

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD

27 JULY 2016

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – K.JONES

SECTION A- MATTER FOR MONITORING

WARDS AFFECTED - ALL

Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan - Full Year Progress Report 2015-2016

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a full year update on progress made on the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan (Appendix 1) for 2015-16. The action plan reflects the governance issues identified in the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2014-15. 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

2. During 2015-2016, the Corporate Governance Group has continued to oversee the improvement work identified in the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan to ensure the Council's processes and procedures enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. Overall, during 2015-2016, good progress was made on the improvement work identified.

Background

3. 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.

4. The Wales Audit Office was 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 Corporate Assessment Report was agreed at Council on 14th January 2015 and was incorporated in the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2015-16.

Progress:

5. During 2015-2016, the improvement work identified in 7 of the 13 key improvement areas was completed.
6. This included:
 - Strengthening the Council's financial monitoring arrangements
 - Undertaking an extensive programme of communication and engagement to support the 2016-2017 budget process
 - Improvements to the grants management system
 - Bringing our internal systems for handling social service complaints in line with the Welsh Government's new arrangements
7. In the remaining 6 key improvement areas, the initial phases of the improvement work identified was completed and the next phases of the improvement work have been carried over into the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2016-2017.
8. This work includes:
 - Further strengthening the Council's corporate performance management framework
 - Continuing to modernise and strengthen Democratic Services

- Further strengthening the Council's approach to corporate risk management
 - Monitoring the implementation of the Information Commissioner's Audit action plan
 - Further strengthening workforce planning arrangements
9. The Council has recently received the Wales Audit Office - Annual Improvement Report 2015-2016 (presented to Council on 6th July 2016 by Mr Steve Barry, Audit Manager). The Corporate Governance Group will review the content of that report to identify any issues that require attention and the associated improvement work will be included in the Improvement Action Plan for 2016-2017.
10. A progress report on the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2016-2017 will be presented to Members in the autumn.

Financial Appraisal

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

Equality Impact Assessment

12. 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.”
13. As the focus is a progress report, there is no requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment.

Workforce Impact

14. The progress described was delivered as the Council saw a further downsizing of its workforce by a further 197 employees during 2015-2016.

Legal Impact

15. 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

16. 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. 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

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

Recommendations

18. It is recommended that Members note the progress made on the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2015-2016 attached at Appendix 1.

Appendices

19. Appendix 1 – Corporate Governance Group Improvement Action Plan 2015-16

List of Background Papers

20. 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>

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Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan – 2015-2016

Key Improvement area	Lead Officer	Progress during 2015-2016	Carry forward for 2016-17
1. Corporate Performance Management Framework – to further develop the use and effectiveness of report cards	Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services	Work undertaken to further strengthen the Business Planning process with the inclusion of both workforce planning and property asset management matters. Review of service report cards completed and findings have informed guidance for managers updating their report cards during 2016-2017.	Yes Next phase of improvement work taken forward to 2016-2017
2. Modernise and strengthen Democratic Services (Phase 2) – to complete the programme of work in line with the recommendations arising from the review.	Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services	The review of representation on external bodies was completed and reported to Council. Forward Work Programmes were re-established. Further training was made available on chairing skills / questioning skills. Improvements to the physical environment of the committee rooms and Council Chamber were carried out. Modern Gov was fully implemented (1 st phase). A survey of Members was undertaken to identify further areas for development. Improved information was provided on Member seminars and evaluation forms	Yes Next phase of improvement work taken forward to 2016-2017

Key Improvement area	Lead Officer	Progress during 2015-2016	Carry forward for 2016-17
		were also introduced. Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a follow-up exercise regarding scrutiny and reported progress having been made.	
3. Strengthen financial monitoring arrangements to ensure emerging service pressures are identified and acted upon at the earliest opportunity.	Head of Financial Services	Work completed to strengthen financial monitoring arrangements including monthly reports to Corporate Directors Group and Senior Management Teams and quarterly reports to Scrutiny Committees. The Wales Audit Office commented they were satisfied with these arrangements as part of their Financial Resilience audit work undertaken during 2015-2016.	No - completed
4. Take forward the improvement work needed to provide and sustain effective risk management	Head of Financial Services	The revised Corporate Risk Management Policy was approved by Cabinet on 15 th July 2015. To implement the Policy, during the autumn of 2015, work was undertaken with Senior Management Teams to develop Directorate Risk Registers which informed the development of the Council's Corporate Risk Register which was presented to Cabinet on 2 nd March 2016.	Yes Next phase of improvement work taken forward to 2016-2017
5. Formalise and implement the Corporate Communication and	Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic	In place of a Corporate Communication and Engagement Strategy, an extensive programme of corporate communication and	No

Key Improvement area	Lead Officer	Progress during 2015-2016	Carry forward for 2016-17
Engagement Strategy	Services	engagement was established to support the budget process. This generated a large number of comments which influenced final priorities and decisions.	
6. Regional Collaborative arrangements – to continue to strengthen scrutiny arrangements by identifying areas for work programmes for the 2015-2016 civic year	Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services.	ERW, Western Bay, City Region – were all subject of scrutiny during the year. Given the range of collaborative arrangements established as a result of Welsh Government policy, discussions will take place with scrutiny chairs to identify suitable topics of inclusion in 2016-2017 work programmes.	Yes – monitor
7. Information Commissioner’s Audit action plan – to continue to monitor the implementation of the action plan	Head of Legal Services & Head of ICT	The on-line Data Protection Training has commenced utilising the All-Wales Academy System which has been provided by the Welsh Government.	Yes
8. Undertake project work to improve the grants management system.	Head of Financial Services	Work completed to improve the grants management system.	No - completed
9. To monitor the ongoing challenge to have the right number of people, with the right skills, in the	Head of Human Resources	A review has been undertaken of the Council’s appraisal and performance development review processes which has led to the development of a singly	Yes Next phase of improvement work

Key Improvement area	Lead Officer	Progress during 2015-2016	Carry forward for 2016-17
right place, doing the right things		Performance Appraisal Policy. The Council's Personnel Committee approved the Policy at its meeting on 22 nd February 2016 and is now being implemented across the Council. A review has been undertaken of the Council's induction process and a revised process developed. Workforce planning has been introduced at a service level via the 2016-2017 business planning process and service workforce plans will support the development of a corporate Workforce Plan by the end of 2016-2017.	taken forward to 2016-2017
10. CSSIW recommendation for Children's Services: to consistently monitor the complaints service to ensure there is sufficient resource and capacity available to manage it effectively. Better organisational learning should be derived from complaints to improve the quality of services.	Head of Children's Services	During 2015-2016 we brought our internal systems in line with the Welsh Government's new arrangements for handling social services complaints, which came into force on 1 August 2014: Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulation 2014 and the Representation Procedures (Wales) Regulation 2014.	No

Key Improvement area	Lead Officer	Progress during 2015-2016	Carry forward for 2016-17
11. To evaluate how effective our corporate communications and engagement activities are (both internal and external)	Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services.	This action has been superseded by the work undertaken to support the budget process.	No
12. To oversee the improvement work contained within the Corporate Assessment action plan.	Corporate Governance Group	The Corporate Governance Group has continued to oversee the improvement work contained within the Corporate Assessment action plan	No Residual activities integrated within Annual Governance Statement.
13. To monitor any emerging risks of legal challenge around the Strategic School Improvement Programme and to ensure we are meeting the basics on consultation and equality.	Head of Legal Services	Monitoring has been undertaken during 2015-2016	No