Agenda Item No. 3

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 16TH JULY, 2025

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 3RD JULY, 2025

"C37 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024-25 (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – PERFORMANCE JOINT SCRUTINY) –

The Leader presented the Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment (incorporating end of year performance against the Annual Delivery Plan) 2024-25 (Appendix A).

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 be endorsed as the basis for consultation as described in the report and Recommendation (2).

(2) T H A T the end of year performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 as detailed in the Annual Self-Assessment (Section 5.2 within Appendix A) be noted.

(3) T H A T the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 be referred to the Performance Joint Committee (16th July, 2025) and Governance and Audit Committee (21st July, 2025) for their consideration as part of a programme of consultation, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet (4th September, 2024) for consideration prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council.

Reasons for decisions

(1) To ensure that consultation was undertaken on the findings of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment in line with requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

(2) To ensure performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 was considered."

(3) To ensure all Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee (as per Section 114 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021) have oversight of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 and their views inform the Council's approach to meeting the performance requirements.

Attached as Appendix – Report to Cabinet: 3rd July, 2025

VALE of GLAMORGAN
BRO MORGANNWG

Appendix

Meeting of:	**Cabinet**
Date of Meeting:	**Thursday, 03 July 2025**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment 2024-25
Purpose of Report:	To present the Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment (incorporating end of year performance against the Annual Delivery Plan) 2024-25 **(**Appendix A)
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Both Council staff and elected Members play a key role in enabling us to assess whether the Council is achieving its Well-being Objectives, delivering value for money and enhancing citizen well-being. Consequently, all Members including the Performance Joint Committee, Governance and Audit Committee and Council staff are being consulted on the self-assessment findings as part of an extensive programme of internal and external engagement between July and August 2025. This is in line with requirements outlined in the performance requirements (Part 6 Section 89-93) of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council. The Annual Self- Assessment findings will inform the Council's annual plans.

Executive Summary:

- The report presents the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2024/25 incorporating end of year performance against the Annual Delivery Plan for the same period (Appendix A).

- The Annual Self-Assessment report is a requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E), which requires the Council to keep its performance under review, consult on and then publish a report setting out the conclusions of its self-assessment once in respect of every financial year.

- The self-assessment findings are informed by data, performance and engagement insights covering the period 1st April, 2024 to 31st March, 2025 in line with the performance requirements.

- The Council has evaluated a wide range of performance, engagement and other data insight from its Annual Performance Calendar of activities including the annual Directorate Self-Assessment and Peer Challenge process, the Annual Governance Statement, Internal Audit Annual Report and progress with delivery of the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2024/25, which has enabled conclusions to be drawn on how well resources are being used to support achievement of the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. This has informed the Council's Annual Self-Assessment judgements.

- In line with the performance requirements, the Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment comprises three main judgements:

  1. How well is the Council performing?
  2. How well is the Council using its resources?
  3. How effective is the Council's governance?

- **For the reporting period 2024/25, the Council judges its performance to be 'Good'** and details of the supporting evidence used in coming to this conclusion is provided at paragraph 2.8 of this report. This includes our end of year performance review against our Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments. There is also further assurance from the Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), findings which concluded that, 'Overall, the Vale of Glamorgan Council exercises its functions effectively… and there were no identified areas of concern.'

- **The Council has attributed an overall judgement of 'Good' in relation to its use of resources.** Paragraph 2.10 provides the rationale for coming to this conclusion and includes the Directorate Self-Assessment findings and assurance from the Panel Performance Assessment findings (November 2024) in relation to the Council's use of resources, which concluded that, 'From the evidence we have heard and within the current high levels of service demand and financial pressures faced by all Local Authorities across Wales the Council is using its resources effectively and efficiently.'

- **For the reporting period 2024/25, the Council judges governance to be 'Good'** with key supporting evidence including the Draft Annual Governance Statement which provides an overall opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance' that the Council's governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the government framework. Paragraph 2.11 of this report provides further details on the evidence that supports this judgment. The PPA also concluded that in relation to the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, 'We consider the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but there are areas which could be further developed.' Good progress has already been made in taking forward these recommendations.

- A public summary of the Annual Self-Assessment report will be produced to support public and other stakeholder engagement activities during July and August 2025. As part of the engagement work, the Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee will be consulted on the draft report with their views informing the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report. Governance and Audit Committee have a specific role set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, in contributing to the Annual Self-Assessment report and a draft report must be provided to the Committee to review with the Council responding to any recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions that it intends to take.

- Post consultation, the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report will be subject to further consideration by Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet prior to being presented for endorsement by Full Council in September.

- Cabinet is asked to review and endorse the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 appended at Appendix A as the basis for consultation.

- End of Year Performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25 is included within the Annual Self-Assessment for consideration and is not being reported separately as it has been in previous years. This is intended to reduce duplication and is part of producing a more timely Annual Self-Assessment report for Members' consideration.

- In addition, Cabinet is asked to refer the report to the Performance Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee for their consideration as part of a programme of consultation, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter approved by Full Council.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet reviews and endorses the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 as the basis for consultation as described in this report and Recommendation (2).
2. That Cabinet considers the end of year performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 as detailed in the Annual Self-Assessment (Section 5.2 within Appendix A).
3. That Cabinet refers the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 to the Performance Joint Committee (16th July, 2025) and Governance and Audit Committee (21st July, 2025) for their consideration as part of a programme of consultation, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet (4th September, 2024) for their consideration prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that consultation is undertaken on the findings of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment in line with requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
2. To ensure performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 is considered.
3. To ensure all Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee (as per Section 114 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021) have oversight of the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 and their views inform the Council's approach to meeting the performance requirements.

1. Background

1.1 Self-assessments form a core part of statutory local government audit, regulatory and inspection processes in Wales. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E), requires the Council to keep performance under review, consult and report on its performance through self-assessment, and arrange and respond to a panel performance assessment once in every electoral cycle.

1.2 Self-assessment is a way of evaluating, critically and honestly, the Council's current approach to decision making to secure improvement for the future. Consequently, 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.

1.3 In developing its performance arrangements for the period, the Council has considered the requirements of the LG&E Act and taken action to strengthen self-assessment opportunities by building in performance challenge throughout the year, internally and externally as well as developing its internal 'insight'

function. This draws together performance, data and customer perception information (from the annual consultation calendar) throughout the year alongside governance related insights (the internal and external audit work programme) to inform decisions. The Council has also reviewed its approach informed by the learning and identified best practice from colleagues across Wales in the third year of meeting the new performance requirements. The Council will do so each year to ensure its approach continues to evolve to reflect identified best practice. Additionally, during the year, the Council undertook a Panel Performance Assessment, and this has strengthened its performance arrangements in response to recommendations from Panel.

1.4 Embedding this self-reflective approach as part of performance management and governance arrangements through the annual performance calendar has enabled the Council to build a robust evidence base for its annual self-assessment conclusions and will help to drive continuous improvement through enhanced performance management arrangements.

1.5 The Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment (Appendix A) is a position statement on the Council's performance over the past year in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan priorities as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. It is intended to provide an honest and balanced account of the Council's achievements and challenges in relation to delivering Corporate Plan commitments and identifies areas where further progress is required. The information contained in the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report will be used to inform annual council plans with progress monitored throughout the year to ensure their delivery. This is the last Annual Self-Assessment linked to the Corporate Plan 2020-25.

1.6 End of year Performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25 is for the first time being reported as part of the Annual Self-Assessment. This is in response to feedback last year from Members regarding duplication of information across different reports and is intended to enable a more holistic view of performance to be considered in a timely way.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 The Annual Self-Assessment report is a requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('the Act').

2.2 Under the Act, the mechanism for a Council to keep its performance under review is self-assessment, with a duty to consult and publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year.

2.3 In line with this requirement, the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Self-Assessment findings (Appendix A) draw on a number of information sources to assess progress against the Council's Well-being Objectives in order to identify how the

Council can further enhance its internal processes and use of resources to support achievement of the Annual Delivery Plan commitments and the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. These include:

- quarterly/annual performance and risk review reports associated with the key steps (actions) and performance metrics aligned to Annual Delivery Plan and Well-being Objectives for 2024/25 as reported periodically to Members via Committees and Cabinet;
- findings from the Internal Audit and Risk Work programme (Annual Internal Audit Report);
- key insights from the Annual Governance Statement and Internal Audit Opinion 2024/25;
- findings from the work of regulators and progress with the Council's regulatory 'Insight' tracker, which reviews and monitors progress in implementing Council's regulatory recommendations.;
- annual Directorate level Self-Assessments 2024/25;
- overview of engagement findings across Council services over the past year;
- staff engagement overview;
- assessments of organisational financial resilience and compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code reported to Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet.
- annual reports for the period on Council services including Complaints and Compliments, Strategic Equalities Plan, Absence and Welsh Language as reported to Members via Committees and Cabinet;

2.4 Additionally, completion of 'peer challenged' Directorate Self-Assessments in respect of the corporate enablers [people, finance (including procurement and commissioning), assets (physical and digital), performance and risk management, and insight and engagement] has enabled the five service directorates to reflect on overall progress and identify what they are doing well, the outcomes being achieved and the areas for improvement and future focus.

2.5 Reviewing this information has assisted the Council in developing a balanced picture of its improvement journey over the past year and has enabled the identification of areas for improvement which will inform Council plans in the coming year.

2.6 The self-assessment findings are informed by data, performance and engagement insights covering the period 1st April, 2024 to 31st March, 2025 in line with the performance requirements.

2.7 The Draft Annual Self-Assessment report is structured around the following main sections:

- Introduction and overview of the reporting year from the Leader and Chief Executive;
- How the Self-Assessment process fits within the overall corporate performance framework and how it is constructed;

- A summary of progress against last year's areas of focus;
- The Annual Self-Assessment judgements;
- Reviewing our Annual Self-Assessment approach.

2.8 **For the reporting period 2024/25, the Council judges its performance to be 'Good'.** We have come to this conclusion because:

- Our end of year performance review shows that we achieved 85.3% (441/517) of our commitments and associated performance targets in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 in what was an ambitious plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate.
- Our review of local service performance indicator trends (corporate performance measures framework) and national service benchmarking where data was available is on balance also positive.
- We can demonstrate that the resulting outcomes from the breadth of activities undertaken during the reporting period have contributed to multiple national well-being goals.
- The Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), a statutory assessment by an independent panel of how the Council is performing undertaken in November 2024, concluded that, 'Overall, the Vale of Glamorgan Council exercises its functions effectively… and there were no identified areas of concern'.

2.9 In reviewing our performance overall, we recognise that there are areas where we could do better and have ensured that underperforming areas identified from performance monitoring throughout the year remain areas of focus in 2025/26 and are reflected in the Council's annual plans for the period.

2.10 An end of year performance overview is provided in Section 5.2 within Appendix A of the Annual Self-Assessment report. Hyperlinks have been provided to more detailed progress across all four well-being objectives. These outline our in-year achievements, key challenges and areas for future focus. A list of performance exceptions by well-being objective is also provided as well as a sample of performance data trends through the 'our year in numbers' overview. For reference, detailed performance commentary for all actions and measures are included in the background papers within this report and provide further contextual information for Members should they wish to examine this level of detail. This provides assurance to Cabinet (and all Members) that in making changes to the timetable and in consolidating end of year performance information with the Annual Self-Assessment, there has been no reduction in the information available to be scrutinised.

2.11 **The Council has attributed an overall judgement of 'Good' in relation to its use of resources.** The judgement is an aggregation of the individual directorate level judgements given to how well we have used our people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Council's Annual Delivery Plan. Directorate Self-Assessment judgements have been subject to internal Peer Challenge and moderation. At moderation, the

overall Council judgement of 'Good' for our use of resources was retained and considered appropriate in light of the significant and ongoing financial challenges across Council services, which continue to be exacerbated by increased demand for services, rising inflationary cost pressures and an increasingly volatile risk landscape.

- Despite significant resource pressures, the Council continues to keep finances in as strong a position as possible and will be reporting a balanced outturn position (subject to closure of accounts) for the 2024/25 financial year, but there are challenges.
- The Council's procurement arrangements have had a higher profile this year with the new Procurement Act 2023 and regulations coming into force with awareness raising in advance, training sessions and amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The partnership with Ardal is bedding in and new documentation is enabling greater engagement with the category managers.
- On balance, there is generally fair performance in the Council's management of its assets – both physical and digital against a backdrop of finite resources.
- We can demonstrate a continued focus on improving how we engage with residents and partners and are taking forward the lessons learned into future engagement work.
- Through strengthening how we work in partnership with the third sector, public and private organisations over the past year, we can demonstrate added value to our services.
- There was further assurance from the PPA Panel in relation to the Council's use of resources, which concluded that, 'From the evidence we have heard and within the current high levels of service demand and financial pressures faced by all Local Authorities across Wales the Council is using its resources effectively and efficiently.'
- We can demonstrate improvements in key people metrics over the past year including improvements in short term sickness absence, voluntary employee turnover, employee diversity ratio, gender pay gap and achieving the Stonewall Top 100 Employers status. Work has also progressed in improving our working environment for our employees, continuing to refresh and remodel all our Health and Safety Policies and procedures and the development of a strong safety culture across the Council, including our schools.

2.12 **For the reporting period, the Council judges governance to be 'Good.'** We have come to this conclusion because:

- The Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2024/25 concludes that from review, assessment and ongoing monitoring work undertaken, an overall opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance' can be given that Council's governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the government framework.
- The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion given as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report gives a 'Reasonable Assurance' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management

and control environment for 2024/25. 94% of assurance opinions issued as part of 53 risk-based reviews concluded in-year testing the effectiveness of the controls in place to manage key Council risks were either 'Substantial or Reasonable' with 95% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories.

