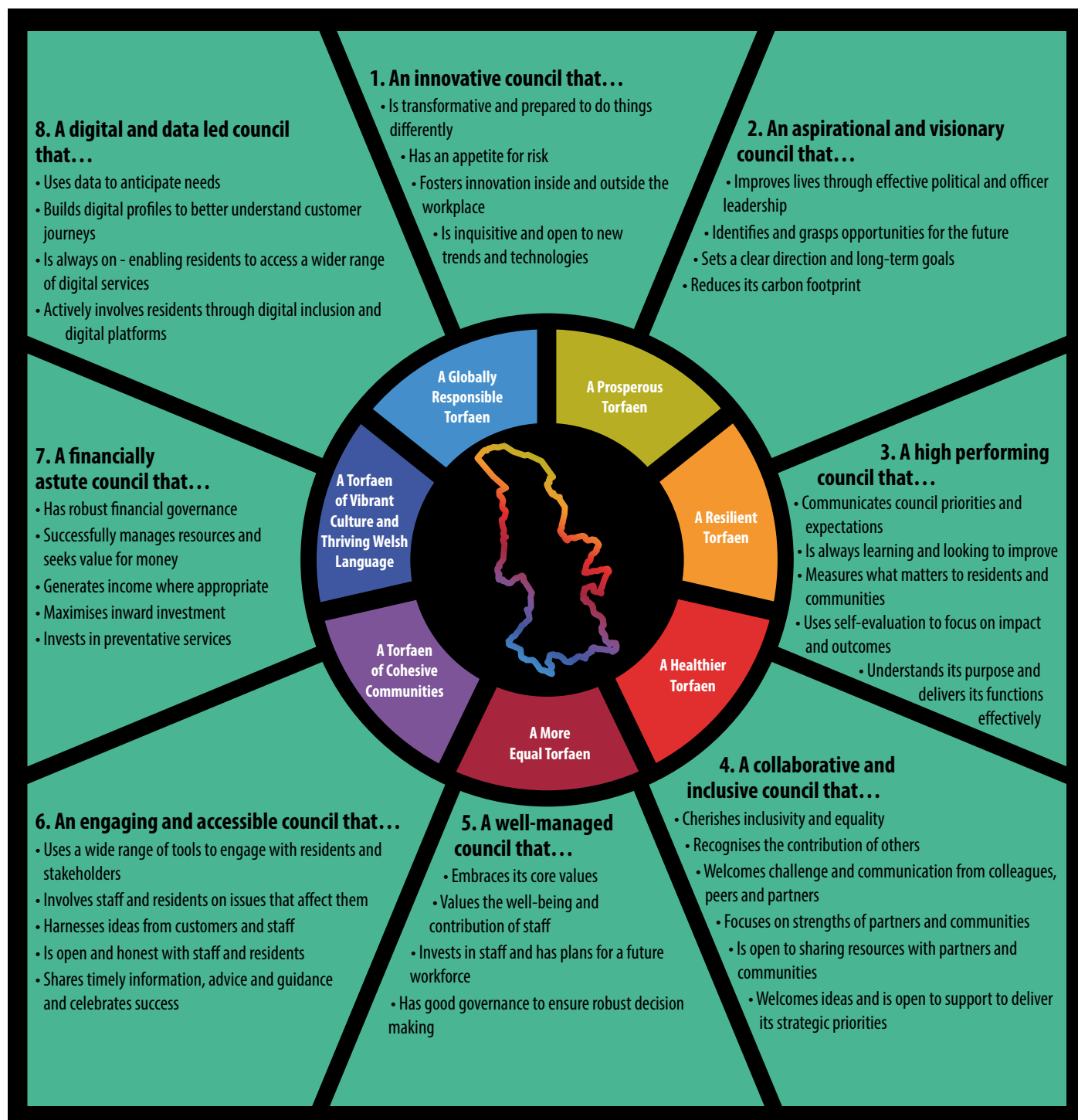


TORFAEN COUNCIL: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN OUTSTANDING COUNCIL



