



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	18 March 2021
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Service Area	Community Regeneration, Public Protection and Housing
Committee Date	13 April 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Corporate Self-Evaluation – Working Life

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Self-evaluation is a rigorous process that 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 June 2019.
- 1.3 This report focuses on the completion of the self-evaluation undertaken by the Interim Deputy Chief Executive/Chief Officer for Community Regeneration: its content directly relates to the work undertaken to support delivery within the Working Life theme of the Corporate Wellbeing Plan (Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community).
- 1.5 This report and its appendices highlight the key findings of the self-evaluation activity; outline areas of good practice along with areas for development; and identifies the priorities for improvement which will be developed into a Business Improvement Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee Members review the summary report and key findings laid out in the report, debating its content.
- 2.2 Committee Members review the judgements reached, assessing these for validity with a view to agreeing these.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Self-evaluation is a business process that is rigorous and enables organisations to be critically self-reflective about outcomes, service provision and leadership and management. Using lessons learned over previous years, the format of the self-evaluation has been developed. The key outcome of the process are to identify areas of good practice; along with priorities for improvement which teams could focus on moving forward.
- 3.2 In 2019, a refocus of the process was undertaken to ensure the self-evaluation documents continued to meet the organisation's needs. Following consideration of the updated documents by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT); the new format was approved for re-introduction in June 2019.
- 3.3 As part of the self-evaluation process, it was proposed that completed questions should be presented before the sector-specific scrutiny committee that scrutinises the outputs/outcomes for the relevant service area(s). This was seen as an opportunity for Committee Members and officers to review details of their services together; to outline positive practice and achievements whilst providing a platform to discussions around any challenges faced and areas for development identified.
- 3.4 A key aim of the refocused process was to support and enable discussions between scrutiny Committee Members and officers and secure feedback from the Committee that could then be considered/used as part of future planning on how identified priorities would be progressed.

4 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 Historically, the Council undertook self-evaluation activities annually on a 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 with a view to planning how this should be done.
- 4.2 Utilising the re-focused process, the Chief Officer and his wider teams considered all facets of their activity when completing the key questions. This resulted in the collation of these 'service-specific' responses into a single document to provide an assessment of progress across the whole directorate.
- 4.3 This approach enabled individual services to assess their areas of work; and also how they contributed to the 'bigger picture': the positive progress against the Working Life wellbeing objective.
- 4.4 At the end of the 2019/2020 self-evaluation process; the following judgements were made by services in relation to the 3 key questions:

Question	Service Areas Judgement	Regeneration & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Review and Assessment
1. Outcomes	Adequate	The evaluation judgements provided by Officers within the self-evaluation report was accepted by Scrutiny Committee Members on 10/09/2019.
2. Provision and Service Delivery	Adequate	The evaluation judgements provided by Officers within the self-evaluation report was accepted by Scrutiny Committee Members on 14/01/2020
3. Leadership and Management	Adequate	The evaluation judgements provided by Officers within the self-evaluation report was accepted by Scrutiny Committee Members on 03/03/2020.

4.5 A number of lessons were learned through completion of self-evaluation in 2019-2020. Although navigating the process was time consuming and intensive; it was seen to be valuable and a number of positives were identified. These included:

- a further improvement of connectivity across teams supported improved delivery;
- over the previous 12-months, a deeper understanding of existing collaborative working not just within the Community Regeneration, Public Protection and Housing services; but much more widely across the Council and with other external key partners/stakeholders had been developed;
- the process enabled those completing it to more clearly identify how the services they delivered contributed to other corporate wellbeing objectives; and wider Council and regional priorities; and
- the identification of opportunities to work together to do different things which could improve the services offered and develop the methods by which the teams worked using lessons learned to improve outcomes and meet set targets.

4.6 There were also a number of areas for development and priorities for improvement which were identified which would need to be actioned. These included:

- Reviewing existing partnerships with a view to consolidating collaborative projects and ensure are right people were involved at the right time, and were active in making positive progress against targets and goals set;
- Prioritising how teams would work effectively with other Council services to maximise opportunities to make positive progress against joint targets and objectives with a view to improving outcomes for citizens;
- Exploring how social media could be more readily accessed to promote services, activities and opportunities; and share achievements and good practice in a timely manner;
- Focusing on succession planning to ensure effective sustainment of key projects and services could be achieved in the mid to longer-term; and
- Improve how the intelligence gathered from key stakeholders both formally (through consultation and engagement) and informally was used to develop or improve services; and to share these findings to maximise the benefits.