- A 'Substantial Assurance' Internal Audit opinion has been provided in relation to the Council's compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code Standards for 2023/24, indicating good financial management practices that support financial sustainability, effective resource allocation and accountability. At the time of reporting, audit work is ongoing to cover the 2024/25 period and no significant changes from the previous period have been identified.

2.13 The views and opinions from our External Regulators provided throughout the year as part of the Annual Audit Work Programme have been constructive and we have responded positively in addressing the recommendations from their work. At year end, our regulatory tracker showed that 55 actions have been completed with 17 actions ongoing.

2.14 Whilst our judgement for the past year is Good, we also acknowledge that further actions are needed to strengthen existing arrangements to ensure the Council's governance arrangements continue to improve to support the delivery of its commitments and ensure that all key stakeholders engage in decision making. The areas for improvement identified in the Annual Governance Statement are consistent with the findings from the Council's Panel Performance Assessment, Directorate Self-Assessments, and the Council's end of year performance review. The work to address our improvement areas is being taken forward through the Council's Internal Audit Annual Work Plan, reshaped performance and scrutiny arrangements, the Reshaping Programme, Public Participation Strategy and the Strategic Equalities Plan.

2.15 This approach reflects our response to the PPA recommendations which concluded that in relation to the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, 'We consider the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but there are areas which could be further developed.'

2.16 A key part of the Annual Self-Assessment is to sense-check the Council's self-assessment judgements and the emerging findings in terms of areas for future focus to ensure that the Council remains outwardly focussed as an organisation, responding to the things that matter the most to Vale of Glamorgan citizens and partners. During July to August 2025, we will engage with the public, Council staff and other key stakeholders, including Trade Unions, to seek their views. The Draft Self-Assessment report including a public summary will also be widely circulated with a request for feedback. The findings of this engagement work will be reflected within the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report which will be subject to further scrutiny by the Governance and& Audit

Committee and Cabinet prior to being presented for endorsement by Full Council in September 2025.

2.17 As part of the engagement work, all elected Members will be consulted on the draft report. Governance and Audit Committee have a specific role in contributing to the Annual Self-Assessment report under the Act and a draft must be provided to the Committee to review with the Council responding to any recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions that it intends to take.

2.18 Cabinet is asked to review and endorse the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2024/25 appended at Appendix A as the basis for consultation.

2.19 Cabinet is asked to review the end of year performance against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 as detailed in Section 5.2 within Appendix A of the Annual Self-Assessment report which, has informed the performance judgements within the Annual Self-Assessment.

2.20 In addition, Cabinet are asked to refer the report to the Performance Joint Committee and Governance and Audit Committee for their consideration as part of a programme of engagement as outlined in this report, with any views and recommendations for changes to the judgements or proposed areas for future focus being referred back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to the Final Annual Self-Assessment report being considered Governance and Audit Committee and approved by Full Council.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

3.1 Performance management and self-assessment is an intrinsic part of corporate governance and integrated business planning which underpins the delivery of the Council's Well-being Objectives and associated annual commitments in its Corporate and Annual Delivery Plan. The Council's Annual Performance Calendar and associated performance management and self-assessment processes are our key means of demonstrating how we are meeting the new performance requirements whilst contributing to the national well-being goals.

3.2 The Council's key plans and performance reports associated with the delivery of its Well-being Objectives have been structured around the WBFG Act's sustainable development principle to enable us to better evidence our contribution to the national goals.

3.3 The five ways of working are a key consideration in our corporate Performance Management Framework ensuring that we continue to focus on working differently and in an inclusive way to challenge why, what and how we respond to our key performance challenges. The five ways of working are a consideration

within the Directorate Self-Assessments which form part of the evidence base for the production of the Council's Draft Annual Self-Assessment report.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

4.1 There are no direct climate change and nature related implications associated with this report. The Corporate Plan and Annual Delivery Plan incorporate our key commitments which aim to have a positive impact on climate change and nature overall.

4.2 The self-assessment report also outlines our achievements from the past year and the key challenges, risks and opportunities for future years in relation to the climate and nature emergencies. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in associated annual plans and the corporate risk register for the coming year.

4.3 The 2024/25 Annual Delivery Plan reflects the Annual Self-Assessment findings from the previous year, including any related climate and nature considerations.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

5.1 Our priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives have resources committed to their achievement (via the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the annual budget review process) or the likely prospect of resources being made available in the period of the plan.

5.2 Corporate Health aspects of annual Council plans (how we are using our resources to achieve our well-being objectives), quarterly performance monitoring and annual reviews of performance and governance arrangements provide Members with an overview of the way in which Council resources (people, finance, assets, engagement and insight) are used to support delivery of our well-being objectives. These considerations have also been extensively examined as part of the Directorate Self-Assessment process.

Employment

5.3 There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report although the self-assessment findings identify the key employment challenges, risks and opportunities for future years both within the Council and externally across the Vale of Glamorgan. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in annual Council plans for the coming year.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.4 Self-assessment is a statutory duty under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, along with a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Further, each year the Council must publish an annual report showing the progress it has made in meeting its Well-being Objectives.

5.5 The self-assessment findings identify the key challenges, risks and opportunities for future years and many of these will have equality implications. Actions to mitigate these will be reflected in the Council's annual plans for the coming year. These actions will have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics, in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Also under this Act (Section 1), due consideration will be given to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

6. Background Papers

Cabinet Report: Statutory Guidance: Part 6, Chapter 1, Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

End of Year Performance 2024/25: Actions and measures commentary

1.0 Executive Leader & Chief Executive Introduction

Cllr. Lis Burnett, Executive Leader of the Council and Rob Thomas, Chief Executive

We are pleased to present the Council's fourth Annual Self-Assessment Report which provides a retrospective evaluation of the past year's performance in meeting our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2024/25. The report also demonstrates the Council's performance in the use of resources and ensuring that its governance arrangements remain robust.

In line with our performance requirements, the Council's self-assessment comprises three main judgements on:

- How well is the Council performing?
- How well is the Council using its resources?
- How effective is the Council's governance?

For the reporting period 2024/25, the Council judges its performance overall to be Good. We have come to this conclusion because, our end of year performance review shows that we achieved 85.3% (441/517) of the commitments and associated performance targets in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 as approved by Members in what was an ambitious plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate. Our review of local service performance indicator trends and national service benchmarking where data was available is also positive. We can also demonstrate that the resulting outcomes from the breadth of activities undertaken during the reporting period have contributed to multiple national well-being goals. Additionally, the Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) a statutory assessment by an independent panel of how the Council is performing undertaken in November 2024, concluded that, ***'Overall, the Vale of Glamorgan Council exercises its functions effectively… and there were no identified areas of concern'***. This external assessment provides assurance about the Council's performance. However, importantly we also recognise that there are areas where we could do better and have ensured that underperforming areas identified from performance monitoring throughout the year remain areas of focus in 2025/26 and are reflected in the Council's annual plans for the period.

The Council has attributed an overall judgement of Good in relation to its use of resources. The judgement reflects an aggregation of the individual directorate level judgements given to how well we have used our people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Council's Annual Delivery Plan. These Directorate Self-Assessment judgements have been subject to internal Peer Challenge and moderation. We can demonstrate improvements in key people metrics over the past year including improvements in short term sickness absence, voluntary employee turnover, employee diversity ratio, gender pay gap and achieving the Stonewall Top 100 Employers status. Work has also progressed in improving our working environment for our employees, continuing to refresh and remodel all our Health and Safety Policies and procedures and the development of a strong safety culture across the Council, including our schools. Despite significant resource pressures, the Council continues to keep finances in as strong a position as possible. We have ensured that the Council's procurement arrangements have had a higher profile this year with the new Procurement Act 2023 and regulations coming into force with awareness raising in advance, training sessions and amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The partnership with Ardal is bedding in and new documentation is enabling greater engagement with managers. On balance, there is generally good performance in the Council's management of its assets – both physical and digital against a backdrop of finite resources, but this is increasingly challenging. We can demonstrate a continued focus on improving how we engage with residents and partners and are taking forward the lessons learned into future engagement work. Additionally, through strengthening how we work in partnership with the third sector, public and private organisations over the past year, we can demonstrate added value to our services. There was also, further assurance from the PPA Panel in relation to the Council's use of resources, which concluded that, ***'From the evidence we have heard and within***

the current high levels of service demand and financial pressures faced by all local authorities across Wales the Council is using its resources effectively and efficiently.'

For the reporting period, the Council judges governance to be Good. We have come to this conclusion because the Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2024/25 concludes that from review, assessment and ongoing monitoring work undertaken, an overall opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance' can be given that Council's governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the government framework. The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion given as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report gives a 'Reasonable Assurance' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control environment for 2024/25. 94% of assurance opinions issued as part of 53 risk-based reviews concluded in-year testing the effectiveness of the controls in place to manage key council risks were either 'Substantial or Reasonable' with 95% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. A 'Substantial Assurance' Internal Audit opinion was provided in relation to the Council's compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code Standards for 2023/24, indicating good financial management practices that support financial sustainability, effective resource allocation and accountability. At the time of reporting, audit work is ongoing to cover the 2024/25 period and no significant changes from the previous period have been identified. Additionally, the views and opinions from our External Regulators provided throughout the year as part of the Annual Audit Work Programme have been constructive and we have responded positively in addressing the recommendations from their work. At year end, our regulatory tracker showed that 55 actions have been completed with 17 actions ongoing. However, we acknowledge that further actions are needed to strengthen existing arrangements to ensure the Council's governance arrangements continue to improve and support the delivery of its commitments and ensure that all key stakeholders engage in decision making. This work is being taken forward through the Council's Internal Audit Annual Work Plan, reshaped performance and scrutiny arrangements, Reshaping Programme, Public Participation Strategy and the Strategic Equalities Plan. This approach reflects our response to the PPA recommendations which concluded that in relation to the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, '***We consider the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but there are areas which could be further developed***.'

Despite the challenges, we have had another year of making a positive difference for people in the Vale of Glamorgan. The rising demand for our services has tested our capacity to deliver in the face of increasingly constrained resources and a challenging economic climate, but they have also inspired innovative solutions. Through collective effort and collaboration involving our workforce, partners and our communities, we have been able to maintain and protect essential services and deliver good outcomes for our residents. This Annual Self-Assessment Report highlights examples of that innovative approach and some of those particular challenges we continue to face.

The achievements highlighted below would not have been possible without the dedication of our workforce, partners and volunteers who have remained flexible and agile, working together to respond to our challenges whilst protecting our most vulnerable citizens and supporting our communities.

As you will see, a lot has happened over the past year, and there is plenty still to be optimistic about over the coming year as we take forward Vale 2030, our new Corporate Plan. A large amount of work has gone into developing Vale 2030, shaped by a breadth of insight including the recommendations from our Panel Performance Assessment and what Vale citizens told us are their priorities through the Let's Talk Survey (undertaken in Autumn 2023 and reported in Spring 2024) and other engagement activities throughout the year. The Panel Performance Assessment conclusions about us were positive and assessed the Vale of Glamorgan Council to be, '***a good Council within the current context of high service demand, operational pressures, and resources. It is a values-based organisation with a good internal culture and solid external relationships. There is a clear commitment to delivering on the Corporate Plan, with a particular focus on prioritising the needs of vulnerable people. Staff are enormously proud to work for the Council, and there is a strong sense of ambition for the future.'***

The Plan adopted in April 2025, provides the framework of how the Council will become the best it can be, working together with our communities as equal partners to collectively shape and achieve our vision of strong communities with a bright future. The Council's ambitions detailed in Vale 2030 and approach to developing the Plan have also been subject to external review through the Panel Performance Assessment and our regulators and it is pleasing to note the positive feedback not only on the level of ambition in the Plan, but also that our approach demonstrated that, '***the Council has applied the sustainable development principle to shape the setting of its well-being objectives including effective use of data, alignment with financial plans and a strong approach to involvement.'*** Alongside the views from our residents and partners, this gives us further assurance that we are heading in the right direction.

Our Key Achievements in 2024/25

Ensuring the prosperity of the Vale of Glamorgan and our communities remains a key priority. Development of our Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) has continued to progress throughout the year, and we will be reporting a proposed deposit Plan in late 2025. The Plan will provide the key framework alongside our four placemaking plans to guide future development and economic growth for the Vale of Glamorgan ensuring sustainable development that meets local needs and delivers positive economic, social and environmental outcomes. Work has continued to embed a placemaking approach in how we work as an organisation, and we are proactively promoting this within our communities which is helping to broaden participation in governance and plans for the regeneration of our communities. Over the past year, as part of this work, we engaged with around 2,250 people across our four main towns of Llantwit Major, Cowbridge, Penarth and Barry to shape the plans that will transform their towns, and we successfully secured placemaking funding of £350k and £450K for 2025/26 and 2026/27 respectively to take forward our placemaking plans. We also successfully confirmed government funding worth over £55 million to invest in the Vale of Glamorgan to support regeneration, places and businesses including £20 million over 10 years for the Town of Barry and £19.5 million for the Barry Making Waves waterfront project. The successful delivery of our Shared Prosperity funded programme of £14 million has supported key council priorities for regenerating our communities such as revitalising town centres, rural and urban areas, supporting our net zero ambitions and delivering community and place-based culture, arts and heritage events and this has benefitted our communities. Whilst progress to date has been positive, we recognise that we need to significantly accelerate work in this area to revitalise our communities sustainably and support achievement of our long term net zero ambitions.

