

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 DECEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

K.JONES

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report (AIR) 2016/2017 – Proposals for Improvement – Progress to Date (December 2017)

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the progress made on addressing the proposals for improvement as contained within the Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2016/2017.

Background

2. At Council on 18th October 2017, Steve Barry (Wales Audit Office) presented the Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report (AIR) 2016/2017. The AIR was informed by a forward looking annual improvement assessment undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, which considers the likelihood the Council will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.
3. Overall, the AIR concluded the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement and believes the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009) during 2017/18.
4. During the year (2016/2017), following the audit and inspection work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, no formal recommendations were made, however, a number of proposals for

improvement were made and included in the AIR. These are listed in Appendix 1 along with a summary of the progress made in addressing them to date.

Financial Impact

5. There are no financial impacts with this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

6. There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment.

Workforce Impacts

7. There are no workforce impacts with this report.

Legal Powers

8. 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. The Auditor General will monitor progress made by the Council against the proposals for improvement contained in Appendix 1.

Risk Management

9. 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

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

Recommendation

11. For Members to note the progress made on addressing the proposals for improvement contained within the Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report (AIR) 2016/2017.

Appendices

12. Appendix 1 - WAO Annual Improvement Report 2016/2017 - Proposals for Improvement – Progress (December 2017)

List of Background Papers

13. Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2016/2017 (<https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/8004/npt-air-eng.pdf>)

Officer Contact

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WAO Annual Improvement Report 2016/2017

Proposals for Improvement – Progress (December 2017)

1. Governance	Proposals for improvement	Action underway / required
<p>The review of the Council’s governance arrangements for significant service change concluded they are proportionate to their scale and complexity but the evaluation of their impact is inconsistent.</p>	<p><i>P1 The Council should further develop guidance for officers to reinforce what is required in terms of conducting and reporting options appraisals on service change proposals and other information.</i></p> <p><i>P2 The Council should set out arrangements for monitoring the impact of service changes at the point of decision.</i></p> <p><i>P3 The Council should strengthen its systems to ensure monitoring reports requested by scrutiny committees are routinely provided</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved - Report template amended to ensure all options considered are included in the report and to include explanations as to why some were disregarded and the reasons supporting the chosen service change proposal • Partially Achieved – Discussions underway with scrutiny chairs on possible arrangements, including amending the report template to ensure monitoring arrangements are set out at the point of decision • Achieved – bring forward systems in scrutiny have been improved

2. Use of Resources	Proposals for improvement	Action underway / required
<p>The review of the Council's financial savings arrangements concluded that whilst the Council lacks indicative savings plans for future years it has a sound financial planning framework which supports future financial resilience.</p>	<p><i>P1 Strengthen financial planning arrangements by developing longer terms savings plans to cover the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partially Achieved – The Council has recently revised the financial planning assumptions and have been discussing those revisions with Members. Officers are currently working with Members to develop budget saving strategies over the medium term.
<p>Local risk-based performance audit</p>		
<p>The review of Third Sector roles in supporting welfare reform advice concluded access to welfare advice in Neath Port Talbot varies and there are examples of duplication.</p>	<p><i>P1 The Council would benefit from investigating the extent of duplication and the potential to better align provision and improve coverage across the County Borough</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved – The Public Services Board has set up a partnership group to explore how all of the various agencies who provide welfare advice can best work together. The Council's review of 3rd sector funding arrangements ensures the Council does not fund duplicate services.

Local risk-based performance audit	Proposals for improvement	Action underway / required
<p>The review of the Council's Corporate Risk Register found the structure of the risk register and strategic risk management procedures were appropriate but the corporate register was detailed or clear enough to support effective risk management.</p>	<p><i>P1 Establish clear procedures about how to identify, categorise and mitigate corporate risks by including more relevant detail within the Corporate Risk Register.</i></p> <p><i>P2 Ensure that mitigating actions have established timeframes, milestones and sufficient detail to allow effective scrutiny to take place.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved – The Council has developed a framework to ensure a consistent approach to the scoring of risks. Officers who have responsibility for identifying and recording risks have received training from Marsh • Partially achieved – Officers are in the process of applying the above training and scoring framework to the Council's Corporate Risk Register.
	<p>Proposals for improvement</p>	<p>Action underway / required</p>
<p>The review of Performance Management arrangements in the Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate concluded the directorate is learning from improvements to performance management arrangements in children's services but needs to produce its business plans earlier and further strengthen arrangements in adult services.</p>	<p><i>P1 The Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate in future years produce business plans in readiness for sign off by the relevant Cabinet Member before the Council's Annual General Meeting in May.</i></p> <p><i>P2 The Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate learns from the experience in children's services and continues to work to develop and agree a comprehensive suite of performance management information for the directorate that is visible and that actively assists the service in driving improvement.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially Achieved – This has now been overtaken by the implementation of the CAMMS Corporate Performance Management System. • SSHH will be using the above system to further develop performance management arrangements to assist the service in driving improvements.

