

### 3 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

#### Assurance Executive Summary

*The Corporate Governance arrangements of the Council are acceptable.*

*It is important that a Governance Statement includes an evaluation and conclusion and provides a clear judgement on whether the governance arrangements outlined are fit for purpose.*

*To enable this judgement the Council's Internal Audit service conducted a review of our arrangements against the adopted standards (see 3.3 below).*

**Table - Internal Audit Report extract:**

Findings of Carmarthenshire County Council Internal Audit review of AGS and Corporate Governance	
Post Review Assurance Level	Description for Assurance Level
Acceptable	Moderate controls, some areas of non-compliance to agreed controls Medium/Low risk of not meeting objectives Medium/Low risk of fraud, negligence, loss, damage to reputation
Internal Audit found no fundamental control issues to be addressed as a high priority.	

The emerging Draft Guidance on Self-Assessment Provisions in Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill expects the Council to have regard to these principles when considering the effectiveness of its governance arrangements.

#### 3.1 Scope of Responsibility

Carmarthenshire County Council (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It must also ensure that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively and to secure continuous improvement in this regard.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the Governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions including having appropriate arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority details how it deals with all aspects of Governance through its Constitution which defines the standards, roles and responsibilities of the Executive, its Members, Committees and its Officers. The Constitution includes a Scheme of Delegation outlining the decision making process, taking into account the relevant legislation.

A **Corporate Governance Group** comprising key Officers and 2 Executive Board Members is in place to inform and monitor progress on issues affecting Governance, including the [Code of Corporate Governance](#), approved by Council in June 2012 and updated by Audit Committee in March 2016, and revisited and presented to Governance and Audit Committee in July 2021. The Chair of the Audit Committee is invited to the Corporate Governance Group meetings in an observer capacity.

The Code of Corporate Governance recognises policies and processes that are consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework '**Delivering Good Governance in Local Government**' (Guidance Notes for Welsh Authorities 2016 Edition – Published September 2016). This framework identifies 7 key principles of good governance which complement the Well-being of Future Generations Act requirements.

This Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the various elements of the Governance Framework.

### 3.2 The Governance Framework

The Council sees Corporate Governance as “doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.” The Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and also the way it accounts to, engages with and leads the Community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of Internal Control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It aims to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives. It evaluates the likelihood and impact of identified risks being realised and to manage individual risks appropriately.

Our duty under the Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 is to ensure that governance is effective for ensuring that

- we are using our resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
- our governance is effective for securing the above

### 3.3 The Governance Environment

The CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework sets out 7 fundamental principles of Corporate Governance. The 'CIPFA Seven' are:

1. **Integrity and Values** - *Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.*
2. **Openness and engagement** - *Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.*
3. **Making a difference** - *Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.*

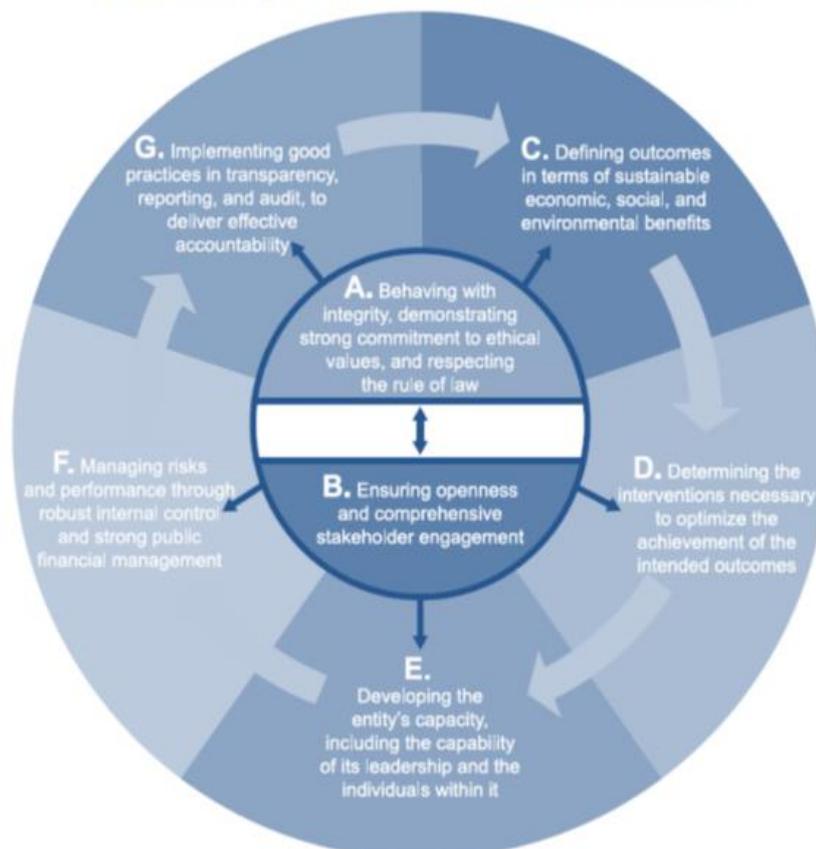
4. **Making sure we achieve what we set out to do** - *Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.*
5. **Valuing our people; engaging, leading and supporting** - *Developing capacity and the capability of leadership and individuals.*
6. **Managing risks, performance and finance** - *Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.*
7. **Good transparency and accountability** - *Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.*

Since 2018/19 the Council has had a Well-being Objective on Building a Better Council and Making Better Use of Resources and the steps taken to achieve this objective are sub headed by the above 7 principles.

Sitting behind these principles are 91 behaviours which guide our work.

The Council has created a Well-being Objective on Better governance and use of resources (Well-Being Objective 13) with an action plan for delivery which embeds the above 7 principles thus demonstrating that the Council commits itself to each of these principles.

### Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times



The Authority addresses the 7 Fundamental Principles through the following:



### 3.3.1 Integrity and Values - *Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.*

<b>3.3.1.1 Standards Committee</b>
❖ <b>How we do it</b>
Standards Committee, chaired by a lay member, oversees standards of members conduct, arranges training for members of the Council and members of Town and Community Councils on the Code of Conduct, and considers applications for dispensations to participate in meetings where members identify personal and prejudicial interests in the business in hand. The Chair of Standards Committee presents an annual report to full Council on the Standards Committee's activities.
This Committee also has oversight of the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.
❖ <b>How well are we doing and how do we know?</b>
No referrals were made by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about the conduct of Carmarthenshire members, either to the Standards Committee nor the Adjudication Panel for Wales during 2020/21.
The lay member chair of the Standards Committee delivered the Committee's annual report to County Council on the 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2022 and had no areas of concern to raise.
❖ <b>What and how can we do better?</b>
From May 2022 onwards new provisions introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will require Group Leaders to work with the Standards Committee to promote good conduct amongst the members of their Groups.

### 3.3.1.3 The Constitution

#### ❖ How we do it

The Authority adopted a new form of Constitution in the form promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government upon the modernisation of local government, following the Local Government Act 2000, and this has been kept under constant review since then to ensure that it meets the needs of the Authority and its regulators in terms of transparency of Governance, accountability and decision making.

The Constitution is published on the Council's website and essentially explains the way the Council operates and how it takes decisions. It comprises 8 parts, namely:

1. *Summary & Explanation – a brief overview of the make-up of the Council and its decision making bodies.*
2. *The Articles – a fuller description of the Council and its constituent parts.*
3. *Functions / Delegations - This Part explains which Members are responsible for which decisions, and in particular whether they are decisions which can only be taken by the Council, or only by the Executive Board, and the decisions which have been delegated to officers to take under a Scheme of Delegation.*
4. *Rules of Procedure - including the rules relating to the Conduct of Council and Committee meetings (commonly known as “**Standing Orders**”), rules relating to proceedings of the ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees, rules relating to access to information, [Contract Procedure Rules](#), [Financial Procedure Rules and Officer Employment Rules](#).*
5. *Codes & Protocols - Amongst the Codes included in this Part is the statutory [Code of Conduct for Members](#). In this respect Members' conduct is strictly governed whether it be in respect of their role as Councillors or as decision makers. In particular Members having a personal and prejudicial interest in any business being transacted at meetings have to declare their interest and withdraw from the meeting (unless they have obtained a dispensation to participate).*
6. *a) Councillors and Co-Opted Members' Scheme of Allowances - which sets out the respective Job Profiles and Personal Specifications for Members, Executive Board Members, and Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees, as well as details of payments which Members are entitled to. In relation to payments to Members as of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, which is the body formed to determine Members' payments (now called “salaries”), used its new powers to actually prescribe the amounts to be paid as opposed to prescribing maximum payments which could be made. The purpose of this prescription was to make payments more consistent across Wales*  
*b) Management Structures.*
7. *Names & Addresses of Councillors.*
8. *Bilingual Composition of ~~Executive Board~~ the Cabinet and Committees.*

The Constitution is a living document and individual amendments are reported to Council for decision on an as and when required basis, following consideration by the Constitutional Review Working Group.

The biggest change the Authority made to its Constitution during 2020/21 was to use the flexibilities granted to local authorities during the COVID19 pandemic to hold its formal meetings wholly online. In line with Legislation the ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet Member attend Scrutiny Committee. It is an expectation for ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet Members to attend the Scrutiny Committee/s relevant to their portfolios to present reports and answer questions.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

At its meeting of the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021 The Council committed to becoming a Diverse Council. Its draft Diversity in Democracy Action Plan was endorsed by Council on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

From May 2022 onwards we will be introducing a hybrid democratic meetings model which will allow members to choose whether to attend meetings physically or attend online.

**3.3.1.4 Corporate Governance Group**❖ **How we do it**

As stated in Section 3.1, a Corporate Governance Group has been established to co-ordinate, manage and report on the Governance arrangements of the Authority. The Group comprises:

- Cabinet Member - Resources
- Cabinet Member - Business Manager
- Chair of Governance and Audit Committee (in an observer capacity)
- Director of Corporate Services (s.151 Officer)
- Head of Administration & Law (Monitoring Officer)
- Head of Financial Services
- Head of IT and Corporate Policy
- Corporate Policy Manager
- Assistant Chief Executive (People Management)
- Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance
- People Services Manager
- Nominated substitutes allowable

The Group are responsible for updating the Code of Governance and developing the Annual Governance Statement, for the approval by:

- the Leader
- the Chief Executive
- the Governance and Audit Committee in compliance with the requirements of The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

In addition, the Group oversees the work of the Information Management Group.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

Co-ordinated approach the drafting of the Annual Governance Statement and challenge of the contents, to ensure it reflects the actual governance position and what improvements are required. Action plan produced annually, these governance issues monitored through the quarterly Governance Group Meetings.