5 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 2020-21 has provided some significant challenges in relation to all elements of the services' workload. A number of impacting factors noted include:
- the need to rapidly adapt ways of working to align with lockdown regulations led to the requirement to suspend some services at the initial stages of the pandemic to comply with government's 'Stay Home; Stay Safe; Protect the NHS' requirements;
 - an increase in the amount of direct community support activities to meet critical needs and safeguard communities – this had a particular impact at the start of the pandemic placing unanticipated demands on services and team across the directorate and wider Council;
 - the requirement to meet the needs of staff who needed to shield; self-isolate or work from home (particularly at the start of the pandemic where this initially had an impact on available resources);
 - to accommodate the required shift to agile/flexible working; investment was required to ensure staff had the necessary equipment to work effectively and efficiently from home and ensure they were able to stay 'connected';
 - as a result of the ongoing pandemic; Welsh Government were understandably unable to produce verified data in line with their standard timescales. This meant limited verified, comparative information was available. The primary focus has been on improving the Council's response to a range of indicators contained within the Working Life Strategy on a Page (SOAP) - **see Appendix 1.** Please Note: the data contained in the SOAP shows the status at the end of Quarter 3 (December 2020) – this is the latest *internally* verified data; and
 - the obligation to respond to new and emerging legislation, and respond positively to regulatory/service change arising from the ongoing pandemic.
- 5.2 There was a necessity to amend the approach to the self-evaluation process delivery model. In 2019-2020; the process was delivered on a question-by-question basis over 6 months – for 2020-2021; service areas/teams were required to consider all three questions at the same time.
- 5.3 Despite the pressures noted as a result of the response to the ongoing pandemic; instances of good practice have been noted. These include:
- The responsiveness to the requirement to move to flexible/agile working models being capitalised upon; with the support of the Council's senior management. Also, effective support was received from a number of corporate support services (e.g.) ICT department; Finance and Accounting, Procurement etc., and response activities were delivered positively at pace;
 - Teams adapted the services they delivered to meet service user needs in safe and appropriate ways (e.g.) the Active Merthyr Team worked to provide support for a grant programme to assist businesses, social enterprises and sports clubs in

continuing to engage with its core members by helping them purchase equipment to run activities virtually. 16 organisations were supported – these in turn helped reach thousands of local residents in the process;

- The local economy has suffered impacts as a result of a series of lockdowns. This might have led to local businesses closing; significantly impacting on products/services available to residents to the County Borough. However, a joint working relationship developed by officers across the Economic Development and Revenues and Benefits services enabled the Council to better understand support needs, enabling local businesses to be with the targeted support they required to survive in a timely and proactive way;
- The wholesale change in how the services worked in responding to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic could have been overwhelming. However, each of the services led by the Chief Officer – Community Regeneration responded positively to the challenges faced and continued to deliver key services to citizens; and
- The rapid responsiveness of Protection and Safety Services at the start of the pandemic was remarkable. The sustained positive relationships which have been built to deliver high-level prevention messages; advice and guidance to communities are notable and has brought together services across the Council to work more effectively together.

5.4 The key findings of the 2020/2021 self-evaluation were identified, and are listed in **Appendix 2**.

5.5 Some key challenges which require to be addressed were noted during the process; these include:

- European funding programmes are set to end in 2022; the need to ensure replacement funding is secured to sustain delivery of key services is critical (e.g.) the majority of Employability Services are EU-funded – these services are more critical than ever with so many across the County Borough being negatively impacted by the effects of the pandemic (e.g.) furlough; job losses etc.;
- New legislation introduced at the start of the pandemic relating to housing and homelessness will undoubtedly impact on the team's ability to deliver additional statutory requirements and balance this with high levels of service demand; this will also increase the pressure on budgets in the medium to longer-term; and
- Public Protection services have had to react and incorporate new emergency powers and carry out enforcement work whilst ensuring staff are protected in what could be high risk environments. Together with Trading Standards and Licensing Officers, Environmental Health Officers have played a critical role in enforcing the new emergency legislation. In order to meet the demands of the pandemic many of the day to day services (e.g.) food inspections; have had to be scaled right back. If further 'lockdowns' are required, this will lead to resumption of some elements of 'business as usual' being impacted further.

