

SUBJECT	Progress Report: Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement
MEETING:	Audit Committee
DATE:	8th March 2018
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

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 February 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members consider the current position of proposals and future actions being taken in response and identify any areas where they feel further action is needed.
- 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 the 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 and a separate action plan, monitoring and reporting arrangements has been established.
- 3.3 This update builds on the most recent update provided July 2017 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 Well-being Objectives, 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 and Asset Management. Each proposal update highlights:
- The report within which the proposals was made
 - The specific proposal, or more than one proposal if they are closely linked.
 - The progress made up to February 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 All of the recent reports issued to the council by Wales Audit Office as part of their performance audit work programme, including the Council’s initial management response to each report, are available on the hub (the Council’s Intranet) for members to view. They are also presented to Audit Committee, accompanied by the management response, as they are produced. For example during 2017/18 a number of audits have been completed by WAO including the Review of Asset Management, which was reported to Audit Committee in January 2018 and Information Management review which is a separate item on this agenda.
- 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 2017 concludes: “the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2017-18 providing it responds constructively and in a timely way to our statutory recommendations.”
- 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 a list of the recently published reports, a brief overview and the recommendations from the report is provided in appendix 3. These have been circulated to the relevant officer. 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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Appendix 1 - Open Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement

Human Resources proposals

WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
	Improve oversight and ongoing implementation of the staff appraisal process. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure staff appraisal completion is uploaded onto the Council's Hub to accurately reflect the numbers of staff in receipt of an annual appraisal; and • increase the appraisal completion rate. 				
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>The People Services annual report highlights the redesign of the performance appraisal has enabled the Talent Lab to design specific supporting material and activities to meet learning and development needs identified.</p> <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. Further Work is required to ensure effective use of the recording system to understand accurately the completion rate of appraisals.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Check-in, Check-out is well understood, consistently employed and informs staff development	Continue to roll out, increase understanding and maximise completion of the check-in, check-out process	Head of People and Information Governance	March 2018	
WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
	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.				

Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Human Resources – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016			
What progress have we made	<p>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 will help support workforce development.</p> <p>A corporate plan has been developed by Cabinet that sets out a clear direction for the Council. Following the approval of the corporate plan the Council's key delivery strategies to enable its delivery will be revised including the people and organisational development strategy.</p> <p>Workforce data displays in the HR system are being developed to provide managers with more timely and a greater range of information to inform the management of their workforce, there has been a need to resolve a number of technical difficulties and it has not yet been implemented in the timescale planned. This is now planned for implementation by April 2018. HR business reports on sickness have continued to be reported to DMT and SLT.</p> <p>The dashboards have previously been reported to Audit Committee. Once completed this will cover a range of workforce data including staff, establishment, age, gender etc. These will enable Managers to interrogate data and identify specific workforce issues. This will be available to be used by department management teams and senior leadership team in order to drive effective decision making based on workforce information and will be supplemented by bi-annual, or more frequent if required, HR business reports that are solely focused on sickness.</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Workforce statistics are available at team level in a timely manner	Implement new workforce data dashboards on My view	Head of People Services	April 2018
	A sustainable business model is in place and clarity on the workforce required to deliver it.	To implement a revised people and organisational development strategy following development of the corporate plan and enabling strategies.	Head of People Services	June 2018

WAO Proposal	Improve the evaluation of HR improvement actions to better measure the impact and outcomes.			Status	Open
Report	Human Resources – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016				
What progress have we made	<p>A People services business plan for 2017/18 is in place which provides clarity of purpose and direction. The second People Services annual report was completed in September 2017, which brings together the different elements of People Services and provides a summary of activity against areas for improvement during the year. There is a need to ensure future reports take a more evaluative approach to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of people services based on the progress and wide range of information collated by the service.</p> <p>A corporate plan has been developed by Cabinet that sets out a clear direction for the Council. Following the approval of the corporate plan the Council's key delivery strategies to enable its delivery will be revised including the people and organisational development strategy. This will include clear evaluation timescales, processes and metrics to evaluate progress and impact of the strategy. The People services business plan will also be revised to align to delivery of these plans.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	A sustainable business model is in place and clarity on the workforce require to deliver it.	To implement a revised people and organisational development	Head of People Services	June 2018	

	strategy following development of the corporate plan		
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Performance Management proposals

