



## POLICY AND RESOURCES (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 24TH NOVEMBER 2011

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES UPDATE 2011/12

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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### 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 must be reported to the public each year. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) in their "Annual Improvement Report" of the Council will include comment on how we have set and performed against these objectives and make this publicly available in January each year.
- 1.2 In spring 2011 Policy and Resources Scrutiny, the choice of objective and the reasons for that choice were presented along with an action plan. It was agreed at the autumn scrutiny that members would be given a progress update highlighting areas of improvement and recognition and if there are areas that may present a challenge to future delivery.

### 2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 Performance Improvement underpins the Caerphilly Community Strategy and the Council's 3 year Improvement Plan (2009-2012).

### 3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 Corporate Services is the owner of one specific objectives which is:
  - Improve how we engage with our citizens and listen to what our customers tell us about our services
- 3.2 This objective was set within the following criteria as laid down by Welsh Government guidance:
  - Unmet need: There is a need to improve on an unmet need within the borough or community. The objective should capture the main priorities for the area and that need can be evidenced to the regulators (WAO).
  - Collaboration – 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 a 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 difference the public can expect to see as a result of our improvement 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 these objectives and can evidence why the choice was made.

### 3.3 The Role of Scrutiny

3.4 The primary purpose of tonight's meeting is to scrutinise the action plan that is delivering the relevant improvement objective, in addition to any other agenda item.

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". There follows a specific set of activities listed in the legislation, but in plain English it means the following:

- Asking how the authority has set the improvement objectives? What data, intelligence etc did we use to tell us this was an area to improve upon?
- Having set objectives scrutiny can question can we actually deliver them? Do we have the capacity, finances, skills and so forth to deliver.  
Who did we 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.

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 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 know there is an effective in-house scrutiny and do not need to duplicate effort. This could also result in a reduction in audit fees.

3.5 In addition to the Improvement Objective, we have an update of quarter 2 performance for the key indicators in Corporate Services. Please see appendix 2.

## 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 act in accordance with section 3.4 of this report.

## **8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 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 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](mailto:roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk) ext. 4238

Consultees: Corporate Management Team

Colin Jones – Head of Performance and Property

Cllr Colin Hobbs – Cabinet Member for Performance, Property and Asset Management

Nicole Scammell – Head of Corporate Finance

Gareth Hardacre – Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development

Dan Perkins – Head of Legal and Governance

Phil Evans – Head of ICT and Customer Services

Shaun Couzens – Head of Housing Services

Rosemary Mathews – Communications Manager

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Update of Objective 1 – Improve how we engage with our citizens and listen to what our customers tell us about our services

Appendix 2 Q2 Performance Update of Corporate Services Key Indicators