Reducing our impact on the environment remains a critical organisational challenge, and we continue to work collaboratively to ensure sustainability is at the centre of all decisions to preserve resources and the environment for future generations. Project Zero considerations, (the Council's response to Climate and Nature Emergency) are embedded in all procurement activities and council projects, with added weighting for CO2-reducing solutions on major council contracts and projects. This past year, Shared Prosperity funded projects alone reduced our CO2 emissions by 96 tonnes. Additionally, we accelerated work to improve environmental impact contributed to a 10.6% improvement in the average Display Energy Certificate (DEC) scores for local authority buildings over 1,000m², exceeding the 3% target. We have successfully retained beach awards in Penarth Marina, Jacksons Bay, Whitmore Bay, Cold Knap, Llantwit Major, and Southerndown by demonstrating well-managed beaches with good water quality. We exceeded the national recycling target of 70% by nearly 2% with a performance of 71.73%. We continue to make positive progress, however, significant challenges lie ahead which makes it all the more important that we collectively work together to shape and deliver solutions that will accelerate efforts to meet our long term commitment for a carbon neutral Vale of Glamorgan by 2030.

As a Council, supporting our vulnerable residents remains one of our highest priorities and throughout the year we have worked collaboratively with our communities and partners to understand needs and ensure that our limited resources are allocated where they are most needed and in so doing preventing the most vulnerable from falling into crisis. Through digitisation and other service innovations including stronger partnerships with local organisations, we have improved access to social care services with quicker response times and more accessible support for individuals and families and this has helped support more individuals within their communities. In

partnership with the third sector, we have increased the amount of residential accommodation for children and young people which has provided more opportunities for our children looked after to live locally. Our newly established Section 16 Forum has been a major step in promoting social enterprises, co-operatives, and user-led services. Bringing together partners from across the sector has ensured that we are better placed to maximise opportunities to co-produce and deliver sustainable preventative services to residents. Despite the positive progress, there continues to be significant demand for social care services, with the increase reflected both in demand and complexity of need which remains challenging in the context of rising costs, limited finances and sustained staffing challenges.

We recognise the importance of healthy and active lifestyles in enabling people to live longer, and are working more closely with key partners, residents, and communities to encourage more active lifestyles. Our partnership with Parkwood Legacy leisure continues to deliver affordable, accessible and sustainable high quality sport and leisure opportunities through our four leisure centres. User numbers at our leisure centres increased further from 741,500 to 856,303 and extensive improvement works have been undertaken at most centres, which has improved the customer experience. Over 35,000 participants generated nearly £5.3 million in social value through using our leisure centres (up 16.5% from last year), with £1.04 million in health care cost savings achieved as a result of being active. The Active Young People and Active Schools Programme continues to grow, with over 17,600 recorded participations delivered through collaboration with 172 organisations with activities delivered in response to pupil and young people led engagement. A comprehensive play programme informed by our play sufficiency assessment delivered more opportunities and resources to support inclusive active play in our schools and communities. There is continued enhancement of community leisure facilities and more accessible green spaces for residents and visitors using S106 contributions including outdoor fitness and play areas and community gardens which have been promoted to encourage participation, with a particular focus on communities and population groups where participation is low.

Our education service and the youth service received excellent reviews following inspections by Estyn who were impressed with the services provided to pupils and young people. Standards across schools remain high and there is continued focus on driving school improvement and enhancing learner outcomes overall. However, disadvantaged learner outcomes remain an area for development and there is a need to close the gap in outcomes between them and their peers. Whilst attendance levels are improving, they are yet to regain the levels seen from before the pandemic. Significant challenges remain in meeting the needs of all learners with additional learning needs and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs with growth in these groups continuing to increase exponentially. Additionally, we are seeing a rise in exclusions linked to the growth in complex SEMH needs. Financial resilience of schools is also an ongoing challenge with budgets under significant pressure.

Three years ago, we established a cost of living reserve to ensure a more effective response to the challenges facing our residents and have collaborated with partners across all sectors ensuring a coordinated and response to tackling these challenges. Informed by community and other data insights, we delivered a wide range of support focussed on skills, employment, housing, access to affordable food, and energy advice across the Vale. Recent data shows that the cost-of-living is continuing to cause hardship, with persisting issues of affordability with regards to food, energy and housing and we have stepped up our efforts to further enhance existing support. However, the ongoing demand for these services poses a challenge for future council budgets.

Homelessness and housing challenges remain, and we have continued to work in partnership to support residents. Our Rapid Housing Homelessness Service successfully reduced our use of temporary accommodation for homeless households and no families have been accommodated in hotels. We extended our homelessness leasing scheme which is now part of Welsh Government's Leasing Scheme Wales, allowing us to formally launch this model of working in the Vale and secure funding. This will further increase access to vacant homes for supporting homeless households. Since the Council achieved Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) in 2018, further capital investment of over £40.865 million has been made as part of a continuing Housing Improvement Programme. 180 homes were built last year as part of the Council housebuilding scheme which focuses on reducing homelessness

and providing better opportunities for those unable to afford mortgages. Looking ahead, significant challenges remain in leading and supporting the delivery of new homes across the Vale of Glamorgan to respond to growing housing and homelessness pressures.

Despite a more favourable budget settlement from Westminster, the Vale of Glamorgan Council in common with councils across both Wales and England is experiencing significant financial pressures. Funding continues to fall well short of what is needed to sustain essential local services, and we need to significantly accelerate work that enables us to deliver our priorities in a way that is financially sustainable and meets the needs of Vale of Glamorgan residents.

We are realistic about the challenges ahead for the organisation, including significant future budget gaps, maximising our use of digital technology, attracting and retaining a workforce fit for the future as well as climate and nature considerations. In response, the ambitious Reshaping Programme, has been developed, providing a framework to respond to these challenges and setting out how we will transform the Council so we can continue to meet residents' needs, protect finances, and embed sustainability as we move forward. It aims to continue to deliver a leaner, more efficient organisation, characterised by modern practices, sustainable service delivery and a skilled and motivated workforce, and most importantly ensuring that our communities, residents and customers are at the heart of our decisions. As we look ahead, our focus remains clear: we are determined to build on the progress made this year and continue to work in partnership to protect essential services, support our most vulnerable residents and provide opportunities for all who live and work in Vale of Glamorgan to thrive. With the same resolve that has carried us through the past year, we will strive to deliver on our commitments and respond to the evolving needs of our communities with our focus firmly on **working together for strong communities with a brighter future.**

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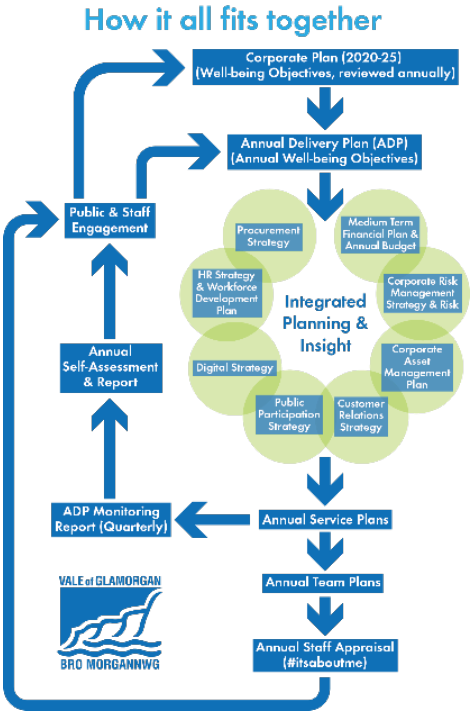
3.0 Our Self-Assessment Report

How it all fits together

Our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives set out the outcomes the Council wants to achieve which reflect the administration's political priorities, our shared aspirations and commitments with public service partners (e.g. the Public Services Board's Well-being Plan and the Cardiff & Vale Area Plan) and Vale citizens and provide a framework for improving well-being in the Vale of Glamorgan over the medium term.



Our Well-being Objectives for 2024/25 were:

- To work with and for our communities.
- To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.
- To support people at home and in their community.
- To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.

Our Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) published each Spring, sets out the steps we will take in-year to deliver on our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, and achieve our vision of **Strong Communities with a Bright Future**.

These steps are translated into actions through an integrated planning process and detailed in Service, Team Plans and staff appraisals (#itsaboutme) across the Council and form the basis for our annual corporate framework of activities, performance measures and service, team and individual improvement targets. Progress against our ADP commitments and our Well-being objectives is reflected in quarterly performance monitoring reports that are subject to internal challenge via the Strategic Leadership Team and elected members through Scrutiny Committees, Governance & Audit Committee and Cabinet. Monitoring of progress against these steps provides an understanding of what has been achieved and where further work is required. The Annual Self-Assessment Report (ASA) provides an end of year summary of the progress made in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments aligned to our four Well-being Objectives.

The above reflects our in-year arrangements for 2024/25 as aligned with the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 to which this ASA report relates, and which ended in March 2025. New arrangements to support delivery of our new Corporate Plan (Vale 2030) are currently being rolled out and this will be reflected in next year's ASA report in 2026.

Our Self-Assessment Judgements

The Council's self-assessment comprises three main judgements for the reporting period:

- an Annual Delivery Plan performance assessment;
- an assessment of the Council's use of resources (which includes its people, assets, finance and procurement, performance and risk and engagement insights); and
- an assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal controls through an Annual Governance Statement.

Throughout the year we have evaluated a wide range of performance and other data insights from the annual planning and performance framework which has enabled informed conclusions to be drawn at end of year on how well the Council's resources and governance arrangements have supported achievement of the commitments in

the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25. The information sources that have helped to inform our self-assessment judgements and areas for future focus can be found here.

Informed by the evidence gathered, we have assessed our progress using the scales below. It is important that our judgements are not considered in isolation as they affect each other and need to be considered in an integrated way. A summary of how we have reached our judgements, and a description of these is provided below.

How well is the Council performing?

In assessing how well we have performed and delivered on our Annual Delivery Plan commitments for the past year, we consider the following evidence to come to a judgement using the scale below:

- Progress in relation to delivery of planned activities for the reporting period as detailed in the ADP;
- Performance in relation to a suite of performance indicators (service user perspectives and service outcome measures) and associated improvement targets and service benchmarking with other public bodies where possible;
- DSA assessment of performance aligned to the end of year performance review.

Annual Delivery Plan			
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
• 100% of activties delivered and targets for performance measures achieved. • We have successfully delivered all of our ADP commitments.	• More than 85% of activities delivered and targets for performance measures achieved. • We have successfully delivered the majority of our ADP commitments.	• Between 50% and 84% of activities and measures have been delivered/achieved target • We have made positive progress in delivering our ADP commitments, but some actions are behind schedule and some performance measures have failed to meet target.	• Between 0% and 49% of activities and measures have been delivered. • Unsatisfactory progress in delivering our ADP commitments. Significant number of actions and measures have not been achieved. • Objective as set out in the Corporate Plan

How well is the Council using its resources?

In assessing how well we have used our resources to deliver on the Council's priorities for the year past, each Directorate completes an annual self-assessment which dovetails with the end of year performance assessment, and this is subject to an internal peer challenge by a Peer Director, the Chief Executive, relevant Cabinet Portfolio holders and Scrutiny Committee Chair(s) and the Leader of the Council. Initial judgements made by Directorates on how well resources have been used to deliver on our ADP commitments are subject to a moderation exercise led by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and this informs an overall judgement for the Council's use of resources. Alongside performance, the Directorate Self-Assessment considers evidence on the following themes to come to a judgement using the scale below:

- People
- Assets (Physical and Digital)
- Finance (including procurement and commissioning)
- Engagement and insight
- Performance management
- Risk management

Use of Resources			
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
• Our management of resources is deemed outstanding in terms of our economy, efficiency, effectiveness and/or equity. • The SD principle is embedded and applied consistently in all considerations in planning, decision making and operating our resources to meet our Well-being Objectives and can be evidenced. • Equality considerations are embedded and applied consistently throughout in planning, decision making and operating our resources to identify and reduce/or eliminate	• Our management of resources is deemed good and is in a strong position to secure future service improvements sustainably. • We have robust mechanisms/practices in place to operate our services economically, efficiently, effectively and equitably. • The 5 ways of working is understood and given consideration in planning, decision making and operating our resources to meet our Well-being Objectives and can be evidenced. • Equality considerations are understood and given consideration in planning, decision making and	• Our management of resources is deemed fair with good prospects for improvement. • We have some mechanisms/practices in place to operate our services economically, efficiently, effectively and equitably. • The 5 ways of working is understood, and aspects considered in planning, decision making and operating our resources to meet our Well-being Objectives and can be evidenced. • Equality considerations are understood, and aspects	• Our management of resources is deemed poor with poor prospects for improvement. • We lack any mechanism/practices to operate our services, efficiently, effectively and equitably. • The 5 ways of working is understood but there is limited evidence of how these are considered in planning, decision making and operating our resources to meet our Well-being Objectives. • Equality considerations are understood, but there is limited

inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage and can be evidenced. • We are in an excellent position to secure future improvements sustainably. • We have strong and excellent insight/ evidence/examples of how we have engaged our resources, enhanced performance, achieved outcomes and/or met need. • We are self-aware and can demonstrate continuous improvement from regular reflection and review and have a clear plan of what direction we need to go in to secure and sustain improvements. • And meets all the criteria under 'Good' performance rating.	operating our resources to identify and reduce inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage and can be evidenced. • We have good insight/evidence/examples of how we have used our resources to enhance performance, achieved outcomes and/or met need. • We have a clear understanding of what we need to do to improve to enhance our performance and secure continuous improvement. We have a plan in place to address these areas of improvement. • And meets all the criteria under 'Fair' performance rating.	considered in planning, decision making and operating our resources to identify and reduce inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage and can be evidenced. • We have some insight/evidence of how we have used our resources to enhance performance, achieve outcomes and/or met need. We are aware of our areas of improvement and are mindful of what needs to be done to secure continuous improvement, but this has not yet translated into action.	evidence of how these are considered in planning, decision making and operating our resources to identify and reduce inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage. • We have limited or no insight/evidence to demonstrate how we have used our resources to enhance performance, achieve outcomes and/or meet need. • We lack any self-awareness of where we need to improve. There is not a clear plan in place to address areas of weakness and secure improvement. • Does not meet all the criteria under 'Fair' performance rating.