- 5.6 A collated list of evidence is available for review (see **Appendix 3**). The **summary judgements for the Working Life theme for 2020-2021** are:

Question	Service Areas Judgement
Outcomes	Adequate
Provision and Service Delivery	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

6 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 Through completion of this process; the Chief Officer: Community Regeneration and his teams have identified a number of **areas for development**.
- 6.2 Areas for development enable teams to record all areas where they have a drive to improve, this information acting as a prompt whenever teams develop, revisit, review and/or refocus services.
- 6.3 In relation to **Key Question 1** (Outcomes); the areas for development noted included:
- 1a. Review and refocus data quality and capture methods to consolidate current positions and increase opportunities for service development and improvement;
 - 1b. Develop and deliver on actions and tasks set down in the Council's Recovery; Transformation and Improvement Plan;
 - 1c. Sustain and further develop collaborative work with other departments across the Council to broaden the contributions made to objectives and outcomes set down in the Council's Corporate Plan;
 - 1d. Focus on future funding where current funding streams are approaching their end stages – this is particularly critical in relation to the teams works as a high percentage of services delivered are externally funded (e.g. Employability, EU-funded projects/programmes etc.);
 - 1e. Maximise the intelligence gathered through connecting with communities and key stakeholders both formally (via consultation) and informally (via local events; client meetings etc.); and ensure feedback captured is considered/ included in future service planning;
 - 1f. Effectively communicate key messages through developed use of social media platforms; sharing information on services/activities delivered, placing a greater focus on sharing details of opportunities and key successes achieved;
 - 1g. Continue to work with corporate support services to review existing governance arrangements to ensure current systems are responsive to changing needs and fit for the future;

- 1h. Capitalise on funding secured to maximise positive outcomes for communities (e.g.) roll-out of the Kickstart programme; continued development of the Taff Trail exploring options to maximised usability for evenings and weekends;
- 1i. Continue to support the Council's commitment to digital transformation to deliver services safely and accessibly to our communities;
- 1j. Continue to work on a regional basis to ensure the Council remains a key stakeholder in both small and large-scale activities; working with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to maximise opportunities to deliver affordable, accessible transport infrastructure that enables communities to access work and learning opportunities; and
- 1k. Continue to deliver the large infrastructure development programmes which support the sustainment and development of economic opportunities and experiences.

6.4 In relation to **Key Question 2** (Provision and Service Delivery), the areas for development noted included:

- 2a. Continue to look at improving succession planning arrangements to ensure the longer-term sustainability of services;
- 2b. Provide greater provision in terms of business support to support effective recovery from the impact of the ongoing pandemic is measured, meaningful and deliverable;
- 2c. Review how new legislation impacting on housing and homelessness will impact on the team's ability to deliver additional statutory requirements and balance this with high (and increasing) levels of service user demands;
- 2d. Continue to lead on the exploration and possible development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system; supporting a central repository for customer data which will enable services to understand customer/service user needs more holistically;
- 2e. Continue to identify and manage/mitigate issues identified within the Town Centre to ensure a safe, attractive space and improve public perception;
- 2f. Deliver the Cyfarthfa Plan in conjunction with the Cyfarthfa Foundation and Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust;
- 2g. Explore opportunities to support communities and businesses to develop their digital skills so they might access services safely and when they need to;
- 2h. Encourage the sharing of key information across teams to support an improved understanding of service delivery; identifying opportunities for integration and collaboration of services and gaining clarity on the impact being made collectively;
- 2i. Review and improve engagement with those who are hard to reach and/or socio-economically disadvantaged; and
- 2j. Contribute to the development of a Corporate Communication Strategy.

- 6.5 In relation to **Key Question 3** (Leadership and Management), the areas for development noted included:
- 3a. Ensure economic recovery is placed at the heart of all services; so that support to communities remains meaningful and valid;
 - 3b. Continue to gauge the impact of the accelerated pace of change brought about by the ongoing pandemic on the longer-term ability to meet identified needs;
 - 3c. Heads of Service and Senior Managers continue to ensure personal objectives of staff clearly link to corporate and service outcomes;
 - 3d. Continue to develop a clear understanding of the needs and requirements contained within the Council's Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan; and respond positively to this;
 - 3e. Ensure Elected Members remain up-to-date with any service changes and have current information to share with community members when fulfilling their roles;
 - 3f. Ensure rigorous review of future funding opportunities remains a central focus to ensure sustainability of those key services which will be impacted;
 - 3g. Capitalise on training and development opportunities to support effective, efficient service delivery for services users; customers and key stakeholders;
 - 3h. Work with leaders; managers and officers across other Council departments to share lessons learned in relation to the services journeys towards integrating professional disciplines which has benefits the directorate so much;
 - 3i. Retain focus on the use of the Focus on my Performance tool to continue using the opportunities to provide one-to-one feedback to staff; and maintain awareness of service and corporate objectives;
 - 3j. Further review resource implication on managers which have arisen as a result of the Chief Officer also becoming the Council's interim Deputy Chief Executive; and
 - 3k. Ensure wider service needs are continuously considered to ensure sufficient resources (finance, equipment and staffing) are available to deliver on current and future priorities.
- 6.6 By discussing and exploring these, the key priorities for improvement were identified. These have been split into 2 elements:

Common *high-level priorities* for improvement include:

