

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Progress Report: Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Audit Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> November 2018</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>

**1. PURPOSE**

1.1 To provide Audit Committee with an update on the authority’s progress against the Wales Audit Office (WAO) proposals for improvement up to October 2018 so that the committee can assure itself of the effectiveness of the authority’s response to any identified weaknesses in its processes.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That members consider the current position of proposals and future actions being taken to address them seeking assurance that adequate progress is being made.
- 2.2 That members refer on any issues contained within national studies to other committees for consideration where they identify there are findings of particular relevance to the council.

**3. KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 Each year Wales Audit Office undertake a Performance Audit work programme with the council. The reports issued by WAO as a result of this work programme are able to make the following interventions for areas that are deemed as requiring improvement:
  - proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council WAO would expect Council to do something about them and will follow up what happens;
  - formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
  - conduct a special inspection, and publish a report and make recommendations; and
  - recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.
- 3.2 The proposals included in appendix 1 are those issued to the council as a result of the performance audit work conducted by the WAO in the authority since the Corporate Assessment in March 2015 as this is the most recent comprehensive assessment of the council. There are no statutory recommendations contained within this update, the update contains lower-priority issues, known as proposals for improvement. Recommendations from the ‘Safeguarding arrangements – Kerbcraft scheme’ report - have been reported separately to Council.
- 3.3 This update builds on the most recent update provided in March 2018 as part of the six monthly reporting in place. Where progress and evidence for a proposal suggests it has been adequately addressed the proposal has been “closed” and removed from the report. An overview of these is provided in appendix 2. Proposals which require further attention are marked as “open”, while some proposals have been combined where the issues covered and/or the action the council is taking to respond to them are strongly linked. Some of the forward looking actions committed by the authority are likely to be reflected within other council strategic documents such as the Council’s corporate plan, enabling strategies, the Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment and the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 3.4 The proposals made by WAO are grouped into the following areas; Human Resources, Performance Management, Partnership & collaboration, Governance, Finance, Information Technology, Information Management, Asset Management and Children’s safeguarding. Each proposal update highlights:

- The report within which the proposal was made
- The specific proposal, or more than one proposal if they are closely linked.
- The progress made up to October 2018 to address the issues identified by the proposal.
- Whether the status of the proposal is to remain “open” or be “closed” if the evidence of progress suggests it has been sufficiently addressed.
- Any further actions that will be taken to address the proposal if it remains open.

3.5 The specific WAO reports, and accompanying management responses, are also presented to Audit Committee as they are produced. Recent reports produced include the WAO ‘Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?’ review which was reported to audit committee in September 2018. The WAO whole authority review of children’s safeguarding report was presented to Children and Young People Select Committee in October 2018, the full report is available [here](#) . As these reports were recently published there is limited further progress to report at this stage. All of the recent reports issued by Wales Audit Office as part of their performance audit work programme, including the council’s initial management response, are available on the hub (the council’s Intranet site) for members to view.

3.6 Wales Audit Office also produce an annual report called The Annual Improvement Report (or AIR) summarising the work undertaken in the council during that year and concluding on the council’s prospects for improvement. The last AIR published in August 2018 concludes: “The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement. Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2018-19.”

3.7 WAO also make recommendations that may be relevant to the council in local government national reports. Although these have not been issued directly to the council, like the other proposals, the recommendations from the national reports could be relevant to the council’s services. The reports are published on [www.audit.wales/publications](http://www.audit.wales/publications) a list of the recently published reports and a brief overview is provided in appendix 3. These were circulated to the relevant responsible officer(s) when they were published. Audit Committee has a role in ensuring the council considers the findings of the report. If the committee feels the report requires further consideration by another scrutiny committee they can refer it for consideration. The committee may also refer issues to Democratic Services Committee who are able to perform a coordinating function.

3.8 WAO as part of their ongoing annual audit work programme may follow up progress in any of the open or recently closed proposal areas.

#### **4. REASONS**

To ensure the authority responds appropriately to the WAO proposals to secure the improvements required.

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Finances and any other resource implications of activity related to the proposals will need to be taken into account by the relevant responsibility holders.

#### **6. AUTHORS**

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Human Resources proposals

WAO Proposal	<b>Ensure that the planned revisions and changes made to 'Check In Check Out' deliver a clear process of assessing and improving the performance of all staff and that department, team and individual objective setting is in line with the Council's corporate objectives.</b>				Status	Open
	<b>Improve oversight and ongoing implementation of the staff appraisal process. In particular:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure staff appraisal completion is uploaded onto the Council's Hub to accurately reflect the numbers of staff in receipt of an annual appraisal;</li> <li>• increase the appraisal completion rate.</li> </ul>					
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Human Resources – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016					
What progress have we made	Based on feedback received, the <i>Check-in, Check-out</i> (CICO) process has been reviewed and rolled out with more robust guidance, video tutorials and supportive training.					
	<p>It was recognised that CICO completion rates are likely to be higher than previously reported as the system was not capturing all data in the most effective way. Recognising this, a longer term more effective recording module has been developed that allows managers to record the completed CICO directly into the MY VIEW system.</p> <p>There still remains further work required to ensure the effective use of the recording system to understand accurately the completion rate of appraisals before the proposal can be considered as being addressed. A further emphasis has been placed on this as part of quarter 2 reporting in 2018/19. A new approach to capturing completion rates using email functionality has been trialled and this will be followed up in quarter 3.</p>					
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale		
	Check-in, Check-out is well understood, consistently employed and informs staff development	Increase understanding and use of the check-in, check-out recording process	Head of People Services	March 2020		

