

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 7th October 2016

Item No:

Subject Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations 2015/16

Purpose To present Cabinet with the Wales Audit Office Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations 2015/16

Author Chief Executive

Ward All

Summary The Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations presents the Wales Audit Office assessment of the Council's progress in addressing recommendations made in the full Corporate Assessment of the Council in 2013 and the Review that took place in 2014/15.

The full Corporate Assessment 2013 examined the council's capability to deliver its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens. In the Corporate Assessment Review 2014/15 the Wales Audit Office considered whether the council had made good progress in addressing the Recommendations and Proposals for Improvement made since the full Corporate Assessment report was published.

The review of progress made in 2015/16 has reduced the number of recommendations to 4 and there are 3 proposals for improvement. The WAO has determined that 'The Council has made progress against all the recommendations made in our Corporate Assessment follow-up report, but some further work remains to ensure these are addressed fully'

This report also contains the WAO's final report (appendix 2) as well as the Council's Statement of response to the Recommendations made in the Corporate Assessment required under section 20 of the Local Government Measure 2009. Proposed accountability and monitoring arrangements for the implementation of recommendations and proposals for improvement are also included (appendix 1).

Proposal Cabinet are requested to:

- Accept the findings of the Auditor General in his Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations
- To endorse the Statement of Response to the Recommendations
- To endorse the accountability and monitoring arrangements for the implementation of recommendations and proposals for improvement

- To receive quarterly monitoring reports on the progress towards recommendations and proposals for improvement

Action by Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Head of Service

Timetable immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Chair of Cabinet
- Chief Executive
- Strategic Directors
- Heads of Service

Signed

Background

The Corporate Assessment Review presents the Wales Audit Office findings of progress following the full Corporate Assessment of the Council in 2013.

The full Corporate Assessment 2013 examined the council's capability to deliver its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens.

Corporate Assessment Review

During 2014/15 the Wales Audit Office reviewed the progress that the Council had made in implementing the Recommendations and Proposals for Improvement from the full Corporate Assessment in 2013. The Corporate Assessment Review contained seven recommendations.

The overall conclusions from the Corporate Assessment Review were:

"The Council has made improvements in some aspects of its arrangements, however in other areas the scale and pace of change required has not been achieved, and longstanding governance weaknesses remain"

Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations

During February 2016 the WAO completed fieldwork and a document review to assess the progress made against the recommendations made in the original 2013 Corporate assessment as well as the 2014/15 review.

The 2015/16 Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations contains four recommendations which is a reduction from the seven recommendations in the 2014/15 review.

Accountability and Monitoring Arrangements

Quarterly updates will be provided to Cabinet to monitor progress made against the recommendations and proposals for improvement.

Statement of Response

As part of the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2009 the council must respond to the Recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office within 30 working days. Included within this report are the council's Statement of Response and associated actions planned and timescales.

Financial Summary

- There are no direct financial implications associated with this report

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The Corporate Assessment Review links to all of the Council's key plans.

Options Available

The options available are:

- a) To accept the findings of the Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations and to endorse the Statement of response and the accountability and monitoring arrangements.
- b) To disregard the information set out in this report and the appended Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is a). The Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations is an important aspect of the Local Government Measure and as such, informs the Council's wider improvement programme.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Separate comments on the Corporate Assessment Review are included in the Statement of Response.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Separate comments on the Corporate Assessment Review are included in the Statement of Response.

The Council is required to formally respond to the statutory Recommendations set out in the Report within 30 days in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2009.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

There are no direct staffing HR implications arising from this report. Separate comments on the Corporate Assessment Review are included in the Statement of Response.

Comments of Cabinet Member

Report author to confirm that the Cabinet Member has approved the report for consideration by cabinet.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report "Corporate Assessment" (21/10/13)

Appendix One: Statement of Response to the Corporate Assessment Review

Appendix Two: Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Review

Dated: October 2016

Appendix One

Statement of Response to the Review of progress in addressing the Corporate Assessment and Corporate Assessment Follow-up recommendations

September 2016

Recommendations

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
The reference numbers relate to the recommendations made the Corporate Assessment follow-up report.							
R1	The Council should ensure that Members are routinely and transparently considering robust information at the earliest opportunity to enable them to inform, take, and challenge choices and decisions effectively, and ensure that decisions are recorded and reported transparently.	Decisions and scrutiny are based on consideration of up to date and accurate information. Decisions are accurately recorded on a timely basis on the Council's decision making tracker so the public are able to easily find and understand what decisions have been taken and by whom.	✓	✓	Chief Officers will view all Decision making reports and conclude on whether they are of sufficient quality before submission to the decision making and scrutiny processes. Heads of Service will ensure that appropriate quality assurance processes are implemented within their service areas to ensure that reports are of an acceptable quality and standard before submission for inclusion in the decision – making or scrutiny	March 2017	Chief Executive Head of Law & Regulation

