

Carmarthenshire Panel Performance Assessment – Response Form

The Council fully accepts the conclusions in the report and fully intends to follow all of the recommendations contained in the report. The following Council response outlines the actions we propose to take to make progress against the report recommendations in order to further strengthen the extent that we meet our performance requirements.

Ref.	Improvement Opportunity	Planned Actions	Timescales for Completion	Lead Officer
1. Local Area for Consideration – Children’s Services				
1.1a	Maximise funding streams to roll out best practice to support prevention and community development.	We will deploy Eliminate & Radical Reform grant funding to develop and further expand new preventative activity which will include consideration of community and third sector partners	March 2028	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
1.1b	Build upon existing partnerships to integrate further with public service partners to deliver community-based services.	We will continue to work closely with Health to further integrate our early years services as part of the Maternity and Early Years strategy. We will also strengthen our partnerships through multi-agency implementation of our new Children and Families Early Help Strategy. We will continue to find ways to work across and together with our Public Service partners with a focus on ensuring bold and transformative developments through multi-agency arrangements.	On-going	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
1.1c	Incorporate important early work on prevention within the broader Transformation Programme for Children’s Services.	We will ensure that work on Early Help & Prevention, both statutory and non-statutory, is included as part of the Children’s Services Transformation Programme and ties into wider prevention work being undertaken by the Council and partners.	March 2026	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing

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1.1d	Further develop partnership work with the voluntary sector and community organisations across Carmarthenshire to build community power.	We will continue to actively work with the third sector when planning and commissioning services whilst also taking the opportunity to review our working arrangements with Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS). We will continue our funding commitments towards the network of third sector community-based family centres and groups across Carmarthenshire. We will be focused on bold, ambitious strategic intent and ensure that community power is our goal.	On-going	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
1.1e	Work with the Hywel Dda University Health Board and build upon the highly effective integration established for Adult Services to explore if a similar model can be put in place for Children's Services.	We will continue to build on pre-existing regional multi-agency workstreams related to commissioning and complex needs. In addition, we will also review current arrangements to consider new ways of working for both adults and children's services.	May 2027	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
1.2a	Increase project management capacity to enhance programming and accelerate the delivery of transformation.	We will explore opportunities to increase project management capacity to deliver children's transformation via both grant income and growth bids. In addition, we will consider links to the Council wide transformation programme which will be reviewed over coming months.	May 2026	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
1.2b	Put in place the appropriate resources necessary to achieving transformation (including the establishment of a Council Transformation Reserve referred to in Recommendation 3).	This will be considered as part of the review of the Council wide transformation programme noted in action 3.1 below.	January 2027	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
1.2c	Establish robust monitoring arrangements for all pilot work including gateway reviews and move at pace to scale-up when desired outcomes have been achieved	We will seek to mimic pre-existing arrangements via the RPB and Welsh Government in order that we can ensure scalability and viability of existing projects.	March 2026	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing

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1.2d	Ensure that data informs and underpins decision making and that this is delivered within the framework of the new Artificial Intelligence and Data Strategy.	We will use the findings from the work referenced in 1.2c along with benefits realisation activity to ensure that strategic and service development decisions are informed by data.	March 2026	Darren Mutter, Director of Social Services & Housing
2. Financial Planning				
2.1	Put in place a Medium-Term Financial Strategy to support delivery of organisational resilience, financial balance, and the Corporate Strategy.	Prepare Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) based on existing service level information and intelligence as well consideration of regional, national and global factors.	March 2026	Chris Moore, Director of Corporate Resources
2.2	Utilise the departmental reserves policy to create a specific reserve to deliver the Transformation Strategy.	2.2.1 Prioritise identification of reserves which can be allocated to Transformation Strategy as part of Annual Statement of Accounts process. 2.2.2 Develop a Transformation Investment framework to maximise benefits realisation of transformation investment.	July 2026	Chris Moore, Director of Corporate Resources
2.3	Review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in-year and align with the Transformation Strategy, to provide assurance on the achievement of efficiencies and expenditure reductions	Once the MTFS is agreed, undertake a review of the Transformation Strategy to ensure it aligns with Council priorities and areas for development.	March 2027	Chris Moore, Director of Corporate Resources & Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive
3. Transformation and Innovation				
3.1	Review, refresh, and relaunch its approach to transformation and the new Transformation Strategy should be resourced to ensure that it is fit for purpose for current challenges	Transformation Strategy will be fully reviewed once Medium Term Financial Strategy is agreed. As part of that review, full consideration of the appropriate resources required to drive delivery of the Strategy will be undertaken. The aim is to have a Transformation Strategy which is fully aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process for the 2027-28 budget cycle.	January 2027	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive

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3.2	Ensure the new Strategy is high-level and cross-cutting to drive a target operating model for the Council and focus on service specific objectives.	As part of the review of the Transformation Strategy a target operating model of delivery will be considered and a plan developed if deemed appropriate for implementation across the Council.	January 2027	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive
3.3	Bring together supporting strategies e.g., workforce and digital strategies, to explain and support the direction of travel.	Work is underway to map the strategies and plans that are already in existence that need to be fully aligned with the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Corporate Strategy and Transformation Strategy are the core strategic drivers for the Council. The delivery plan for each of these core leading strategies will confirm the alignment with the key supporting strategic areas such as workforce, digital etc	May 2026	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive
3.4	Keep communities at the heart of the strategy – engage with them on what matters to them and find new ways of working together.	Involvement plan to ensure all relevant stakeholders are engaged in the development and delivery of the Strategy will be updated	January 2027	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive
3.5	Communicate and engage across the Council to underpin implementation	Communication plan for the Transformation Strategy will be refreshed	January 2027	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive
3.6	Work with partners collaboratively and explore sharing services and what you can do together.	Engage with Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB) (and other appropriate fora i.e. RPB, CJC etc) to further the discussion and ensure an understanding and develop a plan to make progress on areas of possible collaboration.	March 2026	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive
3.7	Look beyond its boundaries, build on existing networks, and learn from others.	As with point 3.6, work through existing networks to further develop plan for areas of possible collaboration and shared learning.	March 2026	Paul Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive

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4. Education and Schools				
4.1	Take action to address the number of school budget deficits. Where necessary and appropriate, the Council should strategically employ the “licence deficit” policy.	A range of actions are ongoing to address the situation. These include: primary schools budget support; financial literacy initiatives to improve headteachers’ financial knowledge through conferences, workshops, training, and a new Power-BI finance dashboard for benchmarking spending; secondary schools financial reviews; formal differentiated letters to schools categorized by their budget status, with those in deficit or forecasting deficits required to develop recovery plans by the end of the summer term; and implementation of the MEP strategy (as below)	Ongoing	Owain Lloyd, Director of Education & Leisure (Aneirin Thomas, Allan Carter, Adam Barnett)
4.2	Continue to focus on site specific issues and challenges affecting individual schools.	Work continues on site specific issues linked to the MEP strategy, capital maintenance programme and health and safety visits. There are significant pressures on school building maintenance budgets, both revenue and capital. These pressures are greatest in older, often smaller schools. A number of specific concerns have arisen in recent months, e.g. Ysgolion Blaenau, Bancffosfelen and Carwe. We have an ageing estate, and it has not been possible to direct capital expenditure to all buildings.	Ongoing	Owain Lloyd, Director of Education & Leisure (Aneirin Thomas, Allan Carter, Simon Davies)

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4.3	Implement the “Modernising Education Programme.” to address issues of excessive capacity and optimise the overall footprint of the school estate. This programme should inform capital programme investment and decisions on the “sustainable communities for learning programme.”	Work continues to implement the MEP Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2024. The current programme of work includes: delivering the sustainable communities for learning band B project, and the rolling programme; consulting on changing a number of schools from 4-11 to 3-11; consultations on a number of proposed school closures; Community Focussed Schools projects; Additional Learning Needs capital projects; WESP capital projects; and the catchment review. As part of the MEP Strategy, the viability assessment will form the basis for the identification of modernisation projects and rationalisation proposals over the coming years.	Ongoing	Owain Lloyd, Director of Education & Leisure
4.4	Maintain momentum on the review of school catchment areas which is important.	A review of school catchment areas is nearing completion. The review has considered the following key factors: catchment area numbers have become unbalanced compared to the capacity of many primary and secondary schools serving those catchment areas; the changing nature of the primary and secondary school footprint since 2010 with the rationalisation and closure of primary school provision in some areas and the reorganisation of secondary provision in the Dinefwr and Gwendraeth Valley areas; the need to support a review of school transport provision to make the network more efficient; and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) has become a key factor in the planning of school places as more schools have moved along the Welsh language continuum.	Review completed by March 2026 with implementation to follow	Owain Lloyd, Director of Education & Leisure

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4.5	Build upon the early yet positive discussions concerning post-16 education.	We have established a 14-19 Strategic Oversight Group which comprises all of our secondary heads, Coleg Sir Gar representatives, LA Representatives and invited stakeholders to analyse and aim to improve our provision through targeted partnership working and collaboration.	Ongoing	Owain Lloyd, Director of Education & Leisure