WAO Proposal	<p>Improve performance management arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring planned improvements are tangible; • improving target setting to better reflect desired improvement and ensuring resources are allocated to deliver Council priorities through the Medium Term Financial Plan; • developing arrangements to identify intended outcomes, targets and data collection arrangements when services are being delivered through alternative models; 	Status	Open
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Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015
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What progress have we made	<p>A corporate plan has been developed that sets out a clear direction for the Council up to 2022 which will be delivered within the resources made available through the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Corporate Plan sets out clearly the council's purpose. It contains five specific objectives, which are also the Council well-being objectives, which can be measured over time using the mix of process, output and satisfaction measures included. Specific medium-term targets will be finalised as the detailed activities are developed in the coming months.</p> <p>Following approval of the corporate plan the Council's key delivery strategies are being reviewed to align to the delivery of the corporate plan, clear principles have been developed to ensure a more robust approach to the development of these strategies.</p> <p>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.</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 particularly targeted for policy and performance team support.</p>
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	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Clarity of outcomes targeted in the Corporate Plan	Develop specific medium-term targets for indicators in the Corporate plan as detailed activities are developed and agree through Cabinet	Head Of Policy and Governance	May 2018
	Clear and robust targets in the Council's key delivery strategies	Ensure the Council's key delivery strategies e.g. asset, people and digital are reviewed and aligned to deliver the corporate plan	SLT	June 2018

WAO Proposal	<p>Improve strategic planning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring clear links between strategies and agreed priorities; and • developing cohesive strategies to underpin and support robust decision making. 	Status	Open
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	Demonstrate clearly the links between the Council's strategies and service plans to show how actions will deliver its strategic targets and outcomes.			
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016			
What progress have we made	<p>A corporate plan has been developed that sets out a clear direction for the Council up to 2022. It gives clarity on priorities and purpose ahead of the revision of the authority's enabling strategies and provides clear direction to teams as they develop their service business plans for 2018-19 onwards.</p> <p>The Council's key delivery strategies are being reviewed to align to the delivery of the corporate plan, clear principles have been developed to ensure a more robust approach to the development of these strategies.</p> <p>The Council's service business planning process has also been revised to align to deliver the corporate plan and ensure plans are set in line with the design principles in the plan and in consideration of a holistic range of factors that impact on service delivery</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Key strategies are mutually supportive and aligned to the corporate plan	Ensure the Council's key delivery strategies e.g. assets, people and digital are reviewed and aligned to deliver the corporate plan	SLT	June 2018
	Clear links between the Council's strategies and service plans	Review the council's service planning arrangements to support the delivery of the corporate plan and enabling plans.	Head of Policy and Governance	April 2018

WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016				
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 also been reviewed to ensure it includes risks to the delivery of the recently approved Corporate Plan.</p> <p>A recently issued draft internal audit report on the Council's strategic risk management arrangements identifies a number of areas for improvement. An action plan is being established in liaison with internal audit to deliver the improvements required, some of these have been considered in the latest iteration of the strategic risk register. Any further changes as a result of these actions 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	Develop and implement the action plan to improve risk management arrangements in response to the findings from Internal Audit.	Policy and Performance Manager	October 2018	

Partnership and collaborative working proposals

WAO Proposal	Adopt a more planned, risk-assessed approach to partnership and collaborative working to make better use of resources.			Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				

What progress have we made	<p>A community governance review has been completed. The review examined local decision making within Area Committees and the level and type of community engagement and the extent to which this facilitates effective involvement. The review identified the need to consider new arrangements for area committees and Bryn y Cwm 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. 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>			
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	March 2018

WAO Proposal	<p>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.</p>		Status	Open
	<p>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.</p>		Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016			
What progress have we made	<p>The Local Service Board has been transitioned to a Public Service Board (PSB) as part of the implementation of the Future Generations Act. 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. Training has been held for committee members on their responsibilities and the PSB select committee members on their specific responsibilities in relation to the Act</p> <p>The PSB is using the evidence in the Well-being Assessment to finalise its well-being plan by May 2018, this will require the board to consider how to allocate and prioritise resources to meet their wellbeing objectives and establish clear plans to achieve this. A detailed action plan and programme management arrangements are being developed and will be published separately from the well-being plan. 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>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Clear PSB well-being objectives allowing the PSB to allocate and prioritise resources to meet the objectives and establish delivery plans to achieve this.	Develop the PSB's well-being plan and establish an action plan, performance framework and accountability arrangements.	Head of Policy & Governance and Community & Partnership Development Manager	May 2018

