

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Reporting Period:
2023-2024



This annual corporate self-assessment report meets our duty as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

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Foreword

This is our third Corporate Self-Assessment report but the first that considers our current corporate well-being plan. We are continuing to build on our experiences, together with feedback from various sources, to further strengthen. In this report we look at how we are delivering our well-being objectives (as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) as well as the extent to which we are meeting our requirements set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, for the financial year 2023/24.

All our strategic documents set out our plans that look to achieve self-assessment across the four pillars of well-being, namely: economic; social; cultural; environmental. The Corporate Well-being Plan is the main plan for the Council. It sets out our objectives, outcomes and what we are doing to deliver them. This report looks at how we are delivering against our Corporate Well-being Plan. We have continued to collaborate with others and focus on delivering our priorities, for example the work we are doing across the region as part of the Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board.

Learning from previous years, we have continued to focus on delivering our services by using the five ways of working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, especially in how we integrate our strategies and build on the collaboration that has been in place responding to the pandemic. This has enabled us to become far more focused on what needs to be done in delivering our objectives for our residents. This is demonstrated by the work done by collaborating with partners from across Cwm Taf Morgannwg to engage with the public and others in developing our Population Needs Assessment and Well-being Assessment, both of which were used to build our corporate well-being plan.

We have continued to place greater emphasis on how we monitor our performance against the needs of our communities and are continuing to improve our understanding of our data and using it to make better informed decisions. To do this we have strengthened our leadership capacity. Two critical posts have recently been filled, namely our Director of Finance and Director of Governance and Resources.

In this report, we set out how we are using our resources, the effectiveness of our functions and our governance. We consider our engagement and consultation activities especially with local people, our staff, businesses and our Trades Unions. We will use the findings of this report to help us continuously assess ourselves. We want to be as efficient, effective and economical in meeting our outcomes for our residents now and in the future.



Brent Carter
Council Leader



Ellis Cooper
Chief Executive

Introduction

This annual corporate self-assessment report meets our duty as set out in Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Self-assessment is defined by Welsh Government (WG) as “a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future”¹. As the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 is “designed to be a more streamlined, flexible, sector-led approach to performance, good governance and improvement”², we have used this approach in the development of this report and performance governance but still considering sound principles such as benchmarking and considering sustainability.

In this report we set out our conclusions as to the extent to which we met our performance requirements for 2023/24. This spans over the previous electoral cycle where some different Cabinet Members held the portfolios to those shown in this report. We will also assess progress in meeting our well-being objectives for this same year. To do this we will use input from our consultees (listed below).

As in previous years, we have set out the actions we have taken and will take to address our findings so that we can continuously improve and increase the extent to which we can meet our performance requirement. This will include short-term (immediate to, and including next year, i.e., 1 year), medium-term (2 to 5 years) and long-term (5 years plus) actions. Going forward, we will be able to make conclusions to the extent to which we have delivered these actions.

As a public body, we are committed to carrying out sustainable development. This means improving the way we can achieve our economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. This starts with setting and publishing our well-being objectives which help us maximise our contribution to the seven nation well-being goals (set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015). Our corporate well-being plan sets out our well-being themes and objectives, that will let us know if things are getting better.

Setting the context – key challenges

We have set out below some of the key challenges we faced in 2023/24 and continue to face. We will continue to work with partners to address these issues.

Impact of the coronavirus pandemic including how this has impacted on available data	Climate change
Loss of European Union (EU) funding	Financial instability
Recruitment and retention of staff especially regarding highly skilled and technical jobs (including competing with other sectors and potential of staff turnover)	Cost of living impacts on our residents



¹ Statutory guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

² Performance and governance of principal councils - Statutory guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1, of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021; Welsh Government; March 2021

About the Area

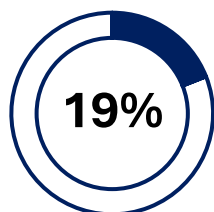
Located in the Heads of the Valleys area approximately 20 miles from the Welsh capital, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough is the smallest Welsh local authority and sits within the Cardiff Capital Region. The UK Census 2021 shows us the following facts and figures about Merthyr Tydfil:

Total Population

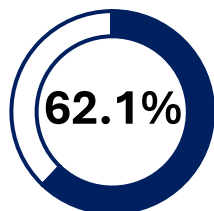
58,839

Population by Age Group:

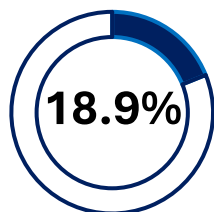
0 – 14
years



16 – 64
years



65+
years



Source: [Census 2021](#)