WAO Proposal	<b>Develop the Council's workforce planning arrangements by including accurate data and key management information around workforce issues and statistics, reporting regularly to Senior Leadership and Management Teams to enable effective monitoring of progress and management of these issues on an ongoing basis.</b>				Status	Open
	<b>Develop further workforce data to include staff establishment, contract status, vacancies, agency use, age, gender, and grade/pay distribution, to better inform future workforce planning activity.</b>					
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Human Resources – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016					
What progress have we made	Accurate and timely data and information is fundamental to support managers to workforce plan, manage performance and identify skills and knowledge gaps. We have made progress in this area but data is not as accessible as we would like so we need to continue to develop out data systems accordingly.					
	To support workforce planning a workflow has been developed to enable service leaders to effectively focus on succession and workforce planning and directorates to develop plans for their workforce. The combination of the workflow and the training and development pathways help support workforce development.					

HR business partnering meetings will be used to engage and support teams in workforce planning supported by people services framework which will identify areas of key risk.

Following and informed by the development of the Council's Corporate Plan, a revised People Strategy has been agreed. The latest iteration of the People Strategy aims to build on the outcomes already achieved, complete activities that are a work in progress and reflects what colleagues, data and intelligence is telling us needs to improve to enable and support our colleagues to be the best they can be.

HR data dashboards have been established and are updated quarterly. The dashboards have previously been reported to Audit Committee. These are now being used as part of HR business partner meetings to inform department management teams and senior leadership team on workforce issues.

Workforce data displays in the HR system have been developed to provide managers with more timely and a greater range of information to inform the management of their workforce, data includes staff, establishment, age, gender etc. there have been ongoing technical difficulties which mean these have not been implemented as quickly as intended. These are now being rolled out and expected to be fully functioning by March 2019. These will enable managers to interrogate data and identify specific workforce issues.

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Workforce statistics are available at team level in a timely manner	Continue to develop and Implement new workforce data dashboards on My view	Head of People Services	March 2019
	Services produce workforce plans based on short and medium term needs	Use HR business partnering meetings to engage and support teams in workforce planning	Human Resources Lead	March 2019

## Performance Management proposals

WAO Proposal	<p><b>Improve performance management arrangements by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring planned improvements are tangible;</li> <li>• improving target setting to better reflect desired improvement and ensuring resources are allocated to deliver Council priorities through the Medium Term Financial Plan;</li> <li>• developing arrangements to identify intended outcomes, targets and data collection arrangements when services are being delivered through alternative models;</li> </ul>			Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				
What progress have we made	<p>A corporate plan has been developed that sets out a clear direction for the Council up to 2022. Detailed activity to deliver the corporate plan has continued to be developed in service business plans and resources to deliver this are being allocated through the Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>The corporate plan sets out clearly the council’s purpose. It contains five specific objectives, which are also the Council’s well-being objectives and can be measured over time using measures included in the plan. Specific medium-term targets will be reported to cabinet as part of six monthly reporting of progress against the plan.</p> <p>Following approval of the corporate plan the Council’s enabling strategies have been revised to align to the delivery of the corporate plan, these include the Digital Strategy, People Strategy and Asset Management Strategy. Clear principles were established which the plans followed to ensure a more robust approach to development. These include a specific section of performance measures and targets to evaluate performance.</p> <p>The role and purpose of service planning has been reviewed and a revised process established aligned to the corporate plan. Target setting guidance has been developed and incorporated as part of the Council’s service business planning process for services to use when developing targets. A training session on performance measurement, incorporating target setting, is still planned through Talent Lab. Performance management forms part of the recently established management induction training.</p> <p>The shift in focus through the Future Generations Act means activity is increasingly focused on longer term challenges at a community level to improve well-being. It isn’t always easy to measure progress quarterly or annually in a single number to evaluate progress against some of these issues. This means the way we measure and evaluate our performance will need to continue to evolve to still allow us to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of current service delivery while also track progress against longer term community well-being objectives.</p> <p>It is recognised that there is a particular difficulty in developing performance data, measures and targets and risks to data quality when setting up new policies, initiatives or arrangements. These areas will be continue to be targeted for performance team support.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Clarity of outcomes targeted in the Corporate Plan	Develop specific medium-term targets for indicators in the Corporate plan as detailed activities are developed	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2018	

