

Report



Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 16 November 2022

Subject Annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

Purpose To present to Cabinet the Corporate Annual Report 2021/22 on the progress of delivery against the Corporate Plan 2017-22

Author Executive Board
Head of People, Policy and Transformation

Ward All

Summary This is the fifth annual Corporate Well-being Self-Assessment Report for 2021/22. This report reflects back on the achievements Newport City Council has made against the delivery of its four Well-being Objectives contributing towards Wales's seven Well-being Goals. As part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, this report also incorporates a Self-Assessment against its governance and performance arrangements to deliver the Corporate Plan and statutory services at Newport Council. The report has concluded on where the arrangements are effective, efficient and self-reflect on the challenges and lessons learned. Where improvements need to be made, we have an action plan which will be monitored through the Council's performance process.

The Annual Report has been presented to the Council's Overview Scrutiny Management Committee and Governance and Audit Committee in October. The recommendations and comments from these committees have been included in the report.

Following the endorsement of the Annual Report by Cabinet, the report will be published in Welsh and English online; submitted to Welsh Government and the three regulatory bodies (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, and Estyn).

Proposal Cabinet is asked to endorse the Annual Report 2021/22 for publication and to be submitted to Welsh Government and the three regulatory bodies.

Action by Executive Board
Corporate Management Team

Timetable Immediate

Signed

Background

The Council's Corporate Annual Report 2021-22 outlines the progress Newport City Council is making towards delivering its Well-being Objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-27. This year's Annual Report reflects back on achievements we have made in the year, challenges that we have faced and the lessons that have been learned. Additionally, the report looks forward to what will be delivered in the Council's new Corporate Plan 2022-27 (reported separately).

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act requires local authorities to undertake an annual Self-Assessment of its governance and performance arrangements to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and its services. This year's report integrates the Self-Assessment requirement into the report which provides a comprehensive overview on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's arrangements. The report was presented to the Council's Overview Scrutiny Management Committee and Governance and Audit Committee for comment and recommendations on the report. These are included in the report below.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act has seven Well-being goals for public bodies in Wales to work towards and sets out a 'sustainable development principle' made up of 5 ways of working that public bodies should consider in their decision making: Long Term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement.

This is the fifth Annual Report on the delivery of the Corporate Plan as required by the Well-being Act. The 2021/22 report looks back at the Council's performance against its finances, performance measures and Well-being Objectives. The report also reflects on other areas such as: corporate/ service planning, procurement, workforce well-being, equalities, Welsh language and engagement. Highlighted in the report is the Council's action plan for improvement to meet the demands and expectations of residents and service users in Newport. As we are faced with new challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and additional demand faced by services across the Council, the action plan for improvement will outline recommendations for the Council to continuously improve its governance and performance in 2022/23.

This Report for the 2021/22 financial year highlights that although we saw a steady recovery from the effects of the pandemic, there were still large parts of the year where services were not able to operate in the traditional manner. At the end of March 2022, the Council reported a net revenue underspend of £18.4m against the £315.9m budget. The underspend was due to a range of factors including:

- Receipt of one-off WG grant funding to assist in its response to Covid-19 and deliver Welsh Governments priorities.
- Staffing savings due to recruitment challenges
- Not undertaking normal services due to the impact of Covid-19
- General contingency budget not being required
- Underspend against Council Tax Reduction scheme

The report also highlights where the council is performing well against the Corporate Plan (2022-27) 20 commitments by 2022. The Council strives continuously to monitor these areas and make improvements where necessary. In this year's Annual Report, the following has been successfully delivered by Newport City Council:

Well-being Objective 1- Education, Skills and Employment:

- The Council's Cabinet approved the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-23 and was formally agreed by Welsh Government in July 2022.
- The Council opened Ysgol Gymraeg Nant Gwenlli, Newport's forth Welsh-medium primary school in September 2021 as part of the WESP Sustainable Communities or Learning Programme.
- Remote learning was a challenge during periods of school closures. Using funding from Welsh Government EdTech fund, 6,587 Chromebooks, 1,146 laptops, 766 Apple devices and 146 charging

trolleys were delivered to schools to support pupils. The funding was also used to support pupils to access internet with 504 MiFi devices up to 31st July 2021.

- The Council's Neighbourhood Hubs and Community Centres have been supporting communities to access digital services and adult learning jobs in the city.
- In collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Council's Regeneration teams have been supporting local businesses and sectors to attract new employment opportunities for residents.

Well-being Objective 2- Economic Growth Whilst Protecting the Environment

- In September 2021, the Council's Cabinet launched the City of Newport business fund of £300k with small grants to help businesses grow. The scheme was a great success with 38 grants awarded.
- The Council has continued to be a key partner in the Cardiff Capital Region, Burns Delivery Unit and Western Gateway partnerships throughout 21/22. These partnerships enable Newport and the larger region to provide new opportunities to the residents of Newport such as attracting technology industries such as Microsoft, IQE and Vantage.
- In March 2022, the multi-million-pound regeneration scheme Newport Market was completed and opened to the public. The large and vibrant indoor market has a host of new traders, a food court and event spaces.
- Newport City Council declared an Ecological and Climate Emergency. Climate Change is one of the biggest challenges of our generation and there is an urgent need for us to act and limit global temperature rise. As an organisation the Council has taken positive steps to reduce our carbon emissions in line with the Carbon Management Plan.
- In 2021, the Council was the first local authority to invest in a fully electric refuse collection vehicle (RCV).
- In partnership with Keep Wales Tidy the Council has embarked on a pilot project to improve the local environment and quality of the city through the use of street art.

