



How councils should understand how well they are doing and improve

We want to know what you think



This document was written by Welsh Government. It is an easy read version of a document asking people about what they think about '**Draft Statutory Guidance. Performance and governance of principal councils**'.

December 2020

How to use this document



This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.



You may need support to read and understand this document. Ask someone you know to help you.



Some words may be hard to understand. They are in **bold blue writing**. They have been explained in a box below the word.



If the hard word is used again it is in **normal blue writing**. You can check what they mean in Hard words on **page 24**.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Where the document says **we**, this means **Welsh Government**. For more information contact:

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This document was made into easy read by **Easy Read Wales** using **Photosymbols**.

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Introduction



A new draft law came out in Wales in 2019 called **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill**.



This document is about the guidance for part of that draft law - **Part 6, Chapter 1**. The aim of the guidance is to support councils to follow the new law.



We want the guidance to be useful for councils. We want to make sure it supports councils to understand how well they are doing and to improve.



We would like to know what **you** think about our ideas for the guidance for **Part 6, Chapter 1**.



Please read this document, and then answer the questions in the response form.

About Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill

Part 6, Chapter 1 tells councils:



- what they should do to understand how well they are doing
- what is expected of them
- what others will do to help



Councils must think about this guidance. If they choose not to follow the guidance, they must have clear reasons.



The guidance should support councils. They will need to make decisions on what is best for their area.



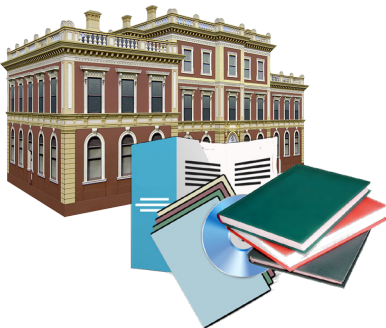
The law says that councils have duties to follow.
They are:

1. Duty to check how it is performing

For example, checking things like:



- If it is carrying out its role well.



- If it is looking after its **resources** well.

Resources are useful things we have or things we own. For example, buildings, vehicles, information, money and staff.



- If it is being managed and run well.

2. Duty to ask what people think about how it's doing, every year.



For example, talking to the public and staff.

3. Duty to write a report every year.



This will be about things like the work it has done/ and how well it has done it.

4. Duty to arrange for a panel of people to check their work.



This must be at least once between council **elections**.



An **election** is when you vote for the people you want to represent you. A local council **election** is when you vote for people to represent you on your local council.

5. Duty to respond to the report the panel write about the council.



The council must say what they are going to do in response to the report.

Alongside these duties:



- The **Auditor General** can carry out special inspections on councils. The **Auditor General** checks how public bodies are managing their money.



- Welsh Ministers can support a council or tell it what to do if they feel the council is not doing their job well.



The draft guidance for **Part 6, Chapter 1** is broken down into 5 chapters. Each chapter gives more information about the duties above. And the roles of The **Auditor General** and **Welsh Ministers**.



Read the rest of this document to know what the draft guidance says in each of the five chapters.

Draft statutory guidance. Performance and governance of principal councils

Chapter 1. Why councils need to check their work



It is important for councils to show how well they are working, because they have been voted for by people.



The new law wants councils to think more about how they can change the way they work to:



- plan better



- and provide services better.

Councils are responsible for:



- Carrying out checks on their work. And writing reports about it.



- Planning how to improve their work.



- Getting a panel of people to check their work. This must happen at least once between council **elections**.



- Getting advice from other councils, organisations, staff and the public about how well it is doing.



Other organisations will support councils and provide information on how they can improve. For example the **Welsh Local Government Association**.



Other organisations will check the work of councils too. For example, **Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Audit Wales**.

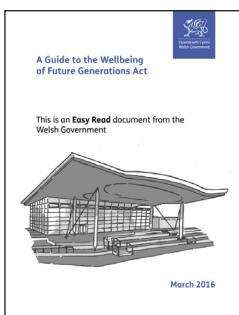


Everyone should work together to make sure the council works well.



Councils need to use the information provided by other organisations to improve how it does things.

Other laws



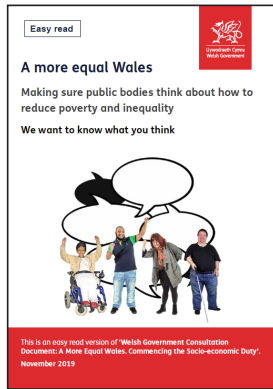
The new law thinks about the goals within the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**.



The goals in the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** aim to improve life in Wales for people now, and in the future.



