

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 16 October 2019

Subject **Wales Audit Office – Certificate of Compliance**

Purpose To present Cabinet with the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Certificate of Compliance following an audit of the Council's 2019-20 improvement planning arrangements.

Author Head of People and Business Change

Ward All

Summary The Auditor General of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) has issued the council with a Certificate of Compliance for the improvement plan process following an audit of the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22. This audit reviewed the Corporate Plan, and confirmation of the Council's wellbeing objectives. This is an annual requirement as outlined in the Local Government Measure (2009), which we are required to meet in conjunction with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) annual reporting requirements.

Proposal Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the report in relation to the Council's delivery of the Corporate Plan 2017-22.

Action by Cabinet

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Corporate Management Team
- Wales Audit Office

Signed

Background

As part of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) regulatory activity, the Auditor General has issued the Council with a Certificate of Compliance for the improvement plan process following an audit of the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22.

The audit reviewed the Corporate Plan, and confirmation of the Council's wellbeing objectives – these are also outlined in the draft annual report 2018/19. This is an annual requirement as outlined in the Local Government Measure (2009), which we are required to meet in conjunction with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) annual reporting requirements.

This is the first of two certificates that the authority aims to achieve each financial year. The second certificate will be issued following the WAO's Assessment of Performance Audit and assessment of the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

Through this Certificate the Auditor General for Wales certifies that:

"...I believe that the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties."

Copy of the Certificate of Compliance in English is attached as Appendix 1 and Welsh in Appendix 2.

Financial Summary

There are no direct financial impacts in relation to this report. Where proposals for improvement have been made in the individual WAO reports these will be actioned through business as usual activities by the Council.

Risks

There are no direct impacts of this report to the risks identified in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

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:

- Newport Public Services Board 'One Newport' Wellbeing Plan.
- The Corporate Plan 2017-22
- Annual reporting arrangements

Options Available and considered

Cabinet are asked to:

- (a) Consider and accept the conclusion contained in the Auditor General's Certificate of Compliance Report; or
- (b) Disregard the findings of the report.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is (a) as the Certificate of Compliance is positive and confirms that the council has discharged its duties under the Local Government Measure 2009 with regards to Improvement Planning.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There is no financial impact in presenting the WAO Certificate of Compliance to Cabinet. Any improvement actions included within the Corporate Plan are reported as part of the on-going medium term financial planning and budget monitoring processes and in that respect, clear responsibility and accountability for delivering the projects and managing resources is key.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The Council has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 ("the Measure") to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services and to prepare and publish an annual Improvement Plan. The Wales Audit Office is required under sections 17 and 19 of the Measure to carry out an annual audit of the Council's Improvement Plan. The Certificate of Compliance issued by the WAO confirms that the Council has discharged its duties to prepare and publish an Improvement Plan in accordance with section 15 of the Measure and Welsh Government statutory guidance.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The certificate verifies that the Council has met its obligation of demonstrating continuous improvement under the Local Government Measure 2009. This is an on-going aim for the council and this also contributes to the Sustainable Development Principle of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

There are no direct staffing implications contained in this report.

Comments of Cabinet Member

The Leader of the Council is briefed on all aspects of performance monitoring and management within the Council and related WAO monitoring work.

Local issues

Not Applicable

Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny Committees receive information on WAO review outcomes as appropriate to the Committee responsibilities, and also received and commented on the Annual Report.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

Not Applicable

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Not Applicable

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 and the Local Government Measure (2009). The Wales Audit Office consider the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in the planning and implementation of their work. The issue of the Certificate of Compliance demonstrates that the council is meeting its obligations under both Acts.

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

Not Applicable

Background Papers

Newport City Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22

Wales Audit Office Certificate of Compliance 19-20

Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report - Cabinet September 2019

Draft Annual Report 2018/19

Dated: October 2019