Well-being Objective 3- Health and Well-being of citizens

- Throughout 21/22 the Council's social services (Adults and Childrens) have been dominated by their response to the pandemic ensuring our most vulnerable citizens are looked after and have care packages in place.
- Children Services have been involved in a number of key projects throughout 21/22. Newport Council has been a strong supporter for Maethu Cymru/Foster Wales work to promote and encourage people to become Foster Carers in Newport.
- Adult services have been delivering Newport's Independent Living Strategy which meets the accommodation needs of people with learning disability. The strategy has been well received by partners. Across the adult care sector, the staff shortages across the social care sector have made it challenging to find people with the right accommodation.
- Newport City Council is committed to improving the city's transportation network to make walking and cycling a more appealing and safe option for people. Over the past year, the Council has been delivering various schemes across Newport such as Monkey Island Active Travel, new links through Tredegar Park and the new Devon Place Footbridge.
- The Council's Public Protection Teams have been working hard to support local businesses through a series of inspections which have been vital in helping the city centre and other areas to re-open safely through the pandemic.

Well-being Objective 4- Cohesive and Sustainable Communities

- Newport Council alongside Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) have been collaborating to address the pressures in the city. Utilising the Social Housing Grant Programme, £16.5m was spent on housing developments across the city in Trebath, Tredegar Court, Coverack Road, Emlyn Street and Hubert Road.

- The Youth Justice Service (YJS) took collective steps during the pandemic to maintain positive links with children and families to ensure public protection remained top of the agenda, informing decision making every step of the way.
- Licencing and Trading Standards have been actively working to reduce alcohol related ASB.
- The Welsh Language standards continues to drive the Council to continually improve the delivery of bilingual public services to businesses. In September 2022, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) will set out the Council's ten-year ambitious plan.
- Throughout 2021/22 the Policy, Partnership and Involvement Team led on the 'Our Voice, Our Choice, Our Port' Participatory Budgeting project. Around £415k was allocated in 6 voting events, the largest of its kind in Wales.
- The Council's Connected Communities Team met and engaged regularly

Overall, the Annual Report concluded:

The Council has made good progress in the last financial year against the four Well-being Objectives in the Corporate Plan 2017-22. There are notable highlights with major projects being delivered in the city centre, community working and supporting most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. However, there remain areas that the Council needs to improve upon to meet the demands of residents, businesses and visitors. The new Corporate Plan will provide the opportunities to continue delivery against these areas but also make improvements. We know that there will also be new challenges and opportunities through costs of living and inflationary cost increases and new legislative requirements requiring the Council to prioritise the services that residents and service users need.

To ensure that Newport City Council is best placed to meet these demands and requirements, we need to enhance how we report our progress against our plans and have effective governance arrangements to make timely and evidence-based decisions. We have welcomed the feedback of our Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committees on the presentation of this annual report and reflected their feedback in the final version of this report. Where we are unable to implement the recommendations raised, these are included in the below action plan to improve the reporting of next year's Self-Assessment report.

To support continuous improvement of the Council's governance and performance arrangements, 14 actions have been identified for implementation by the Council. These will be reported through the Council's performance arrangements.

Following approval by the Council's Cabinet, a copy of the report will be published on the Council's website in Welsh and English. As per the Local Government and Elections Act the Council will also send a copy of the report to the Welsh Government and the three regulatory bodies.

Attached at Appendix 1 of this report is a copy of the Annual Report.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

Financial Summary of the Council's capital and revenue position in 2021/22 is reported in the Annual Report.

Risks

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
The Annual Report 21/22 is not published in accordance with Well-being of Future	2	2	The Council will be finalising the report with the communication's team and	Head of People, Policy & Transformation

Generations Act 2015 and Local Government and Elections Act.			publishing the report on the Council's website.	
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* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015
- NCC Corporate Plan 2017-22
- NCC Corporate Plan 2022-2027

Options Available and considered

1. Cabinet to endorse the Annual Report and for officers to publish the report in accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Local Government Act 2021.
2. To request further information or reject the contents of the report

Preferred Option and Why

1. **Option 1** is the preferred option for Cabinet to endorse the Annual Report 2022/22 to enable publication in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Local Government Act.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report. The report highlights the impact of COVID and cost of living crisis through 2021/22 and the ongoing financial pressures that had been managed through the Welsh Government Hardship Fund and other specific WG grant funding. The report also highlights the financial aspects of other actions delivered throughout the year.

