

## Delivering and Monitoring Progress

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Since introducing our new County Plan we have been in the process of significantly developing its approach to Performance Management, Service Planning and Risk Management, aimed at supporting the delivery of the Council's new County Plan.

Our revised approach to performance has also been in response to the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 and new Leadership within the Council, which has placed greater prominence on the Council's performance structures, processes and culture.

The Act regards effective self-assessment as fundamental to enabling Councils to understand how they're performing and where they could do better. Our performance reporting arrangements are therefore critical to the Council's response to the Act.

Aligned with the ethos of the LGE Act 2021, our Performance Management Framework is as much about implementing changes to processes, as it is about fostering a new culture of continuous self-assessment and improvement in the Council, by placing a much greater prominence on service-planning and the importance of routine performance monitoring.

Our service plans have been developed to ensure that there is a clear linkage between directorate's plans, the County Plan and key corporate strategies. Routine monitoring of service plans will therefore enable the Council to monitor key actions associated with the Council's County Plan and strategic delivery plans. Our approach therefore continues to be carefully nurtured, supported and challenged, as it develops, ensuring it is working as expected, across the Council.

We have begun making use of available data that is on the Data Cymru hub; to benchmark our performance and more recently we have been working with other local authorities and Data Cymru, in order to further develop this system and the availability of comparative information. Further comparative information will be available going forward, through a common resident's survey that will be rolled out across Wales in the year ahead.

Our Executive and Leadership Teams will also continue to focus on performance, through an agreed twelve weekly performance schedule. This provides a specific focus on each directorate's performance, relating to risks, progress against our County Plan well-being objectives and many other "deep dive" investigations into areas of performance causing concern.

The Council's Policy Development Forum (Cabinet and Leadership Team) will also continue to receive quarterly progress updates against the County Plan Delivery Plan. These are now supplemented with a quarterly update on the Council's budget position. Work on enhancing, reporting and monitoring of performance will continue, which will bring an opportunity to further strengthen and align our plans and processes, taking a more integrated approach to the consideration of the challenges, aspirations and resources available to the Council in the year ahead, thus leading to more effective planning of our services.

Our County Plan Delivery Plan update reports are received by full Council every 6 months, one half yearly and another at the end of the financial year, ensuring the Council is as transparent and accountable as possible.

In the coming months we will start to give early consideration to both the challenges and the areas we will prioritise in the forthcoming year, alongside how we can strengthen our process for service planning. This forms part of our ongoing drive to further strengthen the ties between our Corporate, Service and Financial planning processes, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for the residents of Torfaen.

## Our Governance Arrangements

The Council's Governance arrangements are integral to the Council's ability to deliver its key services whilst effectively and economically deploying its resources.

Each year, we produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to outline the governance processes and arrangements that operate within the Council. The AGS is prepared by the officers across the Council whose remit it is to ensure the Council is achieving and maintaining good corporate governance.

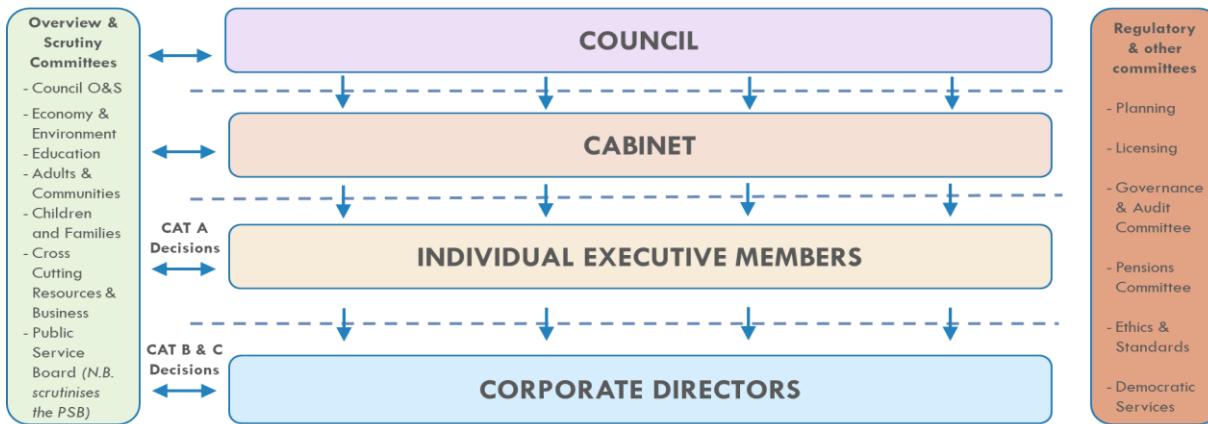
The Governance and Audit Committee also has oversight of the process for producing the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), providing a mechanism for review prior to adoption by full Council. The AGS is integral to the Council's Self-Assessment process and is a key source of evidence when considering the progress made against our 'Characteristics of an Outstanding Council'.

Our Governance and Audit Committee is firmly embedded within our governance arrangements. The committee is made up of 5 local authority elected members and 3 lay members - one of which holds the role of the Chair. A mix of both local authority members and lay members further strengthens the level of independent challenge within the committee. In addition to its role reviewing our AGS, the committee has a key oversight and assurance role in areas such as business risk management (including monitoring of individual directorate risk registers), financial management, our Council's Management Framework and our Complaints process. Another critical role of the committee is to provide assurance that the Council is responding appropriately and effectively to reports from our external regulators.

Any recommendations made by Audit Wales and our other external regulators, are received by our Governance and Audit Committee and added to the Council's "Action Plan for Governance and Improvement". This is the Council's key document to demonstrate how accepted proposals for improvement / agreed recommendations received, are being addressed.

Our Action Plan is updated and reported on a regular basis to provide assurance to the Governance and Audit Committee. Monitoring of service specific recommendations is the responsibility of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees, with annual progress updates being prepared for the Governance and Audit Committee for assurance purposes. Any concerns relating to progress identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and / or the Governance and Audit Committee are highlighted in a report for consideration by the Council's Cabinet.

## **TORFAEN COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**



Over the past year, we have strengthened overall political leadership with the introduction of effective cross-party scrutiny and cross-party focus groups. This has led to smoother planning, functioning and delivery of projects and services that are of priority and matter greatly to our communities. Cross-party work has involved elected Members from various geographical and political backgrounds collaborating to make decisions that benefit constituents and the county as a whole. It's recognised that Members may have different ideologies and priorities, but this approach demonstrates progressive working in Torfaen where the interests of constituents and the well-being of the local communities are prioritised above partisan considerations.

Strong democratic governance is a key element to us being a well-managed organisation and is therefore critical to meeting our performance requirements. (An overview of our governance arrangements has been set out, as below and further information is available within our Council's Constitution, which is our formal framework setting out how we as a council must operate and make decisions with efficiency, transparency and accountability.