
WALES AUDIT OFFICE CORPORATE ASSESSMENT AND PEER REVIEW

Reason for the Report

1. To inform the Committee about the Wales Audit Office's planned Corporate Assessment of the Council's improvement arrangements and the proposals for a Peer Review which the Cabinet has agreed.
2. Attached to this report at **Appendix A**, Members will find a copy of the report of the Chief Executive which was presented to Cabinet on 16 May 2013, setting out details of both the Corporate Assessment and the Peer Review. Appended to that report is a project brief from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) giving the purpose and methodology for the Corporate Assessment. A brief resume of the report is given below.

Background

3. In February 2013, as the 2013/14 Budget was still under discussion, the Leader and her Cabinet asked the Chief Executive to prepare a briefing on the organisational and operational risks which face Cardiff Council. This was in addition to the wider risks identified in the Council's Corporate Risk Register. The Leader was concerned to ensure that the scale of the risk facing the Council was recognised and appropriate mitigations put in place.
4. Following discussion with officers, these issues have been identified as including:
 - Senior Management Restructure – in terms of the timing of appointments to the new structure. Mitigating actions have already been taken and some

interim management solutions put in place. The upper level of this recruitment is now complete, but early engagement in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 budget processes is needed.

- Social care – risks identified in terms of the appointment to the senior management restructure, although mitigations are in place. Ongoing financial pressures in Children’s Services were identified, although this was taken into account during the 2013/14 budget setting process.
 - Education – organisational and reputational risks around the reorganisation of schools in the east of the city including any potential ministerial decisions. Interim management arrangements have been put in place in order to ensure continuity in the service in the short term.
 - Budgetary pressures – Possible changes to services as a result of budgetary pressures and the challenge around effective communication with the public. This was subsequently dealt with as part of the budget process for 2013/14.
 - Collaborative work – Issues could include potential adverse publicity and ensuring sufficient resources and governance arrangements are in place.
5. The Leader has subsequently requested that the issues covered in the briefing be considered for inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register, which is regularly reported to Senior Leadership Team, Audit Committee and the Cabinet.
6. The Cabinet has met the Auditor General to discuss a number of the concerns highlighted in the briefing. At that meeting, the Auditor General also set out his new programme of rolling Corporate Assessments, based on a four-year cycle. These Assessments will be carried out in addition to the WAO’s annual programme of improvement studies. It was confirmed at the meeting that Cardiff will be one of the first four councils to be subject to a Corporate Assessment, commencing in May 2013. The other three councils are Ceredigion County Council, Conwy County Borough Council and Newport City Council.

Issues

WAO Corporate Assessment

7. The WAO's Corporate Assessment is aimed to 'provide a position statement of an improvement authority's capacity and capability to deliver continuous improvement. It will, by its nature, examine an authority's track record of performance and outcomes as well as examining the key arrangements that are necessary to underpin improvements in services and functions'.

8. Desk-based preparatory work was scheduled to begin in May 2013. This will be based on previous work the WAO has undertaken in the Council. The WAO will also carry out a review of existing Council documentation, which is being provided to them. Using this review to focus its work, the WAO will then undertake fieldwork on site. This is likely to be split into two phases to allow time for reflection in between, in total taking five to ten days. After these stages have been completed, a final report will be published detailing the WAO's findings.

Peer Review

9. The Cabinet has also accepted a proposal for Cardiff Council to undergo an independent Improvement Peer Review process, undertaken by a panel of experts established by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). The exact make-up of the Panel had not been determined at the time the report went to Cabinet. Further details can be found from paragraphs 15 to 21 of the Cabinet report at **Appendix A**.

10. According to the Cabinet Report, the Peer Review will be completed by July 2013 in order to feed into the Corporate Assessment process. This timing will also allow it to provide incoming senior managers with a better understanding of the Council's strengths and development areas. The Peer Review is likely to involve discussions with the Cabinet, senior managers, staff, Trade Unions and Scrutiny Chairs. Costs of the Review will be met by the WLGA.