- Continue to deliver appropriate service responses to our communities as we together recover from the effects of the ongoing pandemic;
- Actively and positively engage in improvement activities to not only meet service and corporate goals but to improve performance against these wherever practicably possible;

- Focus on exploring all future funding opportunities to ensure critical services that are currently externally-funded can be sustained in the longer-term;
- Begin delivery of the larger-scale programmes which have received approval from Full Council during 2020-2021 (e.g.) the Town Centre Master Plan; Placemaking Plan and the Cyfarthfa Plan;
- Continually review capacity to ensure community and service needs can be met and sufficient resources are in place to ensure effective progress against objectives is achieved;
- Further develop and maintain effective communication pathways to provide regular updates to citizens; Elected Members; key stakeholders and colleagues across the Council;
- Commit to the Council's vision of digital transformation; exploring opportunities to provide advice, support and guidance using technology;
- Seek to be innovative in our approach to the provision of effective and efficient service delivery; maximising budgets and working smarter, not harder; and
- Ensure a focused approach to service design supporting recovery; ensuring collaboration is at the centre of this.

6.7 Other priorities for improvement to be worked towards include:

- Continue engagement with corporate supports services to maximise available capacity through partnership;
- Maximise opportunities to communicate via social media with a view to improving timeliness of posts; and supporting more effective corporate communications officers;
- Identify areas where support may be required at a much earlier stage; to minimise interruptions to services;
- Ensure ongoing review of partnerships and Service Level Agreements ensuring these remain valuable and meaningful;
- Revisit arrangements for succession planning to support sustainability of services;
- Identify and capitalise on CPD opportunities to ensure officer skill sets meet existing and emerging needs;
- Ensure key findings from consultation and engagement activities are shared more widely so that more people benefit from the intelligence gathered; and
- Sustain work to tackle poverty and socio-economic disadvantage; ensuring these remain at the heart of our service delivery models.

7 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

- 7.1 Discuss the findings of the self-evaluation with Scrutiny Committee Members and secure comments and feedback which services will consider as part of future planning.

- 7.2 Focus on the key priorities for improvement and develop effective response activities that will support services to make positive progress towards achieving these.
- 7.3 Continue to develop knowledge and understanding of the Council's Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan, with the ongoing support of the Council's internal Economic Recovery Board.
- 7.4 Continue to develop the inter-departmental connectivity which is proving so beneficial in accelerating the pace of service delivery.
- 7.5 Ensure local businesses remain fully aware and are supported to receive as much financial and practical support so they remain viable; meeting the continued needs of local people and maximising input into the local economy.
- 7.6 Continue to positively progress all tasks and actions within the Working Life themes of both the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan; and the Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan.
- 7.7 Consider how all future strategic service decisions pay due regard to the Council's requirement to meet the needs of the Socio-Economic Duty.
- 7.8 Develop Merthyr's extended landscape and built heritage into an international quality visitor destination and experience;
- 7.9 To have developed a well-connected Economic Growth partnership where information and outcomes are jointly owned and shared. By achieving this goal, we aim to maximise the positive connections to produce positive results;
- 7.10 To develop the Town Centre as a Strategic Hub as part of the Cardiff City Region Metro focusing on transport infrastructure, physical regeneration and place-making

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 This report specifically links to the Working Life objective within the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan: **People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses; with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.**
- 8.3 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:
 - 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;

- Communities protect, enhance and promote our environment and countryside; and
- People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health

8.4 Through completion of the self-evaluation exercise; The Chief Officer, Heads of Service and officers have identified that meaningful contributions are made to the seven national wellbeing goals; supporting the Councils to maximise its' response to the Council's response to the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

ALYN OWEN
INTERIM DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE /
CHIEF OFFICER: COMMUNITY
REGENERATION

COUNCILLOR GERAINT THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER: REGENERATION &
PUBLIC PROTECTION

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Working Life: Corporate Self Evaluation	18 March 2021	
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		NO

ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER

Chief Officer, Community Regeneration

WORKING LIFE

How will Merthyr Tydfil CBC work?

