

# Appendix IV – Scope: Panel Performance Assessment 2024

This document outlines the agreed parameters of the Panel Performance Assessment of Denbighshire County Council, taking place between **September 9 and 12, 2024 (to be confirmed on appointment of the panel)**. Facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association, these arrangements comply with the council's duty to arrange a panel performance assessment under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

# Scope: Panel Performance Assessment 2024

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# Scope: Panel Performance Assessment 2024

## Introduction

This document covers only the scope of the fieldwork (i.e. document reviews and interviews) to be undertaken by the panel of peers appointed by the council. It captures the council's asks of the assessment, and should serve as a guide to the panel as to the parameters of their investigations.

This document does not cover the steps that will follow the fieldwork with regards to producing the report, creating the management response to the report, and publication thereof, as those requirements are covered clearly within the legislation, statutory guidance, and agreed upon methodology below:

- [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)
- [Performance and Governance of Local Authorities: Statutory Guidance, Chapter 3](#)
- [WLGA Panel Performance Assessment Methodology](#)

Neither does this document cover subsequent sector-led support that the council may expect from the Panel or the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) at the conclusion of the assessment. Those needs and any offer of support would be dependent on the outcome of the assessment and further discussions outside of the purview of the assessment. The WLGA, however, will endeavour to support councils in the identification, commissioning and delivery of sector-led support requirements identified in the Panel Performance Assessment, through either its universal or targeted offers.

## Purpose

This is a corporate, organisational assessment, designed to consider the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements and its capability to deliver effective outcomes. The panel should not be seeking to undertake deep dives or in-depth service reviews, although a panel may draw on the findings of other peer reviews or in-depth service reviews in reaching their conclusions. The panel should not be looking to audit / check the councils own self-assessments, although the approach a council takes to self-assessment may inform a panel's view on the effectiveness of its governance arrangements.

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Under the legislation, the panel, acting jointly, is required to assess the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements, that is, the extent to which:

- it is exercising its functions effectively;
- it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- its governance is effective for securing the above.

In this way the panel is building on, and complementing, the self-assessments already undertaken by the council. The panel's focus should be on looking at the current situation, and over a sufficient previous period to get a meaningful picture of the position in the council and any trends. The panel will be considering how capable the council is to respond to the changing environment in which it operates, and should be guided in its work by using the ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The panel may also find it helpful to consider the activities common to the corporate governance of public bodies as set out in the statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 201512:

- Corporate planning
- Financial planning
- Workforce planning (people)
- Procurement
- Assets
- Risk management
- Performance Management

### Focus

The scope of the Panel Performance Assessment was initially discussed at a joint meeting of Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team in March 2023, supported by the WLGA. Following this, a working group comprised of Cabinet Members and Senior Managers with oversight of key governance functions met in April and May to consider self-assessment information. The recommendation of the working group is that the panel gives particular focus to the following areas within their assessment:

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1. **Leadership:** How well is the council's corporate and political structure working, and how is the capacity and capability suited to the delivery of the council's priorities?
2. **Budget Proposals / Transformation:** How well has the council managed the current financial crisis, and how well is the council preparing for the future?
3. **Partnership Working:** How well placed is the council to work effectively with partners, and maximise resources across sectors?

Appendix 1 (which is derived from Appendix A of the [WLGA methodology](#)), provides a table of questions that the Panel may ask in support of the performance requirements that it is statutorily required to consider as part of its assessment. Performance requirements are defined as the extent to which a council: i) is exercising its functions effectively; ii) is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively; and iii) has effective governance in place for securing i) and ii). Accepting these requirements, the Working Group has suggested within the table which questions it feels may be greatest value for the panel to explore given the focus it (the Working Group) has suggested above, but also taking into account other audit work that has or will take place.

Further input to the above areas of focus and appendix 1 will be sought between May and July from the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet, Performance Scrutiny, the Governance and Audit Committee and County Council, alongside the council's Self-Assessment of its Performance for 2023 to 2024.

