

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	26 th January 2021
Report Author	Sue Walker / Anthony Lewis
Service Area	Learning
Committee Date	8 th February 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Corporate Self-Evaluation – Inspection Area 3

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Self-evaluation is a useful process that is rigorous and enables Chief Officers, Heads of Service and officers to be critically reflective about outcomes, service provision and leadership and management.
- 1.2 Following a refocus exercise of documentation to ensure it continued to meet the organisation's needs; the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) approved the re-introduction of the corporate self-evaluation process in May 2019.
- 1.3 Completion of the process is undertaken in 'bite-sized' chunks on a question-by-question basis. This aims to support all officers involved to contribute to the process whilst maintaining their ability to manage multiple other priorities.
- 1.4 This report focuses on the completion of the self-evaluation undertaken by the Learning Department in relation to **Key Question 3 (Leadership and Management)**. The response directly relates to the Best Start to Life theme laid down in the Council's Corporate Plan: Focus on the Future. It also meets the requirements of the Estyn Inspection framework – the inspectorate for education within Wales.
- 1.5 This report and its appendices highlight the key findings of the self-evaluation activity; outlines areas of good practice along with areas for development; and identifies the priorities for improvement which are incorporated in our Business Improvement Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee Members to provide officers feedback on the content of the report developed through completion of the self-evaluation process.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Self-evaluation is a business process that is rigorous and enables organisations to be critically reflective about outcomes, service provision and leadership and management. In 2013/14, the Council introduced a self-evaluation process which was completed by officers at Head of Service level. The format of the challenge sessions was based on high-level challenge in a session lasting 2-2½ hours; with a number of Heads of Service.
- 3.2 From using lessons learned over previous years, the format of the challenge of self-evaluation was developed (eg.) self-evaluation was undertaken on a service-level basis; with challenge being offered via a Performance Board consisting of the Chief Executive, Directorate Lead; Portfolio Member and the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to which the service reported. The key outcome of the process was to identify areas of good practice, along with priorities for improvement.
- 3.3 In 2019, a refocus exercise was undertaken to ensure the self-evaluation documents continued to meet the organisation's needs (eg.) officers that were tasked with completing the forms were offered the opportunity to outline the current service position; highlight any good practice; note areas for development and to identify the services' priorities for improvement. The documents were organised in the form of three key questions:
- Outcomes;
 - Provision and Service Delivery; and
 - Leadership and management.

There was no specific order in which the questions needed to be completed, as long as all three questions were completed within the year.

- 3.4 Following consideration of the updated documents by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT); the new format was approved for re-introduction in May 2019.
- 3.5 As part of the process cycle supporting the delivery of the self-evaluation process (see **Appendix 1**), it was confirmed that completed questions should be presented before the sector-specific Scrutiny Committee that normally scrutinises the outputs/outcomes for the relevant service area. This was seen as an opportunity for Committee Members to review and explore facets of the wide range of activities for which Chief Officers were accountable; whilst for services, it was seen as an opportunity for details of their services to be brought before Scrutiny to outline positive practice and achievements along with any challenges faced and areas for development.
- 3.6 Committee Members are asked to review the content of the completed questions and consider performance, areas of good practice, areas for development and, perhaps most importantly, the services' priorities for improvement for the coming year. Scrutineers' feedback will be used when considering how these priorities will be progressed.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 In previous years, the Council had undertaken self-evaluation activities on an annual service-by-service basis. The process required Heads of Service to review project/programme activity and reflect on what had been achieved, as well as identifying what needed to be prioritised next with a view to planning how this should be done.
- 4.2 Following approval of the revised corporate self-evaluation template, the self-evaluation process was re-introduced for 2019/20, and each key question was presented to Scrutiny Committee. Following completion of Key Question 3 (**Leadership & Management**) for last year's iteration, the effectiveness of leaders was judged to be **adequate**. This was because although strengths outweighed the weaknesses identified, there were a number of important areas that required improvement.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 For this year's iteration of Key Question 3, the 360-Degree Appraisal scheme has been introduced, which is a common toolkit that is used for measuring leadership and management, as well as performance management.