Way Forward

11. Steve Barry, Improvement Assessment Lead from the Wales Audit Office, will be in attendance at the meeting to discuss the WAO Corporate Assessment process.
12. The Leader, Councillor Heather Joyce; Jon House, Chief Executive; and Mike Davies, Head of Service, Scrutiny, Performance and Improvement will be in attendance to discuss preparations for the WAO Corporate Assessment, as well as the Peer Review, and to answer any questions Members may have.

Legal Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers of behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations

for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- i. Consider the attached report and the information presented at the meeting and forward any comments or concerns it wishes to relay to the Cabinet.

MIKE DAVIES

Head of Service

Scrutiny, Performance and Improvement

30 May 2013

CABINET MEETING: 16 MAY 2013

**PREPARATIONS FOR WALES AUDIT OFFICE CORPORATE
ASSESSMENT**

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA ITEM: 5

PORTFOLIO: CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Reason for Report

1. This report aims to:
 - provide Cabinet with information relating to the planned Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment of the Council's improvement arrangements and;
 - allow Cabinet to consider proposals for a Peer Review external assessment for the Authority as both a foundation level examination for forthcoming audit and inspection exercises and a rigorous local government sector led improvement approach.

Background

2. The new Administration, formed following the local government elections on 3 May 2012, outlined its vision for the City and a number of key priorities for its first municipal year, in its document 'Leading Cardiff – Building Communities'. The development of this document provided the Cabinet with an early indication of the challenges facing the Authority and, in response to the requirements of the Cabinet, the Chief Executive brought forward proposals to strengthen the organisation through the implementation of a new senior team model.
3. The subsequent Corporate Planning and Budgetary processes, in addition to matters highlighted by external regulatory reports and the Council's own performance management arrangements, further emphasised the scale of the challenge facing the Administration to the Leader and her Cabinet.
4. In February 2013, the Leader and her Cabinet, having been concerned at the scale of challenge facing the Administration, requested the Chief Executive to prepare a briefing on the organisational and operational risks facing the Authority at that time, in addition to those already identified in the Authority's Corporate Risk Register. The Leader was concerned to ensure that the scale of the risk that her Administration had

inherited was recognised and had appropriate mitigation in place so that the Council was not faced with “a series of cliffs without fences”.

5. The briefing paper provided to the Leader set out the key organisational and operational risks identified at that time, with several issues highlighted as being affected by the timing of the recruitment to the revised senior management structure. Whilst it should be noted that some actions in mitigation have already been put in place, these key risks included the recognition that there was a need for early engagement in potential budget solutions for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 years when the new Directors team would not be fully in place, and that the ability for the new team to lead on collaboration projects in the immediate future would be limited. It was recognised that interim management arrangements had had to be put in place in a number of key service areas and that the delays in new appointments to the Directors' positions taking up their positions would bring additional risks that would require mitigation.
6. The Leader has subsequently requested that the Briefing Paper referred to in paragraph 5, above, be updated and reflected in an enhanced Risk register to be made available to the Cabinet in advance of the Peer Review and the “fieldwork” phase of the Corporate Assessment process.
7. In addition to the operational and organisational risks referred to in paragraph 5, above, the Corporate Chief Officer (Corporate & Section 151 Officer) set out the residual budgetary risks facing the Authority in her report – Budgetary proposals 2013/14 – that was considered by Council in February 2013. A relevant extract from this report is set out below:

“When setting budgets and reviewing the MTFP, the Council has considered the reserves that it has established and the maintenance of those reserves. The decision on the level of reserves has been considered alongside the strategic, operational and financial risks that the Council faces. These risks are identified and monitored in the Council’s Corporate Risk Register as well as individual service area risk registers and key risks are regularly brought to the attention of Cabinet. The risks are considered alongside the known financial position including commitments, spending plans and liabilities.

