial modelling and ensure that decisions are informed by the best available evidence.
- 7.1.6 Reserves remain lower than average in Wales, which is a known risk. The Council is therefore taking a proactive approach to strengthening financial resilience wherever possible, supported by clear leadership and an organisation-wide commitment to managing resources well.
- 7.1.7 Overall, while significant challenges remain, the Council has shown real determination in stabilising its financial position and is taking purposeful steps to ensure services can continue to meet community needs in a sustainable way.
- 7.1.8 In 2024 Audit Wales highlighted improved long-term planning but a lack of identified solutions to close the funding gap. Recommendations focus on accelerating the Change & Improvement Plan (F-POP), strengthening modelling and reporting impacts more clearly.

7.2 Financial Performance – Against its 2024/25 Budget

- 7.2.1 The Council marginally outperformed its 2024/25 revenue budget, achieving a £1.239m gross surplus and a £497k final surplus after reserve movements, largely supported by a one off £1.19m Welsh Government grant. Despite this positive outturn, significant structural pressures remain across Social Care, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Waste, Passenger Transport and Homelessness, with combined service overspends of £4.6m. School finances continue to deteriorate, with reserves moving to a £4.09m deficit and 15 schools in deficit, reflecting ongoing structural budget challenges.
- 7.2.2 Savings delivery remained below target, with 81.6% of the £10.94m requirement achieved, continuing a multi-year pattern of partial delivery. This position was cushioned by £3.68m of eligible costs funded through capitalisation, staff vacancies, and increased external income.
- 7.2.3 For 2025/26, the Council set a balanced budget following a £5.1m increase in core funding, supported by a guaranteed 3.8% funding floor. Mid-year monitoring shows an improving position, shifting from a forecast overspend to a small £29k underspend, driven largely by maximising grant funding in Social Care. However, significant risks persist in high cost, demand-led services, and schools' reserves are forecast to worsen to a £7.06m deficit, with 18 schools in deficit.

7.2.4 Projected savings delivery in 2025/26 is stronger at 90.4%, though shortfalls remain in Social Care and Infrastructure. Service-specific pressures continue across Early Years, school transport, homelessness provision and Adult and Children's Social Care, reflecting demand volatility.

7.2.5 Overall, while short-term financial control has improved, the Council continues to face substantial underlying budget pressures requiring sustained recovery planning and strengthened longer-term financial management.

7.3 Medium Term Financial Strategy

7.3.1 The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out a rolling four-year financial plan designed to respond to increasing service pressures, national economic conditions and uncertainty in future funding. The latest update forecasts a budget shortfall of £11.5m in 2026/27, rising to a cumulative £37.4m by 2029/30, despite improvements from previous projections.

7.3.2 These gaps are driven by rising pay and non-pay inflation, demand led- pressures in social care, and recurrent service cost increases. The Council recognises that its low level of usable reserves constrains financial resilience and limits flexibility in managing volatility. However, the MTFS and resultant budget strategies have allowed for a £1m contingency base budget to be established to allow for partial mitigation against financial and budgetary risks, along with outperformance of recent budgets allowing for modest and targeted replenishment of some reserves.

7.4 Financial Overview – Conclusions

7.4.1 The Council's short-term financial management has stabilised, with improved in-year control and a surplus in 2024/25, but this position is significantly supported by one-off funding and does not address underlying structural pressures across Social Care, ALN, Waste, Passenger Transport and Homelessness.

7.4.2 Savings delivery is improving, rising from 81.6% in 2024/25 to a projected 90.4% in 2025/26, yet persistent under delivery continues to widen medium-term financial gaps. School finances remain a major and escalating risk, with deficits forecast to reach £7.06m in 2025/26 and nearly half of schools expected to be in deficit. School recovery planning and £1m of increased investment beyond pay related increases into school in 25/26 and 26/27 have allowed for the pace of increase in deficits to be reduced as recovery plans take effect.