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
					<p>processes</p> <p>All Cabinet, Cabinet Member and delegated officer decisions are properly recorded, including background information, options and reasons for those decisions, in accordance with the Council's constitution and legislative requirements. Minutes of Council and Committee meetings are also recorded accurately, approved at subsequent meetings and published in a timely manner. All decisions, background reports and minutes are published on the Council's web site, with a search engine to enable decisions to be tracked and easily found.</p>		

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R2	The Council should address with more urgency the weaknesses in its governance arrangements that underpin its decision making to support improvement. This would include:		✓	✓			Head of Law & Regulation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthening committee work programming arrangements to ensure they are timely, meaningful, informative, transparent, balanced, monitored, and joined up; 	The areas of focus of each of the committees is clear, linked to corporate priorities, regularly updated and considered in an open forum.		✓	<p>To develop the use of Committee pre-meetings in order to focus challenge more effectively and improve the quality of questioning. (Scrutiny AR Action 1)</p> <p>To introduce an effective system for scrutiny of the Public Services Board, in response to the statutory duty placed on scrutiny by the WFGA (Scrutiny AR Action 2)</p> <p>To introduce a new</p>	<p>By April 2017</p> <p>By April 2017</p>	Head of Law & Regulation

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
					<p>report template to improve the quality and focus of the information that is presented to Committees (Scrutiny AR Action 3)</p> <p>To continue to develop the links between Scrutiny and Auditors / Inspectors / Regulators, in particular to support work programming and training (Scrutiny AR Action 4)</p> <p>To continue implementation of the Public Engagement Strategy agreed in 2015 (Scrutiny AR Action 5)</p> <p>Cabinet work programmes are presented to each cabinet meeting</p>	<p>By November 2016 meeting cycle</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>By April 2017</p>	

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewing and updating the Council's constitution ensuring that roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear, and that all Members understand and apply their respective roles in relation to each other without compromising independence; 	The Council's constitution accurately reflects existing arrangements and clearly sets out roles and responsibilities.		✓	The Democratic Services are reviewing the various elements of the Constitution	Ongoing	Head of Law & Regulation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> empowering Members to be more proactive and accountable for their roles and responsibilities; 	Members are able to fulfil their roles effectively and are held to account for these roles.		✓	<p>To develop the use of Committee pre-meetings in order to focus challenge more effectively and improve the quality of questioning. (Scrutiny AR Action 1)</p> <p>To introduce a new report template to improve the quality and focus of the information that is presented to Committees (Scrutiny AR Action 3)</p>	<p>By April 2017</p> <p>By November 2016 meeting cycle</p>	

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthening scrutiny arrangements to more effectively inform and challenge policies, options, decisions and actions, and hold Cabinet Members, officers, partners and others to account more robustly to drive an increased pace of progress and improvement; and 	Scrutiny is used effectively to inform policy development and hold Cabinet Members and officers to account for performance.		✓	<p>To develop the use of Committee pre-meetings in order to focus challenge more effectively and improve the quality of questioning. (Scrutiny AR Action 1)</p> <p>To continue regular meetings of the Chairs of Scrutiny, the Scrutiny Officer Team and leading Members of the Executive, to ensure a positive relationship continues, and workloads are coordinated effectively (Scrutiny AR Action 6)</p> <p>To develop an appropriate role for Scrutiny within the new arrangements for managing performance, and building on the existing measures for service plan monitoring (Scrutiny AR Action 7)</p>	<p>By April 2017</p> <p>Meetings already diarised</p> <p>By December 2016</p>	Head of Law & Regulation

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R4	The Council must continue to develop its people management arrangements, to ensure it has the capacity and capabilities necessary to change and improve. In doing so, it should:		✓	✓			Head of People & Business Change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop its draft Workforce Plan and associated action plans by, for each action: allocating responsibility to an officer and setting a deadline for completion; and 	The Council has effective workforce planning arrangements in place, which will help it deliver its vision and priorities.		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a workforce plan review group Publication of workforce plan Second version of workforce plan in place for 2016/17 HR Business Partners to meet with HoS to discuss workforce objectives for 2016/17 2016/17 objective for workforce planning set in 	<p>February 2016</p> <p>June 2016</p> <p>June 2016 onwards</p> <p>May 2016</p>	Head of People & Business Change

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
					<p>both service planning and individual objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out self-assessment audit to assess current performance and identify future priorities • Conduct enhanced training on workforce planning for all HR/OD officers 	<p>December 2016</p> <p>December 2016</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the absence of a formal approach to 360-degree feedback for all staff, address manager inconsistency in carrying out appraisals and ensure all staff receive a constructive and developmental appraisal to support job performance. 	<p>Staff appraisals are consistently undertaken and to a good standard and these are used to inform staff development.</p>		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback to managers on quality of appraisals sampled • Options to review current processes are investigated to bring about technology in the PM cycle 	<p>October 2016</p> <p>October 2016</p>	<p>Head of People & Business Change</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
					<p>and modernize the system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Coaching for Performance course and recommendations made on future procurement • Solutions identified to offer both coaching and mentoring ILM qualifications • Creation of action learning set network 	<p>August 2016</p> <p>August 2016</p> <p>October 2016</p>	

