

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16TH JUNE 2011

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2011/12

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 must be made known to the public every year. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) will assess whether we set the right objectives for our citizens, what our likelihood of improving is and how well we actually did. Following this assessment the WAO will write an “Annual Improvement Report” of the Council, in which the results will be made publicly available in December each year.
- 1.2 This report is to provide members with the background knowledge needed to scrutinise the delivery of the council’s improvement objectives.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 Performance Improvement underpins the Caerphilly Community Strategy and the council’s 2009-2012 Improvement Plan.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 In 2010 the Council was required to set Improvement Objectives. Setting Objectives (priorities) is not new to the Council however, what is new, is the way in which they should be set. The Council agreed a 3 year Improvement Plan in October 2009 and this was initially used as the basis for identifying the council’s Improvement Objectives using the following statutory criteria below:
 - Unmet need: The Improvement Objective (IO) has to be based on an unmet need and not something the authority is already good at (the principle being there is no need to set an area to improve if the authority is already making good progress). The objective should capture the main priorities for the area. There is a need to evidence this to Regulators (WAO).
 - Collaboration – The IO needs to consider collaboration, as the ability to meet an unmet need for the public is unlikely to be done in isolation, so an authority should try to collaborate with other partners and organisations to make the improvement happen.
 - Consultation – Has the council asked the ‘relevant’ people if this is the priority for them? Is this something they want the Authority to address?

- Outcome focused – The council needs to say clearly why the objective was chosen and more importantly what differences can the public can expect to see as a result of this work (the planned outcome).
- Evidence – The council needs to be able to put arrangements in place to deliver the objective and that both the success and arrangements can be evidenced.
- Reason for choice: The council must clearly demonstrate why it chose the IO and can evidence that there is indeed an unmet need.

There is no requirement to set a fixed number of objectives simply identify, through a range of methods, what is a priority for citizens of the area.

3.2 The Role of Scrutiny

- 3.3 The primary purpose of tonight’s meeting is to scrutinise the action plans that will deliver the relevant improvement objective, in addition to any other agenda item.

The statutory guidance of 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. This should extend to:

- Scrutiny of the processes that an authority has gone through in the discharge of its general duty to improve (e.g. Have we set improvement objectives?)
- Scrutiny of the fitness of the organisation to discharge the general duty to improve. (Can we deliver them?)
- Scrutiny of the processes that the authority has gone through in the selection of It’s improvement objectives, including a review of the level of engagement with Stakeholders, (Did we ask the right people if this is what they wanted?)
- **Scrutiny of the monitoring of the progress of the delivery of the authority’s improvement objectives; the primary function of tonight’s scrutiny meeting**
- Promoting innovation by challenging the status quo and encourage different ways of thinking and options for delivery”.

Importantly the statutory guidance says if an authority’s scrutiny processes are sufficiently developed to carry out the above and there is clear evidence of this, then this activity can be used by the Auditor General and relevant regulators to decide whether council scrutiny processes are sufficiently robust to be relied upon. In other words there will be less need for auditors to scrutinise our improvement objectives if they believe there is an effective in-house scrutiny and therefore will not duplicate effort, which could also result in a reduction in audit fees.

- 3.4 The table below identifies which of the council’s eight Improvement Objectives relate to the various scrutiny committees:

Improvement Objective	Main Activities	PM Scrutiny
Review how we deliver our services by improving how we engage with our citizens and through listening to what our customers tell us about our services	Progress citizen engagement. Improve complaints process Introduce service standards Introduction of the ‘Tell Us Once’ and nationality checking service	Policy and Resources.

Improvement Objective	Main Activities	PM Scrutiny
<p>Making Caerphilly a safer place to live</p> <p>(Addressing anti-social behaviour and increasing public confidence.)</p>	<p>Deliver strategies to address anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Develop a network of community volunteers to work with agencies to improve the quality of life within their communities. Provide support to victims of anti-social behaviour.</p>	<p>Living Environment</p>
<p>Reducing our carbon footprint and improving our sustainability</p>	<p>A. Reducing CO₂ emissions from our buildings and street lighting</p> <p>B. Reducing the impact of fuel poverty on householders in Caerphilly CBC, taking advantage of successful funding bids to tackle properties in specific areas of the borough</p> <p>C. Raising awareness of climate change issues with our staff and residents of the country borough to enable them to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions</p> <p>D. Reducing the impact of our travel and transport to reduce carbon emissions</p>	<p>Living Environment</p>
<p>Sustain the range of employment opportunities for local residents</p>	<p>Helping small & medium term businesses</p> <p>Offer basic skills opportunities</p>	<p>Regeneration</p>
<p>Improving the skills level for children and young people</p>	<p>Increase the range of vocational courses available to all 14-19 year olds</p> <p>Implement a skills strategy on basic skills, numeracy, literacy and Information Technology</p> <p>Reduce 16/17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)</p>	<p>Education for Life</p>
<p>Promote the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.</p>	<p>Increasing participation in leisure and sports and education and communication by the development and delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'An Active Wales' Plan • Sport and Physical Activity Strategy • Climbing Higher • A Healthy Schools Programme • The Healthy Early Years Scheme • The Referral to Exercise Programme • The Appetite for Life Programme • Health Challenge Caerphilly CB Work • Food, Fun and Fitness project • Use of market segmentation evidence to shape marketing activity and campaigns 	<p>Education for Life</p>

Improvement Objective	Main Activities	PM Scrutiny
Adults in the social care system are able to lead full, active and independent lives.	Improving the timeliness and quality of assessments of clients needs	Health and Social care and well-being
Agencies and partners work together to safeguard children and young people	Introduction of the Family Support Strategy with the Children and Young Peoples partnership funding a project to develop family support Implementing the Team Around the Child (TAC) model.	Health and Social care and well-being

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no personnel implications

6. CONSULTATIONS

6.1 All responses from consultations have been incorporated into this report

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Members challenge progress made in implementing the action planning for the relevant improvement objective.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. If the Council can demonstrate it has effective scrutiny within its process for setting, scrutinising and monitoring the improvement objectives and this can be evidenced, then our regulators can rely on the Councils own in-house challenge, this could potentially reduce their involvement and ultimately keep audit fees down to a minimum.

9. STATUTORY POWER

9.1 The Local Government Measure 2009

Author: Ros Roberts Performance Manager. roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk ext. 4238
 Consultees: Corporate Management Team
 Colin Jones – Head of Performance and Property
 Jonathon Jones – Democratic Services Manager
 Cllr Colin Hobbs – Cabinet Member, Performance Property & Asset Management
 Phil Evans – Head of ICT
 Rob Hartshorn – Head of Public Protection
 Pat Mears – Chief Planning Officer and Economic Development
 Jill Lawrence – Assistant Director, Learning Education Inclusions
 Dave Phenis – Education and Leisure Sports Development Officer
 Tony Maher – Assistant Director, Education Planning

Dave Street – Assistant Director, Adults Services
Andrew Jarret – Assistant Director Children’s Services

Appendices:
Appendix 1

Improvement Objective 1 (Improve how we engage with our citizens and listen to what customers tell us about our services)