Characteristics and their Definitions

Characteristic 1 – An innovative council

Is transformative and prepared to do things differently

- **Embrace a Culture of Innovation:** Foster an organizational culture that encourages creativity, appropriate risk-taking, and open communication. Encourage employees to work in an “Ideas Lab” environment where they value independent thinking, viewpoint diversity, the sharing of ideas, experimentation, and learning from failures.
- **Understand Customer Needs:** Develop a deeper understanding of Torfaen’s residents & communities and their evolving needs. Conduct market research, gather feedback, and stay updated on industry trends to identify areas where innovation can make a significant impact.
- **Encourage Cross-functional Collaboration:** Break down silos and promote collaboration between different teams and departments. Encourage diverse perspectives and skill sets to foster creative problem-solving and generate innovative ideas.
- **Digital Transformation:** Integrate digital technologies into all areas of council business to fundamentally change how it operates and delivers value to customers.

Has an appetite for risk &

- **Risk Management:** Identify and assess potential risks. Develop risk management strategies and contingency plans to mitigate impact.
- **Strong feedback loops:** Maximise learning from the mistakes we have made as we innovate and do things differently, using this knowledge to drive future improvement and innovation.

Is inquisitive and open to new trends and technologies

- **Embrace Technology:** Leverage technology to drive innovation in business processes, products, and customer experiences. Explore emerging technologies like educational technology, information technology and artificial intelligence, that can provide a competitive advantage.
- **Measure and Track Results:** Establish metrics and key performance indicators to track the success of innovative initiatives. Regularly assess and analyse the outcomes to refine strategies and ensure they align with Torfaen’s well-being objectives & wider goals.

Fosters innovation inside and outside the workplace

- **Invest in Research and Development:** Allocate resources for research and development efforts to explore new technologies, processes, and products.
- **Foster Entrepreneurial Mindset:** Encourage entrepreneurial thinking within teams & across directorates. Empower staff to take ownership of their ideas, provide opportunities for entrepreneurship, and reward innovation and initiative.
- **Stay Agile and Adaptive:** Be willing to adapt quickly to changing market conditions and customer feedback. Embrace an iterative approach, where innovations based on real-world feedback can be tested, learned from, and refined.
- **Collaborate with External Partners:** Seek partnerships with external organisations, to tap into their expertise and access cutting-edge technologies or ideas.
- **Continuous Learning and Improvement:** Encourage a learning mindset throughout Torfaen Council. Provide opportunities for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge through training, workshops, conferences, or learning events.
- **Continuous Innovation:** Foster a culture of continuous innovation by investing in research and development, piloting new technologies, and embracing a test-and-learn approach.



Characteristic 2 - An aspirational and visionary council

Improves lives through effective political and officer leadership

- **Transparent and ethical practices:** Operate with transparency and integrity with robust governance and compliance frameworks in place and communicate openly with stakeholders.
- **Thought leadership and industry influence:** Strive to be thought leaders in our industry.

Identifies and grasps opportunities for the future

- **Innovation and disruption:** Constantly seek new ideas, technologies, and approaches to stay ahead of the curve.
- **Long-term thinking:** Look to the future and think beyond immediate goals. Invest in sustainable practices, research and development, and strategic partnerships to create lasting value.

Sets a clear direction and long-term goals

- **Purpose-driven:** Have a clear mission and commit to making a positive impact on people's lives and the world.
- **Continuous learning and adaptation:** Embrace a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. Be agile and willing to experiment, pivot, and evolve strategies based on changing circumstances and challenges

Reduces its carbon footprint

- **Social and environmental responsibility:** Prioritize social and environmental sustainability, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity (in accordance with the Environment Act 2016). Take proactive steps to minimise ecological footprint and promote ethical practices throughout supply chains.

Characteristic 3 – A high performing council

Communicates council priorities and expectations

- **Clear Vision and Goals:** Define a clear vision, establish long-term goals and break them down into short-term objectives to ensure a sense of direction and purpose for the council.