Health:



Very Good

45.4%

26,718 people



Good

30.2%

17,786 people



Fair

15%

8,837 people



Bad

7%

4,112 people



Very Bad

2.4%

1,386 people

Source: [Census 2021](#)

Ethnicity:

91.7%

57,140 people

Identify as White

0.9%

510 people

Identify as mixed / multiple ethnic group

1.5%

871 people

Identify as Asian / Asian British

0.2%

91 people

Identify as Black African / Caribbean / British

0.4%

227 people

Identify as other ethnic groups

Source: [Census 2021](#)

Merthyr Tydfil CBC's [Local Development Plan](#) (LDP) shows us that the main town of Merthyr Tydfil has a highest concentration of population (approximately 43,000). It is the main retail and service centre in the Heads of the Valleys; fulfilling a key strategic role in the region. Merthyr Tydfil has some of the most deprived areas in Wales.

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation identified Merthyr Tydfil as having high levels of deprivation; with 28 of its 36 LSOAs recorded as being in the top 50% most deprived areas in Wales. To address this, the Council has an aspiration to develop a 'Tackling Poverty' plan to deliver targeted and co-ordinated actions collaborating with partners.

The County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil has:

11

Electoral Wards

30

Ward Councillors

What is Self-Assessment?

Self-assessment is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. Self-assessment is more than stating what arrangements are in place; it is about considering how effective these arrangements are and how they can be improved. At its simplest, self-assessment of how the Council meets its' performance requirements under the Act needs us to answer some key questions:

How well are we doing?

How do we know?

What and how can we do better?

Self-assessment is not a fixed judgement: it is something which we should undertake regularly – addressing issues as they are identified; responding effectively in real time to challenges and opportunities.

Our Approach to Self-Assessment

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council undertakes self-assessment by encouraging honesty, objectivity and transparency about the Council's performance and governance. It provides an evidence-based analysis, helping us better understand how the Council is delivering its services/functions, how it's using its resources and governing itself. It focuses on what has been achieved by asking honest questions about the impact of the Council's actions is having on people's lives and experiences.

By using intelligence already held corporately in an insightful way, leadership across the Council can reflect on how the Council is operating at a strategic level, and identify what action is needed to make sure it can continue to provide effective services both now and for the long term. The types of evidence we review includes (but is not restricted to):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal reports reviewed by Full Council, Cabinet and other Council committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports from our regulators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any reports from the Public Service Ombudsman
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-evaluations (including scrutiny self-evaluation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance information (e.g. indicators and information on a local, regional and national level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key findings of our Staff Survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User feedback gathered through our engagement and consultation activities (including that with local businesses and Trade Union colleagues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Council Compliments and Complaints Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies and qualitative data

Vision Values & Strategic Objectives

Our Shared Vision

“Acting today for a Better Tomorrow”

The Wales we Want



A Prosperous Wales



A Resilient Wales



A Healthier Wales



A More Equal Wales



A Wales of Cohesive Communities



A Wales of Thriving Culture & Welsh Language



A Globally Responsible Wales

To strengthen Merthyr Tydfil’s position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys; and be a place to be proud of where:

The Shared Vision for Merthyr Tydfil:

People learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambition;
People live, work, and have healthy and fulfilled lives; and
People visit, enjoy and return

How we will work together to deliver change and achieve our goals:

Merthyr Tydfil CBC well being objectives	Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB well-being objectives	Merthyr Tydfil CBC Lead Administration’s Vision
An Aspirational Merthyr Tydfil focused on learning We will strengthen how we enable people to grow and reach their potential.	Healthy Local Communities A Cwm Taf Morgannwg where our communities are inclusive and feel cohesive and people feel safe, supported and valued. Sustainable and Resilient Local Neighbourhoods A Cwm Taf Morgannwg where we understand and respond to the risk of climate change to our communities. To do this we must value, manage and enjoy our green and blue spaces responsibly.	Our people make Merthyr Tydfil a place with a positive future filled with pride for our communities. <i>Taken from People, Place and Pride: Your Independent Vision for 21st Century Merthyr Tydfil</i>
A Healthier Merthyr Tydfil We will empower people to live independent and dignified lives.		
A Safe & Prosperous Merthyr Tydfil We will support how our economy recovers and grows.		
A Clean & Green Merthyr Tydfil We will support the creation of a clean and green environment now and in the future.		