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

Improve on the timescale for producing the Annual Governance Statement.

**3.3.1.5 Monitoring Officer****❖ How we do it**

The Monitoring Officer (Head of Administration & Law) is responsible for maintaining the Constitution to ensure that it reflects up to date legislative requirements and the Authority's Governance needs and is also responsible for ensuring that the provisions are fully complied with at all levels of the Authority's activities. As Chief Legal Officer supported by the in-house legal team, the Monitoring Officer has access to all meetings of the Authority including the ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet and the Authority's Corporate Management Team. The Monitoring Officer is well placed to play a proactive role in supporting Members and Officers in both formal and informal settings to comply with the law and with the Authority's own procedures. As the Head of Service with ultimate responsibility for the Democratic Services Unit, the Monitoring Officer is also responsible for the formal recording and publication of the democratic decision-making process.

The Monitoring Officer works closely with the Chief Executive as the Head of Paid Service and the Section 151 Officer in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and will report to Council or the Executive Board if she considers that any proposal will give rise to unlawfulness.

There is an All-Wales Network of Monitoring Officers which meets on a quarterly basis to discuss topical issues and share best practice, which the Monitoring Officer attends.

**❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?**

The Monitoring Officer did not have to publish any statutory report during the 2020/21 year.

**❖ What and how can we do better?**

The Monitoring Officer did not have to publish any statutory report during the 2020/21 year.

### 3.3.2 Openness and engagement - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

#### 3.3.2.1 Consulting and Engaging with Citizens and Service Users

##### ❖ How we do it

The Authority has a well-established method of consulting and engaging with citizens and service users. There are numerous network groups representing a range of interests from the youth forum to the ageing well network as well as fora that we engage to seek the views of those with specified protected characteristics as recognised by The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

The Council publishes all its on-going consultations on the Council website.

The Authority also makes extensive use of the annual *National Survey for Wales* commissioned by Welsh Government. The results are used to help the Authority in its self-assessment of services and are included in our Annual Report. However, parts of this survey has been accepted by COVID-19 Pandemic and the same level of detail is not as available as in previous years -but we plan to resume full analysis when available.

The Authority has been webcasting all Full Council meetings since May 2013 and Planning Committee since November 2014 and Cabinet meetings from September 2015. Since October 2020 the Council has also been webcasting its virtual Scrutiny Committee meetings.

The Authority normally undertakes extensive consultation on its Budget annually, which includes seminars, Insight events for young people, on-line surveys, social media, and stake holder meetings with Town and Community Councils and Unions. As was the case in 2020/21, this again had to be taken forward in a different way this year as a result of the late announcement of the budget and pandemic restrictions but there were virtual consultation sessions and online survey. The results of the consultations are considered and presented to Cabinet and County Council as part of the Budget Strategy Report.

##### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

Evidence suggests that there has been an increase in participation of online consultations. Specifically, when evaluating comparable consultations. For example, the Welsh in Education strategic plan consultation in 2017 received 21 completes whilst in 2021 the consultation received 854. Additionally, a recent Housing and regeneration masterplan received 2522 completed surveys in comparison to 189 in a similar survey run in 2018. The increase in participation is attributed to the closer relationship developed with the Media and Marketing team ensuring that consultations are promoted on social media and corporate website and are sent to all key stakeholders.

##### ❖ What and how can we do better?

We are currently in the process of developing an Engagement and consultation plan for the local authority. Specifically, we are looking to develop a system whereby colleagues can submit a consultation request to ensure that all relevant key stakeholders are contacted and to ensure sufficient time is allocated for each consultation. Additionally, we are examining options on improving the consultations page on the corporate website. The page can improve continuous engagement and in addition ensure that consultees can view the results of the consultations they have participated in.

We recognise that there is more that we can do to further develop and improve the way we engage. We will review our current approach and consider further improvements we can make to ensure we broaden our

range stakeholder input and ensure greater engagement from a representative cross-section of our residents and other stakeholders.

### 3.3.2.2 Dealing with Complaints

#### ❖ How we do it

The Authority has a [Complaints Policy](#) (adopted in 2021/22) based on an All-Wales model and issued by the Complaints Standards Agency under powers contained within Section 36 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. The [procedure for complaints and compliments](#) is outlined and statistics and analysis of the complaints received are reported as part of quarterly performance monitoring.

The Authority has a centralised Complaints Team for most services which ensures compliance with the requirements set out in our Policy and Procedure and consistency of approach across the whole Authority. During 2017/18, it was agreed that Adult Social Care Complaints would be managed by the Communities Department.

The Authority investigated and responded to 930 complaints during 2021/22 compared to 673 during 2020/21.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

Quarterly reports are provided to the Corporate Management Team with more detailed reports provided to departments monthly in order to monitor trends, identify problem areas and generate service improvement based on customer experience.

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

The Complaints Team is committed to supporting and working with departments to further develop our way of working and handling complaints. Arrangements for great analysis of complaints trends and patterns are being put in place in order to improve learning from complaints and sharing of knowledge and understanding.

Further work will also be undertaken to support the undertaking of investigations relating to complaints in order to ensure a consistent and thorough response across all Council services.

Officers are currently working on a comprehensive review of the customer service that we as a Council provide and how we can further improve the customer journey. The aim is to enable more contacts to be fully and properly resolved at first point of contact, avoiding passing calls to the 'back office'. We already know that people access information and complete council services via a host of different channels, and we know this is not currently being done consistently. We want to ensure that information and services can be accessed in multiple different ways, regardless of the access point or channel of communication.

### 3.3.2.3 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

#### ❖ How we do it

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales considers complaints from Members of the public in relation to Members' conduct, and maladministration and has powers to instigate investigations of his or her own initiative. His Report is published annually.

S.16 Ombudsman's Reports (i.e. Public interest reports) are reported to County Council as required by law.

We provide data on a quarterly basis to the Ombudsman's Complaints Standards Agency, which is an Agency created to drive improvements across Authorities in relation to complaints handling and outcomes.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

No Public Interest Reports were issued against the Authority during the 2020/21 year  
No referrals were made for hearings into any complaints about members conduct, either to the Authority's Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

The Ombudsman issued revised Guidance during the year on Good Administration and Good Records Management which we will need to cascade to officers.  
The PSOW carried out an investigation during the year into homelessness and Carmarthenshire was one of the 3 Authorities chosen for the investigation. Findings from the review will be considered.

### 3.3.2.4 Ensuring Effective External Communication

❖ **How we do it**

The Authority's Marketing and Media team promotes the work of the council and supports proactive engagement with members of the public, helping them to access information on council services.

Since the introduction of My Hwb account (for online services and payments), 78,163 residents have signed up for the service. We are adding more services online and reviewing our existing e-forms to ensure that they are easy to use.

The Hwb in Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli offer pre-booked appointments and drop-in advice to an average 8,000 residents per month, as well as providing advice and access to training and employment support. This had to be taken forward in a different way during 2020/21 due to COVID19 restrictions and the establishments having to be closed. Customers have been able to contact online and telephone and virtual meetings have been held. The increasing use of Social Media has allowed open engagement and conversations with members of the public. In addition to this social media is an excellent tool for promoting council services.

The Marketing and Media teamwork with the Cabinet and Departmental Management Teams to plan proactive communications, supporting service areas to engage with the right people, at the right time, in the right way.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

Throughout 2021/22 we have seen an increase in residents and businesses accessing information, support and council services online, the number of visits to our website has increased yet again this year by a further 7%.

The pandemic without a doubt has supported this increase to the website and how we present information bilingually, often at very short notice has been welcomed and complimented by the public. Our digital platforms have been essential in providing accurate, timely information across as broad an

audience as possible. Customer services have been able to guide many calls to the website and providing detail through our frequently asked questions feature has improved the consistency and simplicity in how we respond to enquiries.

Accessibility of information is key and we are proud to have this year passed the accessibility standard. It is so important to remember that residents, visitors and businesses are now accessing the website in various ways and interestingly 58.9% access using their mobile device. This is key when considering how to present information to ensure we engage to as a wider audience as possible.

Key stats CCC website 2021 / 2022

- Pageviews: 6,144,228
- Sessions: 3017983

Social media, video content and email have been very effective at sharing official updates and driving traffic back to key services.

Key stats for social media, email marketing and video

- 19.3m Twitter reach
- 8.82m Facebook reach
- Published 3259 posts
- Dealt with 4055 'inbound' posts, enquiries via comments, written on our wall or sent as a direct message
- 53.3k link clicks
- Facebook – New followers – 1,201. Total followers: 20,451
- Twitter – New followers – 372. Total followers 11,151
- 443,141 emails sent to MyAccount, businesses and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. 267,018 unique opens.
- Video – 115,800 views

\*All stats are from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Detailed website reports are available here:

<http://intranet/our-people/marketing-media/digital-communication/website-statistics/>

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

We need to Continue to look at ways in how we can reach our external customers in an easy to understand and consistent manner.

We need to continually promote service change and the work of the council so that residents fully understand what we as a Council deliver.

### 3.3.3 Making a difference - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

#### 3.3.3.1 Purpose and Vision

##### ❖ How we do it

The Authority has a firm mechanism for collaboration with key partners and is a statutory member of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB). The Well-being of Future Generations Act puts a well-being duty on specified public bodies across Carmarthenshire to act jointly through the PSB. The PSB is tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Carmarthenshire.

[www.thecarmarthenshirewewant.wales](http://www.thecarmarthenshirewewant.wales)

- In May 2018 the PSB published a Well-being plan which sets out its local objectives to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the County and the steps it proposes to take to meet them. The PSB has produced Well-being Annual Reports on the progress of this plan.