The significant residual risk items apparent from the budget proposals together with their mitigations are described in the relevant service paragraphs but in summary are:

- *Continuing demographic demand for social care services if trendlines vary significantly from the anticipated position.*
- *The impact of welfare reforms on the ability of individuals to contribute to the cost of services provided where relevant.*
- *Reducing demand for services where the Council has historically charged for the activity and so creating an income shortfall.*

- *The reduction in resources for various central education functions with the requirement for schools to purchase the services from their delegated budgets.*
- *Necessity to deliver budgeted savings from service redesign and other change proposals that are not currently fully defined.*

In addition, other general risks to be managed include:

- *The need to deliver significant levels of savings during a period of extensive change in senior management arrangements.*
- *The service impact of the continuing reduction in headcount expected over the medium term.*
- *The ability to react to new demands resulting from welfare reforms as they are progressively implemented together with financial risks in respect of the CTRS.*
- *The level of additional borrowing undertaken in previous years and proposed will require more revenue resources to be used for capital financing in future years.*
- *Capital schemes that are approved on the basis of generating savings, increasing income or capital receipts but which fail to do so will also increase pressure on the revenue budget.*
- *The impact of the potential adoption of alternative models of service delivery and the requirement to test consequential costs and benefits of the change.*
- *The impact of continuing to increase the support of revenue budgets from the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) reserve.*
- *The achievement of the capital financing budget should the dividend from Cardiff Bus not be forthcoming in 2013/14.*
- *The result of the WG review of the CTRS for 2014/15 if this changes the 100% exemption position being used for 2013/14.*
- *The potential impact should the level of Residence & Special Guardianship allowances be increased.*
- *The impact of functions delivered as part of a collaborative arrangement should the planned benefits not be realised.*
- *The outcome of the joint review between the Council and the WG in respect of the next three year funding provision for the Harbour Authority.*

In addition, there are two major reviews pending announcement that have the potential to impact significantly on the Council. These are the WG review of Local Government's role in Education service delivery and the review of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (HRAS) system..."

8. The Council's Cabinet recently met with the Auditor General for Wales to discuss a number of related concerns including the previously highlighted shortcomings in management capacity and the associated risk relating to several key services, including Education and Social Services. The management capacity issue is being addressed by cross party Member Appointment Panels as a result of the Chief Executive's paper to Cabinet in November 2012. The recruitment of Director level posts is now complete, with recruitment to Assistant Director posts about to commence. However, the Cabinet identified that a broad review of

Education and Social Services improvement capacity was required, particularly bearing in mind the lack of permanent senior management capacity over several months.

9. At that meeting, also attended by the Chief Executive, the Auditor General outlined details of his new rolling programme of Corporate Assessments, based on a four-year cycle, which will be in addition to the Wales Audit Office's annual programme of improvement studies and audits of authorities' approach to improvement planning. The Auditor General confirmed that Cardiff will be amongst the first four authorities to be subject to a Corporate Assessment in 2013/14, and that the Assessment would commence in May 2013.
10. Following on from the meeting with the Auditor General for Wales, the Leader invited the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to consider what assistance could be provided to the Authority by means of an independent Improvement Peer Review, working alongside Cardiff Councillors and Senior Officers, to address a high level improvement strategy. Such a review would be intended to provide the Leader, her Cabinet, and service areas, a view from a critical friend of areas of strength and areas for development.

Issues

Corporate Assessment

11. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires the Auditor General for Wales to carry out an Improvement Assessment for each improvement authority every year, to determine whether the authority is likely to comply with requirements to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The Auditor General must also carry out audits of whether the authority has discharged its duties under the Measure.
12. As indicated in paragraph 9, above, the Auditor General has decided that, having conducted three cycles of work since the introduction of the Measure, the planned Annual Assessment of corporate improvement arrangements is, in most cases, likely to be excessive. Therefore from 2013-14 the Wales Audit Office will deliver a rolling programme of Corporate Assessments, based on a four-year cycle. The purpose of the Corporate Assessment is *"to provide a position statement of an improvement authority's capacity and capability to deliver continuous improvement. It will, by its nature, examine an authority's track record of performance and outcomes as well as examining the key arrangements that are necessary to underpin improvements in services and functions"*.
13. For the first year of the cycle (2013-14) the WAO intend to undertake four corporate assessments, with the first four authorities being:
 - Cardiff Council;
 - Ceredigion County Council;
 - Conwy County Borough Council; and
 - Newport City Council

14. It is currently envisaged that the “desk-based” preparatory stage of this assessment will commence in May 2013, with the “fieldwork” element of the assessment, which will include a series of interviews, being undertaken in the Autumn of 2013. A project Brief for the Corporate Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Potential Peer Review process