Our Core Values

- Honesty and Openness
- Trust and Respect
- Accountability
- Learning
- Aspiration
- Team Working
- Communication

Our Operating Principles

Listening and engaging with our stakeholders
Clear communication
Embracing digital technology
Focusing on key priorities and outcomes
Consistent and timely delivery of strategy
Aligning the budget to key priorities
Promoting independence
Everyone is accountable

Finances Budgets & Expenditure

Revenue Budget - The Council sets a revenue budget each year. This revenue budget covers the costs of the services the Council provides, and is paid for by service users, Welsh Government Grants, Council Tax and Business Rate payers. For 2023-24, the Council's revenue budget was **£152,654**.

Revenue Outturn	£,000
Education	61,418
Social Services	43,304
Neighbourhood Services	11,904
Economy and Public Protection	9,831
Governance and Resources	8,644
Corporate Costs	19,961
Transfer from Budget Reserve	-5,500
Revenue Budget Surplus	3,092
Total	152,654

Key Decisions Taken During the Year

When making key decisions the Council considers how these will impact on both the corporate well-being objectives and the 7 national well-being goals. Examples of where positive links between these elements and the decisions made include:

	Our Corporate Well-being Objectives				The 7 National Well-being Goals						
	An Aspirational Merthyr Tydfil	A Healthier Merthyr Tydfil	A Safe & Prosperous Merthyr Tydfil	A Clean & Green Merthyr Tydfil	A Prosperous Wales	A Resilient Wales	A Healthier Wales	A More Equal Wales	A Wales of Cohesive Communities	A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language	A Globally Responsible Wales
Ongoing refurbishment of Penydre School - the first major school refurbishment project delivering net zero carbon in operation in Wales (May 2023)	●	●		●	●	●	●				●
Issue of Enforcement Notice for Ffos y Fran (May 2023)		●		●	●	●	●				●
Commitment to use SPF funding to provide grants for businesses, sports clubs and community groups (June 2023)	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●
Commitment to run the Food and Fun programme (July 2023)	●	●					●	●	●		●
Ending school holiday meal payments (July 2023)											
Relaunch of the SETS Grant programme for tourism, sports and community groups (August 2023)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Completion of Ysgol Y Graig school, realising the benefits of significant financial investment by the Council (September 2023)	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Launch of RAAC inspections to ensure public safety in municipal buildings (September 2023)		●	●				●				
Approval of renewal works to repurpose the former Bus station site at Glebeland Street (November 2023)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Realisation of benefits arising from decision to investment in renewal of playground equipment (January 2024)	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●

Engagement and Consultation

We have approved our Participation and Engagement Strategy which includes how we engage with our stakeholders.

Our consultation and engagement exercises are often as a result of a statutory requirement (e.g. setting our well-being objectives). However, we do undertake other consultation or engagement exercises to gather the views of the public to inform our decision-making process. We have also integrated questions regarding engagement/consultation into our IIA process; especially linking to our socio-economic duty.

Consultation can take place in a number of ways, for example (and not limited to) face-to-face meetings, on-line questionnaires, focus groups, hackathons (A hackathon is a 4-hour event that aims to bring together people with lived experiences, professionals, decision makers and creative producers), drop-in sessions and Group Surveys/Roadshows.

You can find out more in our Council Priorities and Budget Consultation 2023/24.

Scrutiny Feedback Received over the Past 12 Months

The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership, and service failure.

The scrutiny function in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) is performed by five scrutiny groups; these are made up of Elected Members (or Councillors) who are not part of the Council's Executive (Cabinet), along with co-opted representatives. The Council uses the four principles of good scrutiny ([Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#)) to underpin the function.



Provides critical friend challenge to policymakers and decision makers



Enables the voice and concerns of the public



Is carried out by independent-minded people who lead and own the scrutiny role



Drives improvement in public services

An Annual Scrutiny Report is produced at the end of every municipal year to outline the activities and key findings of scrutiny activity undertaken; you can access a copy of the latest report [here](#).

What Our Regulators Say

Like all Councils in Wales, our work is scrutinised by external regulators to ensure that we use public money effectively to deliver benefits to our communities. Audit Wales (previously known as the Wales Audit Office (WAO)) has an annual programme of audit and assessment work which it undertakes in the Council. Other regulators undertake work relating to specific service areas. The conclusions from all this work are brought together in an Annual Improvement Report. The other primary regulators are Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) and the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW).

Findings from ESTYN, CIW and relevant findings from Audit Wales are included in the sections of this report relating to our well-being objectives. As such, this section contains information from Audit Wales linked to the Governance and Resources Directorate and general governance.

