

Meeting of:	<b>Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Wednesday, 22 May 2024</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes - Vale of Glamorgan Council
Purpose of Report:	To advise Members of the findings of Audit Wales' review of the Council's Use of Performance Information – Service User Perspective and Outcomes.
Report Owner:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	No specific ward member consultation has been undertaken. Regulatory reports apply to the whole Authority and inform Scrutiny Committees' annual work programme, the Cabinet annual work programme and the Council's improvement programme. Progress in relation to areas for improvement arising from the Annual Regulatory Plan (including local and national reviews) is regularly reported via the Council's Strategic Insight Board Insight Tracker to the Strategic Leadership Team, relevant Scrutiny Committees, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet for final oversight.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Council's annual audit work programme for 2023, the Auditor General for Wales undertook a review of the Council's Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes.</li> <li>• The purpose of the review was to help fulfil the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This review has been carried out across all Welsh authorities and with a focus on seeking assurance that the performance information the Council provides to senior officers and Elected Members enables them to understand the service user perspective and the outcome of its activities; that this information forms part of the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and its application of the sustainable development principle; and to identify opportunities for the Council to strengthen its arrangements.</li> <li>• The findings of the review (<b>Appendix A</b>) are as follows:</li> <li>• The Council's performance information provides senior leaders with a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council's activities.</li> </ul>	

- The performance information provided to senior leaders provides them with some insight into the perspective of service users, but this is not consistent across all services.
- The performance information provided to senior leaders does not enable them to have a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of the Council's actions.
- The Council has arrangements in place to ensure that its performance information is accurate.
- As information provided on outcomes and the perspective of service users is limited, the extent to which the Council can use this information to help it achieve its outcomes is also limited.
- The Council has identified that it needs to engage more with service users but hasn't determined how this will shape the information provided to senior leaders to ensure it is appropriate and relevant.
- Two recommendations have been made to the strengthen Council's approach.

**R1:** Information on the perspective of the service user - The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.

**R2:** Outcomes information - The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.

- In response to the recommendations, the Director of Corporate Resources has developed an action plan which will be progressed by the Council. This is attached as Appendix B.
- In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, progress against our regulatory improvement areas will be monitored via the Strategic Insight Board Insight Tracker. All Scrutiny Committees will continue to be informed of progress against our regulatory improvement areas through quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. This will be supplemented with a 6 monthly and annual review of regulatory progress, which will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet for final oversight. Progress will also be monitored by Audit Wales as part of the Council's annual audit work programme.
- Corporate Performance Resources Scrutiny Committee members are being asked to consider the contents of the appended reports including the Council's response (in the form of an action plan - **Appendix B**) with any recommendations /comments being referred to Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter, onto Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement of the proposed actions to address the recommendations.

## Recommendations

1. That the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee considers the findings arising from the review of the Council's Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes (**Appendix A**) and the response to the review findings and Audit Wales' recommendations (**Appendix B**).
2. That, subject to recommendation one, the report be referred to Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter to Cabinet for their oversight and endorsement of the proposed Council actions (**Appendix B**) to address the recommendations.

## Reasons for Recommendations

1. To provide for scrutiny and review of the findings of Audit Wales' review the Council's Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes and the Council's response to its findings.
2. To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by Audit Wales.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Council's annual audit work programme for 2023, the Auditor General for Wales undertook a review of the Council's Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes.
- 1.2 The purpose of the review was to help fulfil the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This review has been being carried out across all Welsh Authorities and with a focus on seeking assurance that Councils' approach to the Use of Performance Information; Service User Perspective and Outcomes provided to senior officers and Elected Members enables them to understand the service user perspective and the outcome of its activities; that this information forms part of the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and its application of the sustainable development principle; and to identify opportunities for the Council to strengthen its arrangements.