How effective is the Council's governance?

In assessing how effective our governance has been over the past year, we consider the following evidence sources to come to a judgement using the scale below:

- Annual Governance Statement, based on CIPFA's, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' principles.
- Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion on the Council's control environment in relation to governance, risk management and internal Control.
- Internal Audit & Assurance Work Programme findings.
- External Regulatory views and opinions and Audit Work Programme findings (including assurance work on the financial systems and the wider control environment).
- Corporate risk monitoring.
- Internal Audit opinion on the Council's compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code Standards for the period 2024.

Governance			
Substantial	Reasonable	Limited	None
A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited	Immediate action required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Review of our Well-being Objectives

Each year Vale of Glamorgan citizens, Council staff, elected members and other key partners help to shape the steps we will take to achieve our Well-being Objectives through our Annual Delivery Plan commitments. Through this process they are asked to confirm the relevance of our Well-being Objectives.

Through the findings from key engagement work undertaken in 2023/24 including engagement work on the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25, the Let's talk about Life in the Vale Survey 2023/24 and the annual Budget survey for 2024/25 we are assured that our Well-being Objectives going into 2024/25 were appropriate and continued to remain relevant to the priorities outlined in the Public Services Board's (PSB) Well-being Plan 2023-2028.

Given that the 2024/25 ADP represents the final year of the existing Corporate Plan (2020-2025), we have also taken the opportunity to fully review our Well-being Objectives which has been undertaken alongside the Council's Panel Performance Assessment with both informing the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan for the period 2025-2030 (Vale 2030), effective from April 2025.

4.0 Our Progress against last year's Areas of Focus

In our 2023/24 Annual Self-Assessment we identified a series of areas that we wished to focus on in the 2024/25 year. Below is an update on the work we have undertaken, and the next steps.

- Continued work to support staff by delivering the People Strategy which sets the vision for all people related activities across the organisation including embedding workforce planning across the organisation, development of a Recruitment and Retention Strategy to help address recruitment and capacity challenges ensuring continued service delivery, creation of HR and equality dashboards to inform decision making on all people related activity, including recruitment and retention, career development and the working environment and make the organisation more reflective of our communities. Work is underway to produce the next People Strategy currently.
- Delivered a number of Learning Café events which were attended by over 493 people attended and allowed staff to access free learning opportunities and opportunities to put their questions/ideas directly to senior members of staff.
- Continued to support the rising demand associated with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) through a varied approach across the whole school. This year work includes refreshing the SEMH and Wellbeing Strategy and offering ALN training to all early years settings to support staff and families at an early age. 24 training sessions provided to early year settings and schools with 200 copies of the 'Inclusion for All' guidance shared to provide practical help and information to enable inclusion for all children including those with emerging or identified needs and disabilities.
- Launched a Project Zero staff portal, encouraging our workforce to use sustainable transport options and relaunched of the Project Zero Hub which showcases best practice from across the council, signposts community activity, and shares tips and advice on how the community can reduce emissions and support nature.
- Launched our new Carbon Management Plan 2024 – 2030 to help maximise the potential to reduce our carbon emissions and energy usage supporting work to decarbonise assets and delivery of major projects.
- 10.97% of the Council's fleet is now zero emissions, this is an increase on the 6.8% last year helping to reduce carbon emissions and protect the local environment.
- Project Zero is now included in all of our procurement activity and where possible, extra weighting is applied to solutions that increase our reduction of CO2 (higher cost/impact contracts).
- 71.73% of wate collected by the council has been prepared for reuse/recycled, consistently hitting our high target of 71%. We are still looking to better this by successfully piloting single use plastic trial in the Eastern Vale.

Areas where further work is required:

- Ensuring the importance of staff appraisal is clear within the People Strategy. This year data indicates that only 28.90% of staff appraisals have been completed, compared to 60% the previous year. The reason behind this is being explored including delays in managers completing sections which restricts the ability to complete follow on sections, and a reduction in messaging and reminders following feedback from departments.
- Continuing to improve handling complaints in target timescales remains a focus for improvement. A total of 944 complaints were recorded during the year, with 677 resolved and 267 still under investigation at end of year. Of the complaints resolved, 44.7% were dealt with within target timescales, missing the annual target of 65% and below last year's performance of 57.39%.
- Homelessness prevention continues to be exceptionally challenging as a result of changes to legislation and guidance, particularly for single households. This year a positive prevention action succeeded in preventing/relieving homelessness in 25% of households supported. This is below the 40% target for the year. Work continues to help prevent homelessness and support people who are recently out of homelessness. 180 households are in temporary accommodation, 45 of these are families with children. New initiatives introduced

such as the Welsh Government's Leasing Scheme Wales will enable us to lease empty properties from landlords and owners to help meet housing demand and support people out of homelessness.

- Work on the Green Infrastructure Plan continues to be progressed through ongoing work on the Replacement Local Development Plan and other supporting plans such as the local biodiversity plan.
- The number and complexity of referrals into Children and Young People Services continues to create a high level of demand. The Children Looked After (CLA) Reduction Board has continued to meet regularly and is evidencing a slowing of admissions alongside significant work to enable children to remain with or return to their families. Performance has significantly improved with children looked after in stable placements with the percentage of children looked after who have had to move 3 or more times reducing from 10.12% in 2023/24 to 6.25%.

5.0 Annual Self-Assessment Judgements

This section details the judgements made and how they have been reached including the Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) undertaken in November 2024. A PPA must be undertaken once every five years and the Council was the third Council in Wales to have undertaken one.

5.1 Vale of Glamorgan Council Panel Performance Assessment 2024

The Council's **Panel Performance Assessment undertaken in November 2024 has provided a positive external assessment of how well the Council is meeting its 'performance requirements'.** The PPA considered how well the Council is performing, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and how effective governance arrangements are in enabling us to achieve our priorities. An independent panel appointed and facilitated by the WLGA on the Council's behalf pleasingly assessed, **'the Vale of Glamorgan to be a good Council within the current context of high service demand, operational pressures, and resources. It is a values-based organisation with a good internal culture and solid external relationships. There is a clear commitment to delivering on the Corporate Plan, with a particular focus on prioritising the needs of vulnerable people. Staff are enormously proud to work for the Council, and there is a strong sense of ambition for the future.'**

Three recommendations were made relating to local areas of focus, these are Planning for Place, Signalling Change and Building on existing strong partnerships and work has progressed to address all of the recommendations in line with the response reported to Council in March 2025. In relation to the performance requirements, one further recommendation (Recommendation 4) was made around governance and using resources effectively. A summary of the Panel's conclusions and their recommendations in relation to the Council including those specific to the performance requirements are detailed below. Since approval by Council in March 2025, good progress has been made in relation to all four recommendations and our response with details outlined below of the changes made to date in taking forward recommendation 4.

Performance Requirement	Panel Conclusion
The extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively. How well is the Council performing?	"Overall, the Vale of Glamorgan Council exercises its functions effectively… and there were no identified areas of concern."
The extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. How well is the Council using its resources?	"From the evidence we have heard and within the current high levels of service demand and financial pressures faced by all local authorities across Wales the Council is using its resources effectively and efficiently."
The extent to which the Council has effective governance in place. How effective is the Councils' governance?	"We consider the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but there are areas which could be further developed."

Progress update on PPA Panel recommendations

Rec 1: Planning for Place	Progress Update
• The Council would benefit from developing and effectively communicating a narrative that articulates a positive vision for the future, which is relatable to multiple audiences and has a call to action. In doing so it could be a catalyst for change for the Vale of Glamorgan as a County, drawing together partners, stakeholders, the business sector, and communities.	The final version of the Councils' Corporate Plan (Vale 2030) included the following changes in response to observations regarding the Corporate Plan: • A summary section has been introduced at the beginning of the plan to focus more on the outcomes and difference the plan will make through its delivery. • Details have been included within the plan for each objective about the information that will be used to help understand progress and challenges. Each objective also details the outcomes we are looking to achieve over the next five years. • There is a stronger emphasis on the importance of partnership working throughout the document. • The content of the plan has been simplified, shortened and sections brought together to make the plan clearer to navigate and understand by different audiences.
Rec 2: Signalling Change	**Progress Update**
• The Council should consider how it signals and amplifies its changing approach both within the organisation and across the Vale.	• A signalling change plan has been developed and is being delivered. • Work has been undertaken to communicate the publication of the Corporate Plan both internally and externally including a series of events associated with the Corporate Plan's launch and making connections with the ten-year anniversary of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. • For Council staff, the changes to the performance management of the Corporate Plan and how, via Directorate Plans, this links with individual objectives have been communicated and will enable colleagues to understand and demonstrate their contribution to the Plan's objectives. This builds on the significant staff engagement work that has been a feature of the Council's way of working for many years. The opportunity to signal and amplify the changing approach to the way in which we are working will continue to be progressed via the Council's corporate induction, the six-monthly management development programme, Learning Café and internal communications activities such as the Chief Executive's weekly message and the new Corporate Plan and Reshaping Programme are an excellent and exciting opportunity to reinvigorate aspects of these engagement mechanisms. • Externally, work is advancing to develop a strategy for the way in which the Council will communicate key messages about our work in the future. This 'corporate narrative' will be a tool used to

Rec 1: Planning for Place	Progress Update
	demonstrate how the Council works, how the decisions we take are consistent with the well-being objectives and do so with an increased emphasis on explaining this through the work of Council staff and the impact it has on residents. This work aligns with the Public Participation Strategy and will be an on-going process throughout the five-years of the Corporate Plan. • Work has also commenced on (in conjunction with recommendation four) streamlining the way in which Council reports are written and presented to make them as accessible as possible to a range of audiences.
Rec 3: Building on existing Strong Partnerships	**Progress Update**
• Recognising the democratic convening role that the Council has in leading partnerships, whilst recognising when to lead and when to support wider partnerships to take the lead in the provision of services. • Taking the opportunity to create the time and space to strategically assess and review the partnership landscape, strengthening relationships and assessing where resource and energy is best spent for the wider benefit of the place in order to make the biggest difference. • Working with stakeholders on getting the "brilliant basics" right that reflects the needs of the local community. • Leverage the collective capacity of the Vale of Glamorgan and continue to build innovative joint working arrangements with neighbouring Councils.	• In response to this recommendation, work has commenced to review the partnership landscape. This is being undertaken by the cross-directorate Strategic Partnerships Group which meets bi-monthly to make connections across the Council's strategic partnerships including the Public Services Board, Regional Partnership Board, City Region and others. • The Strategic Partnerships Group have undertaken a mapping exercise to identify the partnerships the Council is involved in, how these align with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, the resources that are committed and the impact derived from our involvement. This will enable themes and categories of partnerships to be identified as by its nature, this landscape is very wide ranging. It is intended that this exercise will complement and bring to life the 'Working with Us' statement contained in the Corporate Plan and inform how we can communicate these commitments to partners and also with Council staff. Further reviews of the Council's approach to individual partnerships may then be undertaken. • In parallel with this strategic mapping work, the Brilliant Basics workstream of Reshaping is also considering how to progress aspects of partnership working the Panel have commented on, for example including working with Town and Community Councils. Progress in relation to these partnerships will be reported to Cabinet as part of the established reporting on the Compendium of Collaboration and will also make connections with the Target Operating Model theme of Reshaping as it will contribute to the way the Council delivers services in the future.
Rec 4: Governance and using resource effectively	**Progress Update**
• Review and revise the cycle of formal democratic meetings and formal reporting requirements, exploring ways to better engage members in more proactive and cross chamber	• Changed from five Scrutiny Committees to four that focus on new areas of responsibilities and outcomes, aligned to the Vale 2030.

Rec 1: Planning for Place	Progress Update
collaboration – in both formal and informal ways including reviewing the effectiveness of online meetings. • Review the balance between the internal corporate demands placed on members and their role as representatives of their constituents to deliver the Council's vision of place. • Use the strong local politics as a force for good, whilst ensuring civility in public life is promoted and kept front and centre to encourage respectful and constructive debate including online and in-person meetings. • Enhance the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny arrangements, specifically meetings, by assessing current practices to identify opportunities for improvement to make them more effective.	• Frequency of meeting have reduced from monthly to bi-monthly. • Introduced systematic task and finish investigative scrutiny, empowering all Scrutiny members to help shape the Council's policy direction. • Increased emphasis upon public participation, increasing the range of opportunities for the public to get involved. • Enhancing recommendation tracking to allow for the public and members to easily understand the impact of Scrutiny. • Introduced new collaborative performance scrutiny arrangements, meeting collectively on a six-monthly basis to review the Council's performance against Vale 2030 in an integrated manner. • Re-emphasis of new avenues to increase elected members' knowledge on issues, including the introduction of regular briefings surrounding topics, alongside the enhancement of the Council's information sharing process with elected members.

5.2 How well is the Council performing against the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25?

For 2024/25, the Council judges its performance to be GOOD.

This is evidenced by:

- As part of the PPA the panel considered the extent to which the Council is exercising its functions effectively and how well the Council is performing. The panel concluded that overall, the Vale of Glamorgan Council exercises its functions effectively and there were no identified areas of concern.

- **Quarterly performance monitoring reports throughout the year to Directorate Management Teams, the Strategic Leadership Team, Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet show that for the reporting period, we have delivered on 85.3% of the commitments and performance targets in the Annual Delivery Plan** that Members approved at the beginning of the year. This is shown in the ADP performance snapshot below with more detailed end of year performance overview by Well-being Objective provided here. However, we also recognise that there are areas where we have not performed as well as we should (performance exceptions), and these continue to be areas of focus as detailed in current annual Council plans for the period 2025/26.