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
R5	To strengthen the arrangements that enable the Council to scrutinise its improvement objectives. In doing so, the Council should:	Members are given accurate and timely information to enable them to challenge performance and progress against improvement objectives effectively. Remedial action is identified and taken forward.	✓	✓	<p>New Performance reporting framework in place ensures more information is provided to scrutiny and Cabinet Members in a timelier manner.</p> <p>New performance management system will allow information on performance to be more visible and readily available around the authority.</p>	<p>Framework agreed by Cabinet and Scrutiny Chairs September 2016</p> <p>New System Implemented April 2016 Further development continues.</p>	Head of People & Business Change

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
	<p>Enable Members to effectively challenge and scrutinise service performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensure that meeting agendas allow for sufficient time for Members to focus on (broad) underperformance; and 	<p>Performance is frequently discussed and challenged by scrutiny and members have sufficient time to do so.</p>		✓	<p>Exception dashboards and reports for service plans highlight key areas.</p> <p>Performance reports that go to Cabinet now go to the Scrutiny Chairs for Information.</p> <p>Heads of Service have regular briefing meetings with Cabinet Members who in turn brief the Leader of the Council.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Committee Meetings</p> <p>Framework agreed by Cabinet September 2016</p> <p>Framework agreed by Cabinet September 2016</p>	<p>Head of People & Business Change</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
	– provide training on effective challenge and scrutiny for Members.	Members have the necessary skills to challenge and scrutinise effectively.		✓	We have put in place a training and seminar programme for Scrutiny Members, and we have also introduced pre-meetings to improve the focus and challenge of Member questions. We are also developing the new induction programme for May 2017 which will include focus on effective challenge.	Systems in place and in ongoing development Induction programme from May 2017	Head of Law & Regulation

Proposals for Improvement

Ref	Proposal for improvement	Intended outcome/ benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
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The Council should:

Ref	Proposal for improvement	Intended outcome/benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
P1	Provide Cabinet with a more detailed update of progress in addressing our Corporate Assessment and its Follow-up recommendations to facilitate more active discussion and challenge of progress.	Cabinet are able to challenge and monitor progress against the Corporate Assessment action plan and understand reasons for delay and to identify further actions as necessary. There is open discussion of progress during public meetings so that public and members can see the progress being made.		✓	<p>The Action plan will be reported as a separate report in its own right; this will raise its profile with Members as it will be an agenda item.</p> <p>The action plan will provide a more detailed update of progress made.</p>	<p>The first report will go to cabinet on 17th October.</p> <p>January 2017</p>	Head of People & Business Change

Ref	Proposal for improvement	Intended outcome/benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
P2	Review the timespan for completion of return to work interviews.	Return to work interviews are undertaken on a more timely basis for mutual benefit to the Council and the employee.		✓	<p>Newport is in the second quartile for sickness absence based on 2015/16 data, and is joint 7th based on the number of days lost per FTE.</p> <p>Our policy uses best practice of 7 calendar days for RTW's to be completed and whilst we do not achieve 100% submission, we do not believe that reducing the time frame will ensure greater submission response rates.</p> <p>However, we will look to move from a paper based system to an online one in an attempt to improve submission rates as we believe that completing paper documentation has a greater impact on delayed submission rates.</p>	March 2017 for review of paper based submission	Head of People & Business Change

Ref	Proposal for improvement	Intended outcome/benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
P3	Review whether it has appropriate capacity and capability within its People and Business Change service area to strengthen workforce planning.	The Council has the confidence that it has the necessary resources and support to address workforce planning to meet its priorities and vision.		✓	<p>Workforce planning has been a theme of the HR service plan for the last year and officers have been identified as leads for enabling workforce planning to become an integral function of the HR service. We have visited the Vale of Glamorgan, Swansea and RCT Councils to learn from their best practice and apply this knowledge at Newport. We intend to undertake the WAO self-assessment audit tool to review our progress and identify priorities for the future.</p> <p>Officers will be effectively trained on workforce planning</p> <p>There is a risk in terms of capacity within the HR/OD team as Newport has considerably fewer HR</p>	Review and training to be completed by February 2017	Head of People & Business Change

Ref	Proposal for improvement	Intended outcome/benefit	High priority (✓)	Accepted	Management response	Completion date	Responsible officer
					FTE than comparable Councils and priorities will need to be assessed accordingly.		