### Approach

Using the above as a framework should guide the panel in understanding whether the council is governing itself effectively in order to maximise its contribution to the well-being goals.

The assessment will be a combination of desk-based research and interviews, with onsite work expected to take four days, with a presentation on the main findings and recommendations made on the final day. The panel will utilise a range of internal and

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external sources, ensuring a broad evidence base to inform conclusions on the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements and recommendations on how to improve.

In carrying out a panel performance assessment in respect of a council, a panel must consult the following about the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements:

- local people;
- other persons carrying on a business in the council's area;
- the staff of the council;
- and every trade union which is recognised (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (c.52) by the council.

While this is the minimum required by the legislation, the panel may choose to consult or involve others as it determines relevant to its assessment of how the council is meeting the performance requirements. The panel may, for example, seek to consult other partners involved in collaborative working with the council, as well as audit, inspection or regulatory bodies.

It is for the panel to consider how it might wish to consult in order to effectively contribute to the panel assessment process, for example utilising existing engagement mechanisms, web-based surveys, questionnaires etc. These should be designed to be representative of the relevant population (e.g. local people, or staff). It is for the council to make the necessary arrangements to facilitate the consultation.

The table below provides the planned timetable for the assessment:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Scoping Finalised	July 30
Document and interviews request sent	August 9
Panel receive documents and final interview schedule	August 31
Fieldwork	September 9-13

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Issue draft report	September 27
LA response on accuracy	October 11
Final Report Issued for Management Response	October 25
Draft response provisionally agreed by Cabinet	November 4
Report and Management Response tabled with Governance and Audit for input	November 20
Report and Management Response approved by Cabinet	December 17
Presentation to County Council	January 2024

### The Panel

As a minimum, the panel must consist of:

- An independent panel chair – not currently serving in an official or political capacity within local government.
- A peer from the wider public, private or voluntary sectors.
- A serving local government senior officer, likely to be equivalent to chief executive or director, from outside the council to be assessed.
- A senior elected member, from outside the council to be assessed.

It is also recommended for the purposes of this assessment that the following members are included on the panel:

- To be confirmed with WLGA, but the Working Group would be eager for the panel to include someone with future / scenario planning / behavioural change expertise.
- The Working Group are also eager that the panel is representative of Denbighshire's diversity as far as is possible, and that senior officers and members on the panel have a strong understanding of local government in Wales.

## Appendix 1: Question Hierarchy

The following is taken from Appendix A of the [WLGA methodology](#) for the Panel Performance Assessment. It is not intended to be an exhaustive or prescriptive list. The extent to which these issues are explored should be proportionate to the requirements of the council as outlined in the scope, whilst observing that minimum standards of a Panel Performance Assessment, required by the Act, are met. This approach should not inhibit the professional knowledge and experience of the peer team.

The Working Group have considered the tables below and suggested which would be key questions to ask in relation to the [focus areas](#) that have been determined as important for the scope of the assessment. In determining these key questions we have also given consideration of other recently scheduled audit work (past and future) to avoid duplication, and to ensure that the output of this assessment brings its own value.

### **Performance Requirement One: The extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively.**

**Guiding Principle:** The council is self-aware and able to demonstrate that it is delivering its functions in accordance with the local, regional, and national context. Where improvement is required, suitable interventions have been identified promptly that should achieve the desired outcomes.

