

SUBJECT: PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

MEETING: Governance and Audit Committee

DATE: 27 November 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an overview of the proposed scope and arrangements for Monmouthshire's forthcoming Panel Performance Assessment (PPA).
- 1.2 To enable the committee to obtain assurance about the effectiveness of the arrangements being put in place.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee seeks assurance that the arrangements being put in place are appropriate to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Commissioning an external Panel Performance Assessment is a requirement under section 92 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Act requires councils to make arrangements for an independent panel, appointed by the council, to assess the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements. Namely:
 - exercising its functions effectively;
 - using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
 - having effective governance in place for securing the above.
- 3.2 This must take place at least once every electoral cycle and supplements the annual self-assessment report, the most recent of which was presented to the committee in July 2025 and approved by Council on 18th September. Monmouthshire's panel assessment will take place during the week commencing 23rd February 2026. The panel assessment is also part of the Council's ongoing commitment to transparency, improvement, and assurance for both councillors and residents.
- 3.3 The statutory guidance identifies a specific role for the Governance and Audit Committee within the process:

“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 to the response to the panel assessment.

“If the council does not make a change recommended by the governance and audit committee, it must set out in the final response the recommendation and the reasons why it did not make the change.”

- 3.4 It is therefore important to ensure that the committee is involved from the outset of the panel performance assessment as part of its remit to assure itself of the effectiveness of the authority’s performance management and governance arrangements.
- 3.5 The independent panel will be made up of:
- An independent panel chair – not currently serving in an official or political capacity within local government.
 - A peer from the wider public, private or voluntary sectors.
 - A serving local government senior officer, likely to be equivalent to chief executive or director.
 - A senior elected member.
 - Staff from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).
- 3.6 Monmouthshire’s panel will be chaired by Beverley Smith. She is the former Chief Executive of North West Leicestershire District Council and currently holds a number of Board roles including chair of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales. Discussions are underway to appoint the other panel members. These will bring a range of knowledge and experience which is relevant to the scope of the review. There is a commitment to ensuring a gender balance on the panel.
- 3.7 The purpose of the assessment is to support the council to achieve its aspirations through developing and deepening our understanding about how we are operating, and how we can ensure effective services for the long term. It is for the Council to determine the scope of the review. This needs to be realistic for a panel of 4-6 people to undertake in a week including writing up and feeding back conclusions. The proposed scope has been developed informed by the Council’s priorities set out in the Community and Corporate plan and learning from the self-assessment process. It has also involved informal discussions with cabinet and SLT with subsequent input from the WLGA. The proposed scope for the Monmouthshire Panel Performance Assessment is:
- 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?

The panel will be asked to review the above and offer positive suggestions on how the above facets of our work can be improved.

- 3.8 The panel will be guided in the ways of working and corporate governance headings set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act: Corporate planning; Financial planning; Workforce planning (people); Procurement; Assets; Risk management and Performance management.
- 3.9 This panel assessment is a corporate, organisational assessment, designed to consider the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements and its capability to deliver effective outcomes. While it is for the panel to determine its approach, it will utilise a range of internal and external evidence sources, to inform its conclusions. This will include evidence sources used by Governance & Audit committee to inform its role. Any further involvement of the committee will be determined by the panel and communicated accordingly.
- 3.10 It is for the independent panel to decide how it will consult with groups such as staff, local people and trade unions. They can use existing engagement mechanisms to achieve this.
- 3.11 The panel's findings must be published. The authority cannot amend the panel's report but does get the opportunity to publish a response. Both the report and draft response will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee. The committee may make recommendations for changes to the draft response to the panel assessment. The panel must send the report to The Auditor General for Wales, Estyn, CCIW and Welsh Ministers.
- 3.12 The committee may wish to familiarise itself with the underpinning Statutory guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1, of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The relevant information can be located in chapter 3, accessible via: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/performance-governance-of-principal-councils.pdf>

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 is not an option as it is a statutory requirement. The process is likely to identify learning that will enable the generation

of options related to both performance management and service delivery which would be the subject of separate future decisions.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Completion of the Panel Performance Assessment within the agreed timeframe.
Quality and relevance of panel recommendations.
Evidence of improved delivery against the Community and Corporate Plan priorities.
Feedback from councillors, residents, and external partner

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 will be met by The Welsh Local Government Association. There are no direct costs associated with the assessment. The preparation work will be carried out officers.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team
WLGA

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11. AUTHOR:

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12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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