##### Preparation for the next PSB Well-being Plan

- One of the requirements of a PSB is to prepare a Local Well-being Plan every five years, using a Well-being Assessment to feed into the planning phase. This PSB has produced a second Assessment at a time when considerations about the current and future well-being of Carmarthenshire has never been so important. The issues presented by COVID-19, climate change, Brexit and changing demographics have highlighted new challenges for individuals and communities and these challenges have not been felt equally. Those who were already experiencing inequalities because of poor health, poverty or because they live in marginalised communities have been hardest hit by the direct and indirect harms of the pandemic and are likely to experience additional disadvantage as we shift to 'recovery.'
- Carmarthenshire PSB has worked collaboratively locally and regionally to produce this assessment. Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire PSB's have worked in partnership to share resources, expertise and capacity in order to reduce the duplication of work. Officers from the three PSBs and Regional Partnership Board (RPB)/West Wales Care Partnership have worked together to develop a consistent methodology and approach which would culminate in three Well-being Assessments (one for each PSB) and a Population Needs Assessment for the RPB.
- Working in this way ensured that the assessments' production was collaborative (between public sector partners and the third sector) in terms of data provision, analysis and interpretation.
- This Well-being Assessment has drawn together local and national data. Responses gathered as part of community engagement sessions are considered alongside analysis of various sources of data and research. Clear themes have been identified in our county, which will allow us to target areas of need when we move from the assessment to planning phase over the course of the next year.
- The Well-being Assessment will be the foundation and evidence on which to prepare our Well-being Plan for the county. The Carmarthenshire PSB has a statutory responsibility to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of our county by contributing to the achievement of the seven national Well-being Goals. This includes our work on setting local objectives to maximise our contribution to meeting those goals and demonstrating how we use the Sustainable Development Principle and Five Ways of Working in everything we do. Our Plan will set out the short, medium and long-term actions to be achieved by the PSB over the next five years up to 2028.

##### Carmarthenshire County Council's Corporate Strategy

- The Well-being Objectives of the Carmarthenshire PSB are not intended to address the core services and provision of the individual partners, rather they are to enhance and add value through collective action. The statutory partners of the PSB (Council, Health Board, Fire & Rescue Service and Natural Resources Wales) each have to publish their own Well-being Objectives.

For 2018/19 we set a New Corporate Strategy that consolidated four plans into one.

- It superseded the 2015-20 Corporate Strategy
- It incorporated our Improvement Objectives as required by the Local Government Measure 2009
- It set our Well-being Objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. For the first time in Wales, there is a shared vision and set of goals for all public bodies to work towards, our Well-being Objectives are set to maximise our contribution to these
- It included Carmarthenshire County Council's Cabinet's key projects and programmes for the next 5 years as set out in 'Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire: the next 5 years'

We review the strategy and its improvement plans and Well-being Objectives annually and keep the action plans and targets supporting the objectives up to date.

The laws that shape councils' approach to corporate planning are changing. Under the previous performance and governance regime, all councils had improvement duties which required them to set out their improvement objectives, and how they would achieve them, and to publish their plans to improve service delivery. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 is repealing the regime in stages. From 1 April 2021, instead of improvement duties, councils have duties to review, assess and report on how well they are exercising their performance requirements. Under the Act, performance requirements relate to whether councils are exercising their functions effectively; whether they are using resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and whether their governance arrangements are effective.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

During 2021-22 working with the PSB our second well-being Assessment has been prepared and we have made a considerable step forward on our previous assessment. The new assessment is due to be published in June 2022.

We met with the Audit Wales and the Future Generations Commissioners Office to discuss the draft assessment and they were very complimentary and made some minor suggestions for further improvement. The PSB received the assessment and were very satisfied with the breadth and readability of the document. This well-being Assessment can be used to inform each partners Corporate Planning development and Well-being Objective setting.

The Corporate Strategy was updated in June 2019 and in April 2021 to make sure that the Well-being Objectives were still relevant.

- The Strategy was well received by Scrutiny Committees and by Cabinet.
- Departmental and Service Business Plans were aligned to these Well-being Objectives. The steps to achieve each Well-being Objective were outlined and detailed actions and targets set for each step.
- Scrutiny Committees challenged business plans that were set to support the corporate strategy and feedback during the 2021-22 business planning cycle requested further consideration of specific measures and SMART actions to be included in business plans. It was agreed that future business plans would be enhanced, and templates prompt more measures and SMART actions. As a result, a new Engagement and Assurance process was introduced for the 2022-23 business planning cycle (undertaken during October 2021-January 2022) in order to further strengthen the business planning approach and support embedding of self-assessment.
- The actions and targets set out in business plans for each Well-being Objective was monitored and quarterly reported to CMT, Cabinet and scrutiny.

In September 2021, the Audit Wales report - [A Picture of Local Government](#) reported that

*Nationally comparable data on recent council performance is variable across service areas.*

*There is a range of public data showing aspects of performance in local government. However, nationally comparable data does not exist for some service areas. Data for some years is not available, and the data is not available in one place, making it difficult for the public to compare their council's performance with others across Wales. Para 28*

Nationally Data Cymru is developing a Self-Assessment Data set as a resource so that we can use comparable performance information to inform self-assessment or help us understand, at a strategic level, how we are performing.

As a Council we already have a lot of data that we report and this needs to be better harnessed and consolidated. We want to make better use of data and we have set up a 'Data Insight' unit to corporately ensure that we become a data driven authority.

Furthermore, we are stepping up the use of data within our business planning.

We presently have 13 Well-being Objectives and we will be reviewing these following Local Government elections in May 2022 and publishing a new Corporate Strategy.

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

- For the PSB's second well-being Assessment (undertaken every five years) we will:-
  - Promote the well-being assessment more with partners and with the Council's elected members and services
  - Ensure it continues to inform our Corporate Strategy and Well-being Objectives formulation
  - Address key findings that apply to the council and play a full part in our partnership response to meeting the needs identified.
- We will review and reinvigorate our Corporate Strategy and Well-being Objectives post Local Government Elections May 2022 making sure that we address identified needs.
- We will focus on in the development of Council Service level data to assist with Council quarterly reporting and annual reporting of performance.
- We will make better use of data with our new data insight unit leading this development across the Authority.

#### 3.3.3.2 Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015

##### ❖ How we do it

##### Where change needs to happen in Corporate Governance

The Act identifies..... *'a core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies (SPF1 Para 47). Applying the requirements of the Act to these activities is likely to most effectively secure the type of change required'.*

1. Corporate & Service Planning
2. Financial Planning
3. Asset Management
4. Workforce Planning
5. Procurement
6. Risk Management
7. Performance Management

Self-assessment is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position in order to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. Self-assessment is more than stating what arrangements are in place it is about considering how effective these arrangements are and how they can be improved.

The general purpose of the Act, is to ensure that the governance arrangements of public bodies for improving the well-being of Wales, take the needs of future generations into account. The Act is designed to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with sustainable development principles. The law states that:

- i. We must carry out sustainable development, improving the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. The sustainable development principle is: '*... the public body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*'
- ii. We must demonstrate 5 ways of working:
  - Long term
  - Integrated
  - Involving
  - Collaborative
  - Preventative
- iii. We must work towards achieving all of the 7 national well-being goals in the Act. Together they provide a shared vision for public bodies to work towards a:
  - prosperous Wales
  - resilient Wales
  - healthier Wales
  - more equal Wales
  - Wales of cohesive communities
  - Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
  - globally responsible Wales

As a public body we must publish our Well-being Objectives that maximise our contribution to these National Well-being Goals.

List of the 2021/22 Well-being Objectives

1. Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life experiences
2. Help children live healthy lifestyles
3. Support and improve progress, achievement, and outcomes for all learners
4. Tackle poverty by doing all we can to prevent it, helping people into work and improving the lives of those living in poverty
5. Creating more jobs and growth throughout the county
6. Increase the availability of rented and affordable homes
7. Help people live healthy lives (tackling risky behaviour and obesity)
8. Support community cohesion, resilience and safety
9. Support older people to age well and maintain dignity and independence in their later years
10. Looking after the environment now and for the future
11. Improving the highway and transport infrastructure and connectivity
12. Promoting Welsh Language and Culture
13. Better Governance and Use of Resources

We included our Statutory Well-being Statement in the New Corporate Strategy. This sets out our governance arrangements to support our planned outcomes.

### Well-being Statement

1. We feel that our Well-being Objectives contribute significantly to the achievement of the National Well-being Goals. Our Well-being Objectives relate to different aspects of life's course and address well-being in a systematic way.
2. These Well-being Objectives have been selected from considerable consultation feedback and a range of different sources of information on need, performance data and regulatory feedback. In developing action plans to achieve these objectives we will involve people (in all their diversity) with an interest in achieving them.
3. The steps we take to achieve the Well-being Objectives (our action plans) look to ensure that long term, preventative, integrated, collaborative and involvement approaches are fully embraced
4. Cabinet member has a specific responsibility for the overall Act. In addition, each Executive Board portfolio holder has responsibility for relevant Well-being Objectives.
5. The content of action plans to achieve the Well-being Objectives are adequately resourced and embedded in Service business to achieve these objectives services will 'join-up' and work together, work with partners and fully involve citizens in all their diversity.
6. Our Objectives are long term but our action plans will include milestones that will enable monitoring and assurance of progress.
7. To ensure that our Well-being Objectives are deliverable and that the expectations of the Act are embraced we will adapt financial planning, asset management, risk assessment, performance management and scrutiny arrangements

### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

#### **Annual Report on 2020/21**

In October 2021 we published an Annual Report on 2020/21. It was produced by the Council because we believe we should provide comprehensive and balanced information to the public about our services, so that they can see how we are performing and the challenges we are facing.

- In November 2021 Audit Wales certified that we had assessed our performance in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure and gave positive feedback.
- The Strategy was well received by Scrutiny Committees and by Cabinet.
- We used a range of information to inform our self-assessment of each Well-being Objective and triangulate evidence to make a judgement on progress.

#### **Corporate Strategy (incorporating Well-being Objectives) 2021/22**

For our 13 Well-being Objectives we identified the key steps we will take to achieve them and then via business plans identified key actions and measures for each step.

<b>Number of Steps set out to support the 13 Well-being Objectives</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>360-deliverables monitored on PIMS quarterly</b>
<b>Number of measures</b>	<b>82</b>	
<b>Number of actions</b>	<b>278</b>	

We have been monitoring our progress for each Well-being objective throughout 2021-22 with 87% on target at Q3.