## 2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 **Appendix A** contains the Audit Wales report outlining the key findings of the review.
- 2.2 The review focused on the performance information provided to senior officers and senior members (senior leaders) about service user perspective and outcomes, and how this information is used. This was not a full review of the Council's performance management arrangements nor an in-depth review of the quality of the data that the Council collects. Neither did the review focus on involvement, engagement or consultation with service users on specific service

changes or the development of policies and strategies which form an important part of senior leaders' understanding of the service user perspective and outcomes of the Council's activity. The audit questions and audit criteria are detailed in the Audit Wales report in Appendix A.

**2.3** Audit Wales were looking for evidence that performance information is shared with senior leaders to help them understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users and how well they are helping the Council to achieve the outcomes it is working towards. They were also looking to see that senior leaders use this information to monitor progress and take action where necessary to improve outcomes.

**2.4** The review concluded that:

- The Council's performance information provides senior leaders with a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council's activities.
- The performance information provided to senior leaders provides them with some insight into the perspective of service users, but this is not consistent across all services.
- The performance information provided to senior leaders does not enable them to have a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of the Council's actions.
- The Council has arrangements in place to ensure that its performance information is accurate.
- As information provided on outcomes and the perspective of service users is limited, the extent to which the Council can use this information to help it achieve its outcomes is also limited.
- The Council has identified that it needs to engage more with service users but hasn't determined how this will shape the information provided to senior leaders to ensure it is appropriate and relevant.

**2.5** The report makes two recommendations to the strengthen Council's approach:

- **R1:** Information on the perspective of the service user - The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.
- **R2:** Outcomes information - The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.

**2.6** In response to the recommendations, the Director of Corporate Resources has developed an action plan which will be progressed by the Council (Appendix B).

**2.7** In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, progress against our regulatory improvement areas will be monitored via the Strategic Insight Board Insight Tracker. All Scrutiny Committees will continue to be informed of progress against our regulatory improvement areas through quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. This will be supplemented with

a 6 monthly and annual review of regulatory progress, which will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet for final oversight. Progress will also be monitored by Audit Wales as part of the Council's annual audit work programme.

- 2.8** Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee Members are being asked to consider the contents of the appended report (**Appendix A**) and the Council's response (**Appendix B**) with any recommendations / comments being referred to Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter, onto Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement of the proposed actions to address the recommendations

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

- 3.1** Performance Management is an intrinsic part of corporate governance and integrated business planning which underpins the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and its Well-being Outcomes. Our Corporate Plan has been structured around the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, through the development of four Well-being Outcomes and eight Well-being Objectives. By aligning our Well-being Outcomes in the Corporate Plan with the Well-being Goals of the Act, this will enable us to better evidence our contribution to the Goals.
- 3.2** External Regulation is an important vehicle for driving continuous improvement across our services. Progressing the improvement areas identified by our regulators not only enables us to demonstrate our commitment to continuous service improvement, but also contributes to further strengthening our impact on the national well-being goals through the achievement of our well-being objectives. The focus of this report will in particular assist in strengthening our work around involvement.
- 3.3** The areas of improvement identified by our external regulators and the associated action plan produced by officers has been developed with the five ways of working in mind. The focus of these is on developing innovative ways of working that better integrate services, whilst enabling us to work more collaboratively with our partners and citizens to involve them in improving service delivery. These improvement actions also focus on preventative actions that will enable us to sustain and future proof our services into the longer term.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** There are no implications directly arising from this report, although failure to progress the improvement areas outlined in the report could have a negative impact on any future external regulatory assessments and could result in a special inspection by the Auditor General for Wales if deemed that the Council is not meeting the performance requirements.

## **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 5.1** There are no additional budgetary implications directly arising from this report, although failure to progress the improvement areas outlined in the report could have a negative impact on any future external regulatory assessments of the Council which could in turn put funding opportunities at risk.

