



EDUCATION FOR LIFE (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 29TH NOVEMBER 2012

SUBJECT: SIX MONTHS PROGRESS UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 4 2012/13

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, requires all local authorities in Wales to set and publish a set of priorities that improve the life of citizens. These priorities are called Improvement Objectives and progress against them is reported to the public each year. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) in their public "Annual Improvement Report" review and comment on how the Council set performed and evaluated performance against these objectives.
- 1.2 In the spring scrutiny (2012), the Head of Performance & Property provided members with an overview of performance management arrangements within the authority and specifically on Improvement Objectives (IO) and explained how scrutiny is instrumental in monitoring progress of them. Each IO has an action plan and it was agreed that at the next scrutiny a presentation would be given on progress against the action plan, with officers highlighting areas that are performing well and those that need improving or challenging the suggested future delivery.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 Performance Improvement underpins the Caerphilly Community Strategy and will form part of the Council's new 4- year Improvement Plan.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 Corporate Services are the owners of one objective for this scrutiny which is:
 - 3.1.1 **Improvement Objective 4** – Improve the skills levels for children and young people
- 3.2 Every six months members have the opportunity to scrutinise performance information within the dedicated Performance Management Scrutiny's.
- 3.3 The primary purpose of tonight's meeting is to scrutinise the action plan that is delivering the relevant improvement objective.
- 3.4 The Local Government Measure states: "There is a clear role for an authority's scrutiny function in its improvement processes: as part of its role in holding local decision makers and policy makers to account, and in its policy development role".

It then goes on to a specific set of activities requesting members do the following:

- Ask how the authority has set the improvement objectives? What data, intelligence etc was used to decide this was an area to improve upon?
- Having set objectives, question can they be delivered? Does the service / organisation have the capacity, finances, and skills etc to deliver?
- Who did the organisation consult or engage with in setting the objectives? E.g. did we ask the right people if this is what they wanted?
- Monitoring, recognising (and where appropriate challenging) the progress of the action plan that will deliver the objectives: **The primary function of tonight's scrutiny meeting.**
- Encouraging different ways of thinking, challenging the way things are done and offering or suggesting other actions or options for delivery.

3.5 In the Spring induction, it was emphasised that one of the most important questions a member can ask is "what difference is all this activity making, to the citizen", others include:

What are you doing and why?

How do you know it is what residents want?

How do you measure progress/success?

What difference is this making?

What OUTCOME is all this activity resulting in?

3.6 Importantly, if an authority's scrutiny processes are sufficiently developed to carry out the above and there is clear evidence of this, this can be used by the Auditor General and other relevant regulators to decide whether council scrutiny processes are sufficiently robust enough to be relied upon. If so there will be less need for auditors to scrutinise our improvement objectives if they are reassured there is an effective in-house process to do so and therefore do not need to duplicate effort. This could also result in a reduction in audit fees.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no equalities implications with this report although of note is that the Local Government Measure 2009 definition of improvement includes 'fairness', this means equalities implications have been considered in the setting of these Improvement Objectives.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report, however see comment above 3.6

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no personnel implications.

7. CONSULTATIONS

7.1. All responses from consultations have been incorporated into this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Members act in accordance with section 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 above.

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1. If the Council can demonstrate effective scrutiny within its process for setting, scrutinising and monitoring the improvement objectives and this can be evidenced, our regulators can rely on the Councils own in-house challenge and this would potentially reduce their involvement leading to audit fees being kept to a minimum.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 The Local Government Measure 2009.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 September 2012 Action Plan update on **IO4** – Improve the skills levels for children and young people