### ❖ What and how can we do better?

- We need to continue to promote the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the sustainable development principle and when we reset our Corporate Strategy and Well-being Objectives following Local Government elections we will undertake a full promotional campaign and ensure that the organisation fully aligns to the delivery of our plans.
- We will establish clear governance mechanism to drive progress against each Well-being Objective.
- We will further drive the expectations of the Future Generations Act and the sustainable development 5 ways of working principles.
- We need to develop more ownership of our Well-being Objectives and lead roles.
- We will look to identify priority themes and service areas to support delivery of the well-being objectives

### 3.3.3.3 Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021

#### ❖ How we do it

The Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 provides for the establishment of a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance. It replaces the Local Government Measure 2009. [Part 6 of the Act outlines new duties in respect of Performance and Governance of Principal Councils](#) and includes specific duties for the Council:

- Duty to keep performance under review;
- Duty to consult on performance;
- Duty to report on performance – based on self-assessment approach;
  - We must set out conclusions on the extent to which we have met the performance requirements and any actions we plan to take or have taken to increase the extent to which we are meeting these performance requirements

The performance requirements are the extent to which:

- We are exercising our functions effectively.
- We are using our resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
- Our governance is effective for securing the above
- Duty to arrange a panel performance assessment
- Duty to respond to a panel performance assessment report.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

To prepare for the expectations of the new Act we have adjusted business plan templates and increased their emphasis on self-assessment. See more on business planning in section. 3.3.4.1

We have placed a lot more emphasis on self-assessment.

The Chief Executive has given clear messages that open and honest self-assessment of Service performance is required and that data gaps need to be closed.

Self-assessment is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position in order to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. Self-assessment is more than stating what arrangements are in place it is about considering how effective these arrangements are and how they can be improved

#### The role of the AGS in self-evaluation

*Considering the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements is a corporate, organisational assessment rather than an assessment of individual services. For example, it should consider the role of leadership, and the effectiveness of the relationship between the political leadership and senior officers in the council, in ensuring the council is able to respond to the changing environment in which it operates. It is about a council being self-aware, understanding whether it is delivering the right outcomes, and challenging itself to continuously improve how it manages delivery of services and performs as the custodian of the area. Para 2.7 of the Statutory guidance.*

Self-assessment is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position in order to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. Self-assessment is more than stating what arrangements are in place it is about considering how effective these arrangements are and how they can be improved (Para 2.6)

- Clearly this AGS document evaluates the Corporate Governance arrangements of the Council and needs to go beyond stating what arrangements were in place to considering how effective these arrangements are. Therefore, we are taking this How well are we doing? How do we know? What and how can we do better? approach.

**❖ What and how can we do better?**

- Newly introduced integrated performance monitoring reports need to be further developed.
- Service Annual Reports need to feed into Corporate quarterly monitoring when available and feed into the Council's Annual Report.
- Key Steering Group performance reporting needs to feed into corporate performance reporting

**3.3.3.4 Leader's Annual Report and Five-Year Plan****❖ How we do it**

Following local government elections in May 2017 the previous Leader was re-appointed at the AGM of the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

The Authority's Administration is a Coalition between Plaid Cymru and the Independents with Plaid holding the Leader's post and the Deputy Leader being from the Independent Group.

In January 2018 the Cabinet approved their 'Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire: the next 5-years' plan. The plan identifies almost 100 priority projects, schemes or services the Cabinet want to deliver over the next 5-years. The Authority's Corporate Strategy incorporates the key projects and programmes within this plan.

**❖ What and how can we do better?**

With the recent elections and new Leader appointed in the AGM held in May 2022, work will commence with the new administration producing the 5 year plan.

### 3.3.4 Making sure we achieve what we set out to do - *Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.*

#### 3.3.4.1 Managing Performance / Scrutiny Function

##### ❖ How we do it

The Corporate Strategy's Well-being Objectives identify the key steps that will be taken to deliver the objectives. These steps are supported by detailed actions and targets that are identified in Service and Department Business Plans. These actions and targets are monitored on the Council's Performance Information Monitoring System (PIMS). This enables responsible officers to update progress on a quarterly basis that can be monitored and approved by Heads of Service and reviewed at Departmental Management Teams. On a quarterly basis the Corporate Management Team and Executive Board Cabinet Members examine performance on 'Dashboards'.

Scrutiny committees receive quarterly Performance Management reports as well as the end of year report. Reports are prepared to respond to the specific portfolio areas of each committee. Supplementary and more detailed Performance reports are on Sickness absence and wellbeing are reported in Q2 and Q4.

PIMS Dashboards are currently being developed for analysing performance informatics on a range of service areas.

The Authority is a partner in the Public Services Board (PSB) and the Council's Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee receives an Annual Performance Report from the incumbent Chair of the PSB. Approved minutes from PSB meetings are presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for their consideration and comments are reported back to the PSB.

### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

#### During 2021/22 a new Performance Management Framework was introduced.

This framework sets out the Council's approach to monitoring and managing the performance of the Council's services and responds to the performance and governance requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The aim of this Performance Management Framework is to keep the Council on track and focused on delivery of its key priorities, by providing councillors, managers and staff with the information and tools they need to deliver high-quality and high-performing services which help to achieve good outcomes for residents.

The Framework follows a Plan/Do/Review approach and embraces the word SIMPLER

#### New Integrated Quarterly Monitoring Reports

- Previously our monitoring reports tended to monitor the actions and targets we set ourselves in business plans to deliver our Well-being Objectives. We only looked at much wider evidence in our end of year Annual Reporting. This was missing the opportunity of giving a more rounded picture of performance throughout the year.
- Therefore, from Quarter 2 onwards we introduced more integrated performance monitoring reports. These analytical reports built on the information outlined in dashboard reports and added ongoing Member feedback and Task and Finish Scrutiny investigations, Customer feedback (complaints and compliments) Financial, Internal and external audit findings, risk, people management, asset, risk, latest news and other relevant data to build up a more rounded picture of progress.  
Detailed Action Plan responses to the Quarterly Report findings are tracked through.

Previous Quarterly Monitoring Reports	New Quarterly Monitoring Reports
Progress on Actions and Measures for each Well-being Objective	Progress on Actions and Measures for each Well-being Objective + Scrutiny Member Task and Finish Review Findings + People Management Issues + Financial Performance + Regulatory Report Findings + Internal Audit Findings + Risk Management + Procurement + Asset Management + TIC + Compliments and Complaints + PSB Needs assessment findings + National Milestones set by Welsh Government + Other PESTLE relevant information
	+ Detailed Action Plan responses to the Quarterly Report findings are tracked through.

#### Business Planning

- Our Departmental Business Plans received some criticism at Scrutiny – and the Environment and Public Protection Committee refused to receive the 2021/22 Environment Departmental Plan and other Departmental Business Plan elements under the remit of this Scrutiny. Departments were required to

resubmit strengthened business plans. This demonstrated good Scrutiny but weaknesses in the governance of business planning, lack of performance measures and SMART action planning.

#### Business Plan improvement for 2021/22

- The new Business Plan templated prompted self-assessment, more performance measures and SMART action planning.
- To further strengthen the development of Departmental business plans we set up an Engagement and Assurance Group consisting of representatives from the Well-being of Future Generations Act seven corporate areas of change with an independent Head of Service joining each session. Going forward, options for independent/external input into this approach will be developed.

Area of Corporate Change	Panel Member	Areas of interest
1. Corporate Planning 2. Performance Management	Head of ICT and Corporate Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure alignment to Well-being Objectives</li> <li>• To ensure the plan addresses any areas for improvement identified in the review section.</li> <li>• To ensure regulatory report recommendations are addressed</li> <li>• To ensure the Five ways of Working are addressed</li> </ul>
3. Financial Planning	Head of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure the financial and business planning are aligned</li> <li>• To ensure budget efficiency proposals are aligned with business planning/service impacts</li> </ul>
4. Workforce Planning	Assistant Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure consideration of workforce planning is aligned to future business needs</li> <li>• To ensure TIC findings are addressed</li> </ul>
5. Procurement 6. Risk Management	Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure alignment with procurement forward work programme</li> <li>• To ensure alignment with corporate and service risks</li> <li>• To ensure appropriate action against any Internal Audit findings</li> <li>• To inform future audit work programme</li> </ul>
7. Assets	Head of Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure Asset Management Plans are in Place</li> </ul>
8. Corporate Communication	Marketing & Media Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure customer focus to service provision and development</li> </ul>

Business Planning constructive supporting steps were:-

- The Engagement and Assurance group attended each Departments Management Team to discuss the Department Business Plan.
  - Following this the Chief Executive met each Director to discuss the Departmental Business Plan.
- Departmental Business Plans were also submitted to Scrutiny Committees for discussion

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

- We will promote the new Performance Management Framework and continue its development
- We will continue to develop the new integrated Performance Management quarterly monitoring reports
- We will submit the new integrated Performance Management quarterly monitoring reports to Scrutiny Committees.
- We will continue to develop the Engagement and Assurance Group role in supporting business planning development across departments and services.
- For 2023/24 Business Plans we will rethink our approach to Departmental and Service Business Planning and bring the process forward. Review of self-assessment arrangements undertaken by Ness Young, supported by WLGA. The findings of the review will inform our future approach.

### 3.3.5 Valuing our people; engaging, leading and supporting - Developing capacity and the capability of leadership and individuals.

Following the local government elections in Wales in May 2017 Carmarthenshire County Council had 30 new county councillors, and a comprehensive package of training, development and induction is being provided to them and returning members. Member development and training programme is refreshed on an annual basis.

#### 3.3.5.1 Democratic Services Committee

##### ❖ How we do it

This is a statutory Committee with terms of reference which include promoting and supporting good governance. An important aspect of that aim is secured by the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Members and the appointment of the Chair of the Committee as the Member Development Champion.

#### 3.3.5.2 Managing our Workforce

##### ❖ How we do it

Carmarthenshire County Council has some 8,000 employees who each contribute to the achievement of our Corporate Priorities.

Our staff are supported by the People Management Division who maintain a range of Policies and Procedures to ensure that all staff are managed in a fair and consistent way.

Our Staff are encouraged to develop, and this is consistent with our objectives as an organisation that has been accredited with *Investors in People*.

The management of attendance and supporting the wellbeing of staff is a high priority for the Council. A robust attendance management framework and policy is in place and the Occupational Health function offers wellbeing support and advice with the aim of keeping people in work, providing advice and guidance on healthy living, stress management and mental health in the workplace. This has been particularly important during the COVID19 pandemic where support to staff has been stepped up via wellbeing initiatives and COVID19 specific policies.