Integration Collaboration Long term Involvement Resilient



Data at: December 2020

Merthyr Tydfil realises its economic potential, with a skilled workforce and better employment opportunities

People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination

We value and enjoy our built and natural environment, protecting and enhancing our heritage and cultural assets for current and future generations

We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others



Key Performance Indicators	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target
Participants who are in employment after leaving a programme	81	71	81	100	241	198	210	300	277	169	TBC
Participants who gain a qualification at the end of an 'out of work' programme	119	165	119	119	212	166	34	216	48	83	49
Participants who gain a qualification at the end of an 'in work' programme	185	97	185	281	184	241	171	312	176	67	168
Number of buildings developed as part of the business start-up process			3	4	4	4	3	8	4	1	4
Number of community enterprises supported in asset transfer opportunities			2	3	2	3	2	2	2	0	
Percentage of inward investment enquiries which become active businesses			5	5	5	8	5	29	5	4	5
Number of social enterprises where growth/development opportunities are identified			50%	66%	50%	60%	50%	66%	50%	75%	50%
Number of visits to the 5 key attractions within Merthyr Tydfil					618,000	825,501	636,540	662,286	655,636	Data pending	675,305
Restore 9 buildings within the Pontmorlais Heritage Area					3	0	3	0	3	1	
** NEW FOR 2019/20 ** Percentage of ASB perpetrators who reoffend within a 6-month period reaching Stage 2									Setting baseline	30.4%	TBC
** NEW FOR 2019/2020 ** Value of fraud detected and resolved									No target set	£21,228	TBC
The percentage of those who present as homeless who are relieved of homelessness	N/A	£73 - 178 £75 - 5*	N/A	33%	34%	31%	34%	31%	34%	32%	TBC
Percentage of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless (PAM/012)	N/A	61%	60%	53%	60%	57%	61%	49%	61%	39%	63%
Percentage of empty private sector properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority (PAM/013)	N/A	6.86% (40/583)	N/A	6.60%	3%	7%	6%	7.09	6%	Annual data	6%
The percentage of food businesses that are broadly compliant with food hygiene	N/A	93.49%	N/A	92.46%	93.11%	93.00%	93.02%	93.17%	92.80%	Annual data	92.90%
** NEW FOR 2019/20 ** Number of People attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least 3 times a year			None set	71%	-	Biannual data	70%	60%	-	Biannual data	TBC

Key Question 1: Outcomes

- 1a. All services led by the Chief Officer: Community Regeneration **contribute to the Working Life objective**; with many services also supporting multiple corporate wellbeing objectives through direct delivery or by working collaboratively. An example of the developing working relationships with colleagues in Revenues and Benefits around the provision of funding support grants – this related not just to Coronavirus, but also to the flooding experienced by communities within the County Borough between March-April 2020. This joint working relationship has strengthened the Council's understanding of the needs of businesses and communities and supported the delivery of extremely effective and efficient support around the accessing of grant aid funding, ensuring businesses survivability;
- 1b. The change in **how services work together** remained extremely beneficial, with discussions around service planning; problem solving and collaborative projects involving officers from across a larger number of service areas;
- 1c. All services provided evidence of how they **monitor performance**. Performance against identified KPIs has been sustained, despite disruption caused by the pandemic. However, as a result of having to do different things to ensure communities remained safe and supported; some of the service delivery models were interrupted in response to the need to follow government guidelines in relation to lockdown etc. Performance has suffered some negative impacts for this financial year as a result of this. There is evidence of an increasing focus on the use of data and information from multiple sources to inform planning; development and improvement activities in which teams are involved.
- 1d. There had been a further **service reconfiguration** over the last 12 months. This has been undertaken to support better effective integration of professional disciplines across the service areas; maximising the skills, knowledge and experience available across the directorate to deliver services and meet both new and emerging demands. Some additional changes will result from the capacity exercise recently undertaken by senior officers within the Council; however, these will not be realised until 2021/2022;
- 1e. **Capacity issues** have been noted across some service areas. A number of services highlighted the fact additional workload arose as a result of supporting Coronavirus community response activities. There is a variety of forms in which this support has been offered by these services (e.g.) advice, guidance and practical support to local people and businesses around social distancing; supporting local businesses to access sustainability grants and officers taking co-ordination roles for large-scale activities such as the mass-testing exercise. These issues have been (and will continue to be) closely monitored but should be considered when reviewing progress against targets etc.
- 1f. **Supporting safer communities** has been critical over the 2020-2021 period; and the degree of **reactive (responsive) service planning** which needed to be undertaken, particularly around safety and the protection of citizens in relation to Coronavirus has been significant. The services contributing to this self-evaluation. The focus on meeting **statutory, regulatory or legislative requirements** was retained, with significant new requirements being introduced and delivered upon as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