WAO Proposal	<b>Review the Council’s risk management arrangements to assure itself it manages risks consistently across directorates and identifies, escalates, and addresses risks in a timely and appropriate way.</b>			Status	Open
	<b>Integrate safeguarding across the Council’s policy framework. In particular: Re-frame the strategic risk register, to enable a SMART-er approach to measuring impact of actions taken in mitigation of identified risk.</b>				
Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016 Whole Authority review of children’s safeguarding – August 2018				
What progress have we made	<p>The Strategic Risk Assessment is updated based on the latest evidence available in line with the Council’s strategic risk management policy. The latest risk register has been reviewed to ensure it includes risks to the delivery of the recently approved Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The format of the strategic risk register has been updated to include timescales and responsibility holders for each mitigating action and includes an update on the progress and impact of implementing each action identified. An internal audit report on the Council’s strategic risk management arrangements has identified a number of areas for improvement. An action plan has been agreed with internal audit to deliver the improvements required, some of these have been considered in the latest iteration of the strategic risk register.</p> <p>Any further changes as a result of these actions or as a result of further feedback received that impact on the strategic risk register or risk management policy and guidance in place will be updated on the intranet - the hub, in line with the established continuous review arrangements in place.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Strategic Risk Management arrangements are designed effectively and are operating in a robust manner	Implement the action plan to improve risk management arrangements in response to the findings from Internal Audit.	Performance Manager	March 2019	

## Partnership and collaborative working proposals

WAO Proposal	<b>Adopt a more planned, risk-assessed approach to partnership and collaborative working to make better use of resources.</b>			Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				
What progress have we made	<p>A community governance review has been completed. The review identified the need to consider new arrangements for area committees and Bryn y Cwm Area Committee (subsequently re-named North Monmouthshire Area Committee) was subsequently identified as a pilot and would act as the primary mechanism for influencing decisions in the locality. A temporary arrangement to the Council's constitution has given voting rights to non-county council members of this committee. An evaluation of the pilot is currently underway and is due to conclude in November. Other areas are served by a cluster arrangement with a member of Senior Leadership team aligned to each cluster.</p> <p>The review also led to a decision to merge the previous Whole Place and Strategic Partnership Teams into a single Partnership and Community Development Team. This ensures alignment between strategic intent and the work that the council does with local groups to enable a focus on building sustainable and resilient communities</p> <p>The Community &amp; Partnership Development Team are working with Town Councils who fall under the Future Generations Act on their responsibilities regarding well-being planning. They are also working on clustering arrangements with Town and Community Councils as a direct interface with the Council. This is also a mechanism to look at well-being collectively for those Town and Community Councils who are and are not governed by the act.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Structures clarified and processes aligned to delivery frameworks to support community governance.	Pilot the Community Governance structure in the Bryn Y Cwm area and finalise the Community Governance review and agree through Council	Head of Enterprise and Community Development	December 2018	

WAO Proposal	<b>Further develop and embed performance management arrangements to allow the Council to hold partners to account and to support the Local Service Board to deliver its plans.</b>			Status	Open
Report	<b>Ensure new Public Service Board (PSB) delivery plans clearly set out relevant actions and resources needed to deliver shared priorities so that each partner, including the Council, is clear what is expected of them.</b>				
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016				
What progress have we made	<p>The PSB has approved its well-being plan which includes four well-being objectives that underpin a clear purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities. The board is now developing a more detailed action plan, in line with an agreed format, that will contribute to delivery of these objectives and will inform how to allocate and prioritise resources to meet their wellbeing objectives. Each partner has assumed responsibility for delivering the activity which includes holding workshops and involving other partners, organisations and community groups.</p> <p>In line with this, the performance framework and accountability arrangements for the PSB will be reviewed to ensure accountability, delivery of the well-being plan and continued delivery of statutory responsibilities</p> <p>A PSB Select Committee has been established and has scrutinised the formation of the PSB and membership, resourcing of PSB support and development of the Well-being Assessment and Well-being Plan. The Committee is now playing an active role in scrutinising the formation and commencement of delivery of actions.</p>				



	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Clear PSB well-being objectives allowing the PSB to allocate and prioritise resources to meet the objectives and establish delivery plans to achieve this.	Establish an action plan, performance framework and accountability arrangements to deliver the PSB's well-being plan.	Head of Policy & Governance and Community & Partnership Development Manager	April 2019



## Governance proposals

WAO Proposal	<b>Strengthen scrutiny's impact, status and effectiveness including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>formally recording Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations and observations; and</b></li> <li>• <b>better co-ordination of Cabinet and select committee forward work programmes.</b></li> </ul>	Status	Open
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Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016		
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What progress have we made	<p>Formalised reporting of scrutiny recommendations to Cabinet Members was initially established through the drafting of chairs' letters to the Cabinet Member. However, in order to ensure the Executive and the public are fully apprised of Select Committee conclusions/recommendations in advance of decisions being taken, the political report template has been revised to include a 'consultees' section, in which the conclusions/recommendations are listed. Scrutiny chairs may still correspond formally with the Executive to request attendance at a select committee or to convey scrutiny's views on an issue, however, inclusion of scrutiny's contribution to the decision making report is considered a more timely and effective way of inputting to decision-making and evidencing the scrutiny that has been undertaken. If the Executive is asked to provide a formal response to a select committee, this is formally reported at Select Committee meetings under 'consideration of the forward work programme', ensuring accountability and transparency.</p> <p>Democratic Services and the Scrutiny Manager continue to attend meetings of Senior Leadership Team and departmental management teams as necessary to discuss the cabinet and select committee forward work planner.</p> <p>A revised whole authority work planner is being implemented to improve the interface between officer meetings, select committees, Cabinet and Council. This will ensure that committees can plan their work programme more effectively and enable clearer tracking of decisions.</p>		
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	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement a revised whole authority planner	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2018
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Review and refresh the report template and guidance and support this with training.  Adopt the next phase of Modern Gov system to enable officers to self-serve when uploading reports. Enhance the advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	December 2018