Following the implementation of the Single Status Agreement in 2011/12, the Pay and Reward function within People Management Division maintains an overview of the pay and grading structure and provides advice to managers on job evaluation and reward as well as undertaking an equal pay audit every year the most recent of which does not suggest any evidence of discrimination within the pay structures, nor the allowances paid. The pay gaps are generally as a result of segregation of the sexes between job types rather than application of the allowances.

In addition, the Council publishes a Pay Policy by April each year, as required under Section 38 of the Localism Act. The purpose of the statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting the pay of its employees (excluding those working in local authority schools). The Pay Policy is agreed by Full Council and is published on the Authority's website. The Council continues to support its lowest paid employees and workers by continuing to pay the Real Living Wage supplement to ensure that our lowest paid receive the equivalent of £9.90 per hour (including fixed allowances).

The COVID19 pandemic has accelerated a move to agile working especially remote and home working, and it is intended that this will inform how the Council manages its workforce in the future through new ways of working. In particular, the Council is keen to support the Welsh Government's aim to continue to support 30% of its workforce to work closer to their homes. This will impact on accommodation requirements and contribute to the environmental agenda by reducing the need to travel. The Staff Travel Policy will be reviewed to reflect the move to new ways of working

Our Whistleblowing Policy is being used by employees to report serious concerns which may be in the public interest. Online learning, promotion of the policy and monitoring of whistleblowing complaints continues to ensure that employees are aware of it. An online induction system will provide this information to new employees more quickly and effectively. This was introduced in early 2020. Most employees now have access to online information so the communication of these types of key policies will become more inclusive as more people use the online intranet.

### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

#### Investors in People Accreditation

We have been an Investor in People since 2009 and it has been a vital tool to measure the impact of our investment in our people. Our last full review was in 2018, when we achieved the silver award, putting us in the top 40% of all organisations holding the award world-wide. Since then, there have been considerable change across the organisation, and we are in a strong position to build on that achievement.

To maintain the Standard, we are required to undertake a full review every three years. This would have fallen in 2021, however, in view of the pressures of the pandemic it was agreed that this would not be the optimum time to carry out a full assessment. It was therefore agreed with IIP that we would undertake a strategic review in 2021 in preparation for the full review in 2022.

#### Key Findings

- The most striking aspect of this review was to what extent Carmarthenshire County Council's employees had stepped up to deliver the best possible services throughout the challenges of the pandemic.
- The Council has also made huge strides in its digitisation.
- Part of the Better Ways of Working review includes a comprehensive reflection and reset of learning and development, workforce planning and recruitment.
- Innovative appraisal process

**Audit Wales Review of Workforce Management** undertaken early 2022. At the time of writing the draft report had been received and the initial findings stated:

"Overall, we found that:

The Council is improving the strategic planning for its workforce and is taking action to address staff capacity issues in key service areas but recognises that performance monitoring of workforce management needs strengthening.

We reached this conclusion because:

The Council is taking action to improve strategic workforce planning but needs a greater focus on its workforce requirements over the longer-term.

The Council is working to address strategic risks it has identified in relation to workforce capacity, and to strengthen its staff engagement arrangements.

The Council recognises that its corporate arrangements for monitoring performance in relation to its workforce need improving."

**Attendance** - CMT / Cabinet / Scrutiny Committee monitors performance on a regular basis. Also, Heads of Service have access to real time data in relation to attendance (developed during the pandemic to track covid absences)

**H&S Annual Report** – CMT monitoring report

**Employee Wellbeing Annual Report** - CMT monitoring report

### ❖ What and how can we do better?

Ensure our workforce is adequately skilled and developed. We will develop a new Transformation strategy; ensure that Learning & Development priorities and programmes are fully aligned with corporate priorities and needs; further develop the Council's Leadership and Management Programme to support key corporate priorities.

Refresh the council's Core Values. Communicate to the workforce the Chief Executive's vision for the Council. Sell the mission for moving forward. (IIP)

Use existing processes and metrics to manage and change expectations and perceptions internally and externally. (IIP)

Further improve our recruitment processes via the introduction of new integrated recruitment IT system. (IIP)  
The current People Strategy needs to be reviewed in light of the pandemic to support the organisation to recover. We need to develop a new Workforce Strategy.

Workforce Planning – consider the impact of Covid on our workforce and develop a Strategic Workforce Plan based on departmental and corporate workforce requirements.

Employee experience – we need to evaluate the employee experience and undertake research to develop a Workforce Engagement Strategy that will underpin the new Workforce Strategy, which will include a new staff voice mechanism, and develop an annual reporting structure for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Attendance: There has been an increase in the number of days lost due to sickness absence post covid. We need to invest more time in developing proactive preventative solutions such as promoting good health and educating employees on healthy lifestyle choices. We will also continue to ensure managers are adequately trained to manage attendance robustly.

Strengthen the application of the sustainable development principle to improve the way it plans, delivers, and monitors the management of its workforce.

Strengthen the performance management of its workforce by:

- developing a set of performance and outcome measures that reflect the Council's ambitions for its workforce, and monitor these measures at a corporate level, including reporting to overview and scrutiny committee(s)

benchmarking performance on workforce management with other organisations. (*Audit Wales Review of Workforce Management*)

### 3.3.5.3 Scheme of Delegation to Officers

#### ❖ How we do it

The Scheme of Delegation itemises the decisions which are delegated to officers, whether by the Council or by the Cabinet. In exercising delegated powers Officers must comply both with any statutory requirements and the Council's Policy and Budget Framework, amongst other requirements. Any significant decisions have to be recorded and are subject to the call-in rules. Significant executive decisions by officers are published.

The delegations in the Constitution became very pertinent during the early part of the 2020/21 year when it became impossible to convene formal physical meetings of the Authority due to the implications of the coronavirus pandemic – things such as the fast pace of decisions needing to be taken and the inability to meet the statutory timelines imposed for the convening of formal meetings of members, the rules prohibiting meetings from being wholly virtual, some members needing to shield and making it more difficult to achieve the quorum needed for meetings, and the stay at home message – so the emergency delegations in the Constitution had to be called upon to allow officers to make some critical decisions. This period of emergency delegated decision taking by officers was kept to a minimum, and as soon as the rules relating to the conduct of democratic meetings were temporarily relaxed so as to allow 100% online meetings, the Authority resumed democratic meetings, albeit online. The decisions taken by officers during the brief emergency period were published.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

A report on the decisions taken by senior officers under emergency powers during the early days of the pandemic was taken to the Cabinet as soon as virtual meetings were allowed and all decisions taken were endorsed by the Cabinet.

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

The Scheme of Delegation is a living document and needs to be kept under review. It was last updated in County Council on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Some of the revisions approved by the Council related to planning applications and enforcement and are intended to make more effective use of the Planning Committee's time. Whether this outcome has been achieved will need to be monitored.

**3.3.6 Managing risks, performance and finance** - *Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.*

**3.3.6.1 Risk Management**

❖ **How we do it**

The Authority has a Risk Management Steering Group which reports directly to Executive Board, Governance and Audit Committee and Chief Officers' Management Team (CMT). The Risk Management Steering Group comprises an ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet Member Risk Champion (~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet Member for Resources), Departmental Risk Champions and is chaired by the Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance.

The Authority aims to embed good risk management into all its processes including a specific section in Committee Reports for the implications from a Risk Management perspective to be discussed and explained.

Corporate, Service and Project Risks are captured within a Risk Register. We use **"Web Based Risk Register Software"**, which allows Departments to input, access, maintain and manage Service and Project Risks. All Departments have direct inputting access for the Corporate Risk Register.

The Corporate Risk Register is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. A Review of Risk Management Arrangements was carried out by Wales Audit Office during 2018/19, where proposals for improvements were made to strengthen the arrangements in place. An action plan has been completed to implement the improvements.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

A TIC review that concluded in December 2021 noted that *'Although the Covid-19 pandemic initially impacted on the ability to progress the recommendations contained within the WAO Office Review and follow-up Internal Audit Review, a number of key actions have now been implemented and good progress has been made across the action plan in general.'*

One TIC priority was to ensure that all departments move to direct inputting of risk information as early in 2022 as possible – this has already been actioned.

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

Continue to implement the action plans developed in response to the WAO/Internal Audit Review, with priority to be given to ensuring that the Risk Toolkit is formally adopted and used to inform development sessions for managers at a divisional level and dedicated development sessions for Departmental Risk Champions

### 3.3.6.2 Risk Management Steering Group

#### ❖ How we do it

The Risk Management Steering Group examines how Risk Management can be developed and ensure that Risk Management is embedded in decision making throughout the organisation. The Group meet quarterly and is supported by the work of its Sub Groups i.e. Property & Liability Risks, Motor Fleet Risks, and Contingency Planning Sub Groups.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

TIC's December 2021 review concluded that *'The Terms of Reference of the Risk Management Steering Groups and its various sub-groups have recently been reviewed. This will allow the Strategic Group to adopt more of a strategic approach to its consideration of risk management issues, such as undertaking regular reviews of the Corporate Risk Register.'*

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

The Steering Group's role in allocating the £250k of risk management funding could be strengthened by introducing clearer criteria for how this funding is prioritised and spent on an annual basis.

### 3.3.6.3 Scrutiny Committees

#### ❖ How we do it

The Scrutiny Function plays a highly valuable role in ensuring performance improvement and challenge. The role of Scrutiny in "Task and Finish Groups" has clearly had a positive influence on policy development.

The Authority has a well-developed system of performance management. Scrutiny Committees receive a Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 report and an Annual Report on performance which includes an update on all Performance Indicators and Key Actions contained within the Corporate Strategy.

Any 3 Council Members have the constitutional power to call-in executive decisions in respect of their own functional responsibilities, whether taken by the Cabinet collectively or by individual Cabinet Members on their own portfolio areas. In order to allow call in to be exercised no decision taken by the Cabinet or Cabinet Members shall take effect until 5 working days after the decision is published and circulated via e-mail to Members.

In line with the formula set out in the Local Government Measure 2011, the Chairs of two out of the Authority's 5 Scrutiny Committees are allocated to the Opposition.

