

SUBJECT	Progress Report: Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement
MEETING:	Audit Committee
DATE:	15th December 2016

1. PURPOSE

To provide Audit Committee with an update on the authority's progress against the Wales Audit Office (WAO) proposals for improvement up to the end of November 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That members consider the current position of proposals and future actions committed in response to the proposals and identify any areas where they feel further action needs to be taken or further information is required.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Proposals for improvement are made by the WAO as advice to support the authority's development. These are distinct from statutory recommendations that require the authority to set actions in response within 30 working days of their receipt.
- 3.2 The proposals included in the report are those issued to the Council as a result of regulatory work conducted by the WAO in the authority. The specific WAO reports which have instigated the proposals are referenced in the update. This update contains proposals from and after the Corporate Assessment completed by Wales Audit Office in March 2015 as this is the most recent comprehensive assessment of the council covering: vision and strategy; governance and accountability; use of resources; collaboration and partnerships; managing improvement; and performance and outcomes.
- 3.3 During 2016 a number of audits have been completed by WAO: Including a Financial Resilience Assessment 2015-16 and Corporate Assessment follow-on reviews on Performance Management, Governance, Human Resources and Information Technology, all of which have already been reported to audit committee, with the exception of the Human Resources report which is due to be published shortly. The proposal from this work and the council's response have been included within this update, with the exception of the proposals from Information Technology report as these have only recently been published.
- 3.4 The latest Annual Improvement report (AIR) published in August 2016 summarises the audit work undertaken by WAO since the last report was published in November 2015, the report is available to download on the Wales Audit Office website (www.audit.wales/publications) and concludes: "Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the council will comply with the requirements of the measure during 2016-17 provided it continues to maintain the current pace of improvement."
- 3.5 Each proposal update highlights:

- The specific proposal, or more than one proposal if they are closely linked.
 - The progress made up to November 2016 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.
- 3.6 The proposals made by WAO are grouped into the following areas:
- a. Human Resources
 - b. Performance Management
 - c. Partnership & collaboration
 - d. Governance
 - e. Finance
- 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 relevant recommendations from the national reports issued in 2015-16 that were included in the WAO Annual Improvement Report 2015-16, have been included in this update to ensure that members are aware of the reports and who is the lead for the areas covered by the reports.
- 3.8 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 Improvement Plan, the Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment and the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 3.9 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 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.
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Human Resources proposals

WAO Proposal	Engage more effectively with staff to ensure the Council's values are clearly evident across the organisation.			Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				
What progress have we made	<p>A progress report for the People and Organisational Development Strategy was presented for Member scrutiny in March 2016, which included progress on the action plan of the strategy and a programme plan for 2016 – 2017, delivery of the People and organisational development strategy has been agreed.</p> <p>MonTalks and MonDelivers talks have been introduced to share insights, information and updates on a variety of aspects of the Council's work, the most recent session was on the work the council is undertaking as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.</p> <p>Action has been taken to feedback from the staff conference and staff survey, while the People board continue to live stream question and answer sessions.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Delivery of actions to provide support and development for people in the organisation.	Deliver the actions in the programme plan of the People and Organisation Development Strategy which brings together the many facets of people and organisational development we run.	Head of People and Information Governance	May 2017	
	More engagement with staff on specific issues in their directorate.	Establish directorate level staff conferences	SLT	Ongoing	

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
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				
What progress have we made	<p>Based on feedback received, the Check in Check out process has been reviewed and rolled out with training sessions on the revised process held via Talent Lab. The annual report recognised that improvements in the Check in Check out employee appraisal process were required and steps have been taken to address this including implementing more robust guidance, video tutorials and supportive training.</p> <p>In 2015/16 reported data shows 54% of staff completed an appraisal, although the actual figure is likely to be higher than this due to the need to further develop the recording process and is therefore at present not capturing all data in the most effective way. Recognising this, work is underway to investigate the possibility of developing a longer term more effective recording module that would allow managers to record the CICO directly into an employee's record on the Human Resources system. This would allow for all employee data to be stored in one place and enable direct access to reports from the system identifying completion rates, training needs (which would automatically be fed through to the training team) and track progress on any actions agreed. While this longer term work continues, a basic interim reporting system is in place at the current time to provide clear data on completion rates of appraisals in 2016/17.</p>				
	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	