We are working on recommendations from all our regulators. These are being monitored through our audit action plan (AAP) system with regular reports being presented to our Corporate Management Team for monitoring and holding recommendation holders to account. This is also reported to our Governance and Audit Committee to provide assurance that we are acting on our recommendations.

You can visit our regulator websites from the links below:

www.audit.wales/publications

www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection

www.careinspectorate.wales

Our Action Plan

Action	Senior Responsible Officer	Priority	Theme	Overview of progress to date
Continue to improve our governance (e.g. scrutiny improvement, constitution, refocusing our SOAPs and BIPs and delivery of our risk strategy/policy)	Director of Governance & Resources	2	Governance and Resources	<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>Scrutiny self-evaluation has been completed and improvement areas identified – feedback and discussion around the findings to be held in October/November 24.</p> <p>The Council is reviewing its risk policy and strategy in line with its audit recommendations.</p> <p>The performance monitoring arrangements have been updated and the strategies on a page (SOAPs) have been replaced by performance scorecards. These scorecards (aligned to the Council’s corporate well-being objectives) are now used as the basis for QPIR meetings.</p>
Strengthen our key governance plans/strategies (e.g. Workforce plans, Procurement strategy, Financial plans to address future challenges and Digital and Data strategy)	Director of Governance & Resources	3		<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>A number of strategies and plans have been developed during 2023/24; with the following documents being presented to Full Council for review and approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-28 • Participation Strategy 2023-28 • Communication & Engagement Strategy 2023-28 • Healthy Organisations Plan (Workforce) 2023-26 • Strategic Equality Plan <p>Work on the development of the Digital and Data Strategies is scheduled to be completed in 2024-25.</p> <p>The Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy is also under development, this is currently in draft form and will be reviewed by Full Council for review and challenge in the second quarter of 2024.</p>

Improve our customer services offer including how we help support our residents (e.g. cost-of-living) and how we engage and communicate (e.g. participation and engagement strategy)	Director of Governance & Resources	2		UPDATE FOR 23/24 This is being review (and is included in our scrutiny work programme). Improved dialogue exists between front end customer services and back-office operations. Our digital offer is increasing. A full improvement plan is being designed. Both the Council's Communication & Engagement Strategy 2023-28 was approved by Full council and has been rolled out across the Council.
Improve our education standards through continuing to collaborate in delivering our RARS strategy	Director of Education	1	An Aspirational Merthyr Tydfil focused on learning	UPDATE FOR 23/24 This work is continuing. We remained focused on improving our education standards. We have focused on our scrutiny function and have received positive feedback on it. We are reviewing our RARS strategy following the approval of our new corporate well-being plan and to ensure we meet the needs of our learners.
Improve our attendance and exclusion data by implementing our attendance plan and our Business Improvement Plans	Director of Education	1		UPDATE FOR 23/24 Again, this remains a focus. We have continued to include this as a priority in how we work. We realise that work is still needed around this issue.
Focus on delivering our 15-year economic vision	Deputy Chief Executive	3	A Safe & Prosperous Merthyr Tydfil	UPDATE FOR 23/24 This is being delivered but our governance arrangements around delivery need strengthening.
Addresses tackling poverty (collaborative working in the delivering our strategies and plans) and cost of living	Deputy Chief Executive	2		UPDATE FOR 23/24 The Council has an aspiration to develop a tackling poverty action plan which will include input from across the Council.
Address our housing issues as we meet our homelessness duties	Deputy Chief Executive	1	A Healthier Merthyr Tydfil	UPDATE FOR 23/24 This remains a priority to MTCBC. We are currently evaluating how best to continue to address on-going issues. This includes how we work with others.
Play our part in addressing anti-social behaviour	Deputy Chief Executive	1	A Safe & Prosperous Merthyr Tydfil	UPDATE FOR 23/24 Our CCTV services has become more robust to help us address this issue. We continue to work with partners, e.g. the police. Factors to consider include:

