

# Report

## Cabinet

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### Part 1

Date: 17 October 2018

Item No: 5

**Subject** Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report 2017/18

**Purpose** To present Cabinet with the finalised Annual Improvement Report (AIR) prepared by the Wales Audit Office (WAO). This report describes how the council is meeting its duty to demonstrate continuous improvement under the Local Government Measure (2009).

**Author** Head of People and Business Change

**Ward** All

**Summary** Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh Inspectorates, and the audit work of the WAO the report presents a picture of improvement over the last year.

The Auditor General has concluded that 'The council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement'.

**Proposal** **Cabinet is asked to:**  
Welcome the findings of the Auditor General in the AIR and ensure that the Council is putting in place arrangements to address the issues identified in this report.

**Action by** Strategic Directors and Heads of Service

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Strategic Directors
- Head of Finance
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of People & Business Change
- Chair of Cabinet

**Signed**

## **Background**

The Local Government Measure (2009) introduced a new form of improvement reporting required of the Auditor General that sets out the how well councils are improving their services.

Legislation introduced in April 2010 requires councils to make arrangements to improve their services and the way that they work.

Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, and the audit work of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) and the Appointed Auditor the report presents a picture of improvement over the last year.

During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any new formal recommendations. However, a number of proposals for improvement have been made and these are repeated in their report. Progress against these will be monitored internally and by the Wales Audit Office through their ongoing program of work. The recommendations regarding 'Scrutiny have been reported elsewhere and are therefore not included in this report.

Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the WAO and relevant regulators, the Auditor General concluded that the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement for 2017-18. This shows that the council is continuing to improve despite the financial, legislative and population growth challenges that it continues to face.

The Annual Improvement Report is not an exhaustive assessment of all services; rather, it focuses on a range of priorities for improvement.

A copy of the Annual Improvement Report is appended to this report.

## **Financial Summary**

The financial implications of actions and projects identified by the Annual Improvement Report and other regulatory work will be reported and considered in the normal way, in accordance with the council's financial plans and regulations.

## **Risks**

As with the financial implications above, each individual action and wider Improvement Planning agenda will be subject to risk assessment in its own right and in accordance with the council's policy making procedure.

## **Links to Council Policies and Priorities**

Continuous improvement is central to the Council's ambitions for itself, organisationally, and in terms of its role in advancing the City's reputation and the quality of life for its citizens. A range of core priorities and programmes are influenced by this agenda, including:

- The Corporate Plan
- The Improvement Plan
- The Well-being Objectives and Well-being Statement

## **Options Available and considered**

The options available are:

- (a) To consider the Annual Improvement Report and acknowledge the reporting and assessment programme introduced by the Local Government Measure. The Report presents an overview of the current position and provides a platform for future improvement activities.
- (b) To disregard the findings of the report

### **Preferred Option and Why**

The preferred option is (a).

The Annual Improvement Report is an important aspect of the Local Government Measure requirements. It presents an overview of the Council's current position in terms of its improvement programme and strategic ambitions for the organisation and the City as a whole. It forms part of a continuum and provides a context for the Wales Audit Office's work plan.

### **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

The Improvement Report confirms that the Council has a good track record of managing its budget, with plans in place to further develop the medium-term financial planning arrangements.

In terms of ongoing budgetary pressures and challenges, the Report presents a realistic assessment of the Council's position as it seeks to achieve efficiency savings whilst continuing to provide good and improving services. WAO recognise these pressures and the Council will continue to engage in constructive dialogue with its regulators as it further develops its financial management strategy.

### **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

This WAO Improvement Report has been produced by the Auditor General for Wales to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Local Government Wales Measure 2009. The report also discharges his duties under section 19, to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an audit under section 17 and an improvement assessment under section 18. The details set out in the Improvement Report confirm that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Measure to secure continuous improvement, despite increasing demand for services and financial pressures. However, the Report does identify certain areas for further improvement and progress in addressing these issues will continue to be monitored through the Council's performance management framework.

### **Comments of Head of People and Business Change**

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. Work programmes associated with the Council's improvement programmes that have future staffing implications will need to be subject to a separate report to the Cabinet Member for People and Business Change.

The report presents a balanced picture of the Council continuing to drive its programme of improvement and change, whilst highlighting areas that require further attention to ensure effective outcomes in terms of service users and organisational effectiveness. The report provides a number of recommendations in relation to the well-being of future generations and these will be addressed by individual service areas working in partnership where required and considering the five ways of working and sustainable development principle.

### **Comments of Cabinet Member**

The Cabinet Member has been consulted and has agreed that this report goes forward to Cabinet for consideration

### **Local issues**

N/A

## **Scrutiny Committees**

N/A

## **Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

## **Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

Although no targeted consultation takes place specifically aimed at children and young people, consultation on planning applications and appeals is open to all of our citizens regardless of their age. Depending on the scale of the proposed development, applications are publicised via letters to neighbouring occupiers, site notices, press notices and/or social media. People replying to consultations are not required to provide their age or any other personal data, and therefore this data is not held or recorded in any way, and responses are not separated out by age.

## **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The Auditor General helps to ensure that public bodies are held to account for their performance in relation to the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Wales Audit Office consider the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in the planning and implementation of their work, they provide the council with assurance as well as helping to identify areas for improvement.

The Annual Improvement Report considers how the council is meeting its duty to demonstrate continuous improvement under the Local Government Measure (2009). The Auditor General has stated that the council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement; this conclusion has been reached after considering the accumulated audit and inspection work that was carried out during 2017/18.

Each review has its own action plan to address proposals for improvement identified in the individual reviews; each action plan considers how to respond to proposals for improvement in a sustainable way that addresses current issues whilst considering long-term needs.

## **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

## **Consultation**

Comments received from wider consultation, including comments from elected members, are detailed in each application report in the attached schedule.

## **Background Papers**

Appendix 1 – Annual Improvement Report

Dated: September 2018