Overall Annual Delivery Plan Performance Status

Combined total of Service Plan Actions and Performance Measures	PERFORMANCE STATUS		Overall RAG Status for all Well-being Objectives
	GREEN	RED	
Total	Actions & Measures	Actions & Measures	Actions and Measures
689[1]	441 (85.3%)	76 (14.7%)	GREEN

Overall RAG Performance Status for the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 is Green.

[1] Performance status was not applicable for 169 measures and 3 actions because data was not available at the time of drafting the report or they were new measures establishing baseline performance. Additionally, targets were not applicable for some measures and one action remained under review at end of year. Consequently, a performance status was not applicable. 26 measures are duplicated as they contribute to multiple well-being objectives.

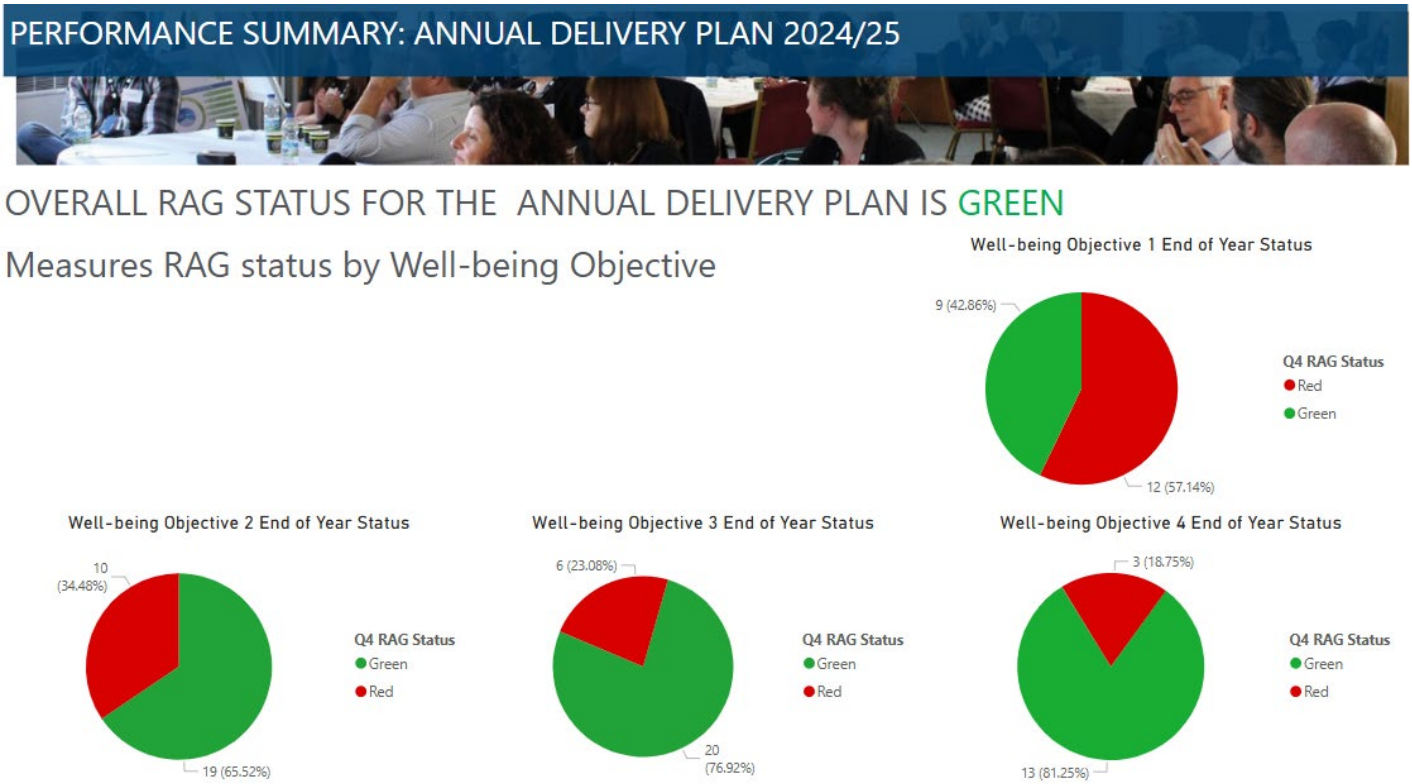
Performance Status by Well-being Objective

Actions

Action RAG Status Explanation: End of Year	
Green: Action completed within annual reporting period by due date.	**Red: Action not fully completed (<100%) within annual reporting period. Remedial action(s) will carry forward into next reporting period.**

Measures[2]

Measure RAG Status Explanation: End of Year		
Green: Performance met or exceeded target	**Amber: Performance is within 10% of target**	**Red: Performance missed target by more than 10%**



[2] For WBO1, a RAG performance status was not applicable for 38 measures because 14 were new for 2024/25 and therefore were establishing baseline performance. Data was unavailable or no update provided for 15 measures at the time of reporting and for 6 measures a target was not set. Additionally, a target was not applicable for 3 measures.

For WBO2, a RAG performance status was not applicable for 24 measures because 8 were new for 2024/25 and therefore were establishing baseline performance. Data was unavailable or no update provided for 5 measures at the time of reporting and for 4 measures a target was not set. Additionally, a target was not applicable for 7 measures.

For WBO3, a RAG performance status was not applicable for 54 measures because 27 were new for 2024/25 and therefore were establishing baseline performance. Data was unavailable or no update provided for 8 measures at the time of reporting and for 18 measures a target was not set. Additionally, a target was not applicable for 1 measure.

For WBO4, a RAG performance status was not applicable for 27 measures because 7 were new for 2024/25 and therefore were establishing baseline performance. Data was unavailable or no update provided for 16 measures at the time of reporting and for 4 measures a target was not set.

- **Directorate Self-Assessments undertaken alongside the end of year performance review have attributed a judgement of GOOD for each directorate and the Council's performance overall in delivering our ADP commitments for the reporting period**. All directorates have delivered over 80% of planned activities and performance targets contributing to the ADP commitments for 2024/25. These performance judgements have been subject to internal peer challenge and moderation and no changes were made during moderation.

DSA Performance Judgements 2024/25 (post moderation)

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	Corporate Resources	Environment & Housing	Learning & Skills	Place	Social Services
Performance	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Overall rating for 'Performance'	Good				

Overall Council Performance Judgement 2024/25 (post moderation)

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	2021/22 Rating	2022/23 Rating	2023/24 Rating	2024/25 Rating	Direction of Travel (DoT)
Performance	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔

- **A review of local service performance indicators (corporate performance measures framework) trends and national service benchmarking data where available, shows that despite significant financial pressures and increased service demand, on balance the Council's performance is positive when looking at a range of services**.

  For the reporting period (2024/25) over 50% of our performance indicators have improved on the previous year. Areas of great improvement include, percentage of client's health improved upon completion of national exercise referral programme, percentage of children in care moved 3 or more times and the number of private rented properties that saw improved energy efficiency through direct action from Shared Regulatory Services. Where data is available, we compare favourably with the Welsh average, for example 0.47% of young people are classed as NEET, well above the Welsh average of 0.70% and 116kg of residual waste was not reused, recycled or composted per person compared to the Welsh average of 168kg per person. Nearly 80% of our performance indicators (where a target was set) exceeded the targets set for 2024/25. Performance indicators exceeding target include, 97 local businesses advised in relation to funding, business planning and new start-ups, against a target of 40; and 39% of reported fly tipping incidents which lead to enforcement activity, against a target of 10%. Around 20% of measures failed to achieve set annual targets and were attributed a Red RAG status and nearly 40% of measures show declining performance from the previous year, Of the 40% declining in performance from 2023/24, 30% achieved the targets set, 38% were below targets set and 32% had no targets set for 2024/25. Declining performance was reported in relation to corporate complaints dealt within target times and households successfully prevented from becoming homeless. Examples of our performance highlights are shown in 'Our Year in Numbers'.

- **We can demonstrate for the reporting period that delivery of our ADP commitments have contributed to multiple national well-being goals and this graphic provides some examples**.

Below are details of the main achievements for each well-being objective, key challenges and areas of improvement.

Main achievements

Well-being Objective 1

- Vale 2030 has been launched following significant engagement and consultation, use of data and insight and by working with a range of stakeholders to create a Corporate Plan that is outcome focused, sets commitments for the organisation and our partners and is a significant shift in the way this strategy is positioned for the future.
- Developed the Reshaping Programme to support the setting of a balanced budget in the medium-term which comprises a greater proportion of savings from transformation than in previous years. The budget setting process was further enhanced with equality impact assessments in place for all savings proposals during the consultation period and a clear framework for a balanced MTFP.
- Commenced an ambitious council transformation programme to ensure that we are in a strong position to address the budgetary challenges facing the Council and enhance financial resilience to secure service sustainability both now and in the future.
- The Council undertook a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) which led to a set of useful recommendations and highly positive feedback from external peers. Work is already being taken forward through Vale 2030, Brilliant Basics and the Signalling Change work which reflects a range of activities including changes to scrutiny, communications internally and externally about priorities, partnership working and new performance management arrangements that will lead to significant and positive change.
- Investment in our online activities has enabled over 1 million enquiries to be raised digitally, saving time for our residents.
- Improved income collection with a Council Tax Collection rate of 95.72%. This performance is above the median for Wales (9th of 22), up from 17th in 2023/24. £3million of historical arrears was also collected as well £2million saved via NNDR appeals as part of our revised approach to income and debt recovery.
- We were one of the top 100 Inclusive Employers for 2024, recognised by Stonewall and awarded Silver Trailblazer Status by Race Equality Matters as well as being a Disability Confident employer and a signatory of the Time to Change pledge.

Well-being Objective 2

- Successfully delivered Shared Prosperity Funded programme of £14million which delivered enhancements to our town centres and facilities such as the Knap Skate park, Belle Vue Community centre, Chickenwood park, Barry library, Murchfield recreation ground, Milkshed workspace, Active Travel projects, Food Vale projects, supporting local businesses and many more.
- Through our Placemaking Project we have engaged with over 2,250 people across Llantwit Major, Cowbridge, Penarth and Barry to shape plans to transform our towns. Successfully secured placemaking funding of £350k and £450K for 2025/26 and 2026/27 respectively to take forward placemaking plans across our four towns.
- Attracted significant government funding with over £55 million secured to invest in the Vale of Glamorgan to support regeneration, places and businesses including £20m over 10 years for the Town of Barry and £19.5m for the Barry Making Waves waterfront project.
- Developed local residential accommodation for children and young people in partnership with the third sector, increasing opportunities for our children looked after to live locally.
- Reduced the average number of days taken to place at home (domiciliary) care packages from 22 days to 3 days.
- High quality sport and exercise opportunities for all continue to be provided through our four leisure centres in a cost-effective partnership with Parkwood Legacy leisure.
- Our education service and the youth service received excellent reviews following inspections by Estyn who were impressed with the services provided to pupils and young people.
- Standards across schools remain high and there is a continued focus on driving school improvement and enhancing learner outcomes overall.
    - At A level, Vale schools have maintained a strong performance at A*-A and A* C, with outcomes in 2024 continuing to be above national averages and demonstrating an improved performance over time (A*-A: 27% in 2019 and 38.6% in 2024; A*-C: 76.3% in 2019 and 82.4% in 2024). Performance at both A*-A and

A*-C compare very favourably with other local authorities (LAs), with outcomes at A*- A ranked the highest, and A*-C the second highest in Wales in 2024.

- Performance at GCSE remains strong overall, with outcomes continuing to be higher than national averages, with improved performance over time at A*-A (27.1% in 2019 and 29.1% in 2024). Performance in most key indicators compares very favourably with other LAs, with outcomes at A*-A, A*-C and average capped 9 points score ranked the highest across Wales.
- All schools inspected by Estyn during the year have had a positive outcome with no statutory-follow up activity; this compares favourably with national picture where 16.6% of schools in Wales have gone into a follow up category. Since February 2022, Estyn has inspected 25 schools in the Vale with one school (4%) remaining in a statutory follow up. Again, this compares favourably with the national picture where 10.3% of schools remain in a statutory follow up category.

- The Youth Service achieved record levels of accreditations this year and the percentage of young people leaving Year 13 who are not in education, employment or training improved (NEET). The Year 13 NEET rate improved to 2.3% from 3.59% and compares favourably with the national average of 3.19% and local authorities of a similar profile. The reach of the Youth Service increased from 2907 to 4516, representing a 55.35% increase. Of the 4516 individuals engaging with the service, 509 accredited outcomes were achieved, up from 133 during 2023/24, a 283% increase.
- Attendance rates at our schools continue to show improvement with primary sector attendance levels recovering at a faster rate than secondary schools when compared with pre-Covid levels. Attendance has seen an increase in primaries from 2023/24 of 1.39% (from 92.23% to 92.9%), and an increase in secondaries from 2023/24 of 3.28% (from 84.96% to 87%)
- Significantly reduced our reliance on temporary hotel accommodation for homelessness (180 compared to 767 last year) and no families with children were housed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

Well-being Objective 3

- Improved access to social care services with quicker response times and more accessible support for individuals and families. The implementation of digital tools has contributed to improved efficiency and service accessibility.
- Enhanced quality of care through increased staff training and service improvements leading to higher satisfaction levels for social care services over the period. Maintained our focus on strengthening community-based support with stronger partnerships with local organisations which helped support individuals to receive care within their communities.
- Implemented a Section 16 Forum which has been a major step in promoting social enterprises, co-operatives, and user-led services. By bringing together partners from across the sector, we are maximising opportunities to co-produce and deliver sustainable preventative services to residents.
- 35,086 participants generated £5,284,827 in social value through using our leisure centres (150+ minutes per week), up 16.46% from last year (£4,537,916). £1,045,302 in health care cost savings were made on eight health outcomes based on the reduced risk and prevented cases combined with reduced GP visits & psychotherapy usage for physically active people. For 2024/25, the social value generated per Vale site was £1,321,209, placing us in the top quartile of the best performing 25% of the sites in the sector. Barry Leisure Centre generated the highest social value for the period at £2,292,936 (8.79% increase from last year), with Penarth Leisure Centre achieving the highest growth in social value at £1,854,642 (29.05% increase).
- The Money Advice Team has supported Council tenants to maximise their income through various measures resulting in £213,091.38 being saved by tenants between December 2024 and May 2025. In the same period 220 fuel vouchers were issued from the Money Advice Team via the Fuel Bank Foundation with a total value of £8,798.00.
- Met our targets for house building for 2024/25 with 73 new Council homes constructed in the Barry area at Clos Holm View Phase 2 (31 units), Coldbrook Road East (20 units), the former Colcot Clinic (12 units) and Olive Lodge (10 units). These schemes include new accessible /adapted homes which will be occupied in the 2025 calendar year. During the year, we also appropriated a number of assets including Cadoxton House and Y

Daith, Cowbridge, the former pupil referral unit and acquired 7 former right to buy properties and 10 units of single person temporary accommodation in Barry which will further increase affordable housing options. Slippage of an additional £10m was provided from social housing grant for the delivery and acquisition of additional homes.