In October 2020 the Authority updated its Scrutiny Procedure Rules so as to change Cabinet Members roles at Scrutiny Committees and to require them to attend the meetings to present reports and answer questions. This change was welcomed by the Cabinet Members.

Again, as a by-product of the pandemic Scrutiny Committee meetings have been webcast since November 2020.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum meets on a quarterly basis to discuss and propose improvements to the scrutiny function for consideration by the Authority's Constitutional review Working Group; to put forward items for discussion at the biannual meetings with the Cabinet; and acts as a forum for sharing scrutiny good practice.

During 2021/22 the Forum discussed how virtual meetings and the webcasting of scrutiny meetings had worked. The unanimous consensus was that the arrangements had worked well and that attendance levels had been good.

In response to concerns expressed by the Forum an email was sent to all Directorates regarding the number of scheduled reports being pulled at the eleventh hour and therefore appearing on the agenda as non-submissions. The Forum monitored the submission rates after the sending of the email and noted an improvement.

Webcasting viewing figures for each Scrutiny Committee for the period December 2020 to November 2021 were as follows:

Committee	All Views	Live Views	Archived Views
Community & Regeneration	518	100	418
Education & Children	627	98	529
Environment & Public Protection	716	161	555
Policy & Resources	733	155	578
Social Care & Health	426	85	341

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

In October/November 2021 Audit Wales undertook a follow up review of the proposals for improvement identified in their Scrutiny Fit for the Future Report 2018 – the outcome of the review is awaited and will be considered when available. Any agreed suggestions for improvement will be implemented.

A review of the Governance arrangements for both Local Authority Trading Companies (LATC) will be carried out with a view to aligning the arrangements and clarifying the roles of Members and Scrutiny Committees in relation to the LATCs.

### 3.3.6.4 Financial Administration (Section 151 Officer)

#### ❖ How we do it

The Director of Corporate Services is the responsible officer for the administration of the Authority's affairs under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and carries overall responsibility for the financial administration of the County Council.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) previously published a "**Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government**". The Statement describes the role and responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and sets out 5 Key Principles (see below) that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role of CFO in public service organisations and the organisational arrangements needed to support them. Carmarthenshire County Council through the appointment of the Director of Corporate Services fully complies with the Statement.

**Principle 1** - The CFO in a Local Authority is a key member of the Leadership Team, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the Authority's strategic objectives sustainably and in the public interest.

**Principle 2** - The CFO in a Local Authority must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the Authority's overall financial strategy.

**Principle 3** - The CFO in a Local Authority must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole Authority of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently, and effectively.

**Principle 4** - The CFO in a Local Authority must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose.

**Principle 5** - The CFO in a Local Authority must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced. The Financial Services Division provides support to Departments and co-ordinates and supports the budget preparation and financial monitoring process.

The Authority operates to a defined set of Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules which are maintained by the Corporate Services Department with any amendments approved by the Governance and Audit Committee.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

Internal Audit's overall opinion reported in July 2021 to the Governance and Audit Committee: the Authority has an ACCEPTABLE control environment in operation. There are clear Governance arrangements with defined Management responsibilities and Committee Structures in place and the control framework is generally sound and operated reasonably consistently. The Authority has an established Constitution, has developed Policies and approved Financial Procedure Rules that provide advice and guidance to all staff and members.

Financial Procedure Rules and Corporate Procurement Rules are regularly reviewed and updated when appropriate. They will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee in July 2022 for changes to be approved.

In September 2021, Audit Wales issued an unqualified audit report in respect of our 2020-21 Statement of Accounts. These included more than £140million of additional Covid related funding from many different grants.

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

The next financial year will see the creation of a new regional Corporate Joint Committee, for which Carmarthenshire will be the lead authority providing the S151 Officer as well as financial support functions. Recognising this new workload, combined with new arrangements within the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue service, we will be reducing and then ceasing the S151 service to the Fire Authority during the year.

### 3.3.6.5 Dyfed Pension Fund Committee

#### ❖ How we do it

Carmarthenshire County Council is the statutorily appointed Administering Authority for the Dyfed Pension Fund. The Pension Fund Committee comprises of three County Council Members plus a nominated substitute to act in the absence of a Member. The Pension Fund Committee has the following responsibilities:

- To review the performance of the Dyfed Pension Fund, decide on the strategic direction of all matters relating to the investment of the Fund and monitor all aspects of the investment function.
- To determine on Administering Authority Pension Fund matters.

During 2020/21 the Pension Fund Committee was supported by the Director of Corporate Services and Head of Financial Services, the Financial Services Division and an Independent Investment Adviser. The Director of Corporate Services is the Section 151 Officer.

The Fund's Governance Policy sets out in detail the Governance arrangements of the Fund.

The Local Pensions Board established in 2015/16 under the Public Service Pension Act (PSPA) 2013 has an oversight or scrutiny role and is intended to assist the Administering Authority in securing compliance with

regulations and requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The terms have been reviewed; the updated Terms of Reference were approved by Council in May 2021.

Following HM Government's approval of the Wales Investment Pool in November 2016 and the establishment of the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) Joint Governance Committee an extensive procurement process was undertaken to appoint a Financial Conduct Authority regulated Third Party Pool Operator to manage the investments of the 8 Welsh Pension Funds. In November 2017 the WPP Joint Governance Committee approved the appointment of Link Fund Solutions as the Operator.

Carmarthenshire County Council is the Host Authority for the WPP, providing administrative, financial and secretarial support and implementing decisions made by the Joint Governance Committee.

The Authority for 2021/22 has produced a separate Annual Report and Accounts for the Dyfed Pension Fund and therefore further information in respect of governance and activity of both the Fund and the WPP can be found in this document.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

There has been a significant increase in the level of engagement related to climate change, which the fund has proactively engaged in with various organisations. The fund has recognised climate related risk within its investment performance and established a responsible investment policy

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

The Fund's pension committee acknowledged the excellent work on Responsible Investing but it had gone unnoticed so requested that communication on these matters was improved at a local and national level.

### 3.3.6.6 The City Deal

#### ❖ How we do it

On the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018 Carmarthenshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and the Council of the City and County of Swansea signed an Agreement for the establishment of a Joint Committee for the Swansea Bay City Region. The first meeting of the Joint Committee was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018. Carmarthenshire is the Accountable Body for the City Deal function.

The Joint Committee is made up of the Leaders of the four regional Authorities and one non-voting, co-opted member each from the Hywel Dda University Health Board, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

A Joint Scrutiny Committee has also been formed, with the scrutiny function being administered by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

A portfolio of nine programmes and projects has been approved under the Swansea Bay City Deal – three of which are delivered regionally. Under the portfolio Carmarthenshire will deliver two local programmes within its constituent area, Pentre Awel (the Life Science and Well-being development) and Yr Egin (creative and digital cluster), both of which have been approved by both UK and Welsh Government. Further to the locally delivered programmes, Carmarthenshire is the delivery lead for two regional programmes, Skills and Talent Initiative and Digital Infrastructure. These have been approved by both UK

and Welsh Government and will be delivered in collaboration with the three other constituent authorities under the Swansea Bay City Deal.

During the financial year, the Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub conducted an Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Gateway Review at a City Deal portfolio (Gate 0) level. This will assure successful progression and overall delivery, while supporting the SRO in the successful discharge of their duties. The Review was undertaken by an independent, external team in accordance with the Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub Guidelines. Seventeen 'conversations' were held with stakeholders between 19th-21st July 2021 together with a workshop session with the four local authority Leaders.

The review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control and Governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors on which the Joint Committee gains assurance. Internal Audit are required to undertake their work in accordance with the standards as set out in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) established in 2013 are the agreed professional standards for Internal Audit in Local Government.

As required by the Standards, the Head of Internal Audit (Pembrokeshire County Council) prepares an annual report for consideration by the Joint Committee. The format of the Annual Report complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

The SBCD Portfolio received an Amber-Green Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA) rating. The summary finding of the Review were made four recommendations, three of which have been achieved as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

The internal audit report has determined an audit assurance rating of 'Substantial'; There are none or few weaknesses in the adequacy and/or effectiveness of the governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements, and they would either be unlikely to occur or their impact is not likely to affect the achievement of the SBCD objectives. This report was presented to the Joint Committee on within the 2022/23 financial year and was subject to delay in financial year 2021/22 due to the COVID-19 crisis and local elections.

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

The Welsh Cities and Growth Implementation Board were very complimentary in respect of the progress the Swansea Bay City Deal has made and acknowledged that the Portfolio is in full delivery.

The Conclusions from the reports and reviews noted above will identify strengthen governance arrangements and support best practise to ensure the successful the delivery of programmes and projects. Recommendations will be reviewed and implemented within portfolio management, governance and control activities and monitored in line with governance arrangements.

**3.3.6.7 ERW / Y PARTNERIAETH****❖ How we do it**

Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Pembrokeshire are developing a new Partnership Framework that will supersede ERW – Y Partneriaeth -, and this framework will deliver the aspirations and objectives that were previously being provided by ERW.

In respect to professional development of the school workforce and the design and development of a new curriculum, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Pembrokeshire County Councils have agreed a new approach that will supersede the regional consortium ERW. **Partneriaeth** will deliver the aspirations and objectives that were previously being provided by ERW. A new streamlined management and operational staffing structure has been designed and populated and a new legal agreement, business plan and budget agreed. The minimal redundancy costs were met by ERW's surplus budget.

Partneriaeth will be governed by a new Joint Committee in line with a new legal agreement. Regular reports, monitoring the progress of achieving the actions in the business plan, will be presented to the Joint Committee and the Joint Scrutiny Panel, comprising of elected members from the three partner authorities. The budget will be regularly monitored by the Joint Committee and the required statutory reports will be completed as well as a programme of audits undertaken.

**❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?**

Partneriaeth is currently only sitting in shadow form. However, once established the Risk Register will be reviewed regularly and on an annual basis there will be a Welsh Government Challenge and review session as well as ESTYN thematic studies / reviews as requested by Welsh Government. The quality of professional learning/support will be evaluated by participants and an annual survey conducted to ensure that Partneriaeth meets the needs of our schools.

**❖ What and how can we do better?**

Outcomes from the reports, reviews and annual survey noted above will identify areas of success and areas to develop. These will be incorporated into subsequent business plans and monitored in line with the governance structure.