### **Employment**

- 5.2** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report. However, there are a number of issues contained within the report that if not effectively managed have the potential to impact on our staff establishment and performance overall. This may in turn impact adversely on achievement of our well-being Objectives.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFG) and the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E) require the Council to publish annual Well-being Objectives, keep performance under review and consult and report on our performance through an annual self-assessment relating to the previous financial year.
- 5.4** The Auditor General for Wales is statutorily required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives and taking steps to meet them.
- 5.5** Under the LG&E Act, a special inspection of the Council may be undertaken if the Auditor General for Wales considers that the Council is not, or may not be meeting, the performance requirements. This inspection is to assess the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements, in exercising its functions effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and in ensuring its governance is effective for securing the above.

## **6. Background Papers**

None

# Use of performance information: service user perspective and outcomes – Vale of Glamorgan Council

Audit year: 2022-23

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.



# Contents

Report summary	4
What we looked at – the scope of this audit	4
Why we undertook this audit	5
The Council's performance reporting arrangements	5
What we found	6
The Council's performance information provides senior leaders with a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council's activities	6
Recommendations	8
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Key questions and what we looked for	9

## Report summary

- 1 We considered the service user perspective and outcome information provided to senior officers and senior members (senior leaders), and how this information is used.
- 2 Overall, we found that the Council's performance information provides senior leaders with a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council's activities.
- 3 Our findings are based upon fieldwork we did between March and August 2023.
- 4 We have made two recommendations to strengthen the information given to senior leaders.

## What we looked at – the scope of this audit

- 5 We focused on the performance information provided to senior officers and senior members (senior leaders) about service user perspective and outcomes, and how this information is used. We did not undertake a full review of the Council's performance management arrangements or an in-depth review of the quality of the data that the Council collects. Neither did the review focus on engagement with service users on specific service changes or the development of policies and strategies.
- 6 We have set out our audit questions and audit criteria in **Appendix 1**. The audit criteria essentially sets out what good looks like and what we would expect to find.
- 7 Overall, we were looking for performance information to be shared with senior leaders to help them understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users and how well they are helping the Council to achieve the outcomes it is working towards. We were also looking to see that senior leaders use this information to monitor progress and take action where necessary to improve outcomes.
- 8 This is an important part of arrangements to ensure that councils are securing value for money in the use of their resources. It is also an important way in which the Council can assure itself that it is acting in accordance with the 'involvement' way of working in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives. Without this information, it is difficult to see how senior leaders can understand whether their policies and actions are having the intended impact and make changes where they are not.
- 9 Our findings are based on document reviews and interviews with the Cabinet Member, Director and senior officers with responsibility for the Council's performance management arrangements. The evidence we have used to inform our findings is limited to these sources

- 10 We set out to answer the question ‘**Does the Council’s performance data enable senior leaders to understand the service user perspective and the outcomes of its activities to effectively manage its performance?**’ We did this by exploring the following questions:
- Does the performance information provided to senior leaders include appropriate information on the perspective of service users?
  - Does the performance information provided to senior leaders include appropriate information on the outcomes of the Council’s activities?
  - Does the Council have robust arrangements to ensure that the data provided is accurate?
  - Does the Council use the information to help it achieve its outcomes?
  - Does the Council review the effectiveness of its arrangements?

## Why we undertook this audit

- 11 This audit was undertaken to help fulfil the Auditor General’s duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 12 We sought to:
- gain assurance that the performance information the Council provides to senior officers and elected members enables them to understand the service user perspective and the outcome of its activities;
  - gain assurance that this information forms part of the Council’s arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and its application of the sustainable development principle; and
  - identify opportunities for the Council to strengthen its arrangements.