- 2024/25 represents another successful year of operation for the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS). The Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) Impacts and Outcomes framework which is published annually highlighted the positive impact of the service, in particular, it being responsible for 30% of all successful trading standards prosecution cases in Wales and securing 14 years in custodial sentences of the 46-year total for Wales for the period. Performance standards of areas such as food hygiene and food safety are back to high pre-Covid levels, and no major non-conformities were identified from the food safety standards audit undertaken by the Food Standards Agency.

Well-being Objective 4

- Over £3.8 million has been spent on schemes funded by Section 106 contributions through the planning process. This has supported enhancements to public transport, walking and cycling networks, new school places, public open space and public art enhancements in order to mitigate against the impact of new developments.
- Successfully delivered various transport and active travel initiatives across the Vale of Glamorgan supported by £3.76M of Welsh Government funding. This includes Brompton bike lockers in Barry, pedestrian improvements in Barry to enable better access to bus stops and crossing points for all, including vulnerable users, improved pedestrian routes leading to Sully Primary school, 155 additional bike/scooter parking spaces in the form of bike pods, scooter pods, cycle shelters and cycle stands in schools and in other areas requested by the public.
- Achieved the national statutory domestic waste recycling target of 70% by recycling 71.73% of municipal waste up from 70.35% in 2023/24. Additionally, we have increased our market share for the new source segregated commercial service. Despite a challenging market for recycling material, especially glass and plastic, which decreased by 50% this year, we successfully increased income from sales of recycling and commercial services exceeding our budget target of £1m at £1.26m.
- Progressed several asset transfers to successful conclusions, including Penarth Athletic Club, Old Penarthians, Wick Pavilion, Llantwit Major car parks and public toilets as part of ensuring sustainability of these valued community facilities.

Key Challenges

- Progressing the Council's programme of Reshaping whilst ensuring a focus on savings, income generation, sustained services and maintaining the necessary pace and momentum for change despite challenges around capacity and resource.
- Managing the Council's finances across the medium term with continued social care demand (cost and volume) and growing deficits across the Vale schools whilst there is a need for increased focus on prevention and long-term transformation to ensure we are a Council fit for the future.
- Embedding Vale 2030 across the organisation and ensuring delivery of the commitments across all objectives and a focus on prevention, tackling poverty and inequalities, climate change and how we work with our partners and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for effective scrutiny and performance management.
- Delivering the necessary digital transformation including cloud migration and changes to how customers access services as well as improved digital processes and procedures behind the scenes which improve efficiency and reduce duplication.
- Delivering effective communications and engagement externally and internally which supports Vale 2030 and a new People Strategy and associated work on organisational development to reflect how the organisation is

changing and our organisational values – giving confidence to residents, customers, partners, staff and elected members and a coherent way forward that will enable delivery of our objectives.

- The Replacement Local Development Plan and the preparation of a Draft Deposit Plan has been delayed due to the promoters of the largest strategic site securing certainty of delivery in the life of the plan. This has required the reassessment of sites previously submitted and considered to enable to Council to meet its growth targets and will require further consultation before moving forward to the Draft Deposit stage.
- The UK Government bidding process and subsequent acceptance of bids for programmes such as the Shared Prosperity Fund is both rigid and time consuming and imposes strict requirements that have created capacity issues, impacting on project support and deliverability.
- Embedding Placemaking across the Council remains a challenge and work isongoing to promote the principles via regular meetings with directorates colleagues and golden thread training.
- Financial resilience and service sustainability for some key council services remains challenging given their increasing reliance on external grant funding sources (often short term in nature) as their base budgets.
- There are significant challenges impacting on the ability to sustain delivery of Learn Welsh courses across the Local Authority, due to lower take up of Welsh language courses by staff. As a result, the Learn Welsh indicative funding administered by the National Centre for Welsh has been cut for the forthcoming year, which presents as a significant threat to the sustainability of Welsh language courses going forward.
- Libraries and Cultural Services strive to maintain a statutory library service that meets the needs of our communities in a financially constrained environment. Whilst the community library model has significantly helped safeguard access across the Vale, continued support is essential to ensure consistency and adherence to the Welsh Public Library Standards across both core and community sites.
- At the end of March 2025, there was a 5.94 percentage point difference between secondary (86.97%) and primary attendance (92.91%). Lower rates of attendance continue to be prevalent in some schools, but in particular within Pencoedtre and Llantwit Major secondary schools. These schools continue to be prioritised for support and challenge.
- Tackling the rising numbers of school exclusions is becoming increasingly more challenging. There has been an increase in the number of days lost to learning due to an increase in fixed term exclusions. Of the 2,580.5 days lost to exclusions across all schools, 1,482 were due to fixed term exclusions increasing from 1,165 last year. There have also been 15 permanent exclusions compared to 7 last year.
- Performance of learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) has continued to fall and although the gap is narrowing across the rest of Wales this has not been the case in the Vale which by contrast is indicating that the gap in performance between eFSM and non-eFSM is widening for all measures at Key Stage 4 since 2023 and 2024.
- The development of a new School Improvement Model is welcomed but there will be challenges with embedding a self-improving system, in terms of schools' ability to engage with the new approach consistently in a way that is impactful for improving standards across schools. Linked to this will also be challenges associated with the establishment of a new set of arrangements for national and regional professional learning.
- Although progress has been made in reducing schools' deficit positions, school budgets remain under significant pressure and the financial resilience of schools remains an ongoing threat.
- There is a degree of variability in terms of how schools are using resources and securing value for money which is of concern.
- The growth in learners presenting with complex Additional Learning Needs (ALN), particularly relating to neurodiversity and social, emotional and mental health needs continues to impact on the capacity of centralised staff and availability of placements within specialist provision. Current ways of working to operationalise the ALN system create financial and capacity challenges at both the LA and school level and remain an area of corporate risk.
- Maintaining the long-term integrity of the highway infrastructure and key assets to an acceptable standard for safety of citizens presents significant challenges due to the limited resources available. The continuing degradation of highway surfaces has seen the pothole repair budget significantly challenged as repairs have had to be undertaken to avoid increased third party liability claims. There are similar concerns with the

remaining highway infrastructure, with many street lighting columns and structures already reaching, or shortly to reach the end of their safe working life.

- Insufficient land for new house building remains an issue year on year and the homelessness challenge is more acute than ever due to the change in the legal duty to house, brought in by Welsh Government with limited funding to implement.
- Limited capital funding has meant that many built assets are falling into a state of disrepair, and some may have to be closed on health and safety grounds if longer term solutions for their management and maintenance cannot be established. Also, certain assets like community centres are run by Associations, who effectively have leases that bind the Council into certain landlord responsibilities, so asset transfers and other alterative management options with these are limited.
- Not having a 3-year funding agreement for the Shared Regulatory Services partnership is becoming increasingly challenging with partner councils requesting various annual savings levels on the non-authority specific services, each year. Savings targets for 2024/25 were negotiated to 3% but savings targets for 2025/26 started at up to 15% for one of the partners.
- Significant budget pressures arising from the growth in demand for social care services and rising costs continue to impact on our ability to deliver a balanced budget for social care services. Managing budget pressures and associated capacity challenges whilst maintaining high standards of care remains challenging.

Areas for improvement

- Set a balanced budget for both revenue and capital, balancing the need for a longer term five year focused financial strategy including continued work with social care and education services to address ongoing pressures whilst maintaining service standards.
- Develop a rolling 3-year budget / funding plan for the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) to avoid annual budget setting challenges and enable improved business planning and service continuity.
- Work with key funding partners (WLGA/CJC/UKGov) and procurement partners to deliver key council projects and ensure resilience of all programmes such as the Levelling up Fund, Plan for Neighbourhoods and the Shared Prosperity Fund programme.
- Maximise opportunities for external funding to support the delivery of strategic Council projects.
- Progress implementation of a full cost recovery model for our library, cultural and adult and community learning services without detriment to broadening citizen access and participation.
- Work co-productively with schools to develop a resilient and sustainable school improvement model.
- Intensify our collective efforts to raise levels of school attendance through a range of proven evidence-based strategies/interventions and embed a preventative approach to minimising rates of fixed term exclusions and avoid permanent exclusions to minimise the risk of learners becoming excluded and disengaged.
- Further develop our whole school capacity to meet the rising demand of learners presenting with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Build teacher confidence and competence to effectively manage the demand for specialist additional learning provision (ALP) and placement across our learning community.
- Increase fees for services and assets to at least a break-even position and where this is not possible, seek alternative service operating models involving the local community, Town and Community Councils and the voluntary sector to support service sustainability.
- Develop a 10 year Land Management Strategy that promotes effective land maintenance. Working alongside the Council's Waste Management Strategy the focus will be on securing the most effective use of resources to improve public spaces in each local community, embracing the use of volunteers, and developing an increased sense of pride and local identity for our residents.
- Work with our regulatory partners including CADW and SRS to support improvements to listed buildings and bring empty property back into use.
- Deliver the Replacement Local Development Plan and associated consultation in accordance with the changes to be agreed to the delivery agreement and reporting the proposed deposit draft plan to Council in late 2025.
- Continued focus on enhancing preventative care, improving digital accessibility, and fostering stronger partnerships to create an integrated support network to support our vulnerable residents.

- Lead and support the delivery of new homes across the Vale of Glamorgan to respond to growing housing and homelessness pressures.
- Embed the principles of placemaking across the Council to support delivery of neighbourhoods that are responsive to the current and future needs of residents.
- Improve our public communications with communities to raise awareness of the service challenges faced and to promote the co-production of solutions.

5.3 How well is the Council using its resources?

For the reporting period, the Council judges its use of resources to be GOOD.

This is evidenced by:

As part of the PPA the panel considered the extent to which the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and how well the Council is using its resources. The panel concluded that from the evidence they heard and within the current high levels of service demand and financial pressures faced by all local authorities across Wales the Council is using its resources effectively and efficiently.

- **Directorate Self-Assessments (DSAs) undertaken alongside the end of year performance review have attributed an overall judgement of Good for each directorate and the Council's use of resources overall**. The judgement is an aggregation of the individual directorate level judgements given to how well we have used our people, assets, finance, performance and risk management and engagement insights to deliver on the Council's Annual Delivery Plan. The judgements have been subject to internal Peer Challenge and moderation.

- At moderation, the Social Services Directorate's judgement of 'Poor' for Finance, Commissioning and Procurement was changed to 'Fair' in recognition of the significant external pressures and the innovation within the directorate in terms of transformation. The judgement for Finance, Commissioning and Procurement for Corporate Resources was changed from 'Good' to 'Fair' in recognition that whilst the directorate's budget was slightly underspent for the year, there are a number of savings schemes which are yet to be fully realised and there is an ambition to embed procurement changes further across the organisation. Across the Council, an overall Council judgement of 'Fair' from 'Good' was considered more reflective of our current position in relation to assets and acknowledges that significant challenges remain in this area including the schools maintenance backlog (despite significant investment), increased number of play areas requiring maintenance, and the deteriorating condition of pavements and roads in light of the medium-term financial forecasts. Additionally, the pre-moderation overall council judgement of 'Good' for Engagement and Insight was retained as this was considered reflective of the good progress made in the past year in taking forward the lessons learned from previous activities e.g. engagement work on Vale 2030, the Waterfront regeneration, placemaking and the budget consultation. Whilst the judgement for Engagement and Insight was good, it is clear from the signalling change plan that we have ambitions to do more in this area.

  These changes did not affect the overall council judgement for its use of resources which was retained as 'Good'. This judgement was considered reflective of the Council's performance in a period seeing significant and ongoing financial challenges across council services, which continue to be exacerbated by increased demand for services, rising inflationary cost pressures and an increasingly volatile risk landscape.