Governance proposals

WAO Proposal	Strengthen scrutiny’s impact, status and effectiveness including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally recording Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations and observations; and • better co-ordination of Cabinet and select committee forward work programmes. 	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 has been established through the drafting of chairs’ letters. Development is underway working with scrutiny chairs and cabinet members to ensure that cabinet members draft formal responses to chairs’ letters, to be formally reported at Select Committee meetings under agreement of the work programme. This will ensure that responses made to scrutiny’s recommendations can be evidenced, ensuring accountability and transparency.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Manager works with Democratic Services Officers to ensure chairs’ summaries are captured in Select Committee minutes and a record of scrutiny’s conclusions and recommendations are now formalised in a regular report to Cabinet. Democratic Services Officers 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 whole authority work planner is being piloted 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	Better scrutiny as part of the decision-making process	To assist chairs in identifying topics for pre-decision scrutiny and prioritising their work more effectively.	Scrutiny Manager	March 2018
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement a whole authority planner	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2017
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	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 2017

WAO Proposal	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.	Status	Open
	Improving the quality of its options appraisals by providing information showing how options have been consistently evaluated.		
	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.		

	Setting out at the point of decision on service change proposals how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored				
Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016. Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017				
What progress have we made	Improvements to the report writing process have already been made. The template for decision making reports has been amended to include an evaluation assessment to set out arrangements for future evaluation of whether the decision has been successfully implemented. The template also includes an option appraisal section to set other options that have been considered. A consultation section is included to set out all the stakeholders that have been consulted as part of the report and provide a short summary of their feedback where the previous template had simply focused on listing consultees. 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	March 2018	
	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; Create a whole authority work planning process and ensure that Democratic Services Officers complete final checks before reports are uploaded to ModGov system.	Head of Policy and Governance	March 2018	

WAO Proposal	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.				Status	Open
Report	Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017					
What progress have we made	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. Further reviews of decision making will be considered, if required, in line with the outcomes of these processes. The inclusion of an options appraisal section and template on all council and cabinet report ensures that evaluation criteria and timescales are set from the outset allowing a more structured approach to learning from decisions.					
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale		
	Identification of potential improvements to the decision making process	Utilise existing processes and evaluation arrangements to implement any improvement actions of the decision making process.	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2017		

Information Technology proposals

WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016				
What progress have we made	<p>The Digital Programme Office was established after a review of the ‘internal delivery’ pillar of iCounty. A business plan for the Digital Programme Office 2017-18 has been established. The plan has identified a method of recording performance against a set of digital maturity measures.</p> <p>A corporate plan has been developed by Cabinet that sets out a clear direction for the Council and the resources required to deliver it. Following the approval of the corporate plan the Council’s key delivery strategies to enable its delivery will be revised including its digital strategy. The development of this strategy will set clear action and evaluation arrangements for its delivery.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Key strategies are mutually supportive and aligned to the corporate plan	Develop a Digital strategy to align and enable the delivery of the corporate plan.	Head Of Digital	April 2018	

WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016				
What progress have we made	The commercial grade Service Level Agreement with SRS has been agreed by the SRS Board in February 2018. A task and finish group has been established with SRS partners with a view to finalising the SLA by April 2018.				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	A clear agreement on the IT services provided to the Council	To implement the Service Level Agreement	Head of Digital	April 2018	

Finance proposals

WAO Proposal	The Council should ensure that all budget mandates are costed and are sufficiently detailed. <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>			Status	Open
	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.				
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Financial Resilience Assessment – February 2016				
What progress have we made	94% of savings agreed for 2017/18 are forecast to be achieved. All services had initially been asked to plan how their services would look within a 5% budget reduction for 2018/19 and begin to position short-term decisions in the context of a longer-term programme which aligns with the Medium Term Financial Plan. A further significant budget shortfall resulting from in-year recurrent pressures,				

together with the announcement of the pay award, resulted in a dedicated team of senior officers (including finance and procurement) working closely with service areas to target and identify further savings.