The toolkit contains a number of different themes to be evaluated that are crucial to effective leadership and management; these are:

1. Human Skills;
2. Leadership;
3. Communication;
4. Developing Others;
5. Delegation and Instruction; and
6. Values

- 5.2 As part of the process, officers are required to complete the appraisal form on their subordinates, colleagues, and supervisor, as well as completing the form on themselves as a self-evaluative measure. Engaging in the 360-degree toolkit can be highly beneficial as it provides feedback from different perspectives; identifies development opportunities and focuses core competencies.
- 5.3 Engagement with the 360-degree appraisal scheme was positive with a return rate of 93% (28 out of 30 forms received). Analysis of the findings has been undertaken; the feedback from the completed 360's highlighted a number of positive attributes across the Education management structure, as well as some areas for development. These will form part of the feedback to officers during their Focus on my Performance sessions (1-2-1 appraisals).
- 5.4 Each of the six themes listed above includes a number of sub-questions that are scored between 1 and 6, with 6 being the highest score. The aggregated scores for all completed responses have been summarised below for Committee members' information.

Theme	TOTAL	Average Score	Aggregated Score	Theme Score	Theme Aggregated
Human Skills					
Has excellent interpersonal skills with staff at all levels	30.44	5.07	5		
I feel able to approach them with any problems I have in my work	31.04	5.17	5		
Demonstrate consistency and fairness to all	30.80	5.13	5	25	5
Provides candid and constructive feedback on performance	29.96	4.99	5		
Recognition is given to effective work	29.44	4.91	5		

Theme	TOTAL	Average Score	Aggregated Score	Theme Score	Theme Aggregated
Leadership					
Inspires loyalty by displaying the right leadership style in the right situation	30.71	5.12	5		
Able to defuse conflict/ill feeling between team members	28.39	4.73	5		
Translates strategic objectives into operational plans	31.19	5.20	5	25	5
Able to motivate, enthuse and influence people to perform with a positive attitude	30.52	5.09	5		
Gains trust and support of others by treating them with respect and fairness	31.86	5.31	5		

Theme	TOTAL	Average Score	Aggregated Score	Theme Score	Theme Aggregated
Communication					
Communicates effectively - the appropriate people are involved and consulted	30.29	5.05	5		
Able to adapt their presentation styles to suit	31.13	5.19	5		
Encourages contribution/involvement when hosting meetings or briefings	31.44	5.24	5	25	5
The team briefings are effective and encourage the team to participate	31.49	5.25	5		
Of I offer an opinion, I feel they listen and are willing to take my opinion on board	31.58	5.26	5		

Theme	TOTAL	Average Score	Aggregated Score	Theme Score	Theme Aggregated
Developing Others					
Displays patience when someone is being trained in a new way of working	31.68	5.28	5		
Explains decision, solicits suggestions and supports progress	31.17	5.19	5		
Ability to recognise and harness the potential of team members	31.89	5.32	5	25	5
Shares knowledge and information openly encouraging others to develop	30.61	5.10	5		
Able to recognise and act on development needs swiftly and appropriately	30.63	5.11	5		

Theme	TOTAL	Average Score	Aggregated Score	Theme Score	Theme Aggregated
Delegation and Instruction					
Work is delegated appropriately to all members of the team	29.86	4.98	5		
Team are always aware of the tasks in hand	30.42	5.07	5		
Ensures that targets and objectives are clearly communicated	31.61	5.27	5	25	5
Encourages people to take pride in shared objectives and goals	31.32	5.22	5		
Provides clear instruction/direction	30.74	5.12	5		

Theme	TOTAL	Average Score	Aggregated Score	Theme Score	Theme Aggregated
Values					
Demonstrates INTEGRITY in all business activities	33.90	5.65	6		
Promotes exceptional SERVICE in line with customer driven needs	33.06	5.51	6		
Actively develops PARTNERSHIPS with internal and external customers	32.23	5.37	5		
Embraces role with PASSION - others strive to emulate performance	30.49	5.08	5	32	5
Fosters a culture of pride, teamwork and continuous improvement to facilitate GROWTH	31.01	5.17	5		
Demonstrates flexibility and embraces work/life balance and FAMILY & COMMUNITY friendly policies	31.43	5.24	5		

5.5 The overall judgement for Key Question 3 (Leadership & Management) has been assessed as **Adequate** – see Appendix 2. A breakdown of the judgements has been included below, and the rationale for each judgement can be found in the Appendices of this report.