Is always learning and looking to improve

- **Innovation and Adaptability:** Embrace innovation and be open to change. Seek new ideas, technologies, and processes and encourage a culture of experimentation and learning.
- **Talented and Engaged Workforce:** Recognize employees are our most valuable asset and foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- **Continuous Learning and Improvement:** Develop a culture of learning and continuous improvement that encourages employees to develop new skills and knowledge. Promote innovation and creativity and learn from both successes and failures.
- **Strong, Compassionate and Engaging Leadership:** Encourage behaviour that inspires and motivates teams. Set clear expectations and provide guidance and support. Lead by example, promoting a culture of excellence, integrity, and ethical behaviour.



Characteristics and their Definitions (continued)

Measures what matters to residents and communities

- **Customer Focus:** Prioritise customers and strive to deliver exceptional services and value. Invest in understanding customer needs, preferences, and feedback, and continuously improve services, and overall customer experience.
- **Customer-centricity:** Focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences by understanding customers' needs and desires and strive to exceed their expectations.

Uses self-evaluation to focus on impact and outcomes

- **Performance Measurement and Data-driven Decision Making:** Establish key performance indicators and regularly measure and track their progress. Use data and analytics to make informed decisions and continuously improve operations and strategies.

Understands its purpose and delivers its functions effectively

- **Clear Vision and Strategy:** Define a clear vision of goals and design well-defined strategies and plans to achieve them. Have a good understanding of our role and our customers and develop plans that align with collective strengths and opportunities.
- **Operational Excellence:** Focus on efficiency and effectiveness across all operations. Streamline processes, eliminate waste, and leverage technology and automation where appropriate.

Characteristic 4 - A collaborative and inclusive council

Cherishes inclusivity and equality

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Meets the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010, including the socio-economic duty, embracing diversity in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, abilities, and backgrounds. Actively promote equality, providing equal opportunities, and ensuring a safe and respectful work environment for all employees.
- **Welsh Language:** The Council assures itself of the impact it is having on the promotion of the Welsh Language, maximising positive impacts and minimising negative impacts. (Welsh Language Wales Measure 2011)
- **Flexibility and Work-Life Balance:** Offer flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options to allow employees to better balance their personal and professional responsibilities.

Recognises the contribution of others

- **Talented and Engaged Workforce:** Recognize employees are our most valuable asset and foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Welcomes challenge and communication from colleagues, peers and partners

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage with a wider range of stakeholders including customers, suppliers, partners, and communities, seeking their perspectives, involving them in decision-making processes, and fostering mutually beneficial relationships.

Focuses on strengths of partners and communities

- **Strong Relationships and Partnerships:** Understand the value of collaboration and strategic partnerships. Build strong relationships with all partners and stakeholders.



Is open to sharing resources with partners and communities

- **Open and Transparent Communication:** Share information, goals, and challenges with employees, actively seeking their input and feedback, and ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive and well-communicated.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Encourage collaboration and teamwork to foster innovation and achieve shared goals. Promote cross-functional projects, establish open communication channels, and implement collaborative tools and technologies.

Welcomes ideas and is open to support to deliver its strategic priorities, developing a communities approach to the delivery of services.

- **Empowering Communities:** The Council will give residents the support, responsibility and power to deliver the services that matter to them in the places they live, promoting greater resilience within those Communities.
- **Empowering Employees:** Empower employees by giving them the autonomy, authority, and resources to make decisions and contribute their ideas. Promote a culture of trust, providing continuous learning and development opportunities, and recognising and rewarding employees' contributions.

Characteristic 5 - A well-managed council

Embraces its core responsibilities, values & mission

- **Sustainable development:** We continuously work towards improving economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in Torfaen through application of the sustainability principle (WBFG Act 2015).
- **Clear Vision and Goals:** Define a clear vision, establish long-term goals and break them down into short-term objectives to ensure a sense of direction and purpose for the council.
- **Clear Mission:** Employees understand their contribution and are working towards the reduction of inequality and inequity in Torfaen's communities through everything they do.