- 1g. Clear evidence of how the services responding were using the **five ways of working** to undertake planning, delivery and evaluation of the activities they have undertaken was made available. More detail on how this has been evidenced can be found in Question 2.3 (below)
- 1h. **Clear evidence of project work** undertaken by the services responding shows a huge scope and scale of activity being undertaken by delivery teams. These services meet a diverse cross-section of needs and provides evidence of consultation which helps ensure the right priorities are set for delivery.
- 1i. Teams have been involved in discussions around development of MTCBC's **Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan**; and officers understand how their services will contribute to the achievement of the developing actions within the Plan either now, or at a later stage of delivery.
- 1j. Teams have been required to move to **working agilely/flexibly** as a result of the pandemic; the majority of services have found this not to have disrupted how they delivered their core services and products and, in some cases, has led to officers being 'more available' – the shift to online meetings meaning their travel time has been reduced.
- 1k. There is evidence of **consistent working arrangements with the Portfolio Member** for Community Regeneration; Public Protection and Housing and these were found to be really positive. Additionally, work with Councillors was also a feature in the teams' self-evaluation responses.
- 1l. Despite the changes that have had to be made over the past 12 months; it was noted that a number of **key plans have secured Council approval** during this period (e.g.) the Placemaking Plan; the Cyfarthfa Plan etc.; all of which will deliver improved access to local attractions; activities etc. whilst continuing to offer opportunities to sustain existing businesses; support for new and developing businesses; and provide local people with jobs.
- 1m. A **significant funding** amount has been secured during 2020-2021. This has not just been in relation to Coronavirus (although a large amount of funding has been secured in this area; but also funding to further develop opportunities for local people to begin to address the challenges they have faced as a result of changing circumstances which they face. Some examples of this include:
- Data shows that young people aged 16-24 have suffered the greatest negative impact by business closures – particularly within the service industry where a large proportion of young people find work. Kickstart funding secured by the Employability Team will enable the Council to provide 96 people within the 16-24 age bracket, offering them 6-month work placements within the Council; where they will have opportunities to gain practical skills, knowledge and experience of the world of work.
 - Mental and emotional health and wellbeing have been seen to be significantly impacted as a result of restrictions of movement which citizens have been required to adhere to under lockdown. Teams have secured **£200,000** from the Welsh Government's Active Travel Fund to continue the development of the Active Travel network within the Borough, and the delivery of new path adjacent to Afon Taf school.

The overall assessment of for the Working Life theme in relation to Outcomes is:

Adequate

Key Question 2: Provision & Service Delivery

- 2a. Services reviewed how they have worked with the Council's corporate support services over the last 12 months and the following findings were noted:

	Corporate Communications	Legal	Human Resources	Finance and Accountancy	Procurement	Performance & Scrutiny	Business Change	Democratic Services	ICT	Business Support	Contact Centre	Revenues & Benefits
2019-20	Good	Good/ Mixed	Mixed	Good	Good/ Mixed	Good	Limited Contact	Limited Contact	Limited Contact	Limited Contact	Limited Contact	Not recorded
2020-21	Good	Good	Mixed	Good	Good	Good	Limited Contact ¹	Limited Contact ¹	Good	Limited Contact ¹	Limited Contact ¹	Good
Positive Change Noted		✓			✓				✓			No judgement recorded
Sustained	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	NEW

Notes:

- ¹ Where limited contact is noted; the contact that has taken place has been judged as GOOD
- 2b. Strong evidence of contributions made to **corporate priorities** was noted across all service areas. Contribution to the Best Start to Life; Environmental Wellbeing; and Living Well objectives were noted, with projects and activities being delivered to support progress being made against outcomes for these service areas. Importantly, when working collaboratively with others; the improved connectivity between services under this directorate now means multiple services work together to meet support requests; providing targeted support that aims to accelerate the pace of change and/or improvement.
- 2c. Examples of the **corporate plans and strategies** which services have contributed to included Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community (including tackling poverty); the Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan; the Economic Growth Strategy; Destination Management Plan; Town Centre Action Plan; Cyfarthfa Plan; Active Merthyr Plan/Physical Activity strategy; and the Air Quality Action Plan; with more currently developing (e.g.) the work plans related to the Business and Education Together Partnership.
- 2d. Examples of meaningful contributions made by teams to **wider or regional strategies** include the Our Cwm Taf strategy (Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB's Wellbeing Plan; the Cwm Taf Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan; the Cwm Taf Community Safety Strategy; and the Cwm Taf Ageing Well Plan. These collaborations offer opportunities not only enhance the progress being made against outcomes; but also offer avenues to learn lessons regarding project/programme delivery from outside of the organisation.