7.4.3 The draft 2026/27 budget appropriately reflects major service pressures and realistic assumptions but retains a funding gap that must be closed before final approval. Medium-term forecasts show a cumulative shortfall of £37.4m by 2029/30, signalling the need for accelerated transformation, demand management and service redesign.

7.4.4 The Council's very low reserve levels constrain financial resilience, heightening exposure to risk. Audit Wales acknowledges improved strategic intent but stresses the need for faster implementation of the financial strategy, stronger modelling, and clearer reporting on the impact of financial decisions.

7.4.5 Overall, while short-term pressures are being managed, the Council faces significant medium to long-term challenges that require a shift from planning to delivery to secure sustainable financial stability.

8.0 Overview of Findings

This section outlines the three areas of local focus identified by the Council for the assessment, together with the Panel's accompanying findings, observations and insights.

8.1 Area of local Focus 1 – How well does the Council align across directorates to optimise delivery of the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan.

Cross-Directorate Alignment and Collaborative Working

- 8.1.1 Monmouthshire County Council demonstrates a strong organisational ethos of networking, collaboration and shared accountability, supported by structures that promote cross-directorate working. This was reflected in staff feedback, and we heard, *“our networking is strong - it doesn't matter where I sit in the organisation.”* This reinforces the Panel's view that internal collaboration is a strength and is enabling more joined up practice. The Council has several examples where alignment is working effectively both conceptually and in practice - particularly in Children, Learning, Skills and Economy - helping to drive innovation and coherent strategic planning. New service alignments are improving the visibility of vulnerable groups and enhancing synergy across person-focused services.
- 8.1.2 The organisation is largely avoiding the pitfalls of silo working, with new ways of working enabling greater staff empowerment *“we employ adults here!”* and improved customer-centred approaches. The relocation of customer services is highlighted as a positive cultural signal, placing customers *“at the heart of the organisation.”* Cabinet thematic portfolios further reinforce cohesion and collective strategic focus.

Values, Workforce and Enablers for Delivery

- 8.1.3 The Council's values strongly underpin and support its delivery model, and the F-POP framework acts as a unifying mechanism for coherent cross-organisational working and change. Integration with community hubs provides a vital link to local communities, improving visibility and connections that support delivery.
- 8.1.4 The workforce is recognised as a critical enabler of organisational priorities, with the People Strategy providing a clear platform for strengthening capacity. Current work on identifying skills gaps will help shape future workforce capabilities and ensure the organisation remains resilient and adaptive. We heard a comment that *“it's rare to have kindness in values.”* The Panel emphasise that addressing workforce challenges now will:
- retain critical knowledge,
 - reduce single points of failure,
 - support innovation and skills growth, and
 - diversify leadership to maintain future resilience.

8.2 Area of local Focus 2 – What opportunities are there to further develop the Council's emerging person-centred and preventative approaches to working with its communities, local businesses and other stakeholders, (including Town & Community Councils).

Embedding Prevention across the organisation

- 8.2.1 Monmouthshire County Council has a clear and coherent strategic intent for its person-centred and preventative ambitions, grounded in both regional alignment and strong local relevance. The Council's values driven approach was also evident in staff perspectives,

with comments such as *“we are able to apply kindness to our communities,”* highlighting how the prevention ethos translates into day-to-day practice

The Council’s Living Well Strategy provides a well-articulated framework that recognises prevention as a long-term continuum and as a “point in time” document there is commitment to ensure this strategic intent continues to evolve, reflecting emerging learning and community insight. This is consistent with the Panel’s finding that the strategy is evidence-informed, shaped by environmental and cultural factors, and supported by strong regional partnerships.

