

# **Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2015-2016**

## **Purpose of Report**

For Mr Steve Barry (Audit Manager, Wales Audit Office) to present the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report 2015-16 (Appendix 1).

## **Executive Summary**

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

The Annual Improvement Report (AIR) attached at Appendix 1 summarises the audit work undertaken since the Corporate Assessment and combined Annual Improvement Report which was published in November 2014. The AIR also includes a summary of the key findings from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW); Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn); and the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC). A list of the audit work carried out since November 2014 which has informed the content of the report is included on page 5 of the AIR.

Overall, the Auditor General concluded the Council has continued to improve in its priority areas, financial management is sound, and its arrangements are likely to support future progress.

## **Findings**

For 2015-2016, the Wales Audit Office undertook improvement assessment work under three themes: use of resources; governance; and performance and concluded:

### **Performance:**

1. The Council is securing improvement against its corporate priorities, whilst overall performance as measured by national indicators has declined compared to previous years it is still better than the Welsh average for over half of indicators.
2. The Council made progress in implementing its new corporate performance framework and was sustaining its focus on improvements to performance reporting and service business planning.
3. The Council made improvements to its provision of Welsh material, training and access to Welsh-speaking staff, but more work was needed to comply with the provisions of the Welsh Language Act.

4. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales considered the Council to have sustained progress in delivering its strategic improvement plan and lifted the Serious Concerns Protocol it had applied to Children's Services.

#### **Use of Resources:**

5. The Council's financial management and governance arrangements are sound but savings plans for the medium term need to be developed and more fully integrated with the corporate planning process.
6. Performance and the rate of improvement in younger children's education is below the Wales average whilst results for those in secondary schools are much higher than in similar authorities, and school attendance is now in line with the Welsh average.

#### **Governance:**

7. The Council has made some positive changes to scrutiny and is sustaining its focus on continuous improvement.
8. The Council is improving its arrangements to effectively manage its exposure to risk.

#### **Financial Impact**

The programme of audit and improvement assessment work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office during 2015-2016 has been delivered within the budget allocated for audit and inspection work.

#### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The programme of audit and improvement assessment work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office during 2015-2016 has not focused on people with protected characteristics.

#### **Workforce Impacts**

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

#### **Legal Impacts**

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**

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 plan.

### **Consultation**

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

### **Recommended**

For Council to acknowledge the Annual Improvement Report 2015-2016 and for the Report to be published on the Council's website.

### **Reason for Proposed Decision**

To meet statutory requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report 2015-2016

### **List of Background Papers**

Annual Report 2014 -15 'Doing What Matters'  
Corporate Improvement Plan 2015-2018 'Rising to the Challenge'

### **Wards Affected**

All

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