



CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.00 am WEDNESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2019

COUNCIL CHAMBER - PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE

Part 1

1. Declarations of Interests

To scrutinise information and monitoring issues being reported by:

2. Progress report on proposals for improvement contained within Wales Audit Office - Annual Improvement Report 2017-2018
(Pages 3 - 12)
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer
3. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (cabinet reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
4. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet (Finance) Sub Committee agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (Cabinet Finance Sub - Committee reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
5. Forward Work Programme 19/20 (Pages 13 - 16)
6. Urgent Items
Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972

S.Phillips
Chief Executive

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

**Vice
Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt,
S.K.Hunt, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller,
R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell,
S.M.Penry, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

Notes:

- (1) If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

2 October 2019

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer

K Jones

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title:

1. Progress report on proposals for improvement contained within Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2017-2018

Purpose of Report:

2. To provide Members with an update on the progress made to address the proposals for improvement contained within the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report 2017-2018 (as set out in Appendix 1).

Executive Summary:

3. The Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report (AIR) 2017-2018 was presented to Cabinet on 12th September 2018.
4. Members of Cabinet Scrutiny chose to scrutinise the AIR and requested as part of the Committee's forward work programme that a periodic report be brought to the committee on the progress of work against the Wales Audit Office proposals for improvement.
5. Work undertaken by the WAO during 2017-18, focused on: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? The purpose of this work was to explore with councils how 'fit for the future' their scrutiny functions are. The outcome of this work resulted in six proposals for improvement (as set out in Appendix 1).

6. Two of six proposals for improvement were not accepted, these being P2 and P4. The improvement work for these had already been implemented by the time the Council received the audit findings (audit work undertaken in January 2018, proposals for improvement received in July 2018).
7. Of the four that were accepted, two have been completed, P1 and P6 and work is underway to ensure achievement of the remaining two proposals for improvement. These are:
 - P3 – The Council should review its arrangements for planning and undertaking scrutiny, and consider different ways of working that best suit the topic area and desired outcome – work is ongoing to ensure the method / criteria by which decisions may be evaluated is embedded into decision reports so as to inform post-decision scrutiny practice.
 - P5 - The Council should strengthen the arrangements for engaging the public in scrutiny – this is being progressed as part of the work tasked to the Democratic Services Committee by Council on 17 July 2019 (Engagement of the Public in the Democratic Processes of the Council).

Background:

8. The Annual Improvement Report (AIR) 2017-2018 discharges the Auditor General's duties under Section 19, 17, 18 and 24, of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, by summarising his audit and assessment work undertaken in this Council during 2017-2018.

Financial Impact:

9. The programme of audit and improvement assessment work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office during 2017-2018 has been delivered within the budget allocated for audit and inspection work.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

10. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

11. Options for engaging the public in the democratic processes for valley communities will be explicitly considered by the Democratic Services Committee.

Workforce Impacts:

12. There are no workforce impacts from the process of audit and improvement assessment work of significance.

Legal Impacts:

13. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment and to publish an annual improvement report for each improvement authority in Wales.

Risk Management Impacts:

14. The findings of the Wales Audit Office are a key input into the Council's corporate governance arrangements and the areas identified for improvement work inform the Annual Governance Statement and the associated improvement action plan.

Consultation:

15. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

16. For Members to note the work that has been undertaken or is in the process of being undertaken in relation to the proposals for improvement as set out in Appendix 1.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

17. This is a matter for monitoring therefore no decision is required.

Implementation of Decision:

18. This is a matter for monitoring therefore no decision is required.

Appendix:

19. Appendix 1 - Progress on Proposals for Improvement – Wales
Audit Office Annual Improvement Report (AIR) 2017-2018

List of Background Papers:

20. Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report (2017-2018)

Contact Officer:

21. Karen Jones, Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer
Telephone: 01639 763284, email: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Progress on Proposals for Improvement - Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report (2017-18)

Work area / issue date	Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018	
Brief description	Review of how well placed the Councils’ overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges	
Proposal for improvement	Progress	Accepted / Completed
<p>P1 The Council’s scrutiny committees should ensure that, where appropriate, Cabinet members rather than council officers are held to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions in accordance with statutory guidance</p>	<p>The WAO study was conducted very early into the new term of the Council following an election which saw 22 new Members elected. Committees have developed and continue to do so.</p> <p>The Leader of Council made it clear at the beginning of the term that Cabinet Members would take responsibility for reporting policy issues to Council and responding to questions on policy. Cabinet Members now routinely take responsibility for matters at Council.</p> <p>In terms of scrutiny, both officers and executive Members attend scrutiny meetings but at the invitation of the scrutiny committee. Scrutiny Members question both officers and Cabinet Members.</p> <p>Revisit the seating arrangements at formal scrutiny meetings to clarify the different roles of the attendees. Suggestion is: Chair and committee support – one side Scrutiny members – one side Officers – one side to answer operational detail Cabinet Members – one side – to answer policy detail.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Work area / issue date	Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018	
Brief description	Review of how well placed the Councils' overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges	
Proposal for improvement	Progress	Accepted / Completed
	Seating arrangements are dependent on the room being used for meetings. Name plates are now being utilised.	
P2 The Council should consider the intended role of scrutiny committees in pre-decision scrutiny activity and ensure current arrangements enable sufficient time for scrutiny	<p>The Council's arrangements for scrutiny were subject of review in the previous administration. The Council has made a conscious decision to organise scrutiny committee meetings in the way currently scheduled.</p> <p>It should be noted that two additional sub-committees were established for public protection and leisure/arts by the current administration on taking office. Neither of these sub-committees take place immediately before the Cabinet Board.</p> <p>There are two approaches to pre-decision scrutiny:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topics selected from the Cabinet /Cabinet Board agenda which follows on from each scrutiny committee - Committees select a small number of items for pre-decision scrutiny and offer comments/recommendations to the Executive who attend the scrutiny committees to answer questions and hear the views of the scrutiny committee. 2. Topics are selected from the forward work programme of the Cabinet/Cabinet Board for inclusion on the scrutiny committee forward work programme with the scrutiny committee indicating what early work they would like to conduct prior 	Not accepted

