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Mr Colin Everett
Chief Executive
Flintshire County Council
County Hall
Mold
CH7 6NB

Reference	681A2013
Date	20 December 2013
Pages	1 of 3

Dear Colin

Improvement Assessment

In my letter of 16 September 2013, I gave my opinion on whether Flintshire County Council (the Council) had discharged its statutory duties in respect of improvement planning.

I am also required, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), to give an opinion on whether the Council has discharged its duties in respect of improvement reporting and met the requirements of the Measure.

In my opinion, and based on audit work undertaken to date, the Council has discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure, although there is potential to strengthen its arrangements further.

I have concluded that the Council has discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure because:

- the Council published its Annual Performance Report (the Report) by 31 October 2013;
- the Report provides an assessment of the Council's performance in the preceding financial year (2012-13) and sets out how the Council has sought to discharge its duties under the Measure;
- the Report includes a summary evaluation of whether or not the Council believes it has been successful in achieving its improvement objectives;
- the Report includes details of the Council's performance, and compares performance against the national statutory performance indicators;
- the Report includes a brief section inviting citizens to provide feedback or make comments on the Report; and
- the Report includes a short section on the ways in which the Council has sought to collaborate.

There are areas in which the Council could improve its self-evaluation of its annual performance. In summary, the Report:

- presents too much detailed information in a style that is not engaging for citizens;
- includes, for each improvement objective, information about work that has and has not gone well during 2012-13, but further clarity in summarising this information would help readers to understand how the Council has determined its evaluation of progress and outcomes;
- lacks information on the impact of the Council's collaborative activity; and
- does not promote as well as it might the opportunity for citizens to provide feedback by, for example, including a web link for comments.

We have provided more detailed feedback to relevant staff on a draft of this year's Report. Much of the complexity of this year's Report stems from the nature of the Council's Improvement Plan for 2012-13. I reported in my September letter that the presentation and content of the Council's Improvement Plan for 2013-14 enable public engagement with the Council's priorities far more effectively than in the past. This change has the potential to support the further development of the Council's public reporting of its performance.

Further proposals for improvement/recommendations

No new proposals for improvement are being suggested in this letter. We will continue to monitor and report on the progress made by the Council in implementing the proposals set out in my previous reports and letters. I will undertake more detailed work on the arrangements that support the Council's performance management and reporting over the following months and report this, as well as summarising all of my work and that of relevant regulators during 2013-14, in an Annual Improvement Report for the Council that I will aim to publish by the end of March 2014.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Huw Vaughan Thomas'.

HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS
Auditor General for Wales

CC: Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Local Government and Government Business

Huw Lloyd Jones – Manager

Karen Lees – Performance Audit Lead