Further action planned	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 2017
	We are able to evidence that staff are receiving appraisals	Implement a new Check in Check out Check out recording module.	Head of People and Information Governance	April 2017

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
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Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015
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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. The combination of the workflow and the coded pathways for development will help leaders foster the behaviours and skills needed to take a proactive and forward thinking approach to maintaining their teams and services and also provide colleagues with clear channels of training to progress in their careers.</p> <p>People Services Data Dashboards covering key workforce information continue to be available on the council's intranet. To further improve the analysis and reporting of this information quarterly scorecards known as "risk radars" are being implemented for reporting to Department Management teams and Senior leadership team in order to drive effective decision making based on workforce information.</p> <p>In May 2016 Cabinet agreed to commission a strategic programme of whole-authority work called 'Future Monmouthshire' that will see the development of a new operating model for the Council in order to equip it to meet its goals amidst increasing change and uncertainty. The new operating model will have a clear purpose: to create solutions to some of the county's biggest challenges and will facilitate work on articulating future workforce requirements.</p>
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	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Workforce statistics are available at team level in a timely manner	Continue to develop accurate and robust systems, data and reporting to ensure a clear baseline of people and organisational data to Managers	HR Manager	Ongoing
	Effective monitoring of workforce issues	To continue to produce a People Services Annual Report and implement quarterly scorecards to DMTs, SLT and Members as required	Head of People and Information Governance	Ongoing
	A sustainable business model is in place	Develop the future business model for the authority	Chief Executive	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire
	Clarity on the future shape of the workforce	Use this business model to articulate the future workforce requirements of the authority including numbers of staff and skills needed	Head of Resources	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire

Performance Management proposals

WAO Proposal	Improve performance management arrangements by: <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
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				
What progress have we made	<p>The Stage 1 Improvement Plan 2016-17 was published in consideration of the areas for improvement identified by Wales Audit Office and the public consultation. Clear and robust targets that articulate the ambition of the council were included in the plan. Wales audit office issued a certificate of compliance following their audit of the plan.</p> <p>A training session on target setting is being developed.</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>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Stretching, realistic and robust targets	Strengthen target setting arrangements and revise and recirculate target setting guidance	Policy and Performance Manager	March 2017	
	Clarity of outcomes and arrangements when services are being transformed	Implement a more robust approach to policy development to ensure services are based on clear design principles and data.	Policy and Performance Manager	Ongoing	

WAO Proposal	Improve strategic planning by: <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
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015				
What progress have we made	<p>In May 2016 Cabinet agreed to commission a strategic programme of whole-authority work called 'Future Monmouthshire'. This work will see the development of a new operating model for the Council in order to equip it to meet its goals amidst increasing change and uncertainty. The new operating model will have a clear purpose: to create solutions to some of the county's biggest challenges.</p> <p>This work on the future shape of the organisation will facilitate a review of the council's key delivery strategies (Improvement Plan, MTFP, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan and iCounty) and service planning arrangements to ensure they all align to the business model.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	A sustainable business model is in place	Develop the future business model for the authority	Chief Executive	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire	

	Key strategies are mutually supportive and aligned to the business model	Ensure the council's key delivery strategies (Improvement Plan, MTFP, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan and iCounty) and service plans all align to the business model.	SLT	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire
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WAO Proposal	Improve performance management arrangements by: • improving data quality arrangements to ensure that performance reporting is accurate and that decisions are made based on robust information.			Status	Open
	Ensure accurate data collection and reporting.				
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 & Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016				
What progress have we made	<p>The data quality process continues to be strengthened and was amended in 2016 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 national and local performance indicators are produced setting clear requirements for data compilers. 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 2016 The audit of nationally set indicators has been given a draft internal audit control rating of “Considerable assurance”.</p> <p>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. These areas will be particularly targeted for policy and performance team support.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	Accurate performance data	Continue to strengthen the data quality process using external and internal audit feedback and liaise with Internal Audit to allocate their time to identified risks in data quality arrangements	Policy and Performance Manager	May 2017	