15. As suggested in paragraph 10 of this report, it is proposed that an independent Improvement Peer Review be undertaken to address a high level improvement strategy. Such a review would be undertaken by a panel of experts established by the WLGA who would conduct a high level review working alongside Cardiff Councillors and Senior Officers.
16. Rather than an examination of individual services, it is the Chief Executive’s belief that it is vitally important that the full spectrum of issues is looked at holistically to present a comprehensive overview to the Council. This could take the form of a Commission under the direction of the WLGA as part of an on-going national initiative aimed at supporting Welsh Local Authorities in their preparations for improving services against their current position and in the context of the expected financial challenges of the medium and longer term.
17. The remit of the Panel would include the consideration of the major risks that are currently facing the Council and to identify, and consider, the risk management arrangements that have been put in place. In addition to the identification of risks facing the Authority, the Panel may also suggest potential solutions for consideration by the Cabinet going forward. Priorities will include the areas highlighted in discussions with the Auditor General, set out in paragraph 4 above, and, in addition, a number of specific issues that the Cabinet wish to see addressed by the Review:
- What progress has been made since June 2012 in developing Cardiff’s strategy as a Member driven City Government with Cabinet Members responsible and accountable for decision making;
 - How Senior Management have prioritised service delivery in line with the Council’s published Corporate Plan;
 - What progress has been made towards achieving targets set in the improvement plan;
 - How closely service delivery reflects and aligns with the policies of the Welsh Government and those agreed through the collective voice of the Welsh Local Government Association;
 - How effective is the level of corporate control within the organisation at providing a coherent strategy for improvement and deliverable outcomes;
 - How the Council plans for the future and supports service areas in delivering change;

- The way in which Cardiff manages and mitigates its financial and service delivery risks;
 - The way that the Council ensures value for money through effective and efficient policy making and management delivery.
18. In undertaking this review it is envisaged that the Peer Review Panel would review and consider the:
- culture of a member-led professionally managed organisation
 - existing organisational structure and culture and its fitness for purpose.
 - existing management systems and processes for reporting to Cabinet
 - strategic and coherent improvement planning and risk management
 - systems to support Value for Money
19. To assist with the preparation for the planned Corporate Assessment by the WAO, the pre assessment by the independent Peer Review process would need to commence with immediate effect as any rapid and intensive review of the Authority would need to be completed by July 2013. Bearing this in mind, it should be noted that the 8 of the 11 new Directors positions have been filled by external candidates who will mostly be taking up their positions between July and August and will still be acclimatising to the organisation. The outcomes of this process should include a better understanding of the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement and offer clear suggestions for action, based on the Peer team's experience and knowledge of good practice across a wide range of authorities.
20. The independent Peer Review Panel would be appointed by the WLGA and it is envisaged that it would comprise individuals of high repute and professional status such as an experienced Leader and Chief Executive of a comparable Local Authority, specialists on Corporate Working and Service Delivery, with project support provided by the WLGA. The Panel would need to engage with the Leader and members of the Cabinet; Scrutiny Chairs; the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team; a representative sample of staff; and Trades Unions.
21. The review, which would be undertaken on the basis of an examination by a "critical friend", should be seen as part of Welsh local government's approach to self improvement and self-regulation and would build on the track record of WLGA Resources Peer Reviews across Wales. The costs of the independent Peer Review would be met by the WLGA.

Legal Implications

22. The statutory framework for the carrying out of an Improvement Assessment is described in the text of this report

Financial Implications

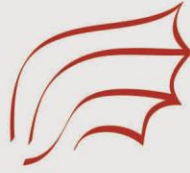
23. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. As identified above the costs of the independent Peer Review are to be met by the WLGA. Any resulting cost implications identified as a result of the peer review and corporate assessment process would be dealt with as a separate report at that time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Formally note the arrangements for the corporate assessment of the Authority, to be undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, during 2013/14;
- 2) Agree proposals for an independent Peer Review of the Authority as both a foundation level examination for forthcoming audit and inspection exercises and a rigorous local government sector led improvement approach; and
- 3) Delegate to the Head of the Cabinet Office the task of co-ordinating the arrangements for the external assessments.