WAO Proposal	<b>Further improve the clarity of reports that members receive to ensure they have access to appropriate and timely information in a format that is easy to read and understand.</b>	Status	Open
	<b>Improving the quality of its options appraisals by providing information showing how options have been consistently evaluated.</b>		
	<b>Ensuring that budget savings mandates and service change reports systematically reflect stakeholder views and that these are taken into account during the decision making process.</b>		
	<b>Setting out at the point of decision on service change proposals how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored</b>		

Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016. Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017		
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What progress have we made	Further improvements to the report writing process and guidance for reports to members are being made. This includes sections on options appraisal, which includes further guidance on completing options appraisal, an evaluation section to state how the decision will be evaluated and a consultation section to set out all the stakeholders that have been consulted as part of the report and provide a short summary of their feedback. The Democratic Services Committee have also been developing a process for improving engagement in the democratic process.			
	An arrangement that provides assurance that evaluations are being completed and which gives decision-makers and select committees the opportunity to look at evaluation in more detail on a risk-based approach was presented to Democratic Services Committee in September 2018.			
	These amendments will be supported with training for managers on report writing as part of the training pathway delivered through Talent Lab.			
	There is an ongoing need to ensure accountability on report authors that their reports relating to their service area meet the required standard before reports are published and decisions made.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Better informed members leading to more robust challenge and decision making.	Amend the report writing template and guidance and ensure the content of reports and presentations is clear and pitched correctly.	Scrutiny Manager & Policy and Performance Team	December 2018
Further action planned	Better informed members leading to more robust challenge and decision making	Ensure that senior officers are held accountable for ensuring the reports relating to their service area meet the required standard;  Implement a revised whole authority planner and ensure that Democratic Services Officers complete basic checks before reports are uploaded	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2018

WAO Proposal	<b>Providing further training on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act for scrutiny members to improve their understanding and consideration of the Act when undertaking scrutiny activity.</b>	Status	Open	
Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018			
What progress have we made	A range of training has been provided to members since the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This includes training for members on the new Public Service Board Select Committee, which has been in place since summer 2017.  A new training module on the Future Generations Act has been developed through the corporate training service and this is being made available to members to inform their role. One officer training session has already been held.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Better challenge in meetings around whether the Council is complying with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.	Undertake further training on the Well-being of Future Generations Act as part of the implementation of the revised report writing process.	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2018

WAO Proposal	<b>Reviewing the level, type and resilience of the scrutiny support function to meet future challenges.</b>			Status	Open
Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018				
What progress have we made	An Interim Scrutiny Officer has been appointed from August 2018. Proposals are being developed to provide a sustainable and permanent solution, which will increase the resilience of the scrutiny function.				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Assurance that scrutiny is able to meet future challenges.	Develop proposals to provide a sustainable and permanent solution which will increase the resilience of the scrutiny function.	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2018	

WAO Proposal	<b>Clarifying the role of Cabinet Members when attending select committees to observe.</b>			Status	Open
Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018				
What progress have we made	<p>Cabinet members' role in the scrutiny process for accountability is clear and they are welcome to observe any scrutiny meetings in line with the Council's code of conduct which states that:  "Members of the Council are entitled to attend any formal meeting of the Council, its committees or sub-committees or the Cabinet, Where they are not a Member of that body, their attendance and right to speak is at the discretion of the Chair of the body."</p> <p>To clarify our process, an update will be made to the scrutiny protocol on the role of Cabinet Members when attending select committees to observe with the option to contribute being at the discretion of the chair.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Clarity over the role of Cabinet Members when attending Select Committee meetings uninvited.	The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol has been revised to clarify the role of cabinet members when attending select committees, either to answer questions or to observe the meeting. This will be revised within the Council's Constitution when it is next updated.	Head of Policy and Governance	October 2018	

WAO Proposal	<b>Assessing the impact of the workshop approach.</b>			Status	Open
Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018				
What progress have we made	The workshop approach will be evaluated as part of the scrutiny service business plan 2018/21. The workshop approach is an identified area of activity in the plan.				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Evaluation of the workshop approach as a future form of scrutiny.	Evaluate the workshop approach as part of the scrutiny service business plan 2018/21	Scrutiny Manager	March 2019	

## Information Management proposals

WAO Proposal	<b>PSN Accreditation</b> The Council should pursue PSN accreditation as a matter of urgency within the current financial year, bringing in external resources to achieve this if necessary.			Status	Open
Report	WAO Information Management Review – December 2017				
What progress have we made	A significant and comprehensive security review has been undertaken in order to gain Public Sector Network (PSN) accreditation however the most recent submission has not been successful and PSN accreditation has not been achieved. There are two elements that remain outstanding regarding PSN accreditation, and the Council is working with partners to resolve these and will then resubmit for accreditation as soon as they are resolved.				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	PSN accreditation is achieved.	Resubmit for accreditation once remaining actions have been completed	Head of People Services	Targeted for January 2019	