The Council's Corporate Plan and the delivery of the four Well-being Objectives in 21/22 were reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The report also acknowledges where recovery was supported by Welsh Government grant funding, including the Hardship Fund. The link between the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will continue to be monitored and updated as the Corporate Plan progresses. Any necessary changes to the MTFP will be identified and implemented if required. These are reflected in the Council's Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.

As the report highlights, moving forward the delivery of the new Corporate Plan will have to consider new challenges around the cost of living and inflationary pressures and opportunities to improve our services. These will be reflected in the future budget, MTFP and Capital programme.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has removed the previous statutory duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 for councils to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services. The continuous improvement duty has been replaced by a more flexible performance self-assessment process which requires the Council to keep under review the extent to which it is exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and has in place effective governance arrangements to secure these performance requirements. As part of that self-assessment process, the Council is required to produce an annual self-assessment report, setting out its conclusions on the extent to which it has met these performance requirements and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase performance. How the Council develops and publishes the annual self-assessment performance report is a matter for the Council to determine. The approach previously agreed by Cabinet is to combine the performance self-assessment with the Council's existing annual Well-being report and to integrate the findings of other annual performance reports. Therefore, this annual self-assessment report has been prepared on that basis. The Annual Report has been considered by Governance & Audit

Committee in accordance with their new statutory role under the 2021 Act to review, assess and make reports about the effectiveness of the arrangements the Council has put in place for the performance assessments to meet the requirements of the legislation and their comments are set out in the cover report. Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee have considered the performance assessment in relation the well-being and strategic objectives set out in the previous Corporate Plan and their comments are also set out in the cover report. Therefore, Cabinet are now being asked to formally approve the Annual Corporate Well-being and Self-Assessment Report 21/22 and agree to its publication and submission to Welsh Government and the external regulators.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires the Council to publish its Annual Report on progress of delivery against the Corporate Plan 2017-22. Additionally, with the Local Government Act this report provides an opportunity to combine its self-assessment to provide a holistic overview of the Council's governance performance arrangements. As the Annual Report highlights, the Council is continuing to make good progress in the delivery of its strategic priorities and continues to improve its governance arrangements. The launch of the new Corporate Plan later this year will build on the Council's lessons learned and strengthen its arrangements. The Council recognises the importance of continuous improvement and will consider the recommendations of both the GAC and Scrutiny before its final publication.

Scrutiny Committees

The Annual Report was presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th October 2022. The comments and recommendations from the Committee are outlined below and will be considered prior to the final publication of the report.

- The committee acknowledged the challenges faced previously and those going forward and appreciated the hard work of staff.
- The committee felt that more information regarding partnership work could be included within the report to emphasise the benefits these partnerships bring to Newport City Council.
- The committee felt that more information was required throughout the report, specifically data to contextualise any percentages given.
- The committee felt that more clarity was needed within the report relating to the national performance measure regarding the number of additional dwellings created as a result of bringing empty homes back into use.
- The committee felt that references to the Heritage Discovery Site could be clarified.
- The committee asked for further information to be circulated to committee on the following:
 - The most up to date Annual Air Quality Monitoring Report
 - Local action groups involved with schools
 - The 38 local businesses who received grant funding and their performance.
 - The money reserved for regeneration projects.

The Welsh Government Guidance states that the Council must make a draft of the Self-Assessment report available to its Governance and Audit Committee. The Committee must review and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or action the council intends to take.

The Annual Report was presented to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee on 27th October 2022. The Committee has raised five recommendations for the Council to consider. Any recommendations not implemented prior to the final self-assessment report being report, the recommendation(s) and the reasons why the changes weren't made are set out in the final report.

1. Committee recommends a review of the format of the report.
The Council will review the report format as part of the 2022/23 Self-Assessment Report. The development of the new Corporate Plan in 2022 supports this development in future reports and this action is included in the final Annual Report (attached).
2. The report lacks detailed analysis and self-evaluation. Where possible this should be rectified before finalisation. If not, it should be included within the next iteration of this report

The Council has updated the final report to strengthen its self-assessment of progress against its Well-being Objectives and overall governance and performance arrangements.

3. Actions should be developed further. Many are statements not measurable actions

We will look to develop this further in next year's Self-Assessment to provide more self-evaluation and impact analysis.

4. Conclusions need to be based on an assessment of what hasn't worked as well as what has worked. There needs to be a balance to the evaluative aspects of the report.

Final report updated to provide a more self-assessment against the progress of each Well-being objective and overall conclusion.

5. There needs to be a clear link between the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives and the outcomes being achieved.

The Report has been strengthened to link back to the Well-being Objectives. However, we recognise that further development is needed and have an action in the report to develop Self-Assessment arrangements.

Fairness and Equality Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act is considered and reported throughout the Annual Report attached to this report.

- **Equality Act 2010 and Socio-Economic Duty**

The Annual Report reflects on the Council's progress against its Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 which was also reported separately earlier in the financial year.

- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

The Annual Report considers the findings identified in the Council's Welsh Language Annual Report which was reported earlier this financial year. The Annual Report will be published in Welsh and English as per the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Local Government Act requirements.

Background Papers

Corporate Plan 2022-27

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

PSB Well-being Plan 2018-23

Dated: 10 November 2022