



## AUDIT COMMITTEE – 10TH JUNE 2015

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

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

### 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 update in December 2014.

### 2. SUMMARY

2.1 The previous report detailed the outstanding proposals as at December 2014. Since that time a number of proposals have now been addressed and no new ones have come onto the proposal register. Currently we have **31** proposals. We believe **9** proposals have been addressed and should now be closed following consideration by Audit Committee. Closing the 9 proposals would leave **22** outstanding as of May 2015.

2.2 Although there are no new proposals to add to this update, a report on Looked After Children carried out and presented by Wales Audit Office to Health and Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015. There were some good practises and some suggestions for improvement that have been built into an action plan. These are not statutory recommendations rather suggestions for improvement and they will be included into the proposal register for the next Audit Committee update.

### 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 May 2015 reporting against the individual categories is as follows:

Customer Services Review	Asset Management	Information Management Review	Review of Management Arrangements following a Homicide Report	Safeguarding	Total
8	6	3	2	5	<b>28</b>

The 1 proposal for 'Evaluation of Social Services contribution to MTFP' and the WAO Improvement Letter with 2 Proposals, are recommended for closure and so these subject areas have been removed from the above categories.

4.2 As of May 2015 the following figures are reported as outstanding

Outstanding	New proposals added	Sub total outstanding	Recommend closure as of May 2015	Total Outstanding	Total outstanding last time reported
31	None * (*See 2.2)	31	9	<b>22</b>	32

- 4.3 The reductions in the proposals represent good progress since the last report, however of the remaining 22 proposals 17 have been outstanding for more than a year with 3 being more than 2 years old. However if the recommended 9 proposals are accepted this will reduce to 8 that are more than a year old. Some of the proposals have many actions and are more complex with partnership-based solutions will not easily be resolved within a year however progress is being made and the specific reviews updates are given below;
- 4.4 Customer Services proposals have remained static since the last time this was reported. The review was carried out in August 2013 and initial work has delayed due to budgetary decisions that needed to be made as part of the MTFP. Since then good progress has now been made in catching up and developing the customer service strategy, which is due to go out for consultation shortly. The Customer Services Project Group is established and will coordinate the implementation of the strategy. Many of the actions will happen after the implementation of the strategy so when this is completed in the summer the remainder of the actions should then speed up and fall into place, such as the updating of corporate customer service standards.
- 4.5 There has been a recommendation to close 4 of the proposals from the 'Review of Management Arrangements following a Homicide Report' (April 2013). This leaves 2 more proposals outstanding. The Director of Social Services is presenting a report on this work to the same Audit Committee, as this update so there will be a verbal presentation given on the work of this review.
- 4.6 Asset Management has 6 proposals outstanding and remains static from the last time the figures were reported. P & R Scrutiny Committee agreed (30/9/14) 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 Management Strategy. Individual strategies are in place but it is difficult to bring those together into a coherent strategy. This affects 5 of the 6 proposals. It will have to be considered whether to close these proposals down in light of this information or to retain them, as the current White Paper on local democracy refers to the need to have an asset management strategy. However this is not yet a bill and consultation on the White Paper by Welsh Government has just closed.
- 4.7 The Information Management Review (Nov 2012) is recommending 2 proposals for closure and this leaves one outstanding regarding improvements in response times for Freedom of Information requests. Much work has progressed on this proposal and this may be recommended for closure in the next update. The actions to address these proposals have been complex with long-term solutions and in the main are now normal day-to-day business.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 We recommend 9 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.

4.10 This report does not include an update against the Improving Governance Programme actions as this is reported separately. A report that provided an update of the proposals for the Corporate Governance action plan was presented to Cabinet on 20th May, which recognised and evidenced the good progress made to date.

4.11 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, monitor the progress against the attached action plan and give agreement on closing the proposals that are noted closed within the Appendix.

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

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

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009.

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Appendices:

Appendix: Update of proposal register May 2015.