5.6 The effectiveness of leaders remains **adequate** because the important areas requiring improvement are being addressed, although it is too soon to provide a more meaningful evaluation as these improvements are not yet embedded.

There is a clear focus on strategic priorities for improvement and delivering plans to address these in order to bring about improvements in outcomes. There is a golden thread aligning strategic priorities, business improvement planning and the performance management framework. Partnership working within and beyond the council is well established and leads to more effective services, although the increased use of school leaders to support school to school working is required to help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes through better leadership and teaching and learning practices.

The overall strategic direction of the service over the medium to long-term, the strategic approach to raising standards in schools and to digital learning are important areas for improvement.

5.7 People management is **good** because there are strong features which outweigh weaknesses and significant improvements have been made to address staff motivation and engagement in the future strategic direction of the learning department.

The performance management framework is well established and performance and wellbeing are well managed with low incidences of sickness absence. There is an over reliance on key officers and single points of dependency and this needs to be better understood in order to optimise existing resources and ensure any planned service restructure delivers more capacity in priority areas.

5.8 Resources management is **good** because staffing, accommodation and financial resources, both revenue and capital, are managed and deployed effectively to support learning and service improvements. The authority makes good use of the funding it receives and increasingly spending and investment decisions are driven by identified strategic priorities for improvement.

Partnership activity delivers good value for money because it contributes to improved provision outcomes for learners in aspects which the authority and its schools alone could not provide.

5.9 The service increasingly sets appropriate priorities based on a robust self-evaluation process that is well embedded within the department and through governance frameworks such as Scrutiny Committee. The services self-evaluation and improvement planning processes have supported the development of the RARS Strategy and the identification of relevant and well-defined priorities for inclusion in the delivery of RARS action plan.

However, there are still important areas that require improvement in order for priority setting and improvement planning to ultimately lead to improved outcomes in schools and key services and the corporate self-evaluation process needs to be further embedded for there to be robust confidence that the priorities being set by the service are the correct ones. Therefore, it is too early for this area to be evaluated as good and so at this time the judgement remains **adequate**.

- 5.10 The service engagement with stakeholders to address issues identified and the response to feedback received is currently **good**. The service engages regularly with stakeholders such as schools, pupils, governors, young people and partner organisations and feedback is sought on service delivery, quality and priorities for improvement that impacts those service users and stakeholders directly.

An area of improvement is to formalise the process where feedback is used to help shape service priorities and service planning so that this can be evidenced and to share this information with stakeholders so they are aware of the influence their feedback and engagement has had.

- 5.11 Safeguarding is **good** because there are many strong features and whilst there are areas for development there are no significant areas that require improvement. The local authority meets safeguarding regulations and ensures that all school staff remain in compliance with training requirements.

The current Estyn Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection doesn't identify any priorities for improvement although there are areas for development across each of the SER questions in the framework. This Estyn self-evaluation framework is currently being updated and any matters arising will be addressed and reported subsequently as appropriate.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 The aim is for Leadership and Management to be at least **good**.
- 6.2 This will be achieved by addressing the priorities for improvement identified in the SER but particularly those that will support leadership and priority setting to improve from **adequate** to **good**.
- 6.3 These priorities for improvement to address overall Leadership progress from adequate to good have been detailed below.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

Priorities for Improvement to progress from **adequate** to **good**.

- 7.1 Successfully launch the RARS strategy and monitor progress during 2021 ensuring delivery in line with expectations. This includes delivery of the CSC Commitments to RARS Action Plan.
- 7.2 Increase the involvement of school leaders in school to school working in order to share best practice in teaching, learning and leadership and help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes.
- 7.3 To develop a more robust sharing of information at Team Around School (TAS) meetings in order to target timely and effective support and intervention in schools.
- 7.4 Review the strategic approach to Learning Department services and agree restructure to ensure delivery on priorities over the medium to long-term in a cohesive, collaborative and sustainable way.
- 7.5 Secure appropriate staffing resources to enable the delivery of a Capita One Development Plan which will help to ensure data is used more effectively across the Learning department to inform service priorities for improvement.
- 7.6 Revise the overall SOAP to identify the key performance indicators that are currently available.
- 7.7 Development of plans to restructure the overall Learning Department and timely, open communication of these plans.
- 7.8 Widen the scope of the 360-degree appraisal scheme by introducing key partners and stakeholders to the process.
- 7.9 Agree an overall strategic asset management plan for the Learning portfolio.
- 7.10 Ensure specialist provision in the secondary school sector is fit for purpose and of sufficient capacity to support the needs of children and young people.
- 7.11 Establish a Headteachers Forum to support the local authority in identifying and addressing key priorities across service areas.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING ASPIRATIONS RAISING STANDARDS STRATEGY