WAO Proposal	Develop a high-level, strategic approach linking the Council's sustainable development principle duties under the Act to its strategic vision, overall direction of travel and the developing local well-being plan under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.			Status	Open
Report	Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016				
What progress have we made	The council has now adopted a new sustainable development policy and incorporated this into its policy framework, which will ensure greater alignment of future programmes to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. During 2016-2017 we are undertaking two substantial assessments of need and wellbeing within the county as a consequence of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Social Services and Well-being Act. The information that is gained during this work will provide a much deeper evidence base and inform the development of the council's well-being objectives by 31st March 2017 and will form the basis of a high level strategic approach to fulfil our duties under the Act.				
	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	

Further action planned	Wellbeing objectives that are in line the sustainable development principles duties under the Act and the Council's improvement framework.	Publish the council's wellbeing objective in line with the act.	Policy and Performance Manager	March 2017
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WAO Proposal	Demonstrate clearly the links between the Council's strategies and service plans to show how actions will deliver its strategic targets and outcomes.			Status	Open
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Report	Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016				
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What progress have we made	<p>In May 2016 Cabinet agreed to commission a strategic programme of whole-authority work called 'Future Monmouthshire'. This work will see the development of a new operating model for the Council in order to equip it to meet its goals amidst increasing change and uncertainty. The new operating model will have a clear purpose: to create solutions to some of the county's biggest challenges.</p> <p>This work on the future shape of the organisation will facilitate a review of the council's key delivery strategies (Improvement Plan, MTFP, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan and iCounty) and service planning arrangements to ensure they all align to the business model.</p>				
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	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	A sustainable business model is in place	Develop the future business model for the authority	Chief Executive	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire
	Key strategies are mutually supportive and aligned to the business model	Ensure the council's key delivery strategies (Improvement Plan, MTFP, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan and iCounty) and service plans all align to the business model.	SLT	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire

WAO Proposal	Set out clearly the financial implications of the Council's service changes within its service improvement plans.			Status	Open
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Report	Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016				
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What progress have we made	Service Improvement Plans already have a column to indicate where costs will be met from. These plans are not used by elected members to make decisions and more detailed cost information would need to be provided prior to a decision of Cabinet or Council. Service improvement planning guidance for managers will be revised to ensure clear requirements on completing financial implications of actions are identified in service improvement plans.				
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	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	The Council will understand the cost of delivering service improvement plans during the decision making process.	Revise service improvement planning guidance to include clear requirements on completing financial implications of actions identified in service improvement plans	Policy and Performance Manager	March 2017

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>In May 2016 Cabinet agreed to commission a strategic programme of whole-authority work called 'Future Monmouthshire'. This work will see the development of a new operating model for the Council in order to equip it to meet its goals amidst increasing change and uncertainty. The new model will help inform planning for any further partnership and collaborative working.</p> <p>A community governance review has been completed. A cross party Member working group was established and met to discuss the proposal. The proposals have been presented to all area committees and the strategic transport group.</p>				
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	
	A sustainable business model is in place.	Develop the future business model for the authority.	Chief Executive	To be informed by Future Monmouthshire	
	Clarity of outcomes and arrangements when services are being transformed	Implement a more robust approach to policy development to ensure services are based on clear design principles and data.	Policy and Performance Manager	Ongoing	
	Structures clarified and processes aligned to delivery frameworks to support community governance.	Present the Community Governance proposals to full Council for decision	Head of Community Delivery	December 2016	

WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
WAO Proposal	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.			Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 and Performance Management – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016				
What progress have we made	<p>The LSB has been transitioned to a Public Service Board (PSB) as part of the implementation of the Future Generations Act. A PSB select committee has been established and is scrutinising the formation of the PSB and membership, resourcing of PSB support and development of the wellbeing assessment. Training has been held for Select Committee members on their responsibilities and the PSB select committee members on their specific responsibilities in relation to the PSB.</p> <p>Partnership delivery has been reviewed to ensure alignment of delivery against the SIP and any statutory duties discharged through LSB. Partnerships are still working towards the SIP but are now taking a more focussed approach on emerging issues and responding to them collectively as a partnership. These are reviewed at each partnership meeting to check on progress against the actions and agree any further action, if required. The Strategic Partnership Team will continue to work with partners to strengthen the clarity of plans and monitoring of progress.</p> <p>In the medium term the development of the PSB's wellbeing plan by March 2018 will require the PSB to allocate and prioritise resources to meet their wellbeing objectives and establish clear plans to achieve this. The PSB has adopted childhood obesity as a priority and is developing its approach to tackling it.</p>				