- 2e. We would note that contact with **Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB** has not been regular over the last 12 months; and connections previously developed with them appear have to diminished, despite the Chief Officer being the project lead for the PSB's 'Strong Economy' work-stream. This is an issue which we will need to explore further to ensure we are able to maintain an equal partnership and realise benefits from the investment of time and funds in this area.
- 2f. Teams are actively working within **regional collaboration arrangements** to deliver better outcomes for communities. Examples of this include the Aspire apprenticeship programme; Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus; South East Wales Competitiveness Network; Work with Public Health Wales (including Test, Trace and Protect)etc.
- 2.f During the ongoing pandemic; we have not only sustained working arrangements with **private sector businesses** both large and small; but have developed this. For example, key infrastructure projects have enabled us to work with Mott McDonald; The Urbanists. Teams have actively worked with British Gas to ensure accessibility to the NEST scheme; and with Morgan Sindall to meet the requirements of their Social Value Plan – this has led to employment opportunities for local people during the development of the Central Bus Interchange in the Town Centre.
- 2g. Partnership arrangements with **third sector organisations** continue across all services within the directorate. Examples are many and include work with the Citizens Advice Bureau around supporting people adversely affected by Coronavirus; work with Adref/Salvation Army around Housing and Homelessness; with Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust; supporting them with their ongoing works and management of the existing contract between them and the Council.
- 2h. As stated in Key Question 1; all service areas in this directorate use the **5 ways of working** in delivering their daily duties. Assessment of how they feel they are doing this was queried; and the following responses received (this is broken down into a service by service basis):

	Judgement for all services
Long term	1.5 – Good
Prevention	1.5 - Good
Involvement	1.5 - Good
Collaboration	1.5 - Good
Integration	1.5 - Good

Key

SCORE	JUDGEMENT
2	EXCELLENT
1.5	GOOD
1	ADEQUATE and needs improvement
0-0.5	UNSATISFACTORY and needs urgent improvement

The overall assessment of for the Working Life theme in relation to Provision and Service Delivery is:

Good

Key Question 3: Leadership & Management

- 3a. Many services noted that it could be **difficult to predict where the service would be in five years**. Reasons identified for this included the significant changes within the Council over the last 12 months; as the organisation as a whole continues its transformational journey to establish, if and how, it can remain sustainable for the future. The current pandemic has made the situation even more unpredictable. Despite this, there was a general feeling that communication across the organisation has improved over the last 12 months.
- 3b. Clarity around **future funding** for services and programmes is still unclear; with a large proportion of services in this directorate being externally funded (including Welsh Government and EU funding); the challenge of identifying where we will be will remain until further information around arrangements is clear.
- 3c. **Officers feedback on leadership and management** within the directorate was secured. Feedback showed staff felt they had regular contact with their service managers; who gave clear instruction and direction regarding work tasks, which is appreciated. Staff also recognised the involvement they have with the Portfolio Member; and acknowledged the recognition he gives to the roles they undertake and the part they play in making the lives of service users better. Team meetings take place regularly (albeit virtually) and staff engagement and involvement levels are positive.
- 3d. It was acknowledged **personal objectives are clearly linked to both service and corporate objectives and priorities**. The framework provided by the **Focus on my Performance** process also re-enforces the requirement for regular discussion and contact with managers; it provides a platform to look at training needs and workflow management; as well as to consider areas where performance levels of individuals is lower than expected and identify why this is the case with a view to identifying ways to support improvement. There is still an over-reliance on key officers in a number of services across the teams; and SPODs are common. There is a risk that some areas rely on goodwill of staff to get by. Discussions around workforce and succession planning continue to take place to manage this.
- 3e. **Frequent contact with Elected Members** was noted; the majority of these interactions were very positive. Where Elected Members understand the scope of the services provided by departments, they can have a positive influence on how services work by providing both support and constructive challenge. However, there are occasions where a lack of understanding has added to the workload; this can be impactful at a time when resources are scarce and risks need proper consideration before decisions are made.
- 3f. Managers frequently work with teams to **review key plans and strategies** to ensure sufficient resources are in place to deliver. Team members have been involved in the development of the Council's **Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan**. The **Community Regeneration, Public Protection & Housing (CRPPH) Board** was felt to have supported positive change to be achieved, and helped develop wider connections across the Council.

