

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Cabinet Board

19th November 2015

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

K.Jones

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All Wards

Governance Group 6 month progress report (with Corporate Assessment Action Plan incorporated)

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a half yearly update on progress made on the Corporate Governance Group's improvement action plan (appendix 1) for 2015-16. The action plan reflects the governance issues identified in the last Annual Governance Statement for 2014-15 and the Group meets quarterly to monitor progress made on these actions.
2. This action plan also incorporates the outstanding actions from the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment report: "Neath Port Talbot Annual Improvement Report, incorporating the Corporate Assessment Report 2014, November 2014."

Executive Summary

3. Overall, of the remaining actions within the action plan, we have made good progress on two thirds and there a few actions where work has not started but are within timescale. The Corporate Governance Group would like to draw attention to those actions which have progressed slower than expected and these are as follows:
 - Implementing the training issue identified in the Information Commissioner's Audit (G6);
 - Asset Management Plan to be aligned with the Corporate Improvement Plan (P13);
 - Formalising arrangements for the Strategic Asset Management Working Group (P15);
 - Finalising the Council's Information Strategy and communicate to all staff (P17); and

- To produce an annual report on information management and information governance matters (P18).

Remedial action is being explored to progress these work areas.

Background

4. The Annual Governance Statement describes the Council's governance arrangements and the controls we employ to manage the risks of failure to achieve strategic objectives. The Annual Governance Statement forms part of the Annual Statement of Accounts and provides a public statement of the extent to which the Council complies with the Code of Governance. This report also discharges the action taken in relation to the Wales Audit Office recommendation that more frequent reports to elected Members should be made during the financial year.
5. The Wales Audit Office is required to deliver a rolling programme of in-depth corporate assessments once, during a four year period for each Council. Our corporate assessment was undertaken in June 2014. The action plan to address the 20 proposals for improvement set out in the Report was agreed at Council on 14th January 2015 and since then it has been incorporated into the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan 2015-2018 and also the Corporate Governance Group's improvement action plan 2015-16.

Financial Appraisal

6. The progress described was delivered against a challenging financial backdrop.

Equality Impact Assessment

7. The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to "pay due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it."
8. As the focus is a progress report, there is no requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment.

Workforce Impact

1. During the year, the Council saw a further downsizing of its workforce (by 241 employees) as it sought to deliver savings of £17.3 million in-year.

Legal Impact

2. This progress report is prepared under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and discharges the Council's duties to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions".

Risk Management

3. The Council also has a general duty under the local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions". In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
4. The Wales Audit Office recently undertook a review of our corporate risk management arrangements. The findings of the review will be presented in a final report to the Audit Committee in December. The review acknowledged that good progress had been made to put risk management on a stronger footing and that the Council needs to ensure the right level of attention is given to risk management for it be effective and robust in the long term.
5. Failure to monitor progress on the action plan may lead to non-compliance by the Wales Audit Office and statutory recommendations the Council would be obliged to address.

Consultation

6. There is no requirement for consultation on this item.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that Members monitor the contents of the progress report attached at Appendix 1.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Governance Group Improvement Action Plan 2015-16

List of Background Papers

- Annual Governance Statement (contained within the 2014-15 Statement of Accounts):
<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/g490/Public%20reports%20pack%2024th-Sep-2015%2010.00%20Audit%20Committee.pdf?T=10>
- Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report, incorporating the Corporate Assessment Report 2014: <http://www.wao.gov.uk/publication/neath-port-talbot-county-borough-council-annual-improvement-report-including-corporate>

Officer Contact

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