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Performance of partnerships delivering under the PSB and SIP is evaluated.	To complete the current round of the SIP (Single Integrated Plan) performance group sessions	LSB development manager	January 2017
	Action plans that support the delivery of PSB priorities	Continue to work with partners to strengthen the clarity of existing delivery plans and monitoring of progress.	LSB development manager	March 2017
	Clear PSB wellbeing objectives allowing the PSB to allocate and prioritise resources to meet the objectives and establish delivery plans to achieve this.	Develop the PSB's wellbeing plan	LSB development manager	March 2018

Governance proposals

WAO Proposal	Strengthen the governance and challenge arrangements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that minutes of meetings are signed at the next suitable meeting in accordance with the Council's Constitution to improve timeliness and transparency of public reporting; and reconsider the Council's policy of not formally minuting Cabinet meetings 		Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015			
What progress have we made	<p>The Modern Gov system has been implemented since September 2015 which is speeding up the process and increasing Democratic Service officer's capacity to process minutes for sign off within required timescales. Further development of Modern Gov will allow officers to create items on work planners and upload reports directly for meetings, which will further improve democratic services officer capacity to process minutes and also support officers in developing reports. Sample checks will continue to be carried out at busy periods to provide monitoring that this is happening.</p> <p>All cabinet meetings are live streamed, all reports are available on the council's website and a decision-log is published on the website following each cabinet meeting detailing the decisions that have been made which include any amendments made to the proposed decision. Not publishing minutes for Cabinet has been a longstanding practice of the council which has raised no issues of transparency and openness in the decision making process and the council does not have any plans to change this process for recording decisions at cabinet.</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Timely and transparent public reporting	Ensure sign off of minutes of committee meetings and carry out sample checks to provide monitoring	Local Democracy Manager	Ongoing
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement the latest development of Modern Gov and members and officers advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	From January 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
Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016					
What progress have we made	<p>The scrutiny manager continues to work with department management teams, as required to improve the quality of reports, this remains an area for continued focus.</p> <p>The Modern gov system has been further developed to utilise functionality that allows officers to access the system to create and upload reports directly to the system for meetings. This is accessed on the Council's intranet where sections for officers and members are also being established to provide a range of information and guidance on the Council's meeting process to support officers writing reports and members to receive information they need. The ability for officers to largely manage work planner items and upload reports for agenda circulation directly will help facilitate time to support officers in developing reports. The latest development of the system will be presented to SLT approval.</p>					
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale		
	Better informed members leading to more robust challenge and decision making.	Continue to work with and train report writers to ensure the content of reports and presentations is clear and pitched correctly	Scrutiny Manager & Policy and Performance Team	March 2017		
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement the latest development of Modern Gov and members and officers advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	From January 2017		

WAO Proposal	Ensure that decisions are clearly and consistently recorded to provide a reliable, transparent and easily accessible decision-making trail.				Status	Open
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.</p> <p>The implementation of further functionality of modern gov system will include a work flow for all reports available on the website. This will provide a record of the meetings the report has been sent to through the decision making cycle and the outcome of the meeting without the need to access each individual meeting. The latest development of the system will be presented to SLT for approval.</p>					
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale		
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement the latest development of Modern Gov and members and officers advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	From January 2017		

WAO Proposal	Strengthen scrutiny's impact, status and effectiveness including:				Status	Open
	<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. 					
Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016					