## The Council’s performance reporting arrangements

- 13 The Council’s Cabinet receives performance reports every three months. These reports include details of service performance and progress towards the Council’s well-being objectives.
- 14 The Council’s Strategic Leadership Team receives quarterly performance reports. These include details of service performance and progress towards well-being objectives.
- 15 The Council published its Annual Self-Assessment 2021-22 in November 2022. Prior to this, the Governance and Audit Committee considered it in October 2022, in keeping with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

16 Our review focused on these key performance reporting mechanisms.

## What we found

### **The Council's performance information provides senior leaders with a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council's activities.**

**The performance information provided to senior leaders provides them with some insight into the perspective of service users, but this is not consistent across all services.**

- 17 Every quarter, the Council reports a large volume of performance information to its Strategic Leadership Team , Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.
- 18 We found a small number of examples of information, such as customer satisfaction measures, which would help senior leaders understand the views of service users. As part of its annual self-assessment, the Council surveyed its citizens, which included questions about satisfaction with Council services. The Council incorporated the findings from the survey into its annual self-assessment report, thus helping senior leaders to understand the perspective of service users. However, the Council acknowledges in its self-assessment report that response rates to the survey were low and did not necessarily reflect the full diversity of the population.
- 19 Overall, we found that information to help senior leaders understand the views of service users is limited and not consistently provided across all services. This means that senior leaders are not always able to use the perspective of service users to inform their decisions or monitoring of service performance.

**The performance information provided to senior leaders does not enable them to have a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of the Council's actions.**

- 20 The majority of the performance measures and indicators reported to senior leaders are output focused, although there are also examples of measures that allow senior leaders to understand the outcome or impact that the Council's actions have had. However, within the Council's performance reports, not all wellbeing objectives are supported by outcome focused performance measures. This limits senior leaders' ability to understand the impact of the Council's activities and whether it is meeting its objectives.

## **The Council has arrangements in place to ensure that its performance information is accurate**

- 21 The Council 's performance management framework incorporates arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of data, and to support colleagues where weaknesses in data quality are identified. For example, the Council provides written guidance on performance reporting to officers responsible for providing the performance information, as well as written guidance on setting targets and a performance indicator definition library.
- 22 Officers responsible for providing performance information are supported by a range of templates and documents that ensure a consistent approach to collecting, checking and reporting data across the Council.
- 23 In April 2022, as part of its review of the Council's performance management arrangements, Internal Audit reviewed the accuracy of the information collected and reported for public accountability measures (PAMs). Internal Audit gave an opinion of reasonable assurance and made a recommendation that officers updating the performance information should be reminded to save and retain source evidence, so accuracy can be checked. The Council agreed that it would do this. These arrangements help give senior leaders assurance that there is rigour behind the performance information they receive.
- 24 The Council, therefore, has processes in place to give itself assurance that senior leaders' decisions are based on robust performance information.

## **As information provided on outcomes and the perspective of service users is limited, the extent to which the Council can use this information to help it achieve its outcomes is also limited**

- 25 As set out above, our main finding is that performance information provided to senior leaders provides a limited understanding of the service user perspective and the outcomes of the Council's activities. Therefore, it logically follows that the extent to which the Council uses the service user perspective and outcomes information to help it achieve its outcomes from this performance information is also limited.
- 26 We did find a small number of examples of the Council providing information on the perspective of service users and outcomes. In those instances, there was evidence of the Council's scrutiny committees responding to poor performance information and engaging with those issues in more depth. For example, there has been scrutiny of the performance of the customer contact centre and sickness absence data.

## **The Council has identified that it needs to engage more with service users, but hasn't determined how this will shape the information provided to senior leaders to ensure it is appropriate and relevant**

- 27 The Council's Corporate sets out the Council's intent to increase the level of engagement with service users. This in turn aims to increase the amount of information the Council has about the service user perspective. However, the Council has not explored how it will use that information to help senior leaders better understand the perspective of service users.
- 28 The Council does not routinely compare its arrangements for collecting and reporting performance information on outcomes and the service user perspective with the approaches of other organisations. Doing this will help the Council understand and learn from how other councils are providing information on service user perspective and outcomes. This is an important element of arrangements to secure value for money.

## **Recommendations**

### **Exhibit 1: Recommendations**

- R1 Information on the perspective of the service user
- The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.

- R2 Outcomes information
- The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.