#### **Panel Considerations**

<b>Leadership:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What do the leadership consider are the key issues from a political (executive and non-executive) and officer perspective? Are views consistent?</li></ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Does the council provide effective place leadership?</li></ul>		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a collective narrative of place?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the Public Services Board effective in ensuring that partners work collaboratively?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the council benefit from effective local and regional partnership arrangements?</li> </ul>	Yes	Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do the community and voluntary sector describe their experience of working with the council?</li> </ul>	Yes	Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a focus on systems leadership and influence – locally, regionally, and nationally?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do leaders demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of local communities? Do they show commitment to working with partners to reduce inequality and delivering services that are inclusive and accessible to a diverse community?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the council's leadership champion and direct action on climate change? How is the council working with partners and the community to reduce the impact of climate change?</li> </ul>		

<b>Corporate and Service Planning:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council have a clear vision and priorities which are evidenced based and informed by the local context (place shaping), with a wider understanding of how this relates to the regional and national context? Is the plan current and realistic?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the councils corporate planning process adequately meet the requirements of the WBFGA, socio-economic and equalities duties?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the council's approach to climate change mitigation measures relating to its own operations? Are the local government 2030 net zero commitments in Net Zero Wales understood and owned across the council? How is the council contributing to the target of net zero by 2050 across its whole community?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the approach to adaptation and building local resilience to climate change?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent have planned mitigation and adaptation actions referred to above been prioritised</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership

and costed, and aligned with the council's financial strategy?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an integrated organisational cross-cutting approach to tackling issues such as climate change, poverty, regeneration/local economy, wellbeing, etc.?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the policy framework integrated to ensure that core duties and cross-cutting priorities are aligned?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a shared understanding and ownership of the council's vision and priorities across officer groups and councillors?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there clarity over what is required to achieve the council's objectives, including due consideration for the 5 ways of working, resourcing, and governance of performance? Are these requirements evident at service planning levels (golden thread)?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council communicate effectively? How does the council use community capacity to shape and deliver priority outcomes? To what extent does the council listen, empower, co-produce, collaborate?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that under-represented</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership;

groups are communicated and engaged with effectively? Do they have opportunities to be involved in decision making and the design and delivery of services?		Budget Proposals / Transformation; Partnership Working
<b>Risk &amp; Assurance:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there any evidence to suggest that there are concerns over the delivery of statutory duties that would have a corporate impact? If so, is the council managing these risks?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there sufficient assurance from Internal Audit, Audit Wales, and other regulators on performance against statutory duties and achievement of objectives?</li> </ul>		
<b>Performance Management:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the outcome of the council's self-assessment of delivery against their functions?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation; Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is data used effectively to evaluate performance, identify risks, and drive improvement?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where there is scope to determine local service delivery standards, has the council determined expected standards, against which performance is</li> </ul>		

measured using metrics and/or benchmarking?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a shared understanding of priorities for improvement across senior management, councillors, communities, workforce, and partners?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What progress is the council able to evidence from its reporting to date of its own emissions, in accordance with the Public Sector Net Zero reporting guide? Are any steps being taken to record, monitor and report on progress with emissions reduction in the wider community?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied with services are residents, including under-represented groups? How is this measured?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council collect, share and publish relevant EDI data and information about its communities? How is EDI information regularly updated and used to identify priorities for the local area?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there evidence of an embedded and continuous approach to performance management, which identifies required interventions that are acted upon promptly?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation

**Performance Requirement Two: The extent to which the council is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.**

**Guiding Principle:** Resources are effectively aligned to assist the council in delivering its objectives and statutory functions and the council is able to demonstrate value for money is being achieved.

**Panel Considerations**

<b>Corporate and Service Planning:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are corporate objectives and key statutory duties embedded within service plans?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do service plans include an evaluation of service performance (including audit and complaints/compliments) to identify areas of improvement are these aligned with corporate improvement objectives?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a clear commitment to prevention, with suitable resource deployed to preventing or resolving issues (root cause) over treating and managing issues? Has consideration been given to collaboration with other services/partners to provide an integrated solution?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation; Partnership working.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is climate thinking integrated into medium and longer-term planning and are planned actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation</li> </ul>		

sufficiently resourced? Are resources focused on the activities which will have the most significant impact?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council regularly consider the most appropriate delivery options for services (e.g. outsourcing, co-sourcing, commercial arms-length company, community transfer, etc.)?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation; Partnership.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is failure demand identified and treated?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has capacity to deliver objectives been quantified is this evident at service planning levels?</li> </ul>		
<b>Digital &amp; Data</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council use digital tools and data to facilitate transformation and efficiency savings?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council have digital and data strategies that support corporate objectives and enable early identification and adapt to changing user needs?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council design its digital services around service user needs, and identify suitable metrics to continuously drive improvement?</li> </ul>		