8.1 The contents of this report relate to each of the RARS Themes and Goals

- RARS Themes
 - Partnership and Collaboration
 - Pandemic Recovery
- RARS Goals
 - Performance Management and System Governance
 - Developing the Education Workforce

- Supporting Learners' Health and Wellbeing
- Improving Achievement and Progression
- Developing the Environment for Learning

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

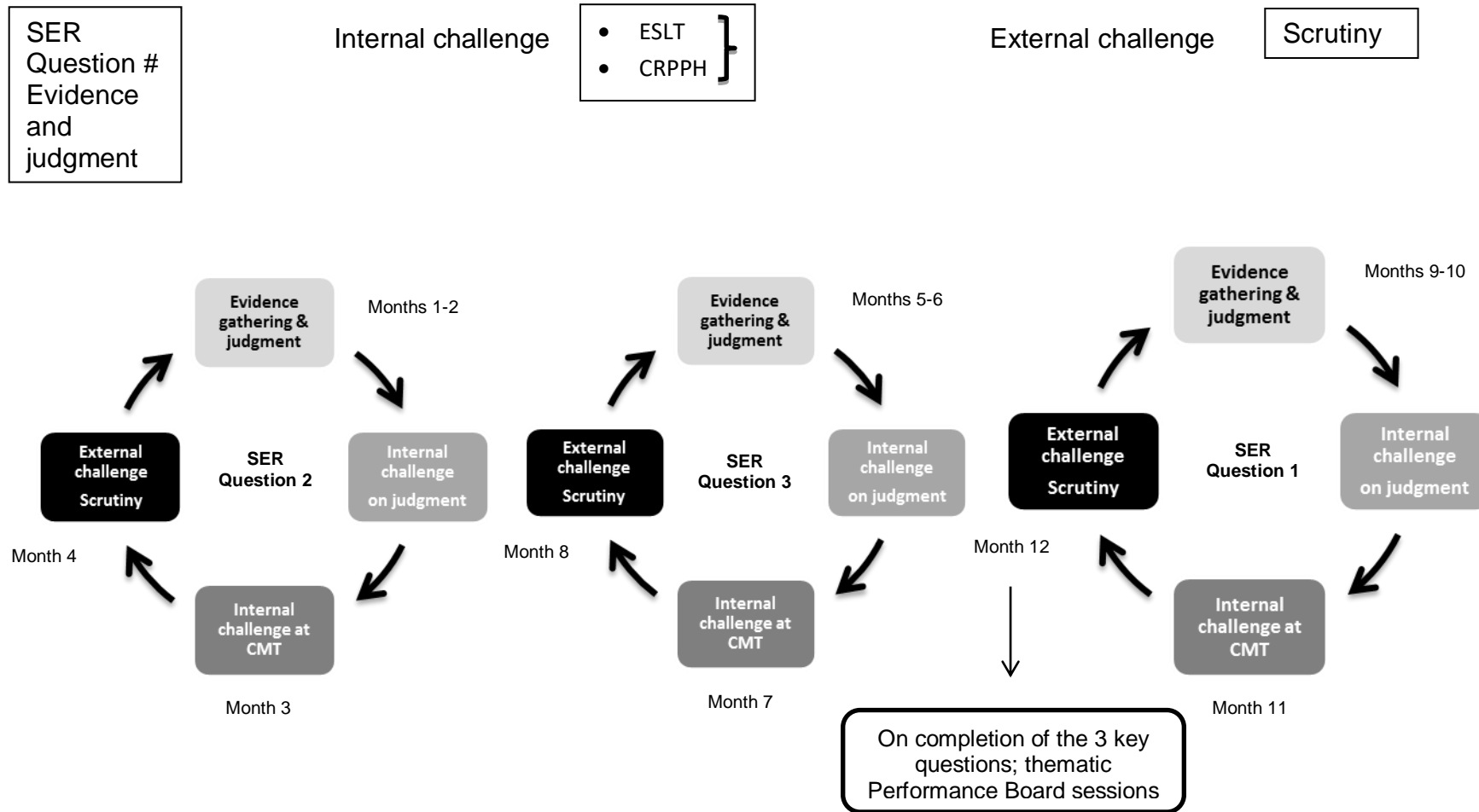
- 9.1 The corporate self-evaluation process is based around the services/activities delivered and should reflect the contribution made in relation to the four wellbeing objectives set down by the Council in focus in the Corporate Wellbeing Plan.
- 9.2 This report specifically links to the Best Start to Life objective within the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan: Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.
- 9.3 Through completion of other self-evaluation responses; we will also be able to demonstrate our team's contribution to support progress against the following objectives:
- People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health; and
 - People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure that establishes Merthyr Tydfil as an attractive destination.