### 3.3.7 Good transparency and accountability\_- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

3.3.7.1 Governance and Audit, Standards and Democratic Services Committees
<p>❖ <b>How we do it</b></p> <p>The Governance and Audit Committee is a key component of Corporate Governance, providing a source of assurance about the Authority's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment and reporting on financial as well as non-financial performance.</p> <p>The Standards Committee (which includes a majority of External Members) promotes high standards of conduct for Members as well as maintaining an overview of the Authority's processes for complaints handling and its Whistleblowing Procedure.</p> <p>The Authority also has a Democratic Services Committee (5 Elected Members) and a statutory designated Head of Democratic Services. The Committee's terms of reference as set by the Authority include securing the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Members, appointing a Member Development Champion and promoting and supporting good governance.</p> <p>The Governance and Audit Committee has received a report on the future changes that affect the committee in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.</p>
<p>❖ <b>How well are we doing and how do we know?</b></p> <p>Governance and Audit Committee meet to agree on their development needs and a training programme agreed.</p>
<p>❖ <b>What and how can we do better?</b></p> <p>Once established the Governance and Audit Committee will conduct a self-assessment of their role and responsibilities to ascertain where further improvement is needed.</p>

3.3.7.2 Internal Audit
<p>❖ <b>How we do it</b></p> <p>The review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control and Governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors on which the Authority gains assurance. Internal Audit is required to undertake its work in accordance with the standards as set out in the <a href="#">Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)</a> established in 2013 are the agreed professional standards for Internal Audit in Local Government.</p> <p>As required by the Standards, the Head of Internal Audit prepares an Annual Report for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee. The format of the Annual Report complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice.</p> <p><i>The overall opinion is that the Authority has an 'Acceptable' control environment in operation. There are clear Governance arrangements with defined Management responsibilities and Committee Structures in place, Risk Management and the control framework is generally sound and operated reasonably consistently. The Authority has an established Constitution, has developed Policies and approved Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules that provide advice and guidance to all staff and members. Sufficient assurance work has been carried out to form a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control environment. Where weaknesses have been identified</i></p>

*through reviews, Internal Audit have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective actions and a timescale for improvement.*

The Authority maintains an effective Internal Audit function. The **Strategic and Annual Audit Plans** are approved by the Governance and Audit Committee annually and regular reports are made to the Committee throughout the year on progress and any significant weaknesses identified.

The Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance in addition to being accountable for the delivery of the Internal Audit Services also has responsibility for the operational management of Revenues and Benefits, as well as Risk and Procurement. To ensure there is no conflict of interest in the audit reviews for the operational areas a protocol has been prepared and was approved by the Audit Committee in September 2018.

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standard (PSIAS) became effective from 1st April 2013 and introduced a requirement for an external assessment of all internal audit services, which must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent reviewer from outside of the organisation.

The two possible approaches to external assessments outlined in the Standards included either a full external assessment or an internal self-assessment which is validated by an external reviewer. Carmarthenshire County Council elected to adopt the self-assessment approach with an external validation undertaken by a suitable qualified and experienced external assessor with the required level of knowledge of the application of the PSIAS, as agreed with the Welsh Chief Auditors' Group. The purpose of the external assessment is to help improve delivery of the audit service to an organisation. The assessment is designed to be a supportive process that identifies opportunities for development which ultimately help to enhance the value of the audit function to the Authority. The self-assessment and the external assessment concluded that the Internal Audit Service is generally conforming.

In addition to the planned work, the Internal Audit Unit undertakes fraud investigation and proactive fraud detection work.

Action plan responses to Internal Audit reviews are entered into the Council's Performance Information Monitoring System (PIMS) and progress is updated quarterly by responsible officers.

#### ❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

- Strategic and Annual Audit Plans presented to Governance and Audit Committee in the March meetings.
- Quarterly updates are provided on the work carried out and Annual Report is presented every July.
- Actions to deliver recommendations made in 2018 Quality Assessment completed.

#### ❖ **What and how can we do better?**

- Consider any improvements identified through the external assessment of Internal Audit's arrangements.
- Introduction of new performance indicators for 2022/2023 with the aim to assisting the service in becoming more efficient.

### 3.3.7.3 External Regulators

#### ❖ How we do it

Services are reviewed during the year by external regulators, such as Estyn, CIW and Audit Wales (formerly Wales Audit Office). The subsequent reports are actioned accordingly.

Each year Audit Wales, as External Auditor to the Authority complete work to meet the following duties:

- ❖ **Audit of Accounts** Each year the Auditor General audits the Council's financial statements to make sure that public money is being properly accounted for.
- ❖ **Value for money** The Council has to put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and the Auditor General has to be satisfied that it has done this.
- ❖ **Continuous improvement** The Council also has to put in place arrangements to make continuous improvements, including related plans and reports, and the Auditor General has to assess whether the Council is likely to (or has) met these requirements.
- ❖ **Sustainable development principle** Public bodies need to comply with the sustainable development principle when setting and taking steps to meet their well-being objectives. The Auditor General must assess the extent to which they are doing this.

We also maintain a log of regulatory reports and recommendations. The external regulatory reviews recommendations or proposals for improvement are entered into the Council's Performance Information Monitoring System and progress is reported quarterly on dashboards. An Annual Report is issued to Audit Committee.

Audit Wales issued a certificate of compliance for our Annual Report for 2020/21 under the 2009 Measure.

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

We track Audit Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales National and Local Regulatory report recommendations and report on them quarterly. We also submit an annual report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

We expect all reports that are going to be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee to go via CMT.

- During the year we have agreed that Estyn national report recommendations will be addressed by the newly created Focus Groups set up to support *The future direction of Education Services in Carmarthenshire 2022 – 2032* key themes and high level priorities.

As outlined in Para 3.3.4.1 we have included regulatory report findings in new Integrated Performance Monitoring reports.

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

- We will produce a protocol/process for dealing with Regulatory Reports to determine what needs to go to CMT/ Cabinet /Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committee.
- We will produce a report to learn from the intervention and turn around arising from the Audit Wales Planning report findings.

### 3.3.7.4 Information Assets

#### ❖ How we do it

The Council's Head of ICT & Policy acts as the Authority's *Senior Information Risk Owner*. A Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) meets regularly in order to safeguard and secure the Authority's information. Minutes of these meetings are provided for consideration to the Corporate Management Team.

There are various safeguards in place to guard against the loss or release of personalised information. These include relevant policies and procedures which are communicated to staff, encryption of laptops, memory storage media and other devices. The Authority employs:

- A Digital Security Officer who advises on data security and external advisers and consultants are employed from time to time to test and advise on the Authority's security arrangements.
- A Data Protection Officer who advises on legal compliance and ensures that policies and procedures are in place and are being adhered to.

These safeguards are subject to ongoing review and include a combination of technical solutions and training for staff involved in handling personal data on the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

#### ❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?

There had been 39 personal data breaches reported this year, which have been discussed at the CIGG.

Details of reported breaches are logged, with a incident report being sent onto the responsible Head of Service for the division along with details and remedial action taken. Two breaches were escalated and reported to the ICO, one by the Council and another by the data subject.

There were 24 breached reported in the previous year with 2 being referred to the ICO, therefore there has been an increase in the number of breaches being reported.

There were 3 cyber incidents reported this year. None of the incidents had caused the loss or destruction of data and it was likely that all three incidents were random and not targeted specifically at the Authority.

#### ❖ What and how can we do better?

It was noted at CIGG that a high number of the reported breaches had involved personal data being emailed to the incorrect email recipient in error.

We will implement warnings to the email system to reduce the human error factor. Breach reports will be added to the PIMS system to increase visibility within each service area.

We will specifically look at high risk service area and look to disable the email auto complete facility which contributes to this type of breach.

We will continue to educate staff highlighting the potential that cyber criminals can steal sensitive information via phishing emails.

<b>3.3.7.5 Review of Effectiveness</b>
<p><b>❖ How we do it</b></p> <p>A review of the effectiveness of our Governance arrangements (including the system of Internal Control) is undertaken regularly by the Corporate Governance Group through its work. That work includes continuous challenge of the governance framework. The AGS is the framework that is used to seek these assurances, through continuous monitoring of actions in the AGS.</p> <p>The review of effectiveness is informed by managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the Governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report and also by comments made by the External Auditors (Wales Audit Office).</p> <p>The effectiveness of the Governance framework draws on evidence and assurances from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Leadership / Executive Board</li> <li>• Executive Board Members</li> <li>• Scheme of Delegation to Officers</li> <li>• The Governance and Audit Committee / Scrutiny Committees / Risk Management Steering Group</li> <li>• Standards Committee</li> <li>• Internal Audit</li> <li>• External Audit</li> <li>• Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</li> </ul>
<p><b>❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?</b></p> <p>Internal Audit view for 2020/21 assessed the process and supporting evidence as adequate. Annual Governance Statement produced timely in line with the closure timetable.</p>
<p><b>❖ What and how can we do better?</b></p> <p>Improve on the completion timetable for the Annual Governance Statement to ensure that it aligns with the earlier closure of accounts timetable, as it is included in the Statement of Accounts.</p>

<b>3.3.7.6 Council</b>
<p><b>❖ How we do it</b></p> <p>The Council meets - online during the period of the pandemic - on a monthly basis and takes decisions on Council functions. Its Agendas are published at least 3 clear days in advance of meetings, and its meetings are open to the public (subject to exemptions) and webcast. Its Minutes are published and are available to the Public. New ways of working group has been established to review the way forward.</p> <p>As from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 all the Authority's democratic meetings are paperless.</p>
<p><b>❖ How well are we doing and how do we know?</b></p> <p>The enforced move to online meetings did not inhibit the democratic process and the provision of training enabled all members to be able to attend meetings and participate online.</p> <p>All our meetings are webcast, thus allowing the public to be able to hear and follow proceedings.</p>
<p><b>❖ What and how can we do better?</b></p> <p>During 2022/23 we will be introducing hybrid meetings, giving members, and the public, choice as to how they wish to attend meetings.</p>

### 3.3.7.7 Leadership / Cabinet

#### ❖ How we do it

The Cabinet takes decisions on executive functions within the policy and budget framework set by the Council. The Agenda is published at least 3 clear days in advance of its meetings and meetings are held in public (subject to statutory exemptions) and webcast. Its Minutes are published, and its decisions are subject to call in by any 3 Council Members. (ref para 3.3.6.3).