JON HOUSE
Chief Executive
10 May 2013



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

Corporate Assessment

Project brief

Audit year: 2013-14

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This document was produced by Huw Rees.

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Project Brief

Introduction

1. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General for Wales to carry out an improvement assessment for each improvement authority every year, to determine whether the authority is likely to comply with requirements to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The Auditor General must also carry out audits of whether the authority has discharged its duties under the Measure.
2. The requirement for the Auditor General to assess the likelihood that an authority will make arrangements to improve changed the way performance audit work had previously been carried out. The emphasis on risk that was apparent in the previous regulatory regime is replaced by a focus on improvement that is broader and more forward looking. The Measure also places a greater emphasis on accounting for performance in terms of the outcomes experienced by citizens.
3. In the first year of the Measure, 2010-11, we carried out an overview assessment of key aspects of local authorities' improvement arrangements to highlight strengths and areas where improvements could be made. This work was reported in Preliminary Corporate Assessment reports that were issued to authorities between July and September 2010. These reports were welcomed by many as painting a useful picture of capacity and capability and they formed a general overview in relation to the key aspects that support improvement in authorities. The Auditor General further published an Annual Improvement Report for each authority in January 2011 summarising his work and those of relevant regulators¹. These reports provided a commentary on improvement authorities' performance as well as a commentary on the arrangements that underpin improvement.
4. In subsequent years we have built on this overview to gain a deeper understanding of some key aspects highlighted at each authority and to evaluate progress on improvements to arrangements, and on delivering improvement objectives.
5. The Auditor General has decided that, having conducted three cycles of work since the introduction of the Measure, continued annual assessment of corporate improvement arrangements is, in most cases, likely to be excessive. Therefore from 2013-14 the Wales Audit Office will deliver a rolling programme of corporate assessments, based on a four-year cycle. This means that, in addition to an annual programme of improvement studies and audits of authorities' approach to improvement planning and reporting, each authority will receive an in-depth corporate assessment once during a four year period. In the intervening years the Wales Audit Office will keep track of developments through progress updates. Although the norm will be for each authority to receive a corporate assessment once in every four years, the Auditor General reserves the flexibility to undertake work on matters of priority or concern as they arise which may, in exceptional circumstances, result in an authority receiving a corporate assessment more frequently under his Special Inspection powers.

¹ Section 16 of the Measure sets out relevant regulators to be The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), Estyn, the Welsh Language Commissioner, and Auditors appointed by the Auditor General.

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6. This project brief sets out our approach to corporate assessment.

Purpose of the Corporate Assessment

7. The purpose of the corporate assessment is to provide a position statement of an improvement authority's capacity and capability to deliver continuous improvement. It will, by its nature, examine an authority's track record of performance and outcomes as well as examining the key arrangements that are necessary to underpin improvements in services and functions.
8. The Auditor General will issue a report that states whether he believes that the authority is likely to comply with the requirements of the Measure². This judgement of 'likelihood' will be based on work carried out and previous accumulated knowledge, and therefore reflects performance at a particular point in time. It should not be seen as a four-year clean bill of health or as a definitive prediction of future success. Rather, it should be viewed as providing assurance as to whether the arrangements currently in place are reasonably sound insofar as can be ascertained from our work and the work of relevant regulators.

Focus of the Corporate Assessment

9. Our work will focus on the extent to which arrangements are contributing to delivering improved service performance and outcomes for citizens. It will therefore not be sufficient that arrangements are merely in place, as those arrangements must be effective in enabling improvement in services and functions.
10. An authority's track record of improvement is an important consideration in the Auditor General's judgement of whether an authority is likely to meet the requirements of the Measure. Our work in relation to this will focus on an authority's priorities and its performance in meeting its improvement objectives, with a particular emphasis on the impact that an authority's improvement programme is making on outcomes for citizens. As well as our own work we will consider the findings from any work undertaken by relevant regulators; principally Estyn, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), the Welsh Language Commissioner and auditors appointed by the Auditor General.
11. The corporate assessment is seeking to answer the following question:
"Is the authority capable of delivering its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens?"
12. Our assessment will cover the following:
- Performance and outcomes;
"Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?"