What progress have we made	<p>Formalised reporting of scrutiny's 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 is working closely with Democratic Services 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.</p> <p>The implementation of further functionality of modern gov system also allows officers to populate forward planner items directly into the system. The planner has been amended to request further information that needs to be included on the plan, for example details on the "type of decision" required. This will automatically generate individual forward planners for meetings as well as a whole council forward plan that shows all meetings the report will be sent to. These will be available to officers, members and the public on the website and intranet. The latest development of the system will be presented to SLT for approval.</p> <p>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. Meetings have been held at the start of the year with some of the key chief officers to identify issues for future scrutiny at an early stage and to assist officers to provide clear and concise reports for scrutiny.</p>
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	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Better scrutiny as part of the decision-making process and more clarity showing how Cabinet interacts with scrutiny	Ensure the Cabinet Forward Plan and select committee work programmes are updated and accessible to Members.	Scrutiny Manager & Local Democracy Manager	Ongoing
	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 2017
	Better scrutiny as part of the decision-making process	To work with senior officers to encourage them to consider early pre-decision scrutiny of issues to avoid call-ins and the subsequent delays in decision-making.	Scrutiny Manager & Senior Officers	Ongoing
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement the latest development of Modern Gov and members and officers advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	From January 2017

WAO Proposal	Ensure that information on the Council's website is accurate, complete and up to date.	Status	Open
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.</p> <p>The implementation of further functionality of modern gov system will include individual and a whole council forward planner being available on the website. A work flow for all reports will also be available on the website. This will provide a record of the meetings the report has been to through the</p>		

decision making cycle and the outcome of the meeting without the need to access each individual meeting. The latest development of the system will be presented to SLT for approval.

The scrutiny website continues to be refined to provide easy access to scrutiny information to Members and to the public.

In spring 2016 the first phase of the content and design review of the website went live to improve user experience. Content continues to be reviewed to ensure it is up to date and user friendly.

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement the latest development of Modern Gov and members and officers advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	From January 2017
	Clear, easily accessible and up to date information on the scrutiny function.	Continue to refine the Scrutiny Website to provide easy access to scrutiny information to Members and to the public.	Scrutiny Manager	Ongoing
	Clear, easily accessible and up to date information on Council services	The website is undergoing a content and design review to improve user experience	Communication and Engagement Manager	Ongoing

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
Report	Financial Resilience Assessment – February 2016		
WAO Proposal	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.	Status	Open
Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015		
What progress have we made	<p>The budget setting process for 2017-18 has been revised, recognising the largely successful approach of the mandates in recent years but at the same time with the continuing challenges faced recognising the process may not be sustainable going forward.</p> <p>A report to cabinet, earlier this year, outlined the work which has been started on Future Monmouthshire. This recognises that the challenges faced by the County and Council are not limited to financial pressures, but these should be seen in the round with other significant challenges.</p> <p>The Future Monmouthshire work is making progress and establishing key themes to work on. The budget process this year has been revised and reconfigured, a one year approach has been taken within the context of the MTFP, and with the expectation that a more medium term approach can be adopted next year once the Future Monmouthshire work is further progressed. A set of principles have been developed to ensure that any work and decisions that need to be made in the short term can be consistent with ongoing work to establish the medium and long term picture.</p> <p>So far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All services have been tasked to provide 5% and 10% budget proposals considering the issues in line with the Future Monmouthshire principles, including capturing cross cutting issues that may deliver savings across the whole authority 		

- The number of proposals which have come forward is much greater than previous years, these have been categorised as income generation, efficiency, reduction and staffing.
- Identification of pressures, including an assessment of any ongoing pressures in the current year's budget. These will be rigorously reviewed and challenged.
- External and internal challenge processes from specialist functions commenced to ensure robustness of proposals and achievability for 2017/18.

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Fully costed and robust budget proposals for member scrutiny.	Complete external and internal challenge processes on proposals for 2017/18	Head of Resources	December 2016
	Scrutiny and challenge of budget proposals	Complete consultation and scrutiny on budget proposals	Head of Resources	February 2017