- 8.2.2 Prevention is firmly embedded within the Council’s organisational ethos and is seen internally as giving “legitimacy and power” to a whole Council focus on early intervention. This is supported by emerging but sound cross-directorate governance arrangements, which demonstrate strong organisational commitment to systemwide delivery approaches. The Council’s focus on targeted populations, underpinned by a more data-driven approach, will build on shared needs assessments across Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) partners and the wider regional footprint. This provides a strong platform for further development.
- 8.2.3 A significant opportunity relates to the wider research and intelligence capacity available through strategic partners. The Panel heard consistently that partners - across public health, local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and others - are “ready and willing” to support Monmouthshire with research, evaluative capacity and insight. The strength of relationships across the region places the Council in a strong position to maximise this support more systematically, complementing its emerging internal analytical strengths.

Community resilience and primary prevention

- 8.2.4 The Council’s approach to prevention would be further strengthened by ensuring that community resilience work is developed in parallel with targeted population level interventions. It is important to recognise that populations are not homogenous the Council should ensure it understands the characteristics of different groups of people, including age and gender, and targets its prevention work taking these differences into account. While the current Living Well strategy acknowledges the role of community resilience, the Panel considers that it must be recognised by the whole organisation as a foundational layer of primary prevention. This means articulating more clearly what community resilience means in the Monmouthshire context and developing a shared baseline to enable progress to be understood over time, the absence of which is currently a limitation. Emerging national research can assist, but this work will need to be co-developed with communities and local stakeholders to ensure legitimacy and relevance.

Engagement, co-production and social capital

- 8.2.5 Stakeholders - including Town and Community Councils, local businesses, voluntary groups and residents - expressed strong willingness to be more involved in prevention, and the Council already benefits from substantial social capital across its communities. However, feedback also highlighted mixed experiences with engagement, with some groups finding it difficult to understand how to contribute to or influence the Council’s work. The Panel suggests that Monmouthshire’s traditionally outward facing partnership strengths should now be more deliberately channelled inward, ensuring co-production becomes the default approach where appropriate.

Place-based opportunities and equity considerations

- 8.2.6 The Council's placemaking plans, developed through co-production, are strong and supported by clear delivery structures. There is recognised opportunity to extend place-based approaches across both rural and urban communities, ensuring that implementation aligns with the Council's equity ambitions. Many communities face barriers to accessing services and balancing the placemaking programme with these equity considerations will be essential to ensuring that benefits are distributed fairly and effectively.
- 8.2.7 Finally, while stakeholders identified significant opportunities to do things differently, the Panel emphasises the importance of ensuring that approaches intended to "create the right environment," enable "organic" community development or adopt a facilitative role are sufficiently purposeful to drive meaningful change. Given capacity constraints, the Council must channel all available talent - internally and externally - into clearly prioritised, intentional interventions that can deliver the equity and prevention outcomes it seeks.

8.3 Area of local Focus 3 - How well is the Council able to demonstrate the intended outcomes and emerging impacts of its Community and Corporate Plan and, how well does it communicate them to Councillors, residents and other stakeholders, including Town and Community Councils and local businesses.

Outcomes Framework, Long-Term Focus and Communicating Strategic Intent

- 8.3.1 Monmouthshire County Council has developed a refined and clearer measurement framework that strengthens the alignment between strategic priorities, key outcome measures and the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan. This sharpening of focus is important given the breadth of commitments within the Plan and the need to concentrate organisational attention on what matters most. Evidence from Education and Social Care demonstrates strong impacts and outcomes, with findings supported by external audit commentary.
- 8.3.2 A major strength is the Council's long-term focus, shared with regional partners, which frames how progress and impact should be understood. While long-term outcomes are well defined, the Panel recognises that evidence for short and medium-term progress remains more challenging. There are known system level issues with some national and regional metrics, which are outside the Council's direct control. In this context, the Panel encourages the Council to carefully consider the use of proxy measures and their limitations, and to complement quantitative performance data with qualitative evidence, including lived experience and case studies, to help illustrate the "so what" of interventions. This should form part of the Council's wider commitment to evidence-based practice and its openness to learning from others.
- #### **Articulating strategic intent**
- 8.3.3 The Panel considers that clearer articulation of the Council's strategic intent - whether in relation to economy, community or prevention - would strengthen both internal and external understanding of the outcomes the Council is trying to achieve. Staff fed back that, at times, it can be difficult to "see the wood from the trees." The recent organisational realignment is helping the Strategic Leadership Team identify cross-cutting themes that could be drawn together into stronger strategic narratives, but further clarification will assist stakeholders and communities in understanding the rationale and the impacts and outcomes the council is seeking to deliver.

