

AUDIT COMMITTEE - 6TH MARCH 2013

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT LETTER COVERING REPORT

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Auditor General for Wales, as part of their programme of works for the year 2012-13 has completed his second annual Improvement Assessment under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. This report summarises the conclusions of the Auditor General's assessment and also makes recommendations for future monitoring of delivery of any proposals for improvement flowing from the review.
- 1.2 Members have a critical role to play in evaluating Regulator reviews and in particular understanding what difference such reviews make to improvement of services for our citizens. They also have a clear role in monitoring progress in achieving report recommendations from the wide range of reviews undertaken.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The Assessment Letter headlines that:

- The Council has discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure. However it should ensure it acts more in accordance with Welsh Government guidance.
- The Council's performance management arrangements are well-embedded and it recognises that effective involvement of scrutiny needs to improve.
- Whilst the Council has started to improve the way it judges its performance, much remains to be done to address inconsistencies in its evaluation arrangements so that it can better drive improvement.
- The Council has made some progress in adopting a more outcome-based approach to its reporting but recognises that it needs to improve the way it accounts for performance, and demonstrate whether it has made a difference to citizens.
- The Council does not consistently evaluate, report and account for its performance in a balanced, rounded and accessible way.

2.2 The Auditor General has concluded the Assessment Letter by making 5 Proposals for Improvement. They are:

P1: The Council should ensure that it acts more in accordance with Welsh Government Guidelines

P2: Better engage and strengthen scrutiny to improve self-evaluation arrangements and to inform the Council's overall evaluation of progress against its Improvement Objectives.

P3: Establish and report against outcome-focussed measures of success for each improvement objective

P4: Assist readers to understand and interpret performance indicators by including narrative explanations and also indicating if a high value is good or poor performance.

P5: Ensure all services have effective arrangements to evaluate and improve performance which are consistently reported against agreed Council targets and are subject to robust scrutiny and challenge.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 Delivery of the council's Improvement Objectives together with all other service priorities is fundamental. Equally important is communicating with citizens on the council's performance in a way that is understandable and accurate.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 The Director believes the Regulator's proposals and any subsequently agreed Action Plan should be monitored by the following route:

	For Decision	For Monitoring	Final Sign Off on completion
Corporate Management Team (CMT)		P1	October 2013
Cabinet			
Scrutiny (state which)		P2 – All Scrutiny Committees via PM meetings. P5- All Scrutiny Committees	Ongoing April 2013 onwards via SIPs & Ffynnon
Audit committee		P3 P1 – P5 Progress Update	Progress reports presented regularly December 2013
Council			
Responsible officer only		P4	October 2013

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Local Government Measure defines fairness and access as one of the criteria that constitutes 'improvement' within the Wales programme for Improvement 2009.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 There are no consultees that have not been included in the overall report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Audit Committee approves the programme of monitoring detailed in paragraph 4.1 of this report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure Regulator reviews are appropriately managed and monitored across the Authority.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Measure 2009, Wales Programme for Improvement 2010.

Author: Colin Jones: Head of Performance Management & Property Services
Consultees: N. Barnett: Deputy Chief Executive
Cllr David Hardacre: Cabinet Member for Performance & Asset Management

Background Papers:
Improvement Assessment Letter December 2012