



## AUDIT COMMITTEE – 9TH DECEMBER 2015

**SUBJECT: REGULATOR PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES & S151 OFFICER**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on progress against the proposals made by all regulators since the last Audit Committee (in May 2015).

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Since May 2015 10 proposals have now been addressed and 4 new ones have come onto the proposal register, 2 from the Financial Resilience Report and 2 that were transferred in from the Improving Governance Group, who have now disbanded following successful completion of their action plan.
- 2.2 Currently we have **24** proposals. We believe **10** proposals have been addressed and should now be closed following consideration by Audit Committee. Closing the 10 proposals would leave **14** outstanding as of end of November 2015.
- 2.3 There are only 4 new proposals to add to this update (included in the above figures). 2 of the new ones (from the Financial Resilience work) are not statutory recommendations rather suggestions for improvement and are included for the first time into this register for monitoring at the Audit Committee.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Both the Corporate Assessment and the Annual Improvement Report (WAO) are designed to assess and report on the Council's compliance with the Local Government Measure 2009. In addition it encapsulates other regulatory and inspection outcomes.

### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 At Nov **2015** reporting against the individual categories is as follows:

Customer Services Review	Asset Management	Information Management Review	Safe-guarding	Financial Position Assessment	Improving Governance (new and C/F)	Total
8	6	1 (see 4.7)	5 (see 4.9)	2 (new)	2 (new)	<b>24</b>

4.2 As of Nov **2015** the following figures are reported as outstanding:

Outstanding	New proposals added	Sub total outstanding	Recommend closure as of DEC 2015	Total Outstanding	Total outstanding last time reported
20	4	24	10	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>

- 4.3 This time last year there were 26 proposals on the register that had been on the register for more than a year. Now there are 15, although with the anticipated closure of 10 this would leave 12 that are more than a year old. There have been 88 proposals since the register began.
- 4.4 The reductions in the proposals represent good progress since the last report however of the remaining 14 proposals 12 have been outstanding for more than 2 years. . Some of the proposals have had many actions and are more complex and cannot be easily resolved within a year however progress is being made and the specific reviews updates are given below.
- 4.5 The Customer Service strategy has been delayed for some time waiting on clarification of what the budget impacts would be on corporate services and how much Customer services would need to save. This would have dictated the types of services that could be offered and this has changed often over the last two years. The Strategy has now been finalised and is going to P&R in January 2016 as part of a wider consultation. It is due to be published as a final document early spring. One proposal of the 8 is recommended to be closed and 5 of the remaining 7 will be completed once the strategy is agreed by Cabinet. This will reduce the number that has been outstanding for more than 2 years down to 7 by the next report.
- 4.6 As all the recommendations from the 'Review of Management Arrangements following a Homicide Report' have been actioned this piece of work has now been deleted as agreed in Audit Committee June 2015.
- 4.7 Asset Management has 6 proposals outstanding and remains static from the last time the figures were reported. P & R Scrutiny Committee agreed (30 September 2014) that the current financial climate and lack of clarity over the levels of future WG funding has rendered it no longer possible to develop a comprehensive Asset strategy. It needs to be agreed as to whether this recommendation should stay or be removed. In the interim the service would like to merge recommendation 44 and 45 into 42. The reason for this is that 44 and 45 are components of a strategy, for example (45) 'the strategy should be approved by members'; this would automatically happen as part of approving a strategy so we believe there is no need to have these as a separate recommendations.
- 4.8 The Information Management Review (IMR) Nov 2012 had one outstanding improvement for response times to Freedom of Information requests. Much work has progressed on this proposal and it is recommended for closure. The actions to address this proposal had been to find long-term solutions and it is now normal day-to-day business. It is recommended to be closed. This would remove the IMR from the register.
- 4.9 Arrangements for Safeguarding proposals are now complete as a comprehensive strategy was approved by Council 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015. The strategy contains actions for delivering aspects of the other proposals such as awareness raising, training etc. however whilst the strategy is complete (which addresses the WAO recommendation and therefore can be removed from the register) the work goes on to become normal part of business implementation and progress will be reported to members in a formal capacity as noted within the strategy. We recommend the 5 proposals are now closed.

- 4.10 Wales Audit Office has stated that the decision on whether a proposal is completed is an internal matter and is for the organisation to decide, (although it is within their remit to make more proposals if they do not believe it has been addressed). We will forward the register onto the Wales Audit Office for their information and update once seen and agreed by Audit Committee.
- 4.11 We recommend 10 proposals be closed down as they have been completed and encourage members to view the specific proposals attached within Appendix A and judge if they concur that these proposals are now completed.
- 4.12 The Improving Governance board has been concluded following the successful completion of the action plan, as this has been wound up; the two outstanding actions that are approaching completion have been now placed on this register to keep track of their progress. A report that provided an update of the proposals for the Corporate Governance action plan was presented to Cabinet on 28th October 15 which recognised and evidenced the good progress made to date
- 4.13 In future not all reports will formally come to the Audit committee although all will be available. The thinking behind the change is that there maybe other committees that are a more appropriate route, for example Corporate Safeguarding is a whole authority report so this type of report may be more appropriate to go to another committee or to go to Cabinet.
- 4.14 This means that not all reports will be presented to Audit Committee although they will always be available. However as an assurance function the recommendations will still continue to come to audit committee. In order to ensure there is continuity between the two, future proposals reports will show what reports have come in and where they have been reported to and they will be placed on the intranet on the relevant page so members can view the reports and understand what work the recommendations relate to.
- 4.15 See example below. This will be on the front page of future covering reports for all reports particularly for those that were not presented to Audit committee.

Name of Report	Where it was presented to?	When	Where can it be found on the Intranet?

- 4.16 When monitoring progress against the proposals, members are advised to consider what value the proposals are making and what difference the activity in addressing them has made for our citizens in creating more efficient, customer focused services.

## 5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No specific Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this report, however the Local Government Measure 2009 cites fairness and accessibility as part of a definition of what 'Improvement' means.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report although it is worth noting that external audit fees could be reduced, if regulators are assured and place reliance on the organisation's own ability to monitor and challenge itself to improve.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 There have been no consultations that have not been included in this report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 It is recommended that Audit Committee note the contents of this report and give their agreement (where appropriate) to close the proposals that are noted as 'recommended to be closed' within the Appendix.

9.2 Audit Committee agree to the merging of recommendations as per para 4.7.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To ensure members are aware of progress the Council's action plan for progressing regulator recommendations and proposals and have an opportunity to monitor and challenge its content.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009

Author: Ros Roberts Corporate Performance Manager [roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services  
Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property  
Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive  
Dave Street, Director of Social Services  
Lynton Jones, Acting Head of ICT and Customer Services  
Lynne Donovan, Acting Head of HR  
Dave Titley, Customer Services Manager  
David Hardacre, Cabinet Member, Performance, Property and Policy

Appendices:

Appendix A: Update of proposal register November 2015.