



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 30TH SEPTEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: WAO CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151
OFFICER**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report to members on the timescales for responding to the Welsh Audit Office review of customer services.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Wales Audit Office conducted a review of the Council's Customer Service function during 2011/12. The review was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers and was issued in August 2013. One of the most significant comments was that "the council's strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and its customer care strategic framework has not been updated since 2005".
- 2.2 Most of the recommendations of the review are linked to the development of a new Customer Service Strategy for the Council. A report on this issue was considered at Audit Committee on 6 November 2013. The timetable for the development of the strategy indicated that the strategy would be presented to Council in April 2014.
- 2.3 However, many of the issues that need to be included within the strategy are dependant on the savings required as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. With this in mind the development of the strategy has been rescheduled to allow time for the implications of the MTFP to be considered.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Members have a critical role to play in evaluating Regulator reviews and a clear role in monitoring progress in achieving report recommendations. This report informs members of the timescales for responding to a key recommendations of a Welsh Audit Office review.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Wales Audit Office conducted a review of the Council's Customer Service function during 2011/12. The review was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers and was issued in August 2013. The review concluded that the "Council provides citizens with a range of channels to access its services but its strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and in need of updating, and it does not effectively evaluate its customer service provision".

- 4.2 There were two proposals within the review. Proposal 2 was to "Strengthen the approach to evaluating and improving customer services in a proactive way", and included some specific recommendations. These have now been completed or are well underway:
- The Viewpoint panel has been reinstated and met in October 2013
 - A new Corporate Complaints policy has been adopted and reports on complaints are presented to Audit Committee
 - The views of customers using Customer Service Centres are now routinely collected. The views of customers e-mailing the Contact Centre or making on-line service requests are now routinely collected. There is a well established customer feedback mechanism for web site users. Work on obtaining feedback from telephone callers to the contact centre are being developed and will be in place shortly.
- 4.3 Proposal 1 was to develop a more strategic approach to customer services. Included within that were a number of specific recommendations:
- 4.4 It is proposed that two of the recommendations, "ensuring that the lead Cabinet Member for customer services has clearly documented responsibilities and is provided with regular performance information"; and "ensuring business cases are developed for service improvements that clearly set out and analyses the costs and benefits of the service improvement, and the expected improvements and the outcomes to be delivered, will be delivered by the establishment of a Customer Services Project Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.
- 4.5 To respond to the recommendation that customer services' performance measures should be included in the Council's corporate performance reporting arrangements, a suite of Performance Indicators will be developed with the Performance Management Unit.
- 4.6 The remaining four recommendations were linked to developing a Corporate Customer Service Strategy. A report on this issue was considered at Audit Committee on 6 November 2013. The timetable for the development of the strategy indicated that the strategy would be presented to Council in April 2014. However, many of the issues that need to be included within the strategy are dependant on the savings required as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. With this in mind the development of the strategy has been rescheduled to allow time for the implications of the MTFP to be considered. As a result of this rescheduling it is proposed that the draft strategy will be presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at the end of 2014/15.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The draft Customer Service Strategy will be consistent with the Corporate Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme. It will incorporate advice and recommendations from the Equality Unit.
- 5.2 The Strategy will have clear links to the following Equalities and Welsh Language Objectives:
- EO3 Physical Access "Improve physical accessibility in terms of living in, working in, learning in, travelling around and visiting the county borough"
- EO4 Communication Access "Improve the way council services and activities are made accessible to those who need them, in terms of language and format.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications arising directly from this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The views of consultees are included within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That members note the progress on meeting the recommendations of the WAO Review of Customer Services

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Members have a critical role in monitoring progress in achieving regulators recommendations. This report supports members in monitoring the recommendations of the WAO Review of Customer Services.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972 and 2000

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Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer
Lynton Jones, Acting Head of IT and Customer Services
Ros Roberts, Performance Manager
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)

Background Papers:

Welsh Audit Office Review of Customer Services, Audit year 2011-12, Issued August 2012.

This report has been an appendix to previous reports and is available from David Titley, Corporate Customer Services Manager