Values the well-being and contribution of staff

- **Effective Communication:** Establish open lines of communication by encouraging regular feedback, both top-down and bottom-up, to promote transparency and address concerns. Utilise communication tools and platforms to facilitate efficient information sharing.
- **Employee empowerment:** Value staff and create an empowering work culture by providing opportunities for growth, fostering a collaborative environment, and encouraging innovation from within

Invests in staff and has plans for a future workforce

- **Strong Teams:** Hire and develop skilled employees who are aligned with your Torfaen's values and goals. Provide staff with proper training and resources to excel in their roles. Foster a positive work culture that encourages collaboration, innovation, and growth.



Characteristics and their Definitions (continued)

Has good governance to ensure robust decision making

- **Financial Management:** Maintain robust financial management systems and processes.
- **Customer Focus:** Put customers at the centre of our business. Understand their needs, preferences, and feedback. Deliver high-quality services, and consistently aim to exceed customer expectations. Build strong relationships through exceptional customer service
- **Continuous Improvement:** Embrace a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Encourage innovation, creativity, and adaptability. Regularly evaluate business processes, seek feedback from stakeholders, and implement necessary changes to drive improvement.
- **Risk Management:** Identify and assess potential risks. Develop risk management strategies and contingency plans to mitigate impact.
- **Performance Focused:** Set key performance indicators to measure success. Regularly track and analyse metrics to evaluate progress towards goals. Use the insights gained to make informed decisions and drive continuous improvement.
- **Strategic Planning:** Develop comprehensive business plans that outline strategies, delivery objectives, impact and financial projections. Plans are supported by robust impact assessments giving thorough consideration to their alignment and support for delivering the council's County Plan, Strategic Framework, Characteristics of an Outstanding Council and key legislative duties.
- **Efficient Operations:** Streamline operations to maximize efficiency. Identify and regularly review areas where processes can be improved or automated to increase productivity and efficiency.
- **Data Security and Privacy:** Prioritise data security and privacy by implementing robust cybersecurity measures, encryption techniques, and compliance frameworks to protect sensitive data from unauthorized access and breaches

Characteristic 6 - An engaging and accessible council

Uses a wide range of tools to engage with residents and stakeholders

- **Clear and User-Friendly Communication:** Ensure that communication, both online and offline, is clear, concise, and easily understandable. Avoid using jargon or complex language that may confuse customers. Use plain language in communications materials, websites, and customer interactions to make information accessible to everyone.
- **Personalized Customer Experience:** Tailor customer experiences to meet individual needs. Use customer data and preferences to provide personalised recommendations, offers, and support.
- **Embrace Technology:** Leverage technology to enhance accessibility and engagement.

Involves staff and residents on issues that affect them

- **Customer-Centric Approach:** Put customers at the centre of all business strategy. Understand their needs, preferences, and pain points, and design solutions and services accordingly. Engage with customers through a range of solutions including surveys, feedback forms, or social media to gather insights and continuously improve offerings.
- **Employee Training:** Train staff to provide exceptional customer service and to engage with customers effectively. Teach them how to handle diverse customer needs, be empathetic, and resolve issues efficiently.

Harnesses ideas from customers and staff

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage with a wider range of stakeholders including customers, suppliers, partners, and communities, seeking their perspectives, involving them in decision-making processes, and fostering mutually beneficial relationships.



Is open and honest with staff and residents

- **Open and Transparent Communication:** Share information, goals, and challenges with employees and residents, actively seeking their input and feedback, and ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive and well-communicated.

Shares timely information, advice and guidance and celebrates success

- **Inclusive Web Design:** Use industry standards to create a website that is accessible to individuals with all abilities.
- **Multi-Channel Presence:** Be accessible through various channels to reach a broader audience including the use of online platforms, social media, mobile apps, and physical locations.

Characteristic 7 – A financially astute council

Has robust financial governance

- **Financial Controls:** Implement internal controls to safeguard assets, ensuring accurate financial reporting, and complying with relevant laws and regulations. Conduct regular audits and reviews to identify and address any potential financial risks or irregularities.
- **Strategic Financial Decision-making:** Makes strategic financial decisions based on careful analysis and evaluation including investment decisions, capital structure choices, commissioning strategies, and mergers and acquisitions.
- **Risk Management:** Identify and assess financial risk and implement risk mitigation strategies to minimize potentially negative financial impact.
- **Stakeholder Communication:** Effectively communicate with stakeholders to provide transparent and accurate financial information.
- **Financial Discipline:** Maintain strong financial management practices. Allocate resources wisely, manage risks effectively, and maintain a focus on achieving goals and long-term sustainability.