## Finance proposals

WAO Proposal	<p><b>The Council should ensure that all budget mandates are costed and are sufficiently detailed.</b> <i>All budget mandates should be fully costed and supported by information showing how each saving area will be achieved with an evaluation of its impact. This information should be produced on a timely basis to inform the agreement of the mandates by Members.</i></p> <p><b>Ensure central specialist functions, such as finance and procurement, work more closely with individual service areas in identifying potential savings, the scope of savings achievable and the potential to use pooled budgets with partners.</b></p>			Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Financial Resilience Assessment – February 2016				
What progress have we made	<p>Budget proposals for 18-19 were produced in a standard format which covers costs of implementation and are supported by information showing how each will be achieved. Proposals were scrutinised by Select Committees between November 2017 and February 2018. 93% of savings agreed for 2017/18 are forecast to be achieved.</p> <p>A process for setting the budget for 2019/20 has been established. A revised proposal template has been developed to strengthen the capture of budget proposals. An essential part of the process is closer alignment between services business planning arrangements and financial planning arrangements to improve the quality of service planning. There is still a need to think differently about the even greater challenges of the medium term and this work and engagement will continue in the coming months as part of our Future Monmouthshire programme to develop the Medium Term Financial Plan.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Fully costed and robust budget proposals for member scrutiny.	Establish a clear Medium Term Financial Plan and proposals	Head of Finance	March 2019	

WAO Proposal	<p><b>Strengthen financial planning arrangements by developing a robust Medium Term Financial Plan that incorporates its Reserves Policy, Income Generation Strategy and Future Monmouthshire project</b></p>			Status	Open
Report	Savings Planning – February 2017				
What progress have we made	<p>The Corporate Plan sets out a clear direction for the Council up to 2022. It contains five specific goals and includes a number of programmes of work, twenty-two in total, which the Council is committed to between now and 2022.</p> <p>Following the approval of the Corporate plan a financial strategy is being developed, this will apply a strategic lens to the Council's finances and across the medium term – both revenue and capital, develop further the approach around the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) and budget setting process and align to the delivery of the corporate plan to ensure its aspirations are sustainable.</p> <p>As part of the delivery of the Corporate Plan a Commercial Strategy has been developed and is an important means through which the Council can self-direct its own economic future and ensure services, functions and wider activity has an outlook broader than 'survive' - and a real aspiration to 'thrive'. Specifically, it seeks to enhance income generations, develop an approach to commercialising assets and create a commercial culture and ethos.</p> <p>A process for setting the budget for 2019/20 has been established. A revised proposal template has been developed to strengthen the capture of budget proposals. An essential part of the process is closer alignment between services business planning arrangements and financial planning arrangements to improve the quality of service planning. There is still a need to think differently about the even greater challenges of the medium term and this work and engagement will continue in the</p>				

coming months as part of our Future Monmouthshire programme to develop the Medium Term Financial Plan.

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	A robust and realistic Medium Term Financial Plan to support and facilitate strategic planning	Complete the development of a Financial Strategy	SLT	March 2019
	Fully costed and robust budget proposals for member scrutiny.	Establish a clear Medium Term Financial Plan and proposals	Head of Finance	March 2019

## Asset Management proposals

WAO Proposal	<p><b>The Council's asset management arrangements could be strengthened by: Developing and delivering a long-term sustainable strategy for its assets based on a thorough assessment of needs, costs and benefits supported by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>short, medium and long-term performance indicators;</b></li> <li>○ <b>embedded governance arrangements to support the strategic management of assets;</b></li> <li>○ <b>IT asset management systems which integrate more effectively with other systems to facilitate better information capture and use; and</b></li> <li>○ <b>Utilising information arising from stakeholder consultation and engagement including what the Council has learnt about its experience of its community asset transfers to better inform its decision-making.</b></li> </ul>			Status	Open
Report	WAO review of Asset Management – November 2017				
What progress have we made	<p>Following approval of the corporate plan the Asset Management Strategy 2018-2022, including Asset Management Plan 2018-19 has been revised to align to its delivery. The plan includes arrangements for how performance will be evaluated including relevant performance indicators. Specific actions and performance targets are embedded within the Landlord Services Business Plan 2018/2021 which has been set in line with the principles of service business planning developed and aligned to deliver the corporate plan and digital strategy. The plan will be updated and progress monitored in line with quarterly reporting arrangements in place for service business plans.</p> <p>Governance arrangements have been set out within the Asset Management Strategy. These are in the process of being implemented.</p> <p>The current software will be replaced with a system that incorporates the Financial Asset Register as well as providing a comprehensive solution for the effective management of property data. The scope for this is being agreed and will take longer than originally planned.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Clarity over the Council's approach to the use of its assets to support robust decision making.	Implement revised governance arrangements agreed as part of the Asset Management Strategy	Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services	December 2018	
	Clarity over the Council's approach to the use of its assets to support robust decision making.	Replace the IT system with a system that incorporates the Financial Asset Register as well as providing a comprehensive solution for the effective management of property data	Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services	June 2019	