Stakeholder involvement and co-production in understanding impact

- 8.3.4 Stakeholders, including communities, businesses, voluntary sector partners and Town and Community Councils, should be involved earlier and more consistently in helping shape the Council's approach to evaluating impact. Their insight can strengthen the continuing development of the measurement framework and help ensure that outcomes reflect what matters most to residents. The Panel highlights the importance of co-production as a principle and the need to make full use of the significant social capital that exists across the county. Ensuring clarity on shared ambitions with key partners will support the Council's preventative ambitions and its wider community resilience work.

Capturing the story of progress

- 8.3.5 While purposeful storytelling is recognised within the Council, its use remains inconsistent, with stronger practice more evident in areas such as social care. The Panel encourages the Council to embed a more systematic, organisation wide approach to capturing the journey towards long-term outcomes. This should maximise the use of lived experience, case studies and qualitative evidence, aligning storytelling with the Council's change programme, strategic priorities and what matters to residents and stakeholders. Strengthening this approach will help provide assurance that the Council is on the right trajectory and enable more compelling communication of progress and impact.

Communication, Engagement and Advocacy

- 8.3.6 The Council's response to Storm Claudia demonstrated exemplary crisis communication practice, marked by clear, timely and proactive public messaging. The coordination between political leadership, operational teams and communications staff enabled residents to receive accurate updates quickly, while the organisation showed strong capacity for rapid organisational learning during and after the event. One comment captured this approach by describing the Council's style as "*chatting not talking*," reflecting a communication method that is conversational, accessible and grounded in trust.

9 Statutory performance requirements considered by the Panel.

The following section examines the three statutory performance areas that form the core of the Panel's duty under the legislation. For each area, the Panel sets out its findings, observations and insights, offering an evidence-based assessment of how well the Council is discharging its statutory responsibilities.

9.1 The extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively

Strategic Leadership, Planning and Vision

- 9.1.1 The Council demonstrates strong ambition with the capability to become "great," a view reinforced by external regulators. Corporate and service planning reflect key national frameworks, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Welsh Government Net Zero 2030 commitments, supported by a (Replacement) Local Development Plan and a cohesive, values driven leadership team that prioritises tackling inequality. The Chief Executive and Leader maintain an effective, honest working relationship, fostering a culture of collaboration and delivery across the strategic leadership team.

Member - Officer Relations and External Insights

- 9.1.2 Relationships between elected members and officers are described as effective, with members bringing diverse backgrounds and adapting well to their roles. The organisation is characterised as a "family," where individuals' journeys are recognised and valued.

However, businesses expressed a desire for improved engagement and raised concerns about the local planning process, citing it as a barrier to economic growth due to issues with communication, timeliness and customer care during planning interactions.

Performance Management, Workforce and Communication

- 9.1.3 The Council has robust mechanisms for managing and monitoring service performance, including dashboards, trend analysis and RAG ratings accessible to staff and members. However, performance measures relating to outcomes and impact are less mature, and staff and members do not consistently understand how to use available performance information effectively.
- 9.1.4 The Council has invested significantly in staff communication and engagement, contributing to strong staff morale - "*Staff love working here!*" - and constructive trade union relationships. A People Strategy is in place, though the completion of the workforce plan remains an outstanding requirement.
- 9.1.5 There is also recognition of the need to enhance the use of storytelling and multimedia approaches to communicate outcomes more clearly to all communities particularly young people, building on existing positive shifts in communication and engagement practice. Several focus groups also highlighted the need for a clearer feedback loop, noting that while communication with the Council is regular and constructive, it is not always evident what actions are taken in response.