DSA Post-moderation judgements on use of our resources

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	Corporate Resources	Environment & Housing	Learning & Skills	Place	Social Services
People	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair
Assets	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Good
Performance	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Risk	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Good
Engagement and Insight	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Corporate enablers: Overall Council Summary	2021/22 Rating	2022/23 Rating	2023/24 Rating	2024/25 Rating	Direction of Travel (DoT)
People	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Finance, Commissioning and Procurement	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	↔
Assets	Good	Good	Good	Fair	↓
Performance	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Risk	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔
Engagement and Insight	Good	Good	Fair	Good	↑
Overall rating for 'how we are using our resources'	Good	Good	Good	Good	↔

- **We can demonstrate improvements in key people metrics over the past year including improvements in short term sickness absence, voluntary employee turnover, employee diversity ratio, gender pay gap and achieving the Stonewall Top 100 Employers status. Work has also progressed in improving our working environment for our employees, continuing to refresh and remodel all our Health and Safety Policies and procedures and the development of a strong safety culture across the Council, including our schools.** We engaged with employees on reviewing key council policies including Recruitment and Retention, Hybrid Working and Special Leave. This is informing work on a new People Strategy and accompanying Workforce Plan. Significant work undertaken to support the Council's diversity networks, with GLAM and Diverse becoming more established and Abl being supported to develop, has contributed to the Council achieving the Stonewall Top 100 Employers status for the first time and is shaping the development of more inclusive working practices, policies and procedures. There have also been positive improvements in areas of key skills and greatest recruitment need, for example social services through the adoption of the fast-track to care scheme and social service graduate opportunities which have grown in success across the financial year, working collaboratively with our communities for learning teams has also seen the growth in opportunities for our 16-24 age group, in the provision of our Quickstart scheme, 2024/2025 seeing over 24 Quickstarters recruited across the Council. Our Learning Café, providing free learning opportunities and skill development continues to grow and which has included the provision of digital skills development and improvements in safeguarding training provisions, and we have continued to support our managers through a twice yearly management development programme, delivered at no cost to the Council. Strategic workforce planning is moving more towards becoming business as usual as directorates develop on the maturity matrix and workforce plans, including succession plans are in place in all directorates. Further efforts have been made to increase the diversity of colleagues across the Council including the development of an Equalities dashboard which is in use across all directorates to analyse working practice to develop policies and procedures based on equity.

  In line with the Employee Engagement and Involvement Strategy and following the closure of this year's survey and analysis of the findings, the People Board will review how we take forward employee feedback to positive

effect. Early headline findings from the staff survey are positive with 72.66% of respondents satisfied with the Vale as a place to work, 75.4% would recommend the Vale as a place to work and 81.1% plan to stay with the Council for the next 12 months. These results are an improvement on the last survey undertaken in 2022. However, nearly 71% of respondents were proud to work for the Council, lower than the 76.7% achieved in the previous survey. In terms of managing workload allocated, just over half of respondents (52.81%) felt this was manageable with 65.36% stating that they had the tools and resources needed to perform their roles effectively. However, only 43.4% of respondents said they understood how their role contributes to Council priorities. Whilst 76.15% of respondents said that they worked in a safe, supportive and positive environment, just over half of respondents, (54.51%) thought that the Council cared about their health and well-being. 64.5% of respondents considered the Council was committed to delivering exceptional services, although, under half of respondents (45.9%) said that they were encouraged to test new ideas and contribute to improvements, with 50.2% being aware of the Reshaping Programme. In terms of senior leadership, 63.82% of respondents thought that senior leaders communicated a clear vision for the future, with 56.51% agreeing that senior leaders communicate effectively about the Council's priorities. However, under half of respondents (47.07%) felt that senior leaders treat employees as the Council's most valued asset. Despite significant promotion and opportunities for completion across council sites, the completion rate of 20% was much lower than the previous survey at just over 48%. These results are being evaluated and responses to these areas of development will be encompassed within the People Strategy and associated work. A separate report to Members will be forthcoming in the autumn of 2025.

- **Despite significant resource pressures, the Council continues to keep finances in as strong a position as possible and will be reporting a balanced outturn position (subject to closure of accounts) for the 2024/25 financial year.** The Council's financial position is under pressure with the 2024/25 Welsh Government settlement of 3.1% falling somewhat short of meeting the cost and demographic pressures in the Vale's schools and Social Care Services in particular. There's been a growth in deficits in schools which is proving difficult to turn around, but a range of measures are in place and starting to take hold. There has been an unprecedented increase in Children's Social Care demand giving rise to overspends in 2024/25. Whilst there are overspends in Social Care the financial management, arrangements in the directorate are robust with significant leadership focus on the finances both in year and for medium term financial planning. Keeping with the forward look has been the development of the Reshaping and Transformation Prospect to ensure the Council's long term financial sustainability. Taking account of the work taking place but also the ongoing pressures and the impact this has council wide then the rating for 2024/25 is fair.

  The Council's procurement arrangements have had a higher profile with the new Procurement Act 2023 and regulations coming into force with awareness raising in advance, training sessions and amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The partnership with Ardal is bedding in and new documentation is enabling greater engagement with the category managers.

- **On balance, there is fair performance in the Council's management of its assets – both physical and digital against a backdrop of finite resources.** Highways maintenance is a challenging area but there have been innovations in Environment & Housing during 2024/25 and whilst the depreciation of the highways assets is outstripping investment, additional resources have been targeted here, both revenue and capital. Contracts for highways resurfacing and maintenance have been reviewed to encourage sustainable and innovative management practices. The property portfolio is lean and efficient and there are regular surveys, and the Asset Management Plan is assessed on an annual basis. There is an Assets Board in place through the Reshaping Programme which seeks to identify further efficiencies despite the relatively small base to work from. The Council's housing stock meets the Welsh Housing Quality Standards, and all new properties are built to the highest standards of construction. The Council adopted a new Digital Strategy in 2023 and there have been a number of discovery and development projects in year to deliver both service improvements and efficiencies.

There were risks with the age of the Council's IT servers and this is being mitigated by a cloud migration strategy developed in year but signed off formally by Cabinet in May 2025.

- **We can demonstrate a continued focus on improving how we engage with residents and partners over the past year and are taking forward the lessons learned into future engagement work.** The Council undertook more than 30 consultation and engagement projects across the course of the year. These were typically undertaken by service area teams, sometimes with support from the Council's central communications team. These projects varied significantly in size and scope and a range of consultative and participative methods were used to gather insight from stakeholders. The Council's most robust source of insight into public perception and citizen's priorities remains the Let's Talk About Life in the Vale survey undertaken in Autumn 2023 and reported in Spring 2024.

  This was the Council's largest-ever perception survey, with over 4,000 responses. Insights have informed service planning and strategic priorities throughout 2024/25, including the new Vale 2030 Corporate Plan. A standalone exercise was also undertaken to support the development of Vale 2030 in October 2024. This work gathered views across the Vale through online and in-person events. This work raised issues related to engagement, the environment, transport, housing, supporting families and young people, budgets, rising costs and delivery. A number of actions were amended following the consultation and scrutiny of the draft plan. The wording was also simplified and parts of the plan restructured. There was an increased emphasis on partnership working and the title Vale 2030 was introduced to be more engaging and to reflect the scope of the plan and vision.

  The ongoing engagement on the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) is another example of effective engagement in policy making. Thousands of responses have been received, and hundreds of residents attended the in-person drop-in sessions that shaped the Preferred Strategy for 2021–2036.

  The most intensive programme of engagement has been undertaken by the Council's Placemaking team to support the development of four new Place Plans for Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge, and Llantwit Major. This work utilized a range of approaches. For example, in Llantwit Major 15 separate consultation activities were undertaken, engaging more than 700 individuals through a mix of in-person and digital methods. These included public drop-in events, online surveys, and targeted outreach sessions. There was a particular focus in this work to reaching underrepresented groups. For example, when engaging young people proved particularly challenging, with low attendance at public events and limited response to traditional methods, the team partnered with the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service to host a week-long series of lunchtime engagement sessions at a comprehensive school.

  Other engagement activities across the year included projects to inform the Age Friendly Vale strategy, the Council's budget priorities, the development of new active travel proposals, the new Long Term Plan for Towns (subsequently the Plan for Neighbourhoods), a new Tree Strategy, and the implementation of new Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). Each of these projects varies in scope and naturally so does the number of respondents to each. There are, however, priority groups that we are working with to give more opportunities to engage. These include younger people, and those with lived experience of inequality. Addressing this will be central to the Council's new Public Participation Strategy which is currently under development.

  Social media sentiment
  Throughout the year we share news and information about Council services, decision making, and events in the Vale of Glamorgan via our social media accounts. There are thousands of interactions with citizens (measured by likes, shares, comments, and link clicks) via these channels every month. We also occasionally seek feedback on our services directly using social media. The way in which citizens engage with the content we share online tells us a lot about how they view our services and how we can get better at informing people about our work.

The content that we share receives a lot of interaction, particularly on Facebook. The sentiment of engagement on this very much varies depending on the information that we are sharing. The greatest number of positive interactions typically come from posts sharing news and information about new community facilities, events and services. For example, the announcement of a positive Estyn inspection report for one of our schools received 2924 engagements (reactions, comments, clicks and shares). This post received a high number of likes and generally positive comments. A post introducing additional waste and recycling services for Christmas and New Year received 2880 engagements, again largely positive.

However, we do also see significant levels of negative engagement when sharing other types of content. The greatest number of negative interactions typically come from us sharing news and information relating to changes or interruptions to council services, particularly those perceived as reductions in service frequency or standards. In these cases the weight of negative engagement is often stronger than the positive response we see elsewhere. For example, a post introducing a new limit on black bag waste accepted at Household Waste Recycling Centres received 7152 engagements, generally negative reactions and comments. There are also instances where a significant negative reaction is driven by a perception that the Council has not considered the impact on citizens or service users when taking a decision. For example, a post sharing information about roadworks at a busy section of the highway in Barry received 8142 negative engagements. To seek to address this we are always working to find more effective ways to present information with clear and simple explanations of how decisions have been taken and the impact we believe they will have. This is something we will continue to do and will be a key part of the developing new Communications Strategy.

Member Champions

Member Champions in the current administration are largely not Executive Members and rather are those who have a particular skill, experience or knowledge associated with the issue they are championing. The Council's Member Champion Network comprises 19 Member Champions covering a breadth of subject matters including tackling poverty, climate change, equalities, older persons, youth, carers, mental well-being, domestic abuse, safeguarding, disability, biodiversity, armed forces and veterans and diversity.

Member Champions focus largely on working closely with relevant officers and groups within the Council and externally to raise the profile of their interest areas, highlight good practice, and ensure that the engagement insights from their community role both as Councillors and Member Champions continue to inform Council decisions that impact on the relevant communities. The Member Champion Network also regularly brings together these Members to consider, respond and help shape participation activity. During 2024/25 special Member Champion meetings were held to consider Vale 2030, the Council's budget strategy, and the new Strategic Equality Plan. Shaping the development of key Council plans such as these gives the champions a clear route to advocate for the groups or policy areas they represent. It also enables the Champions to gain a greater insight into the issues they are championing. Some key highlights of the past year are detailed below.

- Several Member Champions have been involved in actively shaping the work of Age Friendly Vale. The Older Persons Champion has been particularly active in supporting and developing this work as well as that of the 50+ Forum.
- The Member Champion for safeguarding is a standing representative on the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group (CSG). CSG monitors and oversees arrangements in place to ensure that all of council employees play their part in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children and adults who may be at risk of harm. Through this representation the Champion has provided regular updates and communications in terms of the priority safeguarding areas across the local authority. They are also cited on any significant safeguarding issues arising within the local authority and they give advice and support in relation to these matters where appropriate. Additionally, the Champion is engaged on key strategic and operational matters in relation to safeguarding.

- The Youth Member Champion has regularly attended monthly Vale Youth Council meetings, providing youth members with an update on council matters as well as championing the views of members on issues affecting them. The Member Champion has also supported the elected Chair and Vice Chair of the Youth Council to attend Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee Meetings, encouraging them during these meetings to speak up and informs them of particular agenda items that may be of interest. The Youth Member Champion has attended regular meetings of the School Council Network. These bring together secondary school pupils from all Vale of Glamorgan schools to share pupil voice news and take part in council consultation work. During these meetings, the Youth Member Champion alongside the Cabinet Member for Education, has provided pupils with an update on Education and Council Matters.

- **We can demonstrate added value to our services through partnership working with the third sector, public and private organisations over the past year**. Working with Cwmpas consultancy, we engaged with the Third Sector and Town and Community Councils during the year. Their recommendations were fed into Vale 2030, to include a 'Our commitment to those working with us' section that outlines what current and future partners can expect from the Council when working with us, providing a framework for these relationships going forward. This work also helped shape the focus on tackling poverty within Vale 2030 and the Council continues to work with a number of partners to tackle and prevent poverty including work on food poverty and money and housing advice. The Council is also working with partners through the Public Services Board to focus on some of the most deprived areas in the Vale and during the year a significant programme of engagement was delivered, reaching deep into communities and partner agencies to explore the underlying causes of poverty and importantly, to begin to develop actions to alleviate these.

  Community Asset Transfers have continued through close working with Town and Community Councils, and community organisations to find new ways of asset ownership and continued operation. For example, we have progressed transfers with two major sporting clubs in Penarth who will be shortly taking on responsibility for their own facilities and Llantwit Major Town Council is taking on three car parks and two public conveniences in the town later in 2025.

  Placemaking plans also continue to be developed through community mapping exercises undertaken in partnership with local partners and Town Councils, with the resulting four Plans subject to Cabinet approval in the near future.

  In line with the Social Partnership Duty, we have continued to work through the Joint Consultative Forum, the Change Forum, and other mechanisms to foster our relationships with Trade Unions.

  Over the past year, we have worked closely with the Health Board, Police, Third-Sector organisations, social enterprises, and other local authorities to develop and deliver services that meet the needs of our population. We have actively worked with partners to promote community-based models of care, ensuring that individuals receive the support they need in the right setting. The implementation of the Section 16 Forum has been a major step in promoting social enterprises, co-operatives, and user-led services. This forum brings together partners from across the sector to co-produce and deliver sustainable preventative services in social care.

  Examples of successes include, the Vale Locality Mental Health Team, a partnership with Health and Social Services along with other voluntary sector providers to provide care for working-age adults (18-65 years) who have moderate to severe, unstable mental health problems. The Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS), an integrated Health, Social Care and Third Sector Team based at Barry Hospital, effectively collaborates with other services across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to support individuals in their own homes to maximise functional independence in activities of daily living (ADL), thus reducing the need for admission into hospital and longer-term Social care services. The Well-being Matters Service, a Single Point of Access for Health and Well-being Services in the Vale of Glamorgan has continued to grow, supporting XX people in the past year. In

partnership with Llamau, we now have two new children's residential homes providing care for young people locally within our community.

