

SUBJECT: Draft Self-Assessment 2023/24
MEETING: Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 16th July 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an assessment of the council's performance during 2023/24. The committee is asked to consider how well we have achieved our Well-being Objectives, set out in the Community and Corporate Plan, during 2023/24 and to what extent the council has met the performance requirement outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee uses the draft self-assessment report to scrutinise the council's performance during 2023/24 and agrees any areas they would like to examine in greater depth as part of their forward work programme.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Self-Assessment Report is a 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', that is the extent to which; it is exercising its functions effectively; it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and its governance is effective for securing these.
- 3.2 Under the Act, the mechanism for a council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the current position and to inform decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. It needs to be embedded across the organisation to help the council continually learn and achieve sustainable improvement and better outcomes for citizens, service users and its own workforce. The self-assessment process has been embedded as part of the council's performance management framework (appendix 1). This has been integrated with the council's requirement to report on the progress it has made in meeting its well-being objectives for the preceding financial year (2023/24) under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 3.3 The self-assessment report evaluates the council's performance under each of the six Well-being Objectives set out in the Community and Corporate Plan, and the programme of work that supports their delivery. This includes 20 'what we want to achieve' statements that are each underpinned by specific actions. To support the delivery of the objectives, the council has to make sure that all of its areas are working efficiently and effectively. The report also assesses the effectiveness of the 'enabling functions' that support council services to meet changing demands and ensure their sustainability. These include corporate planning, performance and risk management, financial planning, workforce planning, procurement, assets, digital and data.
- 3.4 The financial year 2023/24 saw a continuation of numerous wider pressures that are resulting in challenges for many local authorities. Monmouthshire is no exception. The council is facing rising costs, alongside increasingly complex demand pressures. The aims set out in the Community and Corporate Plan strive to address complex issues within an increasingly uncertain environment. The

ambition outlined in the document looks to the long-term and is focused on the well-being of current and future generations.

- 3.5 Alongside the assessment of the delivery of our objectives, the report assesses how well we have achieved the areas for development identified in the 2022/23 self-assessment report. This can be found in the 'our actions' section. This section also sets out any further areas for development that have been identified as part of the 2023/24 assessment.
- 3.6 The self-assessment report demonstrates the progress the council has made and further areas for development. These include:
- We have continued to support those on low-income and address inequality in the county through working with partners to provide cost-of-living support sessions across Monmouthshire and implement universal free school meals for all primary school pupils. We need to develop a joined-up whole-authority approach to sustain the impacts of our interventions.
 - We have shown our commitment to reducing our impact on the planet through developing a refreshed Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy, underpinned by four delivery plans which set out the action we will take. However, we recognise these are complex challenges and unless there is an increase in the public finances available for this, the evidence that we are gathering suggests that reaching our net-zero ambitions will be extremely challenging.
 - Through Rapid Rehousing we are preventing an increasing number of households from becoming homeless and are decreasing the number of homeless households in costly B&B accommodation. We've begun the process of acquiring properties to transform into temporary accommodation to address the issue of limited availability.
 - We are focused on understanding barriers to learning, particularly for vulnerable pupils, and ensuring suitable wellbeing support is available. We are facing challenges in returning attendance figures to pre-pandemic levels, and are seeing an increase in behaviours that challenge.
 - We are developing a Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The financial strategy is key to realising the aims and ambitions set out in the Community and Corporate plan. The strategy explains how the Council will respond to the challenges ahead, and the principles that will be adopted in managing and using financial resources.
- 3.7 The feedback and findings from the Committee have been used to inform our assessment of performance and formed a key part of our evidence base. Evidence presented to, and scrutinised by, the committee which informed our assessment includes, but is not limited to, 2023/24 budget monitoring reports; the Strategic Risk Register; Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report, Exam Performance and School Attendance.
- 3.8 Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee has an important role in scrutinising the council's performance. This report provides the committee with an assessment of performance during 2023/24 which the committee can use to inform this role. The committee may also wish to use this report to identify any further areas it may want to scrutinise the performance of in more detail as part of its forward work plan.
- 3.9 Following scrutiny, the self-assessment report will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee which has a statutory role in scrutinising the self-assessment report to seek assurance on the effectiveness of the council's governance and performance management arrangements. The assessment will be taken to Governance and Audit Committee on the 5th September before being presented to Council on the 19th September.
- 3.10 The annual self-assessment report will be complemented by a panel performance assessment once in an electoral cycle, providing an opportunity to seek external insights (other than from auditors, regulators or inspectors) on how the council is meeting the performance requirements.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 There are no additional resource implications as a result of this report. However, there may be resource implications in undertaking further actions identified in the self-assessment report. These would be subject to the usual council decision-making processes.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Performance and governance of local authorities: statutory guidance

Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28

Self-assessment Report 2022/23

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Appendix 1

Performance Management Framework

Our performance management framework makes sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction to deliver real and tangible outcomes.

Building a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life is the unifying purpose of the diverse range of services for which we are responsible. We are a partner in the Public Service Board, which is responsible for setting well-being objectives for the county. The council's own well-being objectives are set by Council and form the backbone of our Community and Corporate Plan. Each of our teams has a service business plan that aligns to these objectives. We have a range of performance measures that we use to keep track of our progress. Our risk management policy enables us to manage strategic risks to our delivery. Our employee aims and objectives show the contributions that individual colleagues make to these objectives and delivering our vision in accordance with our values.