<b>Financial Planning:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the corporate planning cycle aligned to the statutory budget planning cycle and has the council allocated funding according to priorities and need?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a medium-term financial plan/strategy which demonstrates how the council will sustain service delivery and manage future budget, demographic, demand, inflationary (workforce and other, and legislative pressures)?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a shared understanding and ownership of the scale of the current and future financial challenges?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there sufficient reserves to provide assurance on management of risk and sustainability?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the council compliant with the principles Cipfa Financial Management Code, if there are areas for improvement is there evidence that action is being taken? (Refer to councils own self-assessment, internal audit review).</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do councils make good use of the powers available to them to recover costs/generate funding? E.g. full cost recovery, commercial strategies,</li> </ul>		



community asset transfer, grants, etc.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is the council measuring value for money? Is there a clear understanding of unit cost and are trends in over/underspends monitored within the context of VFM?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<b>Workforce:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council's organisation design support best use of the workforce?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are capacity and skills aligned to priorities?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the council proactive in managing recruitment pressures and skills gaps? (considerations such as employer brand, recruitment accessibility, apprenticeship and graduate routes, etc)</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are staff retention issues highlighted and further explored to look at root cause and potential mitigation?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do workforce plans take account of current and future skills needs and gaps?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do workforce profiles represent the community?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the council embedded equalities and anti-racism practices into their HR policies and practices and does it</li> </ul>		

regularly review the effectiveness of these arrangements in line with the diversity and inclusivity of the workforce?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do individuals understand their contribution to the corporate objectives?</li> </ul>		
<b>Procurement:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the council reviewed its supply chains and procurement strategy in the context of the WBFGA to support the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing for current and future generations?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council adopt a category management approach to procurement?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are contracts evaluated and awarded based on the interpretation of Welsh Governments Wales Procurement Policy Statement?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the councils procurement strategy maximise the councils spending capacity for community benefit and to support low carbon economic growth? Is there awareness of the WLGA procurement toolkit, which supports councils with embedding decarbonisation and sustainability into procurement at all levels.</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council routinely publish and promote local service/goods provision gaps to support foundational economy?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there suitable evaluation mechanisms in place to measure impact and continuously refine approaches?</li> </ul>		
<b>Risk &amp; Assurance:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is risk management embedded in the council? Does risk awareness and management inform decision-making?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there evidence of integrated identification and responding to corporate risks?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a shared understanding of the most significant corporate risks (threats and opportunities)?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a collective view of the councils risk appetite that is communicated and understood?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there evidence of a robust assurance framework, including data/reporting from key support functions such as finance, risk management, business continuity, HR, asset management, procurement, climate change, IT, health and safety, etc.?</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is innovation encouraged and supported within the context of a mature approach to risk management?</li> </ul>		
<b>Assets:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a strategic asset management policy, strategy and plan, which is aligned to corporate objectives and priorities, corporately owned and led, which identifies the objectives and actions that are required of many different services across the council?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the operation and management of the councils property portfolio known and regularly reviewed through quality data on inventory, condition surveys, regulatory compliance, voids, joint ventures, community transfers, etc.?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are assets being managed to support other agenda such as climate change, housing shortages (health and wellbeing) financial resilience, place shaping, social value and regeneration?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation; Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council operate a corporate landlord model, and does it deliver efficiencies and support the delivery of corporate outcomes?</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council have sufficient resources to maintain and manage the property portfolio to the expected levels? If not, is there a plan to increase resource, outsource or rationalise the portfolio to a manageable level?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation;
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**Performance Requirement Three: The extent to which the council has effective governance in place for securing performance requirements one and two.**

**Guiding Principle:** There are clear and robust governance arrangements, which encourages an open and transparent culture that welcomes scrutiny and constructive challenge.