SUE WALKER
CHIEF OFFICER, LEARNING

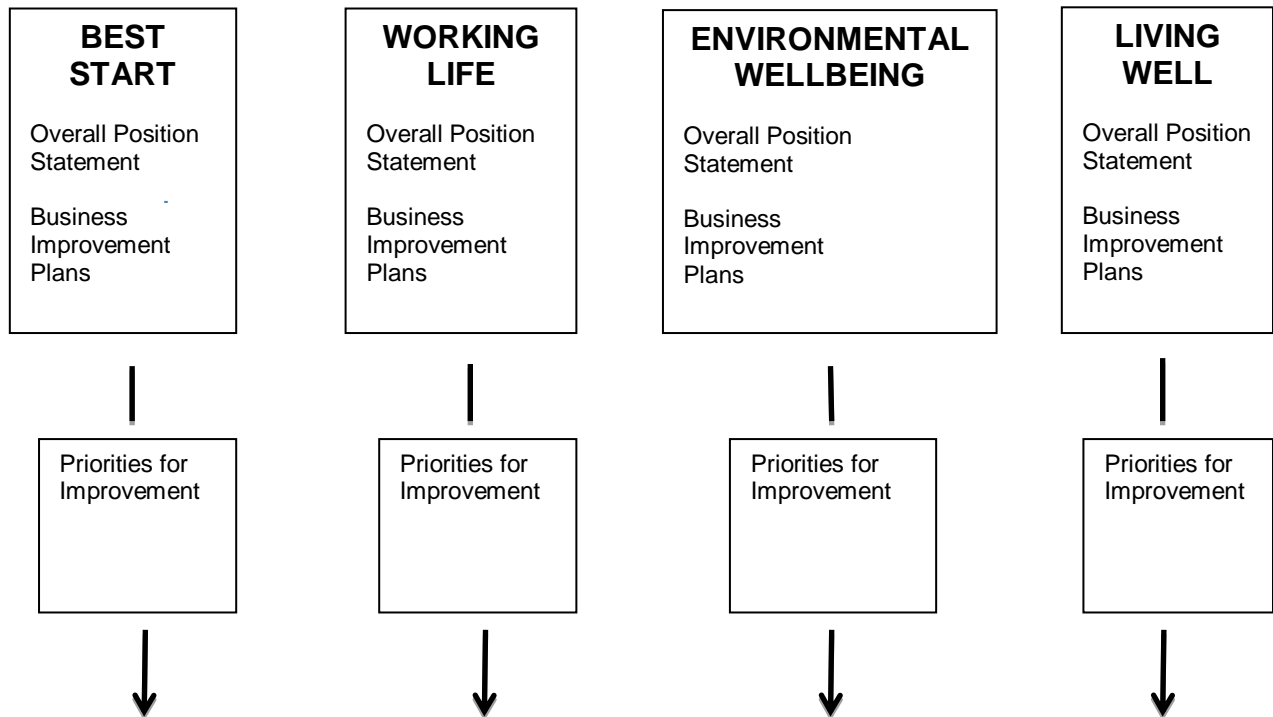
COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS	
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date
Document Location	
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?	No

Self-Evaluation Process Cycle: 4 months x 3



Performance Board



Analysis of commonalities → Report to CMT to identify support needed to drive improvement