## Children's safeguarding proposals

WAO Proposal	<p><b>Integrate safeguarding across the Council's policy framework. In particular:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Produce a 'project plan' identifying the underpinning work required and associated timescales to fully incorporate the Council's approach to integrating child and adult safeguarding.</li> <li>b. Re-frame the strategic risk register, to enable a SMART-er approach to measuring impact of actions taken in mitigation of identified risk.</li> <li>c. Strengthen safeguarding policy and guidance in the areas identified in this report. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– data protection arrangements and guidance linked to safeguarding;</li> <li>– embed whistleblowing policy arrangements through training and awareness raising; and</li> <li>– revise taxi licensing arrangements strengthening health and safety requirements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			Status	Open
Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018				
What progress have we made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Integration of the service management responsibility for Adult and Children's safeguarding has been completed. At present there are no plans to further integrate the teams operating functions.</li> <li>b. The format of the strategic risk register has been updated to include timescales and responsibility holders for each mitigating action and includes an update on the progress and impact of implementing each action identified. Any other amendments to the strategic risk register will be considered based on any further feedback received.</li> <li>c. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy established in 2017 is to be reviewed and updated annually; this work is underway and will conclude in November. This will include new responsibilities and guidance for GDPR and its links to safeguarding. Any actions will form part of the Whole Authority action plan.</li> </ul> <p>The Whistleblowing Policy 2017 is available on the People Services hub where all HR policies are accessed. HR business partner meetings with all managers now include awareness raising around all new policies, including Whistleblowing policy.</p> <p>The Taxi Driver Policy was last amended, and approved by Licensing Committee, on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018. This provided more stringent requirements on the suitability of taxi drivers and operators, in line with Institute of Licensing national guidance.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Consistent policies that reflect the Council's corporate commitment to Safeguarding	Review and update the Corporate Safeguarding Policy	Chief Officer Social Care Safeguarding and Health	November 2018	

WAO Proposal	<p><b>Embed all aspects of safe recruitment, induction and training consistently.</b></p> <p><b>In particular:</b></p> <p>a. improve training records on safeguarding to show why the person received that particular level of training, when the training was received, and when it needs to be reviewed;</p> <p>b. ensure all people who have a specific role in safeguarding undertake appropriate training; and</p> <p>c. clarify when enhanced DBS checks are required and ensure these are obtained in line with guidance.</p>			Status	Open
Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018				
What progress have we made	<p>a/b. As a minimum each employee is required to undertake basic safeguarding training. This is now recorded as part of the My View System. We are currently updating this system via each departments designated safeguarding lead and HR. This will include assignment of the appropriate level of training required to each role across the authority including the ability to report. The capability to enable review prompts is also being explored.</p> <p>We are currently working towards recruiting all of our volunteers through the Volunteer Kinetic digital management system. This means we have a live central record of volunteer safe recruitment information and activity. The system is structured so dependent on the role the proportionate amount of safe recruitment checks are carried out and logged on the volunteer's profile, also training is logged on the system for example Safeguarding Level 1.</p> <p>c. Training on safe recruitment runs quarterly, DBS policy incorporates up to date legislation and is available on People Services hub.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	An appropriately vetted workforce that understands its safeguarding responsibilities.	Update Safeguarding training records system via each departments designated safeguarding lead and HR.	Safeguarding leads, all directorates	December 2018	

WAO Proposal	<p><b>Ensure control arrangements are consistently applied and improve performance monitoring arrangements around safeguarding to include all areas of service operation to address all gaps in accountability.</b> This should include issuing clear guidance to managers on information on safeguarding that should be included in reports to Members.</p>			Status	Open
Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018				
What progress have we made	<p>Service safeguarding arrangements remain part of the principles of Service Business Planning 2018/2021 which all services must apply in their plans.</p> <p>The Performance team are completing an appraisal of the quality of service business plans developed for 2018/21 to inform and help shape the plans, this includes a specific section assessing the appropriate inclusion of activity related to safeguarding.</p> <p>Further improvements to the report writing process and guidance for reports to members are being made, this will include reviewing the section on safeguarding information. This will be supported with training for managers on report writing as part of the training pathway delivered through Talent Lab.</p>				

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Corporate assurance that safeguarding arrangements are implemented across the Council.	Complete an appraisal of the quality of service business plans developed for 2018/21	Performance Manager	November 2018
	Corporate assurance that safeguarding arrangements are implemented across the Council.	Implement further improvements to the report writing process and guidance for reports to members	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2018

WAO Proposal	<b>Improve the Council's commissioning and contracting arrangements in relation to safeguarding children by finalising guidance on commissioning, contracting and volunteering from a safeguarding perspective.</b>			Status	Open
Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018				
What progress have we made	The Self – assessment template has been developed and will be piloted by SCH. Following this the minimum standard and assessment template will be agreed by Senior Leadership Team (November 2018). Each Directorate will then assess performance against the standards and further action identified (December 2018). Each Directorate to undertake actions identified via assessment tool and performance reported to Whole Authority Safeguarding Group ( WASG)				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Assurance that children are safeguarded irrespective of the service provider being in house or external to the Council	Each Directorate to undertake actions identified via assessment tool and performance reported to Whole Authority Safeguarding Group ( WASG)	Chief Officers/Heads of Service	March 2019	