The PPA also made some recommendations regarding partnership working and progress is being made in responding to these recommendations as detailed on page 12.

Detailed below are some of the main achievements, challenges and areas for improvement identified through our Directorate Self Assessments.

Main achievements

- Developed the Reshaping Programme to support the setting of a balanced budget which comprises a greater proportion of savings from transformation than in previous years.
- The Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) was coordinated and delivered in the year leading to a set of useful recommendations and highly positive feedback from external peers. Work is already being taken forward through Vale 2030, Brilliant Basics and the Signalling Change work which reflects a range of activities including changes to scrutiny, communications internally and externally about priorities, partnership working and new performance management arrangements that will lead to significant and positive change.
- As part of Vale 2030, developed a 'Working with Others' statement to show what partners can expect when working with the Council to ensure a positive and consistent way of working with third sector partners, social enterprises and Town and Community Councils.
- Development and approval of a number of key plans and strategies. This includes a new Strategic Equality Plan, Data Strategy, Carbon Management Plan and as well as a revised Corporate Risk Strategy and review of our Corporate Risks. This has been undertaken alongside work to review the People and Procurement Strategies and delivery of the Digital Strategy which will all support the delivery of Vale 2030.
- Designed and implemented digital solutions to tackle challenges aligned to the Reshaping Programme, Vale 2030 and financial savings including the delivery of Teams Telephony achieving significant savings for connectivity. In line with the Digital Strategy over 130 services are now digitised for our residents improving access and responsiveness with 59.04% of all customer engagement with the Council taking place via digital channels.
- This year 77% of savings targets have been met. Work is ongoing to monitor the saving projections closely and cross departmental work through key projects under the reshaping programme are ongoing to ensure we can deliver the best possible services for residents which are cost effective within the financial climate. Outstanding savings will be monitored into 2025/26 and mitigated in year or funded from the budget risk reserves until they are delivered in full.
- Enhanced communication with the public through a range of methods to ensure we work across the whole of the organisation, sharing best practice on how residents' views shape local services and decisions, building on Let's Talk. Included developing social media presence, face to face events and a well-received budget quiz with 770 responses received part of the budget setting consultation.

Key Challenges

- Progressing the programme of Reshaping across the organisation ensuring a focus on priorities, savings, income generation, improved services and maintaining the necessary pace and momentum for change despite challenges around capacity and resource.
- Managing the Council's finances across the medium term with continued social care demand (cost and volume) and growing deficits across the County's schools whilst there is a need for increased focus on prevention and long-term transformation to ensure we are a Council fit for the future.
- Embedding Vale 2030 across the organisation and ensuring delivery of the commitments across all objectives and a focus on prevention, tackling poverty and inequalities, climate change and how we work with our

partners and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for effective scrutiny and performance management.

- Delivering necessary digital transformation including cloud migration and changes to how customers access services as well as improved digital processes and procedures behind the scenes which improve efficiency and reduce duplication.
- Delivering effective communications and engagement externally and internally which support Vale 2030 and a new People Strategy and associated work on organisational development to reflect how the organisation is changing and our organisational values – giving confidence to residents, customers, partners, staff and elected members and a coherent way forward that will enable delivery of our objectives.

Areas for improvement

- Strengthen workforce planning and put in place robust and sustainable staffing structures that enable transformational change across the Council.
- Revise the People Strategy to incorporate a staff well-being strategy, including the identification and provision of services appropriate to support staff well-being and ensuring that the appraisal system is used to enable effective dialogue between managers and their teams.
- Continued focus on addressing recruitment and retention challenges across key council services including Social Services, Environment & Housing and Place.
- Embed new approaches to procurement and contract management especially in response to the Procurement Act 2023 and reduce carbon in the supply chain.
- Further develop the Reshaping Programme across the medium-term financial plan to drive sustainability and enable earlier decision making, including a revised timetable and further engagement with a focus on delivery of Brilliant Basics.
- Set a balanced budget for both revenue and capital, balancing the need for a longer term five year focused financial strategy including continued work with social care and education services to address ongoing pressures whilst maintaining service standards.
- Develop a rolling 3-year budget / funding plan for the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) to enable improved business planning and service continuity.
- Work with key funding partners (WLGA/CJC/UK Gov) and procurement partners to deliver key council projects and ensure resilience of all programmes such as the Levelling up Fund, Plan for Neighbourhoods and the Shared Prosperity Fund programme.
- Maximise opportunities for external funding to support the delivery of strategic Council projects.
- Progress implementation of a full cost recovery model for our library, cultural and adult and community learning services without detriment to broadening citizen access and participation.
- Develop approaches in both physical and digital asset works that enable greater pace and momentum across the organisation ensuring the right skills are in place to support change.
- Increase fees for services and assets to at least a break-even position and where this is not possible, seek alternative service operating models involving the local community, Town and Community Councils and the voluntary sector to support service sustainability.
- Increase the use of digital technology to improve services, their efficiency and transparency, ensuring citizens have better access to real-time service data and can input into how services are operated.
- Improve performance management, scrutiny and engagement linked to embedding Vale 2030 across the organisation and with partners and demonstrating the outcomes achieved and addressing areas where performance needs to improve.
- Improve our communications with communities to raise awareness of service challenges faced and to promote the co-production of solutions.
- Ensure that engagement and consultation reflects our diverse communities including seldom heard groups with the insight effectively informing Council work.
- Progress the Council's strategy to strengthen our use of data across the Council.

- Strengthen partnerships to develop an integrated support network that enhances preventative care and improves digital accessibility.

5.4 How effective is the Council's Governance?

For the reporting period, the Council judges governance to be GOOD.

To ensure consistency with our judgements, the use of 'Good' within the governance context indicates 'reasonable assurance' or above opinions from internal and external audits on the Council's systems of governance with scope for improvement.

This is evidenced by:

- As part of the PPA the panel considered the extent to which the Council has effective governance in place and how effective the Councils' governance is. The panel concluded that the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but there are areas which could be further developed. Pages 14-15 details progress made since the PPA to take forward work in this area and strengthen arrangements.

- The **Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 concludes that from review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken, an opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance' can be given that the governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework**.

- **The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion given as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report gives a 'Reasonable Assurance' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control environment for 2024/25**. 94% of assurance opinions issued as part of 53 risk based reviews concluded in-year testing the effectiveness of the controls in place to manage key council risks were either 'Substantial or Reasonable' with 95% of all recommendations issued being in the low to medium priority categories. 3 'Limited Assurance' audit opinions were issued and there were no 'No Assurance' opinions. Overall, this level of assurance means that no major weaknesses were identified in our risk management, governance and control processes, based on review, assessment and ongoing monitoring. No significant cross-cutting control issues have been identified that would impact on the Council's overall control environment and the weaknesses identified are service specific (3 limited assurance reviews), and recommendations to progress these is being monitored via follow up reviews which is considered by Governance & Audit Committee throughout the year. This opinion will be subject to scrutiny by the Governance & Audit Committee, Cabinet and our external Regulators.

- A **'Substantial Assurance' Internal Audit opinion has been provided on the Council's compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code Standards for the period 2023/24**. This indicates good financial management practices that support financial sustainability, effective resource allocation and accountability. The Council fully complies with 5 out of 6 standards and partially for one and an action plan is in place for further strengthening compliance across all standards. At the time of reporting, audit work is ongoing to cover the 2024/2025 period although no significant changes from the previous period have been identified.

- **The views and opinions from our External Regulators provided throughout the year as part of the Annual Audit Work Programme have been constructive and we have responded positively in addressing the recommendations from their work** as detailed below. Progress against recommendations is monitored through the Council's Strategic Insight Board Regulatory tracker and reported periodically to the Strategic Leadership Team, Governance & Audit Committee and Cabinet. These continue to serve as a catalyst in encouraging improved coordination and further integration of our approach involving key partners to address key shared challenges and associated improvement areas building on the progress to date.

The Council's Annual Audit Summary published in May 2025 issued recommendations in relation to 5 local and 12 national audit reviews undertaken during the period as part of the Auditor General for Wales's duties. 12 recommendations have been made for local reviews including Commissioning (3), Financial Sustainability (2), and Urgent and Emergency Care: Flow out of Hospital (a joint review comprising Cardiff & Vale UHB, Cardiff Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council (7). No recommendations were issued in relation to the Council's setting of well-being objectives review. The Assurance and Risk Assessment review considered the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and will inform future audit work for the Council.

In relation to local and national reports published during the period, consideration has been given by relevant council services to the findings contained within the reports as they have been published, and where appropriate actions have been incorporated within the Council's regulatory tracker and progress monitored throughout the year. At end of year, there are currently 17 regulatory actions on-going in the Insight Tracker. Positive progress has been made in responding to our regulatory improvement areas with 65% of actions (11) attributed a Green performance (RAG) status, 29% (5) an Amber status and 6% (1) a Red status. A further 58 actions (22 national and 36 local regulatory actions) have been completed. It must be noted that whilst our response to recommendations have been addressed, many of these actions are long term in nature and work will remain ongoing in a business as usual capacity to further embed the required changes in response to audit recommendations.

- **Effective monitoring of our key risks through a well-established risk management framework which has provided essential input into the determination of our well-being objectives, priorities and areas for focus**. As part of the Annual Internal Audit Plan, 'Reasonable' and subsequent 'Substantial' audit opinions have been provided on a sample of our corporate risks and our risk management oversight arrangements over the past four years, indicating the Council has sound systems/processes in place in terms of how risks are being managed to enable us to achieve our well-being objectives. During 2024/25, the Council also reviewed and revised its Risk Management Strategy as part of the development of the new Corporate Plan (Vale 2030) further strengthening its arrangements and this was confirmed by the Internal Audit review for the period which highlighted that corporate risks continue to be appropriately managed with progress effectively reported. Strengths and areas of good practice identified were, 'The Corporate Risk Management Policy 2024-2028 clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of boards, committees, and staff at different levels' and 'Oversight and governance at both a corporate level and individual risk level was in place and there is evidence of challenge from Governance & Audit Committee being responded to.' No recommendations were made during 2024/25.

The above judgement is testament to the robust mechanisms in place that ensure that we continue to operate our resources economically, efficiently, effectively and equitably and deliver effective accountability for decisions.

Whilst our judgement for the past year is Good, we acknowledge that further actions are needed to strengthen existing arrangements to ensure the Council's governance arrangements continue to improve to support the delivery of its commitments and ensure that all key stakeholders engage in decision making. The areas for improvement identified in the Annual Governance Statement are consistent with the findings from the Council's Panel Performance Assessment, Directorate Self-Assessments, and the Council's end of year performance review. The work to address our improvement areas is being taken forward through the Council's Internal Audit Annual Work Plan, reshaped performance and scrutiny arrangements, the Reshaping Programme, Public Participation Strategy and the Strategic Equalities Plan.

6.0 Reviewing our Self-Assessment approach

It is important that our approach to self-assessment continues to evolve to drive improvement as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and the national well-being goals. This self-assessment responds to feedback from Members in previous years, by presenting a more streamlined main document whilst retaining links to all background information for transparency purposes. Based on our review throughout the process and feedback from key stakeholders and partners, the following areas will require continued focus in readiness for the 2025/26 annual self-assessment. These will be considered alongside feedback from Welsh Government, Audit Wales, the WLGA and any identified best practice from colleagues across Wales.

- Further embed our approach to Directorate Self-assessment dovetailing this with our arrangements for quarterly self-reflection undertaken by Directorates as part of corporate arrangements for performance monitoring and reporting of progress against our annual priorities. Our approach will reflect the reshaped performance and scrutiny arrangements to monitor the Corporate Plan 2025-30.
- Further align the reporting requirements of other regulatory bodies e.g. CIW and Estyn within the Directorate self-assessments to demonstrate integration of working with the findings informing multiple corporate work programmes as aligned to delivery of the Vale 2030 well-being objectives and outcomes.
- Strengthen our use of outcome focused performance and other data insights throughout the year to support performance judgements at end of year. This forms part of ongoing work to develop our internal insight function which will help to strengthen our evidence base for the Council's Self-Assessment.
- Further strengthen our internal 'critical friend' challenge by involving external key stakeholders in sense checking our judgements and emerging findings from our annual self-assessment. Engagement with these key stakeholders will also ensure we become more outward facing.
- Further strengthen elected member involvement in the Peer Challenge process using the new scrutiny arrangements. Extending the breadth of participation will ensure that we have a broader spectrum of involvement in the process and will also ensure a wide range of perspectives are taken into account whilst ensuring there is ownership of any changes being identified and proposed.
- Further strengthen aspects of the Annual Self-Assessment Report informed by constructive feedback from internal and external challenge processes including:

    - Promote an easy read public summary document as part of engagement work informed by feedback from residents and members on how they would like the Council's performance information reported. Continue to use a variety of media to reach stakeholders including social media, tailoring information to suit target audiences.
    - Continued focus on demonstrating how major council decisions have been informed by citizens, communities and other key stakeholders, the resulting changes and impact.
    - Continued focus on how partnerships and collaborative working including work with the Third Sector and Town and Community Councils have contributed to delivering our Annual Delivery priorities and the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, giving greater visibility to successes and challenges.
    - Streamlining the amount of performance analysis within the Annual Self-Assessment report focusing on highlighting performance exceptions and including more reflective narrative in relation to our performance exceptions, especially in those areas where we have not achieved our ambitions for the period. Additionally, ensuring that identified areas for future focus are supported by reasons why they have been identified as such.
    - Providing more content around the work of Member Champions to give greater visibility to their work.