Budget proposals for 18-19 have subsequently been identified and are produced in a standard format which covers costs of implementation and are supported by information showing how each will be achieved. Proposals have been scrutinised by Select Committees between November 2017 and February 2018. Through the process work has continued to develop further proposals and revise the existing savings and pressures in the light of further engagement and analysis of data and evidence the existing savings and pressures in the light of further engagement and analysis of data and evidence.

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 2018

WAO Proposal	Strengthen financial planning arrangements by developing a robust Medium Term Financial Plan that incorporates its Reserves Policy, Income Generation Strategy and Future Monmouthshire project	Status	Open
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Report	Savings Planning – February 2017
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What progress have we made	<p>Budget proposals for 18-19 have been identified which are a blend of ongoing sustainable efficiencies; continued income generation and a focus on investing in areas such as education and social care. Following the approval of the Corporate Plan in February 2018 the Medium Term Financial Plan will be updated to align the resources required to deliver it once the budget is developed and scrutinised by members.</p> <p>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> <p>The income generation strategy will be reviewed alongside the updated Medium Term Financial Plan, which will incorporate its reserve policy, and the Authority's new Commercial Strategy.</p>
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Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	A robust and realistic Medium Term Financial Plan to support and facilitate strategic planning	Update the Medium Term Financial Plan to align to the resources required to deliver the corporate plan based on the latest available information.	SLT	March 2018

Asset Management proposals

WAO Proposal	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ short, medium and long-term performance indicators; ○ embedded governance arrangements to support the strategic management of assets; ○ IT asset management systems which integrate more effectively with other systems to facilitate better information capture and use; and ○ Utilising information arising from stakeholder consultation and engagement including what the Council has learnt about its 	Status	Open
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experience of its community asset transfers to better inform its decision-making.

Report WAO review of Asset Management – November 2017

What progress have we made

A corporate plan has been developed by Cabinet that sets out a clear direction for the Council and the resources required to deliver it. Following the approval of the corporate plan the Council's key delivery strategies to enable its delivery will be revised including the Asset Management Plan. Performance Indicators are already reported within the Estates Service Improvement Plan. These will be revised/refined to reflect the updated Asset Management strategy and corporate plan priorities.

Governance arrangements are planned to be embedded and aligned alongside Finance's Capital monitoring. Therefore the intention is to constitute a new group with a broad remit and terms of reference. These will be set out within the reviewed Asset Management Strategy

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

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.	Revise the Asset Management Plan to align and enable the delivery of the corporate plan, include revised/refined performance indicators and set out revised governance arrangements.	Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services	April 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	December 2018

Appendix 2 - Closed Wales Audit Office Proposal for Improvement

Human Resources proposals

WAO Proposal	Engage more effectively with staff to ensure the Council's values are clearly evident across the organisation.	Status	Close
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Human Resources – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016		
What progress have we made	<p>MonTalks and MonDelivers talks have been introduced to share insights, information and updates on a variety of aspects of the Council's work.</p> <p>A further staff survey, including questions on wellbeing, has been completed and the results show 73% of respondents partially, mostly or totally agree that the Council lives and breathes its Corporate Values, with 9% not agreeing. 94% of respondents partially, mostly or totally agree they understand their purpose and contribution to the authority. The staff survey reflects mostly good levels of staff engagement although there are still areas which require further attention and focus to improve. The results from the staff survey are being used to inform future plans</p> <p>Staff engagement continues to be important, well-being events and focus groups have been held and the "Go to Group" providing peer support has been established. Market Place Events have commenced and will become quarterly to strengthen Induction Process and incorporate new mandatory learning for new and existing colleagues. Future developments such as directorate level staff conferences will be considered to provide more specific staff engagement on issues in their directorate.</p>		

