



AUDIT COMMITTEE - 5TH FEBRUARY 2014

SUBJECT: COLLABORATION

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES & S151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Auditor General for Wales, as part of the programme of works for the year 2012-13 has issued (January 2014) the findings of his review of collaborative working across four councils in Gwent: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire and Torfaen. The reviews sought to assess whether the councils' approaches to collaboration were robust and delivering what they intended.
- 1.2 This report to Audit Committee summarises the conclusions of the Auditor General's assessment for Caerphilly and also makes recommendations for future monitoring of delivery of any proposals for improvement flowing from the review.
- 1.3 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 Review headlines that:

- The Councils surveyed are involved in many collaborative projects and Caerphilly reported the second highest number of these projects compared with other councils.
- The planning and management of some projects could be improved by clearly setting out the rationale for collaborating, nominating a lead officer and specifying clear timescales for the project.
- Collaboration projects in the councils surveyed generally lack information on the costs and benefits of collaboration, which has made it difficult to assess value for money.

2.2 The Auditor General has concluded the Review by making 2 Proposals for Improvement. They are:

Improve the approach to planning and managing collaborative projects

- P1: Develop and agree arrangements to ensure that the Council has oversight of the collaborative projects it is engaged in and appropriate governance and management arrangements to assess and, where appropriate, report on the effectiveness of collaborative projects. This approach should:
 - Be flexible enough to manage small informal collaborative projects and large formal collaborative projects.
 - Provide clarity at the outset of projects on:
 - reasons for collaborating

- how decisions will be made and by whom (both locally and regionally or across the collaboration)
 - timescales
 - expected costs
 - expected benefits
- Include mechanisms for:
 - project governance (including lead officers' accountabilities and challenge and scrutiny from members where appropriate)
 - financial management
 - performance management
 - risk management
 - regular review and evaluation

Improve the arrangements that support the Gwent wide Integrated Community Equipment Services (GWICES) project

- P2: Improve financial and performance management arrangements by:
 - Reviewing regional and local GWICES budgets to prevent further regular overspends
 - Reviewing performance management arrangements to ensure that the appropriate information is used to inform decision making and ensure data protection issues are addressed

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 Service Improvement is key to delivering council priorities

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	A revised Business Case template has been agreed and will be used as the basis for all future Collaboration Projects
Cabinet			
Scrutiny (state which)		P1	Progress review reports will be presented to Scrutiny Committees as appropriate
Audit committee	P2		Review of current arrangements to be completed by March 31 st 2014 and consequent recommendations made to Audit Committee
Council			
Responsible officer only			

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.

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Consultees: N. Scammell: Acting Director of Corporate Services

D. Street: Corporate Director of Social Services

CIlr David Hardacre: Cabinet Member for Performance & Asset Management

Appendices:

Appendix: Collaboration Review - WAO