Strategic Partnerships

- 9.1.6 Monmouthshire County Council has collaboration and partnership working embedded in its organisational culture, described as part of the Council's "DNA". Successive administrations have consistently valued and developed strong strategic partnerships to benefit Monmouthshire's communities. The Leader and Chief Executive are respected for bringing intellectual rigour, constructive challenge, and a strong advocacy role across regional forums.
- 9.1.7 The Council works effectively with neighbouring authorities and plays leading roles in key partnerships such as the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) and the Marches Forward Partnership, the latter focusing on cross-border connectivity, food, and the rural economy. Partnerships are built on shared values, and Monmouthshire is seen as a partner others want to work with. While the Council's ethos has been to "*offer more than we ask,*" the Panel highlights that now is the time to build on this investment and begin realising tangible returns, supported by sensitive and valued leadership.

Reputation, Credibility and Forward Momentum

- 9.1.8 Monmouthshire is regarded by partners as credible, creative, innovative, agile and pragmatic in how it engages with joint working arrangements. There is a strong mutual understanding between the Council and its partners around the challenges each faces, alongside respect for Monmouthshire's collaborative approach.
- 9.1.9 The Council is now at a point where it must bring greater pace and focus to partnership activity to ensure that the strong foundations already established deliver greater benefits, impact and measurable outcomes for communities. Doing so will require sufficient capacity and sustained organisational focus to convert well-regarded partnerships into greater practical value for Monmouthshire residents.

9.2 The extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently, and Effectively

Financial Context, Stability and Stewardship

9.2.1 Monmouthshire County Council operates within the same challenging financial context faced by local government nationally, but has responded with a clear Medium-Term Financial Strategy, strong engagement across the organisation, and a shared understanding of both pressures and opportunities. The Council has a proven track record of delivering efficiencies, stabilising reserves, and strengthening financial discipline, including focused recovery plans for school deficits. Senior officers, including the Section 151 Officer and Children, Learning, Skills and Economy Leads, demonstrate a strong grasp of areas of financial concern.

Governance, Oversight and Data-led Decision-Making

9.2.2 The Council benefits from robust committee oversight, particularly through the Performance and Overview Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee, both of which provide constructive challenge. There is an established approach to benefits realisation and return on investment assessments, supporting more rigorous decision making. The organisation recognises the importance of data and intelligence and is developing its work to quantify preventative spend. Budget development is increasingly treated as a continuous process, improving strategic alignment and organisational responsiveness.

Digital Enablement and Change Management:

9.2.3 The Council has made good progress against its digital roadmap and strategy, using digital transformation as a key enabler for innovation and improved service delivery. However, there is a need for strong alignment between digital work and the wider change programme, ensuring consistent evaluation, effective project management, and adequate capacity and capability to deliver organisational change at the required scale.

Ambition, Opportunity and Organisational Capability

9.2.4 Monmouthshire is ambitious about seizing opportunities to deliver better outcomes at lower cost, drawing on external best practice and building on what already works well locally. Senior officers have a comprehensive grasp of their operational and financial pressures, supporting sound decision-making. This reflects a wider organisational confidence in its ability to identify and act upon opportunities for improvement.

For Purpose On Purpose - F-POP as an Organisational Framework for Improvement

9.2.5 The Council's F-POP approach provides a strong foundation for identifying improvement opportunities and establishing the conditions required to deliver them. The framework empowers leaders and teams to:

- Identify and scope opportunities
- Build and leverage the right internal and external relationships
- Work within a light-touch, proportionate Project Monitoring Office (PMO), avoiding duplication
- Draw on enabling services such as Shared Resource Service (SRS), Estates and HR

9.2.5.1 This creates a “can-do,” cross organisational culture that supports collaboration, ownership of change, and effective delivery. Senior officers again demonstrate strong understanding of key areas of risk, including in finance and education.