Work area / issue date	Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018	
Brief description	Review of how well placed the Councils’ overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges	
Proposal for improvement	Progress	Accepted / Completed
	to final recommendations and advice being developed.	
<p>P3 The Council should review its arrangements for planning and undertaking scrutiny, and consider different ways of working that best suit the topic area and desired outcome</p>	<p>The Cabinet and cabinet boards routinely publish forward work programmes which, amongst other things, enables scrutiny committees to determine what they wish to focus scrutiny activity on.</p> <p>Scrutiny committees already use a range of different approaches to their work, dependent on the topic and objectives of the approach. This can include asking questions in a formal committee meeting, undertaking one day inquiries, undertaking task and finish projects.</p> <p>At the present time, scrutiny committees mostly address questions to their officers and executive Members, but there is also evidence of scrutiny being assisted by external experts (Welsh Language Promotional Strategy, Estyn), holding partners to account (Community Safety Partnership, Public Services Board, Education Regional Working), and making visits to the community/services to inform their work (e.g. social services, waste)</p> <p>Scrutiny chairs have all received training in chairing scrutiny committees and further development for scrutiny committee Members has also been delivered through the Member Development Programme.</p>	Work ongoing

<p>Work area / issue date</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018</p>	
<p>Brief description</p>	<p>Review of how well placed the Councils’ overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges</p>	
<p>Proposal for improvement</p>	<p>Progress</p>	<p>Accepted / Completed</p>
<p>P4</p>	<p>During forward work programme planning workshops, committees have looked back at decisions taken and selected a few for post decision scrutiny.</p> <p>Ensure the method/criteria by which decisions may be evaluated is embedded into decision reports so as to inform post-decision scrutiny practice - action outstanding.</p>	
<p>P5 The Council should strengthen scrutiny committee ownership of forward work programmes, ensuring that there is a clear rationale for topic selection</p>	<p>The forward work programmes in place for each scrutiny committee were determined following workshops that involved scrutiny committee Members.</p> <p>The forward work programmes of the Executive were one of a number of areas considered when determining topics for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme. Service performance, issues of concern to residents and funding were amongst other factors taken into account.</p>	<p>Not accepted</p>
<p>P5 The Council should strengthen the arrangements for engaging the public in scrutiny</p>	<p>It should be remembered that Members are elected to represent the views of their constituents. Members were encouraged to consider issues of interest to their constituents when determining the current forward work programme for scrutiny committees.</p> <p>There are a number of examples where scrutiny enquiries sought the views of the public when formulating proposals to put before the Executive e.g. Welsh</p>	<p>Work ongoing</p>

Work area / issue date	Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018	
Brief description	Review of how well placed the Councils’ overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges	
Proposal for improvement	Progress	Accepted / Completed
Page 11	<p>Language Promotional Strategy and Direct Payments in Social Services. The Deputy Leader has already introduced a Communications and Community Relations Strategy to strengthen communications and engagement across all areas of the Council’s work. These arrangements will extend the range of mechanisms available to scrutiny committees to aid them in their work.</p> <p>A report was also considered by Council on the 17th July 2019, tasking the Democratic Services Committee to review the participation / engagement of the public in the democratic process and how to strengthen the arrangements for engaging the public in scrutiny (scrutiny will be scoped into this work) – action outstanding.</p>	

Work area / issue date	Overview and Scrutiny: Fit For the Future? July 2018	
Brief description	Review of how well placed the Councils’ overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges	
Proposal for improvement	Progress	Accepted / Completed
<p>P6 The Council should put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 12</p>	<p>The Council does capture information that identifies the work activities and impact of scrutiny work.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Champion has observed a number of scrutiny committee meetings and fed back to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum where areas for development were supported. The Democratic Services Committee subsequently endorsed the proposed areas for development and is overseeing the associated work. It is the Scrutiny Champion’s intention to conduct observations of scrutiny practice from time to time to encourage collaborative working across the committees, ownership of the scrutiny function and to distil good practice and areas for further development.</p> <p>It is intended that each committee will produce an annual report setting out the work undertaken each year, assessing what impact the committee has made. Ensure each committee produces an annual report each year.</p> <p>Annual Reports to be drafted by September 2019.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

**Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme 2019/20**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Officer
29 May 2019		
19 June 2019		
10 July 2019	Public Service Board – Annual Report	Karen Jones
31 July 2019		
25 September 2019	Public Services Board – updates on Wellbeing Objective 2 (To build Safe and Resilient Communities)	Public Services Board

2 October 2019	Periodic report on the progress of work against the Wales Audit Proposals for Improvement	Karen Jones/ Caryn Furlow
30 October 2019		
20 November 2019		
4 December 2019		

8 January 2020		
5 February 2020	Public Services Board – updates on Wellbeing Plan	Public Services Board
12 February 2019		
19 February 2020		
1 April 2020		
29 April 2020		

27 May 2020		

Items to be programmed in for future meetings

- To view the impacts of the decisions on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and the Valleys Action Plan annually (Karen Jones)
- Public Services Board – updates on Wellbeing Objective 4 (To support wellbeing through work and in the workplace). – (early November – date to be confirmed)
- Evaluation Structure for Wellbeing Objective 2 – Public Services Board