## Appendix 2 - Closed Wales Audit Office Proposal for Improvement

## Human Resources proposals

WAO Proposal	Improve the evaluation of HR improvement actions to better measure the impact and outcomes.	Status	Close
Report	Human Resources – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016		
What progress have we made	<p>Following and informed by the development of the Council's Corporate Plan, a revised People Strategy has been agreed. The latest iteration of the People Strategy aims to build on the outcomes already achieved, complete activities that are a work in progress and reflects what colleagues, data and intelligence is telling us needs to improve to enable and support our colleagues to be the best they can be.</p> <p>The People strategy identifies an action plan including performance indicators/milestones, responsibility holders and timescale that can be used to better evaluate progress and impact of action. The strategy has informed the development of the People Services business plan 2018/21 which is updated quarterly including actions, performance indicators and risk. Strengthening the evaluation of action is an ongoing area for development, there is a continuing need to strengthen the analysis of data and information available to evaluate actions and, as importantly, inform future plans.</p> <p>The People Services annual report is no longer produced following the development of the People Strategy.</p>		

## Performance Management Proposals

WAO Proposal	Improve strategic planning by: • ensuring clear links between strategies and agreed priorities; and • developing cohesive strategies to underpin and support robust decision making.	Status	Close
Report	<p><b>Demonstrate clearly the links between the Council's strategies and service plans to show how actions will deliver its strategic targets and outcomes.</b></p> <p>Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016</p>		
What progress have we made	<p>A corporate plan has been developed that sets out a clear direction for the Council up to 2022. Following approval of the corporate plan the Council's enabling strategies have been revised to align to the delivery of the corporate plan, these include the Digital Strategy, People Strategy and Asset Management Strategy. Clear principles were established which the plans followed to ensure a more robust approach to development and alignment between the strategies and the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The role and purpose of service planning has been reviewed and a revised process established aligned to the corporate plan. Each service has set a Service Business Plan for a three year period (currently 2018-2021). One of the principles of planning is aligned to deliver the council's strategies.</p> <p>Business Plans have been corporately appraised by the Policy and Performance team against the principles and feedback. The appraisal of 2018/21 plans demonstrated that plans mostly continue to provide clarity and focus of the service's activity, there remains variability in the overall quality and completeness of some plans and the timeliness of updating plans is not always adequate. Assistance will be provided to services, where required or requested, to continue to improve the quality of planning.</p>		

### Governance proposals

WAO Proposal	<b>Formally reviewing its decision making process in relation to service changes as part of post project learning to evaluate and learn from its effectiveness and ensure continuous improvement.</b>	Status	Close
Report	Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017		
What progress have we made	<p>The Council already has existing arrangements that review decision making and governance arrangements these include: the Annual Governance Statement, Democratic Services Committee and through specific service plans, for example, scrutiny.</p> <p>These existing processes and evaluation arrangements will continue to be used to implement any improvement actions of decision making processes. Further reviews of decision making will be considered, if required, in line with the outcomes of these processes.</p>		

WAO Proposal	<b>Ensuring that the Public Service Board Select Committee complies with the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Council's constitution.</b>	Status	Close
Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018		
What progress have we made	<p>We always seek to work within the council's constitution and it is good practise to put written reports before members so that they have as much information as possible to properly scrutinise.</p> <p>The authority's Monitoring Officer has confirmed that if no report is available it does not constitute a breach of our access to information procedure rules.</p> <p>There will always be occasions when a report is not required and the officer attending will give a verbal update. Members can still ask questions of the officer and the details will be available via the live stream and pertinent points captured subsequently in the printed minutes.</p>		

### Information Technology proposals

WAO Proposal	<b>Review and revise the iCounty Business Plan for 2016-2019 by setting out clear and measurable actions to enable senior managers and members to effectively monitor and manage progress of its implementation.</b>	Status	Close
Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016		
What progress have we made	<p>Following approval of the corporate plan the digital strategy has been revised to align to the delivery of the corporate plan. The strategy includes arrangements for how performance will be evaluated including relevant performance indicators.</p> <p>Delivery of this strategy is through the Digital Programme Office Business plan 2018/2021 which has been set in line with the principles of service business planning developed and aligned to deliver the corporate plan and digital strategy. The plan includes clear and measurable actions for delivery. The plan will be updated and progress monitored in line with quarterly reporting arrangements in place for service business plans.</p>		

WAO Proposal	<b>Negotiate and agree commercial grade Service Level Agreements with SRS in advance of new organisations joining the partnership to support sound governance, and to enable the Council to measure service delivery, and assure itself that its IT needs continue to be met.</b>	Status	Close
Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016		