Performance Management Proposals

WAO Proposal	Improve performance management arrangements by:	Status	Close
Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving data quality arrangements to ensure that performance reporting is accurate and that decisions are made based on robust information. • Ensure accurate data collection and reporting. 		
What progress have we made	<p>Corporate Assessment – November 2015 & Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016</p> <p>The data quality process continues to be strengthened and was amended in 2017 to take account of previous audit feedback and allocate Internal Audit time on the data system producing the data as well as the data outputs.</p> <p>Internal guidance notes on completing performance indicators are produced setting clear requirements for data compilers, these were updated and used to inform the submission of national performance data for 2016/17. There is continued support from the Policy and Performance team with a specific and clearly defined role for Internal Audit to quality assure data. In April 2017, Wales Audit Office conducted a follow up review of 2015-16 published data which concluded "Data quality arrangements continue to improve and arrangements could be strengthened further by correctly applying the national PI definitions".</p> <p>There is continued focus to improve the council's use of data to inform decision making. It is recognised that there is particular risk to data quality, including target setting, when developing performance data measures for new policies or initiatives that may not have been subject to data quality processes previously which will continue to be a focus for support. While ongoing support to</p>		

strengthen the data quality process, including using external and internal audit feedback, is a continual process.

Governance proposals

WAO Proposal	Ensure that information on the Council's website is accurate, complete and up to date.	Status	Close
Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016		
What progress have we made	<p>The Modern Gov system has been used since September 2015, further functionality of the system has continued to be implemented including the documentation of agendas, reports, minutes and decision logs on the Council's website making these more easily accessible for the public. The implementation of further functionality of the Modern Gov system has further improved usability of the meeting, minutes and agendas function of the website. With further updates planned.</p> <p>The scrutiny webpage continues to be updated to provide easy access to scrutiny information to Members and the public and provide an online scrutiny resource.</p> <p>In spring 2016 the website underwent a content and design review to improve user experience. There is now ongoing activity to ensure content is reviewed and up to date and improve user experience.</p>		

WAO Proposal	Reviewing and updating the Constitution to reflect, for example, recent changes to the Council's senior leadership team and select committees.	Status	Close
Report	Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017		
What progress have we made	<p>In December 2017 Council approved an update to the Constitution. This included updates on a number of decisions that had been made which affect the constitution, along with changes in the senior management structure of the council and legislative changes that need to be reflected in the constitution.</p> <p>Periodically the constitution will continue to be updated to reflect decisions that have been made by the council that affect the constitution, any statutory changes and any changes to the structure of the council.</p>		

Wales Audit Office National Studies Published so far in 2017/18

National Study	<p align="center">Public Procurement in Wales http://www.audit.wales/publication/public-procurement-wales</p>
Summary	<p>The report examines whether there is evidence that current procurement arrangements in Wales are helping to deliver value for money in public spending and are fit for the future.</p> <p>The report concluded that national governance arrangements for procurement could be strengthened and there is clear scope for improvement in procurement arrangements at a national and local level. Public bodies also face challenges in balancing potentially competing procurement priorities, responding to new policy, legislation and technology, and in the recruitment and retention of key personnel.</p>
Recommendations in the report	<p>We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage public bodies to review the accuracy of the data that they provide for the Collaborative Spend Analysis project, reflecting on the issues identified in the course of our work; and • explore with the further education sector and the missing Welsh Government sponsored bodies why they will not engage with the Collaborative Spend Analysis project, with the aim of all public bodies participating in 2017-18.
	<p>In taking forward its plans to merge the national Procurement Board with the NPS Board we recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly sets out, for example on its website, the accountability and governance structure for public procurement in Wales, particularly in relation to the role and remit of the revised national Procurement Board arrangements; and • invite representation from Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies, the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, the third sector and from public bodies in North Wales.
	<p>We recommend that public bodies review their procurement strategies and policies during 2017-18 and on an annual basis thereafter to ensure that they reflect wider policy and legislative changes and support continuous improvement.</p>
	<p>In rolling out a new round of checks, we recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the Procurement Fitness Checks are carried out consistently to allow for more effective benchmarking; • provide guidance to public bodies on the expectations for follow-up self-assessments; • work with the national Procurement Board to analyse the results and identify action that can be taken at a national level to support further improvement; • include an assessment of where public bodies stand in relation to procurement policy statement recommendations – for example, that there should be a minimum of one procurement professional per £10 million of procurement spend across the wider public sector.
	<p>We recommend that the Welsh Government update its community benefits toolkit, including taking account of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and building on lessons learned from current practice across Wales such as the use of community benefits champions.</p>
<p>In following up its work on the Transforming Procurement through Home Grown Talent Programme, the Welsh Government should explore with public sector partners the impact of differential pay for procurement staff across different sectors and any potential solutions.</p>	

