

Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report

May 2014

Executive Response

The Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report is, overall, a fair and positive summary of the position of the Council. The report is a welcome endorsement of a full year of improved improvement reporting following the introduction of this year's Improvement Plan.

There are no new statutory recommendations or proposals for improvement.

In our response we set out how we will make improvements to ensure full compliance with the spirit and detail of the national guidance.

Listed below are the principal topics within the letter along with our response.

Issue	Response
<i>In summary the report:</i>	
Performance Evaluation "The Council has strengthened its approach to performance evaluation, underpinned by better improvement planning arrangements, but the changes are not yet fully embedded"	This was a transitional year in which the measures and targets the Council set were not published alongside the Improvement Plan for 2012/13 but were reported alongside progress in the mid year report. The Improvement Plan for 2014/15 is now fully aligned and accompanied by the more detailed 'Measures of Success' document which will continue to be monitored and reported against each quarter as a practice.
Improvement Plan – compliance with Welsh Government guidance "The Council has strengthened its approach to improvement planning but further action is needed to fully comply with Welsh Government guidance" (in respect of consultation)	This is a specific comment on limited reference in the Improvement Plan 2013/14 to consultation undertaken. The priorities set for the Improvement Plan were, from the outset, based on a wide range of previous consultations in service areas with both partners and representative groups (e.g. community safety, anti-poverty, education, economic development) and, in some cases, service users directly (e.g. housing). There has been no one intensive consultation exercise on the Plan itself, by local choice, given this background. A local decision has been made by elected members to use their representative role to test the relevance of the priorities of Plan against local public opinion as explained in the Plan. The Council remains open to feedback on the plan and amending it following new service based consultations at any time. This explanation is given in the Improvement Plan for the clarity of the reader.
Response to change – financial planning "The Council has developed a more detailed plan to manage its	The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan is under constant review and improvement. Under the newly adopted Corporate Operating Model the new Chief Officer Team will have a strengthened

<p>challenging financial position, but success relies on timely and effective implementation and monitoring”</p>	<p>collective role on priority led budget planning to meet the corporate sub-priorities in the new version of the Improvement Plan. Strengthening of the roles, systems and organisational disciplines which underpin robust planning, implementation and tracking of financial planning and efficiency planning is advancing and continues to be work in progress.</p>
--	---