Opportunity Framework and Risks

9.2.5.2 The Council fosters a “can-do” culture that supports cross-organisation working, builds consensus, and avoids unnecessary “transformation theatre.” However, the intended end state for delivering major opportunities is unclear, and the process for determining this remains insufficiently defined, creating risks of sub-optimal outcomes.

Opportunity, Time and Capacity

9.2.5.3 The panel reinforce the message that the Council has significant opportunities to improve outcomes and efficiency, but that realising these opportunities will require time, organisational focus, and expanded capacity. There is a need to reinforce the theme of needing more intent and pace to deliver change.

Scale of Opportunity

9.2.5.4 The Panel noted that while there is significant potential for organisational improvement, any early estimates of scale are illustrative at this stage. A more detailed and evidence-based assessment will be needed to determine the realistic benefits that can be achieved. The Council must quantify, prioritise and plan the opportunities rigorously to unlock their value.

Refining Opportunity Estimates

9.2.5.5 To realise the potential for significant opportunities, the Council will need structured methods to turn broad, high-level estimates into actionable programmes supported by evidence-based projections of financial and outcome benefits.

Opportunity Pipeline and Delivery Stages

9.2.5.6 While the path from idea to delivery can vary it typically involves a progression through discovery, prioritisation, and design. Integrating case development and return on Investment analysis into this journey ensures that the implementation is backed by a robust strategic rationale.

9.2.5.7 These stages of the Improvement Framework highlight the need for a disciplined, structured approach to realising opportunities at scale. There is a strong understanding of key risks held by all accountable officers.

Timescales and Ambition

9.2.5.8 Indicative timelines illustrated to the Council during the feedback presentation underline that the transformation required is a long-term commitment, with full benefits likely to emerge towards 2029/30. However, the Panel emphasises that meaningful progress depends on the Council putting the necessary foundations in place now. Early measures introduced during 2026/27 will be critical in initiating the change process and positioning the organisation to sustain momentum. These timelines reinforce both the scale of the ambition and the level of organisational commitment needed to deliver transformation over multiple years.

Continued Emphasis on Long-Term Delivery

9.2.5.9 The Panel emphasises the importance of maintaining a long-term focus in planning and decision making. Achieving the scale of change identified will require sustained organisational commitment, clear sequencing, and ongoing horizon scanning to ensure the Council remains prepared for future challenges and opportunities.

Aligning End-State Ambition with Organisational Reality

9.2.5.10 Delivering meaningful long-term change requires clarity about the desired end-state, realistic pacing, and an honest assessment of organisational capacity. Without a clearly defined destination and the conditions needed for success, opportunities may not translate into sustainable improvements.

Key Questions for Change

9.2.5.11 To support effective long-term transformation, the Council will benefit from exploring the core themes of purpose, delivery, and impact. This involves considering the rationale for change, the conditions required for success, and, critically, what the future state will look like for both residents and staff.

9.2.5.12 These questions highlight the need for a coherent narrative, clear design principles, and robust evaluation frameworks to support whole-system transformation.

9.3 The extent to which the Council has effective Governance in place.

Effective Governance & Member Development

9.3.1 The Panel were assured that effective governance arrangements are in place, as evidenced through regulatory reports, the Annual Governance Statement and confirmed during the onsite interviews. The Panel also consider that there remains scope to further strengthen aspects of the existing framework, and these areas for improvement are set out in the sections that follow, reflecting opportunities to build on a strong foundation and enhance the Council's overall governance effectiveness.

Strengths in Governance and Leadership

9.3.2 Monmouthshire County Council demonstrates strong and effective leadership, with clear understanding of respective member and officer roles and a culture of transparency and accountability across the organisation. Members are described as well-connected to their communities, responsive, and valued for their insight, while scrutiny chairs and non-executive members show strong commitment and passion for contributing to the Council's work. Committees are characterised as inclusive and well chaired, supporting constructive democratic governance.