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the town centre wardens - Demolition of the old bus station and ongoing plans to redevelop this site <p>Director to provide a more targeted update</p>
Work towards the all-Wales target of becoming a zero-waste nation by 2050	Director of Neighbourhood Services	3	A Clean and Green Merthyr Tydfil	<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>We have a waste management plan that is currently being delivered. We have undertaken analysis and evaluation of our data and we are focusing on how we increase the recycling of food waste.</p>
Playing our role in the Welsh public sector becoming carbon neutral by 2030	Director of Neighbourhood Services	2		<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>Factors to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Decarbonisation Plan 2023-2030 was presented to and approved by Full Council in June 2023 - The Council has introduced Energy Champions to ensure the optimum level of recycling can be achieved within the organisation
Deliver our EV transition plan, which sets out how we will transition all the Fleet by 2030	Director of Neighbourhood Services	4	A Clean & Green Merthyr Tydfil	<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>We are ahead of targets in the delivery of this plan. Vehicle delivery times has been an issue though.</p>
Continue to strengthen our reporting and future system provision	Director of Social Services	2	A Healthier Merthyr Tydfil	<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>This remains a priority for MTCBC and fits with our social services strategies and our digital and data strategies.</p>
Continue to increase our resilience in Social Care and build on our collaborative approaches	Director of Social Services	1		<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>We have increased capacity in some key areas of the service but this remains a priority. We are also working well with our regional partners.</p>
Deliver our strategic plans and strategies, e.g. regulator action plans, Children's and Adult Services strategies	Director of Social Services	2		<p>UPDATE FOR 23/24</p> <p>This work is continuing, and we have built our RTI Plan into our business as usual or our new corporate well-being plan.</p>

LEGISLATION: Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to work better with each other and communities through involvement and by taking a collaborative approach. This is increasingly important to meet the challenges we face.










The Act introduced 7 national well-being goals – these show the kind of Wales we want.

Together the 7 national well-being goals provide a shared vision for the public bodies in Wales to work towards.

All public bodies must evidence how they have used sustainable development as their central organising principle. Following these ways of working offers a huge opportunity to make long-lasting, positive change to current and future generations.

The chart below provides a brief summary of where our Well-being Objectives primarily align to the 7 national well-being goals.

	 A Prosperous Wales	 A Resilient Wales	 A Healthier Wales	 A More Equal Wales	 A Wales of Cohesive Communities	 A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	 A Globally Responsible Wales
An Aspirational Merthyr Tydfil focused on learning							
A Healthier Merthyr Tydfil							
A Safe & Prosperous Merthyr Tydfil							
A Clean & Green Merthyr Tydfil							

The Act also requires all public bodies to use the sustainable development principle when delivering services – this principle is also known as **the 5 ways of working**.

				
Long Term	Prevention	Collaboration	Integration	Involvement

As we develop our performance framework, we will continue to use the [Future Generations Commissioner’s self-reflection toolkit](#) to help us review how we continue to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle (the 5 ways of working).

LEGISLATION: Local Government and Elections Act 2021

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('the Act') was passed by Senedd Cymru on 18 November 2020. It received Royal Assent on 20 January 2021.

The Act seeks to reform and strengthen local government accountability, performance and transparency, and places new duties on principal councils to promote public participation in local democracy. The Welsh Government also anticipate that some of the provisions within the Act will encourage greater diversity in local government.

The key provisions of the Act are:

- PART 1: Elections
- PART 2: General Power of Competence
- PART 3: Promoting Access to Local Government
- PART 4: Local Authority Executives' Members; Officers and Committees
- PART 5: Collaborative Working by Principal Councils
- PART 6: Performance & Governance of Principal Councils
- PART 7: Mergers & Restructuring of Principal Areas
- PART 8: Local Government Finance
- PART 9: Miscellaneous
- PART 10: General.

A Quick Guide to the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has been produced by Senedd research; you can access this guide by clicking [here](#).

Summary of Progress Against Statutory Duty: Performance

This report shows how the Council is making progress and improvement. However, there are areas that we need to focus on to further strengthen our governance and continuously self-evaluate.

We continue to make progress against our regulator recommendations, we use our audit action plan to update our Governance and Audit Committee to do this.

Our case studies which were included in our corporate well-being plan show how we are using the 5 ways of working to deliver our well-being objectives and contributing to the 7 national goals as a result. We want to continue to do this in meeting our challenges going forward.

We have received sound information from our engagement exercises. This is being used to inform our plans and improve our services.

In conclusion, we want to continue to self-evaluate to improve where we need to. The action plan in this report has been designed to help us do this. The action plan focuses on our areas of development but uses lessons learnt and encourages best practice from other areas of the Council and wider.

Last year we provided an overall judgement of 'adequate', if asked the same question this year, although we have made sound progress, we must implement our action plan and reappraise our position before having the evidence to be able to progress to 'good', which is our aim.

Certification of our Corporate Self-Assessment Report 2023-2024

Signed on behalf of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council:

Leader:		Chief Executive:	
Date:		Date:	

Have Your Say

We welcome your thoughts on this report and the work of the Council. You can contact us using the details below.

Address

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

<https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/10919/adroddiad-asesiad-corrfforaethol-2023-2024.pdf>