Councils need to think about this important law when making decisions and planning.



Another duty which is due to start in 2021 is the **Socio-economic Duty**.

This duty says councils must make sure:



- people who have less money are treated fairly and equally



- the decisions that they make do not leave people worse off.



The **Socio-economic Duty** wants councils to make better decisions for everyone so everyone can achieve the same.

Chapter 2. Councils need to check their own work



A council needs to check how it is performing and decide what it needs to do better. This is called a **self-assessment**.



It must also ask other people what they think.



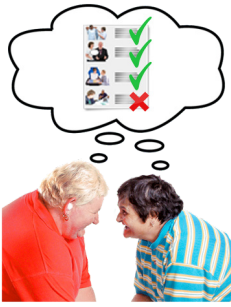
The council needs to write a **self-assessment report** to show what it has learned.



The report will say what changes it will make to get better.



The **self-assessment** is a chance for councils to look at how well they are doing and how they can do better.



Each council needs to think about the best way to carry out their **self-assessment**.



The **self-assessment** could also use information from other checks the council has done itself. For example, staff surveys.



The **self-assessment** could also use information from checks done by other people. For example the Auditor General for Wales.



It must also ask what people think about how it's doing, every year.



People must be able to find and read the **self-assessment** report within 4 weeks of it being written.

Chapter 3. The panel performance assessment



The **panel performance assessment** is a group of people who work together to look at how well the council is doing its job.



It is not meant to be like an inspection. It is more about supporting the council to be the best it can be.



It should help give the council a different view of how it is doing.



Each council can decide how to do a **panel performance assessment**. As long as it follows the rules written in the law.



The council will need to find a group of people to be part of the **panel performance assessment**.



They will then need to decide what the panel will do.



The panel will need to carry out a review and talk about what they find.



Skills

People on the panel should have lots of different skills.



People on the panel **must not** work for the council, or feel like they can't be totally honest about how the council is doing for some reason.



For example, because they used to work there, or they have a business that relies on the council somehow.

The panel needs to have:



- A Chairperson. This is someone who will lead the group.



- Someone from the public sector or another organisation such as a charity.



- A senior officer from local government.



- A local councillor.



- There can be other people too, if the council choose.

The panel will be looking at:



- How well the council is doing what it is supposed to do.
- How well it is using its resources.
- If the council is being run properly.



The panel should get the views of other people. For example, the public and council staff.



The panel will write a report about what they find out. It will say what the council needs to do to improve.



The council must publish the report. And respond to it.

Chapter 4. Inspections by the Auditor General for Wales



The **Auditor General for Wales** can do a special inspection of the council if the Auditor General thinks that the council is not performing its role well enough.



Welsh Ministers can ask the Auditor General to carry out a special inspection.



The Auditor General must write a report saying what they have found, and what they think the council needs to do to improve.



They must publish the report so everyone can find it and read it.



The council must respond to the report. They must say what they are going to do. The council's response must also be published so everyone can read it.

Chapter 5. The role of Welsh Ministers



Welsh Ministers can support councils to deal with issues about how well they are doing.



Also, a council can ask a Minister for support.



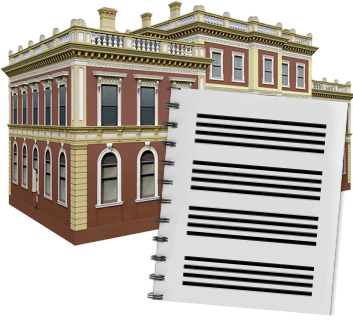
Welsh Ministers can tell a council what to do. This is only if they have:

- tried to support the council
- have spoken to everyone they think is important in the situation
- have told the council they will be telling them what to do.





However, if the Minister thinks the situation is urgent they do not need to follow the above steps.



The council must let the Minister use its buildings and see any important information they need.

Next steps



The **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill** should become an official law in January 2021.



The duties that this law places on councils in Part 6, Chapter 1 will start from 1 April 2021.



Except the duties around [panel performance assessments](#). These will start in May 2022.



After this consultation, we would like to finish the guidance and send it out to councils ready for when they will have to follow the new law.

Hard words

Election

An election is when you vote for the people you want to represent you. A local council election is when you vote for people to represent you on your local council.

Panel performance assessment

The panel performance assessment is a group of people who work together to look at how well the council is doing its job.

Resources

Resources are useful things we have or things we own. For example, buildings, vehicles, information, money and staff.

Self-assessment

A council needs to check how it is performing and decide what it needs to do better. This is called a self-assessment.