National Study	<p>The Financial resilience of Councils in Wales – April 2015 www.wao.gov.uk/publication/financial-resilience-local-authorities-wales-2015-16</p>
Summary	<p>The report looks at the financial performance of the 22 local authorities in Wales and the quality of their financial management arrangements.</p> <p>Based on the findings of this audit, the Auditor General has concluded that since the last review local authorities are improving their strategic planning arrangements but are having difficulty in developing and delivering the savings and changes to services at the pace required to ensure future financial resilience.</p> <p>The report made six recommendations for local authorities to consider in its report.</p>
Monmouthshire County Council lead	<p>The majority of the findings of the report relate to financial management. The council received its own individual financial resilience assessment in 2015 and is addressing proposal from the report.</p> <p>The Head of Finance has a service improvement plan setting out key actions being undertaking by the department this year.</p>

National Study	<p>Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view – June 2015 www.wao.gov.uk/publication/achieving-improvement-support-schools-through-regional-education-consortia-early-view</p>
Summary	<p>The report examines whether the Welsh Government’s arrangements for regional consortia are likely to deliver the intended improvement in support to schools and local authorities. In reviewing the progress of regional consortia the report focused on the effectiveness of governance arrangements based on the Good Governance Standard for Public Services.</p> <p>The report concludes that after an uncertain start, the foundations for regional school improvement services are being established and there are positive signs of progress, but remaining weaknesses are hindering the development of the whole system and the effective governance and financial management of regional consortia.</p> <p>The report makes five recommendations mainly for the consideration of Welsh Government, local authorities and regional consortia</p>
Monmouthshire County Council lead	<p>The Council lead for the Education Achievement Service partnership is the Chief Officer for Education</p>

National Study	<p>Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils – July 2015 www.wao.gov.uk/publication/review-corporate-safeguarding-arrangements-welsh-councils</p>
Summary	<p>The report examines the extent to which councils have put in place, and are operating, effective management and assurance processes and controls for safeguarding children.</p> <p>The report summarises that Welsh councils’ corporate assurance arrangements for overseeing the safeguarding of children are of variable quality.</p> <p>The report makes eight recommendations; seven for the consideration of councils and one for the consideration of Welsh Government.</p>

Monmouthshire County Council lead	<p>The Chief Officer for Social Care & Health is the lead for safeguarding. An established whole authority safeguarding group works to implement the safeguarding policy, governance and accountability, practice and process to consistently embed accountability.</p> <p>A Safeguarding strategy was developed and approved in July 2016 to ensure that responsibility for safeguarding is adopted by everyone both within the authority and where we deliver services with others. The recommendations from the study along with insight from other review work has been factored into an action plan that will be steered through the whole authority safeguarding group.</p>
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WAO National Study	<p>Supporting the Independence of Older People: Are Councils Doing Enough? – October 2015</p> <p>www.audit.wales/publications/Independence-of-Older-People</p>
Summary	<p>This report examined whether councils are working effectively to support the independence of older people.</p> <p>The report has concluded that whilst the Welsh public sector recognises the challenges of an ageing population, some key barriers are inhibiting the shift in focus that is needed to reduce demand for health and social care services and support older people to live independently.</p> <p>The report makes six recommendations; five for the consideration of councils and one for the consideration of Councils, health bodies, third sector partners and the Welsh Government</p>
Monmouthshire County Council lead	<p>The Head of Adults services is the primary lead for supporting the independence of older people.</p> <p>The Head of Adults services annual report reflects on progress in delivering priorities for 2015/16 and key areas for development and improvement in 2016/17.</p>

WAO National Study	<p>Delivering with less - leisure services – December 2015</p> <p>www.wao.gov.uk/publication/delivering-less-leisure-services</p>
Summary	<p>The report examines council leisure services under the series of Wales Audit Office thematic reviews called ‘delivering with less’.</p> <p>The report found that although public sector ownership and management of leisure provision is starting to change with the transfer of some services and assets to other models of operation, such as private sector trusts, strategic decisions on whether to transfer or continue with in-house provision of leisure services have not always been based on robust information or a consideration of all of the options open to councils.</p>
Monmouthshire County Council lead	<p>The Head of Tourism, leisure and culture is the lead for leisure services in Monmouthshire. Leisure services have a business plan setting out key actions being undertaken by the service this year.</p> <p>Following agreement by Cabinet in October 2016 a full Business Case is being developed for further consideration by members on a proposed new delivery model for Leisure, Tourism, Culture and Youth Services</p>