Successfully manages resources and seeks value for money

- **Financial Planning:** Engage in comprehensive financial planning with clear financial goals, developing and managing budgets, and establishing practices to achieve council objectives.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:** Continuously monitor financial performance and key metrics. Use financial analysis and reporting tools to track progress, identify trends, and make timely adjustments.

Generates income where appropriate

- **Build customer relationships:** Focus on building strong relationships with our customers; offer excellent customer service, respond to inquiries promptly, and seek feedback to continuously improve our offerings
- **Diversify revenue streams:** Explore different avenues to generate income; explore partnerships or collaborations or expand into new markets or segments.
- **Set appropriate pricing for our services and reduce subsidisation:** Consider factors such as production costs, market demand, competition, and perceived value
- **Streamline operations:** Optimise business processes to reduce costs and improve efficiency; identify areas where waste can be eliminated, tasks can be automated, or better deals with suppliers negotiated.



Characteristics and their Definitions (continued)

- **Explore partnerships and collaborations:** Look for opportunities to collaborate with partners
- **Leverage technology:** Embrace technology to enhance our business operations and income generation.

Maximises inward investment

- **Strong value proposition:** Consider our unique selling points, competitive advantages, and the benefits of investing in the county
- **Networking and relationship building:** Actively participate in industry events, trade shows, conferences, and networking platforms to connect with potential investors, government officials, and industry influencers
- **Look at national and regional incentives and support:** Collaborate with relevant government agencies or economic development organisations to understand the incentives, grants, tax breaks, or other support available
- **Investor relations:** Focus on investor relationships to effectively communicate with potential investors, answer their queries, provide accurate and up-to-date information, and build trust; maintain transparent communication channels.
- **Skilled workforce:** Invest in employee training and development programs to build a skilled and adaptable workforce.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** Foster collaborations with universities, research institutions, and other companies

Invests in preventative services

- **Assess and understand local needs:** Understand the needs of residents and build prevention in to all strategies
- **Set clear objectives:** Define goals and outcomes for preventative services; objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)
- **Allocate resources:** Be prepared to reallocate the financial and human resources required to implement and sustain preventative services
- **Conduct a cost-benefit analysis:** Assess the potential return on investment of preventative services; consider the potential savings from avoided costs.
- **Engage communities, residents, staff and other stakeholders:** Involve a wide range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of preventative services and foster a culture of prevention throughout the organisation.
- **Communicate and celebrate successes:** Communicate achievements and positive outcomes resulting from investing in preventative services; recognise individuals or teams who have contributed to the success of initiatives
- **Continuously improve:** Maintain a proactive approach by regularly reviewing and improving preventative services; stay up to date with emerging trends, new research, and evolving best practices in relevant areas; make necessary adjustments to the strategies and initiatives to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Characteristic 8 - A digital and data led Council

Uses data to anticipate needs

- **Data-driven Decision Making:** Prioritise data collection, analysis, and interpretation to make informed decisions. Use data analytics, business intelligence tools, and data visualisation techniques to extract meaningful insights from large volumes of structured and unstructured data. Be in a position to respond quickly to changing market dynamics, customer preferences, and industry trends.



Builds digital profiles to better understand customer journeys

- **Enhanced Customer Experiences:** Focus on understanding and catering to customer needs through personalised and targeted experiences. Leverage customer data, behaviour patterns, and preferences to deliver tailored products, services, and marketing campaigns with a focus on increasing customer satisfaction, better collaboration, and improved engagement.

Is always on – enabling residents to access a wide range of digital services

- **Agile Operations:** Streamline and where possible automate operations, leading to increased efficiency and productivity.

Actively involves residents through digital inclusion and digital platforms

- **Agile Operations:** Streamline and where possible automate operations, leading to increased efficiency and productivity.

