

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 8th September 2026

Report Item 3: Enablers Update

Key Issues raised by the Committee:

The members' questions focused on whether the Council can demonstrate that its enabling strategies are making a meaningful difference rather than simply delivering plans and processes. There was significant discussion about the robustness of the Council's performance assessment framework, including how strategies are scored, whether assessments are sufficiently independent, how they compare with approaches used by other local authorities, and whether residents can have confidence in a system that involves the Council assessing its own performance. Members also questioned whether the rationale for overall scores was always clear and whether performance ratings adequately reflected weaknesses in individual measures.

A second major theme concerned workforce performance and organisational effectiveness. Questions focused on sickness absence levels, apparent inconsistencies in reported figures, comparisons with national averages, and whether headline statistics provide sufficient insight into underlying causes. Members wanted reassurance that detailed analysis was being undertaken to identify trends, target interventions and improve wellbeing. There were also questions about staff training, take-up of the Thingi learning platform, completion of mandatory training requirements, and how both employees and councillors are supported to access and complete essential training.

Members also scrutinised the effectiveness of the Council's internal strategies and whether reported achievements were translating into measurable outcomes for residents. Questions were raised about whether reports placed too much emphasis on activities, processes and planned actions rather than demonstrable results. In particular, members sought evidence that investments in areas such as procurement, digital transformation, data systems and financial management were delivering tangible benefits for communities rather than simply improving governance arrangements or organisational compliance.

Further questions focused on the impact of specific enabling strategies. Members examined the effectiveness of asset management arrangements, asking why the strategy received a high overall rating despite some underperforming measures and missed income targets. There was also interest in how digital and data initiatives were being used to support service improvement, including lessons learned from the Monmouth flooding response through the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the value being derived from artificial intelligence and digital tools, and whether opportunities linked to the Cardiff Capital Region were being fully exploited to support economic development and investment.

Finally, members sought examples of where enabling strategies had already delivered tangible benefits for residents, businesses or taxpayers. Questions explored whether measurable productivity gains had been achieved through digital innovation and artificial intelligence, how success was being demonstrated beyond internal processes, and whether research into areas such as the gender pay gap was leading to practical actions. Overall, members' scrutiny focused on demonstrating real-world outcomes, evidencing value for money and ensuring that enabling strategies lead to visible improvements in services, organisational performance and resident experience.

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Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair recognised the significant work that had gone into producing the report and thanked those involved in presenting and responding to members' questions. The Chair emphasised that members were highly supportive of the work being carried out across the Council. The purpose of scrutiny was to explore whether the work could be made more effective and whether the Council could be improved further.

Points requiring a further response by the Cabinet Member:

None required.

Report Item 4: For Purpose On Purpose (F-Pop)

Key Issues raised by the Committee:

The members' questions focused on the purpose, practicality and potential impact of the programme. Members explored whether the vision was sufficiently focused on residents rather than the Council itself and whether the framework was a set of high-level aspirations or a programme capable of driving real organisational change. There were questions about what the programme would contain in practical terms, how it would influence decision-making, and whether it would help the Council focus on its most important priorities rather than trying to do everything. Members also sought clarification on how the programme would be implemented and whether it was intended to improve services, generate savings, or achieve both.

A second area of discussion concerned resources, costs and measuring success. Members asked how much the programme would cost to deliver, whether it would require additional staffing, and how taxpayers would know whether the investment had delivered value for money. Questions explored how success would be assessed over time, what indicators would be used to demonstrate progress, and whether the programme could help the Council respond to its continuing financial challenges. Members were particularly interested in how the framework would support prioritisation, improve organisational discipline and ensure that limited resources were directed towards the outcomes that matter most.

Members also focused on the relationship between the programme and local communities. Questions examined how residents would know the programme exists, how they would be able to influence priorities, and whether it would lead to stronger relationships between the Council and the public. A recurring theme was the extent to which the programme could build trust, encourage greater participation from residents and create a more collaborative relationship between communities and the Council. There was also discussion about how success might be demonstrated through increased resident engagement and confidence in local government.

Significant attention was given to project management and organisational capacity. Members questioned how the programme would improve project delivery, ensure that projects are properly prioritised and prevent the Council from overcommitting itself. Concerns were raised about stakeholder involvement, resident engagement and whether communities are consulted early enough in the development of projects. Questions also focused on the need for stronger project management disciplines, better use of lessons learned, and more meaningful involvement of ward members throughout the development of proposals rather than after key decisions have already been made.

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Finally, members explored the programme's relationship with local democracy and partnership working. Questions were asked about the future role of Town and Community Councils, how they could be involved in shaping and delivering outcomes, and whether more localised decision-making might emerge as the programme develops. Members also examined how the Council could make better use of the knowledge, networks and influence of elected members, public service partners and community organisations to achieve long-term improvements for Monmouthshire. Overall, the discussion centred on whether the programme could create a more focused, outward-looking and community-centred organisation that delivers better outcomes with increasingly limited resources.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the report and his responses. He noted that the questions demonstrated the members' interest in the framework and their positive view of it. Members look forward to supporting the work of the whole organisation as the programme proceeds.

Points requiring a further response by the Cabinet Member:

None required.