What progress have we made	The commercial grade SLA with the SRS has been developed and was agreed by the SRS Board in July 2018. A delivery group meets once a month to monitor SRS Performance.
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<b>Information Management proposals</b>	
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WAO Proposal	<p><b>The Council should finalise and agree its updated Management Information Strategy. The Strategy should include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>an outline of the broad approach the Council plans to take, emphasising how Information will be used to support its strategic aims; and</b></li> <li>• <b>a schedule of annual review and update so that developments can be responded to in a relatively short time.</b></li> </ul>	Status	Close
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Report	WAO Information Management Review – December 2017
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What progress have we made	<p>The information strategy has been revised, scrutinised by Audit Committee in September 2017 and agreed by individual Cabinet member decision in October 2017. The Information Strategy covers a three year period with annual review dates to ensure its currency.</p> <p>With changes in digital capabilities and the ever increasing need for data and evidence to support critical business decisions, the strategy has been revised to accommodate the 3 inter-related strands of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Information,</li> <li>• Information Governance and Legislation &amp;</li> <li>• Data use, Open Data and Business Intelligence.</li> </ul> <p>This split better reflects the importance of information and data in a digital era, and the potential for it to be used as a business tool with data insights enabling effective decision making and service re-design options.</p> <p>The Council has recently recruited to a new role of Data Protection and Information Governance, to further strengthen information governance arrangements.</p>
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WAO Proposal	<p><b>The Council should review, clarify and rationalise its information management policy documents ensuring that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>its policy decisions and guidance follow on clearly from the overall strategy; and</b></li> <li>• <b>its documents conform to a standard format, and are subject to regular planned reviews.</b></li> </ul>	Status	Close
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Report	WAO Information Management Review – December 2017
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What progress have we made	<p>The information strategy has been revised. The Information Strategy covers a three year period with annual review dates to ensure its currency.</p> <p>The information policy and guidance documents are separate documents, although whilst separate, were fit for their various purposes. The original intention was to align these into one integrated and comprehensive policy.</p> <p>The council has an intranet site containing all of the relevant guidance, and this site will continue to be reviewed and refreshed to make it easier for staff to find guidance through a simple search. On reflection we do not feel that it is helpful to have one single large document. We feel it is far more</p>
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helpful to provide bite sized chunks of policy and guidance in plain English along with any relevant videos and graphics to help people find what they need accompanied by e-learning.

WAO Proposal	<b>The Council should assure itself that the role of SIRO has sufficient profile, authority and accountability, with the seniority to challenge decisions made at Senior Leadership Team.</b>	Status	Close
Report	WAO Information Management Review – December 2017		
What progress have we made	<p>The Council has assured itself that the SIRO is independent of the delivery of IT services and, whilst not a member of SLT, following its restructure, is sufficiently senior and independent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide challenge and advice to SLT</li> <li>• has close links with the Chief Executive and cabinet portfolio holder</li> <li>• meeting regularly to update on issues related to information management /governance and security concerns.</li> </ul> <p>The SIRO also reports to the Chief Officer for Resources who is a member of SLT.</p>		

WAO Proposal	<b>Information Governance Group</b> The Council should revise the Terms of Reference for the Information Governance Group to explicitly include the task of overall scrutiny of all the factors affecting the environment within which data and information reside.	Status	Close
Report	WAO Information Management Review – December 2017		
What progress have we made	At its meeting In January 2018 the Information Governance Group revised its Terms of Reference to reflect its role for overall scrutiny of all the factors affecting the environment within which data and information reside.		



## Wales Audit Office National Studies Published since last update

National Study	<b>Housing Adaptations</b> <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations">http://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations</a>
Summary	<p>This report looks at whether public bodies, with responsibilities for delivering housing adaptations, have an effective strategic approach that delivers value for money.</p> <p>WAO have concluded that user satisfaction with housing adaptations masks a hugely complicated, reactive and inequitable system that is not delivering for all those who may need it.</p>
Recommendations in the report	The report makes 8 recommendations for improvement for consideration of relevant organisations including, local authorities, delivery organisations and Welsh Government.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The report has been received by the Council's Housing and Community team. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of their service planning.

National Study	<b>Speak my language: Overcoming language and communication barriers in public services</b> <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/speak-my-language-overcoming-language-and-communication-barriers-public-services">http://www.audit.wales/publication/speak-my-language-overcoming-language-and-communication-barriers-public-services</a>
Summary	<p>This report looks at how public bodies, particularly local government and NHS bodies providing front-line services, provide interpretation and translation services for BSL and other languages to enable people facing these communication barriers to access services.</p> <p>WAO have concluded that organisations varied in the degree to which they understood the needs of their communities and ensured their services were accessible to people needing interpretation and translation services.</p>
Recommendations in the report	The report makes 8 recommendations for improvement for consideration of public bodies and Welsh Government.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council's Policy Officer for Equality and Welsh language has received the report. The Council is considering the report to inform work with services on interpretation and translation services for BSL and other languages.

National Study	<b>Reflecting on Year One: How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?</b> <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/reflecting-year-one">http://www.audit.wales/publication/reflecting-year-one</a>
Summary	<p>The report provides an assessment of how public bodies in Wales have responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It is designed to support organisations during this transition phase. The report recognises that all public bodies are on a learning path to deliver legislation that is bold, ambitious and aims to drive a long term cultural change in public services, resulting in better outcomes for the people of Wales.</p> <p>The report found that public bodies are able to give examples of how they have used the Act to make the changes needed for them to effectively apply the sustainable development principle. Public bodies now need to set out how they will continue developing their approach to the Act so that they can deliver on the ambition and maximise the opportunities it affords.</p>

Monmouthshire County Council lead	The report is being used to strengthen the council's application of the sustainable development principle as part of its arrangement alongside feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner.
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National Study	<b>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</b> <a href="http://www.audit.wales/strategic-commissioning-learning-disabilities">http://www.audit.wales/strategic-commissioning-learning-disabilities</a>
Summary	This review has focused on assessing if local authorities have effective approaches to commissioning accommodation for adults with learning disabilities (those aged over 16). Local authorities are generally meeting the accommodation needs of adults with learning disabilities, but existing commissioning arrangements are unlikely to be fit for purpose in the future.
Recommendations in the report	The report makes 6 recommendations for consideration by local authorities
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The report has been received by the Council's Commissioning and disability team. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of their planning.