Scrutiny Arrangements

9.3.3 Scrutiny work programmes are in place and there is good use of pre-decision scrutiny, helping strengthen informed decision-making. However, members report that scrutiny views are not always sufficiently valued, with limited feedback following reports to Cabinet. The timeliness of the Cabinet forward plan can also hinder scrutiny's effectiveness. There is a lack of clarity around how members can deploy "deep dive" approaches within task and finish methodologies, suggesting further support and clearer frameworks are needed.

Full Council Effectiveness and Use of Time

9.3.4 Full Council meetings are described as well-informed with robust debate, reflecting active democratic engagement. However, the lengthy duration of meetings is unusual, consideration should be given whether the constitution best enables councillors to focus time on the most strategic issues. The structure of meetings should be reviewed to better utilise the wide range of skills and experience that members bring.

Member Development, Training and Support Tools

9.3.5 A comprehensive Member Training Programme is in place, including a strong induction offer for new members and ongoing improvements led by the Democratic Services Committee. E-learning enhances flexibility and accessibility. However, individual Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are not yet in place, limiting tailored development. The “My Monmouthshire” system provides a platform for managing casework, though members report functionality limitations that affect usability and create frustration.

10 Opportunities for Improvement – Recommendations.

10.1 We have carefully considered the three required performance areas and the additional three areas identified by the Council for local consideration as part of the assessment process. This report contains a number of observations and comments about the Council’s performance in each of these areas. They should be considered along with the summary of recommendations set out in the table below.

10.2 Table 1 - Summary of recommendations.

1	<p>Prioritising major opportunities to deliver better outcomes for residents at lower costs.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Council focus and prioritise major opportunities that will deliver better outcomes for residents at a lower cost. The Council must establish a clear mechanism to identify, assess and exploit these opportunities, supported by a structured plan to be completed by the end of 2026/27.</p> <p>The plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust assessment of the investment required; • Consideration of organisational capacity to deliver; • Expected returns, including both financial savings and improved outcomes; • Alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). <p>Realising these opportunities requires discipline, sequencing and a strong organisational narrative linking change to outcomes and financial resilience.</p>
2	<p>Strengthening Community Resilience and Shared Understanding.</p> <p>The Panel recommends that the Council works with communities and partners to develop a shared understanding of “community resilience” within the Monmouthshire context. This shared definition will enable better measurement of impact and help clarify the difference the Council and its partners aim to make.</p> <p>Key points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using community insight to understand impact and well-being outcomes; • Ensuring prevention plans maximise social capital, which stakeholders identified as a major strength; • Strengthening purposeful communication and engagement with communities, drawing on the placemaking model; • Ensuring all communities - particularly in a geographically large county - have a voice in shaping local priorities. <p>Stakeholders are ready and willing to work with the Council and that co-design is essential for meaningful progress.</p>

3	Workforce and Succession Planning <p>The Panel recommends that the Council complete the development and implementation of its workforce and succession plan to underpin future delivery and organisational resilience.</p> <p>The emphasis is on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring the Council has the skills and capabilities required for future challenges;• Addressing identified workforce gaps;• Supporting leadership development and retention of critical knowledge;• Strengthening organisational capacity to deliver its priorities. <p>Workforce planning is essential to sustaining improvement, reducing single points of failure, and supporting innovation.</p>
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10.3 Collectively, these recommendations set out the priority areas for strengthening performance and governance and provide a basis for the Council's ongoing improvement journey.

11 Improvement Support

If you would like to discuss any further improvement support, please contact Jo Hendy, WLGA Chief Officer Improvement

12 Acknowledgements

The Panel and the WLGA would like to extend their thanks to the Council for its engagement throughout the PPA and we especially appreciate the support and openness from the Leader, Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby and Chief Executive, Paul Matthews. Our thanks and appreciation also go to Matthew Gatehouse - Chief Officer - People, Performance and Partnerships, Carly Rogers, Hannah Carter and Richard Jones for their invaluable support in coordinating documentation requests, responding to queries, arranging meetings and workshops, and providing onsite assistance.