- 3g. A big change over the last 12 months has been **the move to agile/flexible working**. Staff felt the support they had received from management, particularly at the early stages of the change had been good; though some issues had been noted, the majority of these had been managed effectively. Encouragement and motivated was still regularly received by team members; and this help reduce any feelings of isolation individuals might have felt. The additional support around health and wellbeing circulated corporately was also accessed by some staff.
- 3h. Over the past 12 months; the Chief Officer has encouraged managers to attend **scrutiny committee meetings** to develop a deeper understanding of this function's role and purpose. This attendance has enabled staff to see first-hand that scrutiny can be a platform for meaningful discussion to take place; it has also supported a better understanding of Committee Members expectations when writing reports. Both the Chief Officer and the Portfolio Member have spoken at scrutiny meetings to praise the officers in their substantive efforts to meet their targets and goals; particularly in relation to the challenges faced over the past 12 months.
- 3i. As a result of the ongoing pandemic; a number of **changes in legislation** have been introduced and this has added significantly to workloads in some areas. There is a risk this will impact on resilience if these pressures are sustained and there are occasions where staff wellbeing has undoubtedly been impacted. For example, the current legislative burden on the Council is that all the people that that were supported into temporary accommodation during the pandemic, the Council now has a statutory obligation to re-house. This brings substantial pressures onto the Council. This situation has been managed over the past 12 months; but it also means the Council will have to think of very innovative ways to accommodate this client group as this will not just be in relation to accommodation, but also the support provision which is going to have to be put in place to sustain the tenancy.
- 3j. Looking at **financial governance arrangements** across the services; there is evidence of regular financial review. There is a focused approach to funding management; and evidence of success relating to the securing of funding to sustain and develop services. It has been found that collaborative work with stakeholders has supported effective use of budgets. A high proportion of services delivered are grant funded; and the positive relationships in place with finance and accountancy has enabled leaders and managers to be confident around financial management.
- 3k. It has been noted that limited revenue funding can mean challenges when delivering resource-intensive activities; and on occasions this has led to **significant pressures being placed on resources to meet deadlines**. Cross Council working arrangements have helped when this has occurred, but due to the leanness of the organisation, cannot be sustained over the longer-term.
- 3l. **Regular communication with stakeholders** takes place to help sustain a clear understanding of community needs. Regular involvement in team; project; partnership and regional meetings/activities has added to the knowledge of officers. Cross-departmental working has been positive in delivering corporate services and priorities – this has been particularly true in the arrangements to provide support and response activities linked to Coronavirus.

The overall assessment of for the Working Life theme in relation to Leadership and Management is:

Good

Examples of Evidence Presented to Support the Self-Evaluation Process

Evidence Source	Question 1: Outcomes	Question 2: Provision & Service Delivery	Question 3: Leadership and Management
Data and statistical information (include Corporate SOAPs)	✓	✓	✓
Community and Stakeholder feedback	✓	✓	✓
Evidence showing evaluation of activity	✓	✓	
Planning documentation	✓	✓	✓
Statement of Wellbeing/Focus on the Future: wellbeing in our community	✓	✓	✓
Recovery, Transformation & Improvement Plan		✓	✓
Annual Performance Report	✓	✓	✓
Sector Specific Plans and Strategies	✓	✓	✓
Regional Plans and Strategies	✓	✓	✓
Funding applications	✓	✓	✓
Reports to funders	✓	✓	✓
3-weekly Public Protection report to Welsh Government	✓		
Grant offer letters	✓	✓	✓
Media and publicity materials	✓	✓	✓
Documentations from meetings (minutes/agendas etc.)	✓	✓	✓
Service Level Agreements	✓	✓	
Consultation documents and findings	✓	✓	✓
Online learning/service materials	✓	✓	
Evidence of provision of funding support	✓		
Case studies	✓	✓	✓
Prosecuting files	✓	✓	✓
Lalpac licensing records	✓		
Scrutiny reports	✓	✓	✓
Community Regeneration, Public Protection and Housing documentation (including TOR)		✓	✓
Self-evaluation documentation (2019/2020)	✓	✓	✓
Tenancy agreements		✓	
CRM scoping paper		✓	
Reports to other corporate committees (Cabinet, Full Council, Audit Committee etc.)	✓	✓	✓
Legal charges and agreements		✓	
Contract with Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust		✓	
Expression of Interest documents		✓	
Education Business Improvement Plan	✓	✓	
PSB Strong Economy Employability Pledge		✓	✓

Evidence Source	Question 1: Outcomes	Question 2: Provision & Service Delivery	Question 3: Leadership and Management
Corporate subjective wellbeing tool and data	✓	✓	
Job Descriptions		✓	✓
Budget reports	✓	✓	✓
Tasking records		✓	✓
Tender documentation (Merthyr Tydfil Central Bus Interchange)		✓	
Sports Wales Annual Report		✓	
Local Commissioning Plan		✓	✓
Vacant buildings brought back into use		✓	
Relationship agreements		✓	
Morgan Sindall Social Value Plan		✓	
ASB cases		✓	
Record of referrals to other agencies/organisations		✓	
Closure Orders (following successful court appearances)		✓	
Corporate capacity exercise		✓	✓
Staff Culture Survey		✓	✓
Highlight reports	✓	✓	✓
Delivery of major regeneration programmes		✓	✓
Focus on my Performance paperwork	✓	✓	✓
Analysis of homelessness presentations			✓
Staff structure			✓
Training certificates			✓
Occupational health referrals			✓
Staffing returns			✓
Electronic calendar entries			✓
Huddle board			✓
Engagement Plan			✓
DRAFT Pathways to Work policy			✓
Intelligence database			✓
Terms of Reference for partnership/working groups			✓