The Authority normally meets with Town and Community Councils twice yearly in a formal Forum. However, due to COVID19 one virtual meeting was held in 2020/21 as part of the budget setting consultation.

### 3.3.7.8 Cabinet Members

#### ❖ How we do it

The Cabinet Members have decision making powers in relation to their own portfolio areas. Their decisions are published and are subject to call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committees (ref para 3.3.6.3).

### 3.3.7.9 Governance and Audit Committee

#### ❖ How we do it

The Governance and Audit Committee meets throughout the year to provide independent assurance to the Authority in relation to the effectiveness of the Internal Control Environment and Risk Management Framework.

The Governance and Audit Committee are also responsible for approving the Authority's Statement of Accounts.

Under the **Local Government Wales Measure 2011** it is mandatory for Local Authorities to have an Audit Committee. The Measure provides that there must be an independent External Voting Member on the Audit Committee.

The changes to the Audit Committee are split and will come into force as follows:

Re-naming of Audit Committees came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This section provides for the re-naming of Audit Committees to 'Governance and Audit Committees' and requires the Committee to undertake additional functions, namely those functions set out in Chapter 1 of Part 6 of the Act and:

- (a) review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively;
- (b) make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively

Further changes will come into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 which will require one third of the members of the Governance and Audit Committee to be lay persons and for the lay person to be appointed as Committee Chair. Arrangements for the appointment of the lay members by March 2022.

Job Profiles are in place for both the Chair of Governance and Audit Committee and the Members of Governance and Audit Committee. In line with the Local Government Measure 2011, the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee is has been a Member from the Opposition Group but from May 2022 onwards will be one of the lay members, following a change in the law.

❖ **How well are we doing and how do we know?**

Following a recruitment process recommendations will be made to County Council by the Governance and Audit Committee following the May 2022 election as to appointments to the lay member posts.

❖ **What and how can we do better?**

From May 2022 onwards one third of the Governance and Audit Committee must be lay members which will bring even more independent overview.

### 3.4 Corporate Governance during the COVID19 Pandemic

Normally the Council holds physical meetings, including those of the Full Council, the Cabinet individual Cabinet members and other committees, to make key decisions. Although the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 made provision for remote attendance at such meetings at least 30% of members were required to be physically present in person at the meeting. This requirement was relaxed by Regulations in May 2020, when meetings could be held 100% online.

Interim emergency arrangements therefore had to be put in place for decisions to be taken at a fast pace until the relaxations were enacted. On the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 a decision was taken to suspend most democratic meetings in order to protect members and staff and on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 a decision was taken to close all Council buildings to the public for the same reason. Following the announcement by the Prime Minister of the nationwide 'lockdown' on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, all remaining democratic meetings were suspended.

Alongside these developments, on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the growing pandemic resulted in the senior officers of the authority adopting the Gold/Silver Command structure under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

In the absence of any formal meetings of the ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet and Full Council, senior officers have exercised the powers granted to them in Part 3.2 of the Council's Constitution (Scheme of Delegation to Officers) under section 100G Local Government Act 1972 to make such decisions as are necessary for the functioning of the Council and its response to the pandemic.

These delegated powers are broad in scope and cover day to day operational decision making by the authority. However, the scheme of delegation also provides that the Chief Executive and Directors have the power to make:

"Determination of any urgent matter in the purview of the Council, the ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet or any committee where it is impractical to convene a meeting of that body to consider the matter."

As it was impractical to convene meetings of Full Council and ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet due to the ongoing pandemic these powers have been utilised to make any necessary urgent decisions falling outside the normal delegated authority of officers. Records have been kept of urgent decisions made under these powers and following a change in legislation by Welsh Government permitting virtual democratic meetings, these were reported at the virtual meeting of the ~~Executive Board~~ Cabinet held on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. Remote meetings have continued during the year with the resumption of the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2020 and Scrutiny Committees from

November 2020. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 allows remote meetings to continue but also provides for hybrid meetings to be held.

The requirement to work from home during lockdown has been enabled by existing ICT capabilities but has inevitably meant some changes to working practices, control mechanisms and authorisation methods. These have been made with approval of the relevant senior manager or directors and consultation/advice from Internal Audit where appropriate. Internal Auditors were redeployed during the initial lockdown as the team were unable to commence the annual work programme due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. The programme was redesigned to achieve control assurances remotely and recommenced during the summer.

During 2021/22, the Authority continued to claim from the Welsh Government hardship scheme, covering increased costs of delivering core services, provision of new services and income loss from closure of commercial services. Looking ahead, this scheme has now ended, with Local Authorities required to assess and provide for future financial implications from core budgets. The 2022-2023 Budget includes an explicit contingency totalling £3.5m. .

As restrictions have eased, this has permitted increased office working. The preparation of this statement of accounts has taken place through a combination of Face to face reviews mixed with virtual meetings and electronic files and screen sharing technology.

### 3.5 Governance issues to be addressed

The following additional Governance issues need to be considered and addressed during the next 12 months:

#### For 2022/2023

- Develop recruitment strategy and workforce plan alongside implementation of new recruitment software to ensure recruitment service can be streamlined and maintained.
- Set up governance group to oversee development of Reward and Benefit hub
- Review employment safeguarding framework and develop training programme for recruiting managers

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our Governance arrangements. An Action Plan summarising the above Actions, Responsible Officers and Target Dates is attached in Appendix 2. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Approved

xx June 2022

Leader of Council

Chief Executive

## APPENDIX 1

*UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING GOVERNANCE ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN  
PREVIOUS ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENTS*

<b>SOURCE</b>	<b>ISSUES</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	<b>ACTIONS/PROGRESS</b>		<b>STATUS</b>
AGS 2017/18 No.6	Monitor and evaluate People Strategy Group/Work stream actions relating to AW People Performance Management recommendations.	Assistant Chief Executive – People Management	March 2020	<p>Consolidating learning and moving forward. PSGB Group has met through COVID19, but revaluation of way forward needed.</p> <p>IIP – high level review for further accreditation carried out. Steering group is refocusing its objectives.</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>IIP meetings held in November / early December. 6<sup>th</sup> formers event done.</p> <p>Aiming for gold – workplan to be put in place.</p> <p>Empowerment &amp; wellbeing being two main focus.</p> <p>Reconfigure the group to align with expectations.</p> <p>The interim report received from IIP to CMT in next fortnight. Then to pre-cabinet following that.</p>
AGS 2019/20 No.8	Ensure Employment Policies reflect any new legislation such as exit payment cap, reclaiming exit payments etc.	People Services Manager	March 2021	<p>Ongoing – On 12/2/21 the UK Government repealed the exit pay cap provisions. We await new legislation and will update policies accordingly.</p> <p>The legislation is likely to come back in the Autumn. Waiting for this, following these policies will be reviewed and updated where required.</p>	<p>2021/22</p> <p>Exit pay cap legislation was due in December but has not been received – likely now to be 2022.</p> <p>ACAS compliant policies in place.</p> <p>Still awaiting information</p>

<p>AGS 2019/20 No.13</p>	<p>Implement appropriate changes in respect of the governance arrangements of the Local Authority Companies in response to the Governance Review Report.</p>	<p>Corporate Management Team</p>	<p>June 2021</p>	<p>Democratic decision has been taken to put one company into dormancy. Decision has been taken that reports from the other two companies to be presented to Cabinet on 6 monthly basis.</p>	<p>CWM updates commenced - reported recently to CMT in December 2021 – to be next taken to Pre-Cabinet. Delivered. Llesiant will be reporting to Pre-Cabinet by end of the fy.</p> <p>TIC review being undertaken on Llesiant. Planned work in programme</p> <p>Governance update review to be carried out early 2022.</p>
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AGS 2020/21 No.1	Review Staff Travel Policy	People Services Manager	April / May 2021	Draft presented to CMT 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021  Principles agreed and consultation now will commence with TU. Following which the policy will go back to CMT and follow through the political process.	Travel policy with TU for consultation until 4 <sup>th</sup> March for comments. Formal presentation and waiting for formal response.
AGS 2020/21 No.2	Implement The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act requirements	Corporate	May 2022	The elements that have not been implemented to date have a timetable that needs to be met to deliver the Act's requirement / timescale. Elements of performance & governance implemented. Elections – in hand	Ongoing  Statutory Guidance not provided yet, some draft guidance issued beginning of February 2022.
AGS 2020/21 No. 3	Develop governance arrangement around the better ways of working once plan is in place – for officers	Chair of Better Ways of Working Strategic Group	2021/22	Facilitated sessions underway for each HoS teams.  3 sub groups in place reporting into Strategic group.  Communications plan being drawn up for the project  Two pilots on hybrid working in place.	Ongoing  Each service is now collating information to determine the practicalities / operational needs space allocations collated from all HoS to inform the property strategy.  Also work ongoing with other public sector bodies – joint working.
AGS 2020/21 No. 4	Develop governance arrangement around the better ways of working once plan is in place – for Members	Chair of Better Ways of Working Strategic Group / Head of Legal and Democratic Services	2021/22	The work of the Task and Finish Group has been completed	The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee presented the Task and Finish Group's report to County Council on the 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2022, and all 5 recommendations were approved.
AGS 2020/21 No.5	Recruit lay members for Audit Committee	Head of Legal and Democratic Services / Director of Corporate	2021/22	<i>A recruitment process was conducted during (check date)</i>	Job Specification drawn up Job advert drafted – both presented to Governance & Audit

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		Services / Head of Revenues & Financial Compliance			Committee for approval 17 <sup>th</sup> December 2021. Shortlisting and Interviews completed- Recommendations on successful applicants for the lay member posts to be presented to County Council in May 2022
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## APPENDIX 2

GOVERNANCE ISSUES ACTION PLAN			
NEW GOVERNANCE ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT			
ISSUE REF	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	TARGET DATE
AGS 2021/22 No.1	Develop recruitment strategy and workforce plan alongside implementation of new recruitment software to ensure recruitment service can be streamlined and maintained.	People Services Manager	March 2023
AGS 2021/22 No.2	Set up governance group to oversee development of Reward and Benefit hub	People Services Manager	May/June 2022
AGS 2021/22 No. 3	Review employment safeguarding framework and develop training programme for recruiting managers	People Services Manager	March 2023