# Appendix 1

## Key questions and what we looked for

### Exhibit 2: key questions and what we looked for

The table below sets out the question we sought to answer in carrying out this audit, along with the audit criteria we used to arrive at our findings.

Level 1	
Does the Council's performance data enable senior leaders to understand the service user perspective and the outcomes of its activities to effectively manage its performance?	
Level 2	Audit Criteria <sup>1</sup> (what we are looking for)
2.1 Does the performance information provided to senior leaders include appropriate information on the perspective of service users?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The information is:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– relevant to the objectives the Council has set itself;</li><li>– sufficient to enable an understanding of the service user perspective;</li><li>– sufficient to provide an understanding of progress towards the outcomes the Council is planning to achieve;</li><li>– drawn from the diversity of service users including groups who share protected characteristics; and</li><li>– used to inform comparisons with the performance of similar bodies where relevant.</li></ul></li><li>• The Council has involved service users in determining which information to collect.</li></ul>
2.2 Does the performance information provided to senior leaders include appropriate information on the outcomes of the Council's activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The information draws on a range of evidence sources to provide a holistic view of progress.</li><li>• The information enables senior leaders to monitor progress over the short, medium and long term.</li><li>• The information enables senior leaders to monitor the delivery of outcomes that cover multiple service areas and/or organisations.</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Our audit criteria have been informed by our cumulative knowledge of previous audit work, as well as the question hierarchy and positive indicators we have developed to support our sustainable development principle examinations.

## Level 1

Does the Council's performance data enable senior leaders to understand the service user perspective and the outcomes of its activities to effectively manage its performance?

## Level 2

### Audit Criteria<sup>1</sup> (what we are looking for)

2.3 Does the Council have robust arrangements to ensure that the data provided is accurate?

- The Council has clear arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of the data it provides to senior leaders.
- Where weaknesses in data quality are identified, the Council addresses them.

2.4 Does the Council use the information to help it achieve its outcomes?

- Where poor performance is identified, the Council uses the information to make changes/interventions.
- There is evidence of the Council improving its progress towards its outcomes as a result of interventions.

2.5 Does the Council review the effectiveness of its arrangements?

- The Council reviews the information provided to senior leaders to ensure it is appropriate and relevant.
- The Council compares the information it collects with the information collected by similar organisations to identify opportunities to strengthen its arrangements.







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## Organisational response

**Report title:** Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes

**Completion date:** April 2024

**Document reference:** Use of Performance Information; Service User Perspective and Outcomes (**Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee**)

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	Information on the perspective of the service user - The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.	<p><b>More information and emphasis on the service user perspective will be included as part of the Annual Self-Assessment process and reporting.</b></p> <p><b>The findings of the recent Let's Talk residents survey will be reported to members, SLT, and other key groups.</b></p> <p><b>Additional Performance measures have been added to the Corporate Performance Management Framework.</b></p> <p><b>Actions in the ADP 2024-25 have been included on participation and communications and progress will be reported quarterly.</b></p>	<p><b>December 2024</b></p> <p><b>April-July 2024</b></p> <p><b>Complete</b></p> <p><b>Complete</b></p>	<b>Tom Bowring</b>
R2	Outcomes information - The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.	<p><b>Guidance to be issued as part of the end of year performance monitoring to emphasise to officers the need to ensure that information on outcomes is provided for inclusion in reports. This will be carried through to processes for performance reporting in 2024-25.</b></p> <p><b>More information and emphasis on the need to demonstrate outcomes will be included as part of the Annual Self-Assessment process and reporting.</b></p>	<p><b>April 2024</b></p> <p><b>December 2024</b></p>	<b>Tom Bowring</b>

**As part of the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-2030 and Reshaping and the associated performance management arrangements there will be an increased emphasis on demonstrating outcomes.**

**March 2025**

**Scrutiny Member training in March 2024 will include information about focusing on outcomes when scrutinising reports.**

**March 2024**