	We recommend that the Welsh Government better promote the use of the SQuID to public bodies and assess its use as part of the procurement fitness checks.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The report sets out 7 recommendations for improvement, some of which are for consideration by public bodies, as above. Scott James, Strategic Procurement Manager, is the lead for procurement in Monmouthshire

National Study	<p>Good governance when determining significant service changes – National Summary</p> <p>http://www.audit.wales/publication/good-governance-when-determining-significant-service-changes</p>
Summary	<p>This report is designed primarily to provide insight, share existing practice and prompt further conversations and discussions between councils and other organisations.</p> <p>Governance arrangements for determining significant service change are generally clear and well understood. We have not included any recommendations in this report, as we have already issued each council with relevant proposals for improvement in their own local report.</p>
Monmouthshire County Council lead	This is a national report summarising specific work undertaken in each Council, Monmouthshire received its local 'Good governance when determining significant service changes' report in March 2017 which contained five proposals for improvement. The current progress the Council has made on the proposals that remain relevant and responsibility holders for these are set out in this report.

National Study	<p>Savings Planning in Councils in Wales</p> <p>http://www.audit.wales/publication/savings-planning-councils-wales</p>
Summary	<p>The basic premise of the review is how well savings planning supports financial resilience. The more successful each council is at delivering its planned savings in the timeframe it predicts the greater the contribution savings planning has to the financial resilience of the council.</p> <p>Overall, the report concludes that medium-term financial planning in councils is generally effective, but shortcomings in savings planning present a risk that some councils will not achieve the savings they need to make.</p>
Monmouthshire County Council lead	This is a national report summarising specific work undertaken in each Council, Monmouthshire received its local 'Savings Planning report' in February 2017 which contained one proposal for improvement and the response was completed by Joy Robson, Head of Finance. The current progress the Council has made on this proposal is set out in the financial proposal section of this report.

National Study	<p>How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness</p> <p>http://www.audit.wales/publication/how-local-government-manages-demand-homelessness</p>
Summary	<p>This review has focussed on assessing if local authorities and their partners are addressing demand through the development of appropriate and effective prevention approaches.</p> <p>It concludes local authorities are reacting to the problems caused by homelessness with varying degrees of success. But there is limited focus on preventing the fundamental causes of homelessness.</p>
Recommendations in the report	<p>We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure their staff are sufficiently skilled to deal with the new demands of mediating, problem solving, negotiating and influencing with homeless people; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and reconfigure their services to engage more effectively with homeless and potentially homeless people to prevent homelessness <p>We recommend that local authorities review their funding of homelessness services to ensure that they can continue to provide the widest possible preventative approach needed. Reviews should consider use of Supporting People as well as General Council fund monies to support delivery of the authority's homelessness duties.</p> <p>We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design services to ensure there is early contact with service users; • use 'triage' approaches to identify and filter individuals seeking help to determine the most appropriate response to address their needs; and • test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose. <p>We recommend that local authorities publish service standards that clearly set out what their responsibilities are and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive and what they must do for themselves. Service standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be written in plain accessible language; • be precise about what applicants can and cannot expect, and when they can expect resolution; • clearly set out the applicant's role in the process and how they can help the process go more smoothly and quickly; • be produced collaboratively with subject experts and include the involvement of people who use the service(s); • effectively integrate with the single assessment process; • offer viable alternatives to the authority's services; and • set out the appeals and complaints processes. These should be based on fairness and equity for all involved and available to all. <p>To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out in Appendix 5; • increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information; making better use of online applications; and • linking more effectively to information from specialist providers' and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice. <p>We recommend that local authorities set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>We recommend that local authorities address weaknesses in their equalities monitoring, and ensure that their homelessness service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards.</p> <p>We recommend that local authorities use the checklist set out in Appendix 10 to undertake a self-assessment on services, to help identify options to improve how they can help manage demand.</p>
<p>Monmouthshire County Council lead</p>	<p>The report sets out 8 recommendations for improvement which are for consideration by local authorities. Ian Bakewell, Housing and Communities Manager, manages the Housing Options Team in Monmouthshire and is considering the findings of the report.</p>