

Wales Audit Office Improvement Assessment Letter 2012

Update Response

A: Formal Recommendations made in the Annual Improvement Report 2012

Ref	Recommendation	Update Response
R1	The Council should report more fully and regularly to the Executive Board on progress in delivering the Human Resources (HR) Strategy and Single Status agreement and ensure capacity and capability are available to achieve intended outcomes and timetables.	For the People Strategy see C. P2 below. The Council's project plan for adoption of a local Single Status Agreement makes a commitment to an effective date for the Agreement of the first quarter of 2013-14. The project is sufficiently resourced to achieve this timeline. Achievement is subject to the successful conclusion of negotiations with the Trade Unions, adoption by the Council as the employer, and a positive outcome in the workforce ballot.
R2	The Council needs to complete its work in quantifying the financial benefits of its programme for efficiencies and organisational change by mid-2012-13 to determine the remaining funding gap (shortfall or surplus) and then establish clear plans to identify further savings or re-direct resources to priorities.	The Flintshire Futures first phase programme has clear objectives, project plans and financial targets. These targets are being built in to both the Medium Term Financial Plan and the annual budget for 2013-14. The programme governance and accountability arrangements have been strengthened with a new member-officer programme board. A second and more far-reaching phase of Flintshire Futures is under development for major organisational change and redesign.

B: Proposals for Improvement made in the Annual Improvement Report 2012

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Response
P1	Complete the work in progress to set clear success measures for all improvement objectives and ensure regular, clear reporting.	The improvement objectives set in 2012-13 have had a first and initial review by the new Cabinet prior to read option with several additions. The priorities, targets and outcomes for the objectives are under review in line with this recommendation and the Wales Audit Office has been invited to advise and assist. The Local Service Board has similarly reviewed its priorities and has reset more specific and measurable outcomes and targets in the spirit of this recommendation.
P2	Develop and agree a detailed business plan for improving customer access showing how success measures will be achieved and offer value for money.	The Customer Services Strategy is adopted and is in the process of implementation. Success and efficiency measures are being developed for each work-stream of the Strategy as they are adopted and implemented (e.g. channel shift, Flintshire Connects). This is an ambitious Strategy and the Council is calculating risks and benefits for each work-stream as they develop. The Council must avoid being too cautious and be prepared to

		take some calculated risks to improve the organisation for customer benefit and to achieve efficiencies.
P3	Ensure its Annual Performance Report is published by 31 October in line with statutory requirements and more fully reflects Welsh Government guidance.	The 2011/12 Annual Performance Report has been published by the due date in full compliance with Welsh Government Guidance.
P4	Improve quality assurance arrangements to ensure that data used to support performance management and monitoring is accurate and robust.	Quality assurance arrangements for performance data are robust and sufficiently reliable. The audit of performance data for 2011/12 by the Wales Audit Office showed data to be accurate.

C: Proposals for Improvement made in the Corporate Assessment Update Letter 2011

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Response
P1	By the end of 2011, the Council should complete its medium-term financial plan so as to allow informed decisions on how funding pressures will be addressed and resources allocated to achieve improvement objectives.	The next staged publication of the Medium Term Financial Plan will be published alongside the 2013-14 annual budget. The Plan is under continual review given the volatility in national public finances and the economy, the uncertainty over financial systems such as the social housing finance regime, and the impacts of national Government policy notably Welfare Reform. The financial challenges the Plan aims to quantify and address are not static.
P2	By the end of October 2011, the Council should complete a review of overall progress with the People Strategy 2009-12, prioritise the outstanding actions and resources necessary to achieve them, and report on this to elected members.	The People Strategy has been reviewed in 2012-13 and the priorities re-set. The progress of the Strategy is reported at regular intervals to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.
P3	Develop an improved corporate approach to engagement with communities and users of services including arrangements to enhance the contribution of elected members.	An improved corporate programme for community and citizen engagement is under development. The Council continues to progressively develop effective consultation methods in support of key service change as evidenced in housing, social care and school modernisation.

D: Additional supplementary responses made to the Improvement Assessment Letter 2012

	WAO Reference	Update Response
	The Council's arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology to support continuous	The technology review undertaken earlier this year was positive and we accept the findings and recommendations. We have already

	improvement.	strengthened the ICT business partner role to work with services to identify opportunities for ICT to support service improvement and identify priorities for corporate ICT investment. ICT is also seen as a key enabler of the Flintshire Futures programme. Our project management methodology is being applied consistently for ICT projects and a sound business case and ROI are required for all projects. We are seeing real tangible benefits from targeted corporate investment in ICT e.g. mobile working, EDRMS, e-Procurement, but need to be more consistent in undertaking post implementation reviews for all ICT projects.
	The Care and Social Services inspectorate Wales has published a positive assessment of the Council's services for children and families, reflecting strong leadership and improving outcomes.	The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) assessment of Services for Children and Families makes a positive assessment of the services, notably leadership of change and delivery and our success in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people. The Council has already implemented measures to improve the small number of areas identified for improvement, and has discussed and agreed these with the CSSIW.