**Panel Considerations**

Evaluation	Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?	For which locally selected Focus Theme?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the Annual Governance Statement cover the key issues – and is it reflective / self-critical? When and how are the governance essentials reviewed? e.g., Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, etc.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an effective Internal Audit function (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards self-assessment and external assessment)?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an effective Governance &amp; Audit committee?</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is scrutiny welcomed and supported – both formal O&amp;S (if applicable) and scrutiny more generally? Do all members have the opportunity to inform and influence?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there evidence that the governance arrangements of the council provide sufficient assurance and constructive challenge on key priorities and performance challenges, to enable early intervention where necessary?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does scrutiny add value through the provision of a broader perspective to influence policy, monitor and challenge performance, and review decisions to assess effectiveness on delivering intended outcomes?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do statutory officers have sufficient authority and support to undertake their duties? Do statutory officers work together and feel listened to?</li> </ul>		
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the council well led by councillors and officers?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an effective top-team?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the roles of members and officers clear? Are there good</li> </ul>		

officer-member and member-member relationships?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key governance issues from a political and officer perspective? E.g., clarity, transparency, speed of decision making, accountability. To what extent are they structural or cultural / behavioural?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are councillors and officers supported in their leadership roles – including learning and development?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do political group leaders take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do political and managerial leaders at all levels demonstrate leadership and commitment to reducing inequality and challenging discrimination within the councils?</li> </ul>		
<b>Organisational culture:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a positive organisational culture – e.g. respect, transparency, co-operation, challenge, and a commitment to continuous improvement– and how is this reflected in behaviours and practice?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do protected groups of staff say about the culture of the organisation?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there whistleblowing procedures in place? Do staff have confidence in this procedure?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are staff engaged with and listened to? Is there strong internal communications?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there staff led networks or other safe spaces for staff from protected groups to discuss equality issues? Do staff networks feel able to influence the organisation?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is overall organisational health? What is the direction of travel of key indicators? e.g., staff satisfaction / morale, sickness absence, senior management stability</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there effective governance structures and processes to oversee and monitor the delivery of equality objectives and strategies?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are managers trained and equipped to manage staff fairly and deal with any Equality, Diversity and Inclusion related issues?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What known equality gaps exist within the organisation (e.g. pay</li> </ul>		



gaps) and to what extent are mitigation plans in place?		
<b>Financial Governance:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there effective budget monitoring arrangements?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there sufficient arrangements in place to oversee capital and treasury management arrangements?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are financial plans backed by business cases and delivery plans which identify the steps needed to achieve the desired outcomes?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the arrangements for managing and monitoring delivery sufficient?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the organisation act to rectify matters when actuals diverge from budgets?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where there are commercial activities, is there sufficient understanding of the financial risks and evidence of effective governance and scrutiny? Are risks managed within the risk appetite?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the council work positively with its Governance and Audit Committee and its internal and external auditors to ensure effective financial controls are in</li> </ul>		

place and to address issues raised?		
<b>Capacity to Improve:</b>	<b>Key Question for our locally selected Focus Themes?</b>	<b>For which locally selected Focus Theme?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there evidence of successful transformational change? Does the councils have a current transformation plan aligned to corporate and financial strategies?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the council's approach to self-assessment drive interventions and continuous improvement?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the council adapt and learn? Is the council agile and able to pivot? Is innovation encouraged and supported?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What will the council look like in the future?</li> </ul>	Yes	Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is change and transformation led and managed?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key areas for development / capacity for improvement challenges?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation; Partnership Working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are plans realistic (sufficient resource, achievable, timely, etc)?</li> </ul>	Yes	Leadership; Budget Proposals / Transformation

## Appendix 2: Sample Document Request

The following list of documents may assist Panel members in the development of their understanding of the council. It is not intended that every peer reads everything, but that panel members select from the list below, those documents which are most relevant to their role within their team / the aspect of performance that they are focusing on. The documents may also provide evidence to substantiate or otherwise issues that emerge from interviews or focus groups.

- Corporate plan (current and previous)
- Annual statutory reports produced by the council for last three years, including Self-Assessment Report, Wellbeing Report (if separate to Self-Assessment Report), Annual Governance Statement (if separate to Self-Assessment Report), Social Services Annual Report
- External inspection and regulation reports (for last three years)
- Medium Term Financial Plan (current)
- Procurement strategy
- Commissioning strategy
- Workforce strategy
- Digital strategy
- IT strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Commercialisation strategy
- Transformation plan
- Learning and Development Strategy
- Cabinet forward work plan
- Scrutiny forward work plan
- Scrutiny Annual Report (and any scrutiny self-evaluations undertaken recently)
- Governance & Audit Committee Annual Report and any self-assessment evaluations recently undertaken
- Public Participation and Engagement Strategy
- Strategic Equality Plan
- Any S54 Reports prepared by the Chief Executive
- Staff engagement and wellbeing plans and surveys
- Performance Dashboard/Reporting (councils' own KPIs)

- Citizen surveys/service user satisfaction surveys
- Customer Compliments/Complaints Reports
- Standards Committee Annual Report
- The Constitution (including Codes of Conduct, Overview and Scrutiny Structure and Terms of reference and Financial Regulations)
- Target Operating Model
- Performance Management Framework
- Risk Management Strategy & Corporate Risk Registers
- Data Management Strategy
- Head of Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion
- Net Zero and/or Climate Change Strategy

## Appendix 3: Sample Interview Schedule

The following list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive (other than the expectation of statutory consultee's), but a suggestion of individuals and groups the panel may wish to meet during the assessment. For some it may be more efficient to hold remote sessions / phone calls (e.g., interviews with regulators and partners):

- Leader
- Chief Executive
- All Cabinet Members
- All members of Senior Leadership Team
- Chairs of Scrutiny Committees
- Chair of Governance and Audit Committee
- Chair of Democratic Services
- Chair of Standards Committee
- Group Leaders
- Councillor focus group/s
- Heads of Service Focus Group/s
- Staff focus groups
- Union representatives
- Stakeholder focus groups
- Public Service Board focus group<sup>8</sup>
- Regional Partnership Board focus group
- Director of Resources
- Section 151 Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Audit
- Head of Procurement
- Head of Human Resources
- Head of Property

Statutory members of each PSB are:

- Local authority
- Local health board

- Fire and rescue authority
- Natural Resources Wales

In addition, the following are invited to participate:

- Welsh ministers
- Chief constables
- Police and crime commissioner
- Relevant probation services
- At least one body representing voluntary organisations
- Head of Democratic Services
- A leader and/or chief executive from a neighbouring authority
- Partner organisation Chief Executives (e.g., Health Board, neighbouring councils)
- Regulators (e.g. Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, Audit Wales) – it should be noted that no information will be shared with the panel that hasn't already been reported to the council.
- Business Leaders/Chair of Chamber
- Representatives from Town & Community Councils

The panel may use a combination of focus groups and web-based surveys/questionnaires to fulfil the statutory consultation requirements. The council's self-assessment consultation process will be considered by the panel when determining their approach.

## **Appendix 4: Sample Observation Schedule**

In the week of September 9-13, the following meetings are scheduled to take place:

- Corporate Executive Team – Monday 9, 2024
- County Council – Tuesday 10,2024
- Licensing Committee – Wednesday 11, 2024
- Partnerships Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 12, 2024
- Standards Committee – Friday 13, 2024

Members of the Panel are, however, welcome to observe any committee meetings scheduled outside of the planned week for the onsite fieldwork. Public meetings are also recorded and available to view online.