² A general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement, and specific duties to set improvement objectives and to publish improvement plans and assessments of performance.

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- Vision and strategic direction;
“Does the authority’s vision and strategic direction support improvement?”
 - Governance and accountability;
“Do the authority’s governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?”
 - Use of resources;
“Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?”
 - Collaboration and partnerships;
“Are the authority’s collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?”
 - Managing improvement.
“Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?”
- 13.** As well as being informed by the work of regulators and inspectors the assessment will also be informed by other available sources including the authority’s own mechanisms for review and evaluation. Such mechanisms may include, but are not limited to:
- the Annual Governance Statement and its review of effectiveness;
 - the activities and outputs of scrutiny committees;
 - the work of the Audit Committee;
 - the work of internal audit;
 - the authority’s own assessment of performance as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009;
 - the Director of Social Services Annual Report;
 - self-evaluations prior to Estyn inspections;
 - management information and reports;
 - complaints, correspondence, Ombudsman reviews, whistleblowing etc;
 - the authority’s assessment of progress in meeting equalities duties and objectives (from 2012); and
 - the authority’s Welsh Language Scheme self-evaluation report.
- 14.** Over time our work, and that of the relevant regulators, will allow the Auditor General to take a view as to whether he can place reliance upon these self-evaluations.

Methodology

- 15.** A series of question hierarchies will underpin the key lines of enquiry for each of the aspects of the corporate assessment that are set out in Appendix 1. The first phase of the assessment will involve detailed local scoping as, whilst the coverage of the corporate assessment is as described in paragraph 12, the specific and relative focus on individual aspects will vary from authority to authority, based on:
- Breadth of work undertaken to date;

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- Significance and priority of previous findings;
 - Progress on recommendations or proposals for improvement;
 - Planned or actual changes to arrangements.
16. An initial desktop review of documentation and previous audit work will focus in on the specific enquiries required for the fieldwork phase. Documents likely to be required at this stage are set out in Appendix 2. This is not an exhaustive list, and we will make refinements and submit a document request to the authority seven weeks prior to on-site fieldwork asking for documents to be supplied to us within two weeks. At this stage we will also notify the authority of the proposed interview schedule for the on-site phase. An example interview schedule is set out in Appendix 3. Again this is indicative and we will liaise with the authority regarding specific interviews or focus groups.
 17. During the third week prior to fieldwork we will brief the authority on the specific focus of the on-site work with a view to also finalising the interview schedule.
 18. Typically the fieldwork phase will involve us being on-site at the authority for between 5-10 days in total. It is likely that this will be broken up into two stages to allow for pause and review.
 19. We will share outline conclusions with the authority prior to drafting our report. This is likely to be two weeks after the conclusion of fieldwork. We will share our report for factual accuracy before issuing the report as final. The total elapsed time from local scoping to publication of the final full corporate assessment report is approximately 19 weeks. An example timeline with key milestones is set out below:

Week	Activity
1	Local scoping – assessment team
2	Document request and draft interview schedule sent to authority
4	Receive documents from authority
6	Brief authority and finalise interview schedule
9-11	Fieldwork (including pause and review stage)
13	Share outline conclusions with authority
15	Issue draft report to authority
17	Receive comments from authority
19	Publish final report

Appendix 1

Question Hierarchy

Level 1	Level 2	
<p>Is the authority capable of delivering its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens?</p>	<p>Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</p>	<p>How much? How well? Is anyone better off?</p>
	<p>Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?</p>	<p>Clarity, sense of purpose, needs based priorities, leadership, culture, ownership.</p>
	<p>Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities, values and behaviours, scrutiny, engagement, transparency, openness.</p>
	<p>Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</p>	<p>Financial, human, buildings, ICT.</p>
	<p>Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?</p>	<p>Business cases, governance, resources, management, results and outcomes.</p>
	<p>Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?</p>	<p>Improvement planning, performance management, risk management, reporting.</p>

Appendix 2

Sample document request

Organisation chart

Details of member affiliations, portfolio etc.

Constitution

Standing orders and scheme of delegation

Delegated decision register

Annual Governance Statement

Corporate Plan

Improvement Plan

Community Strategy / Single Integrated plan

Medium Term Financial Plan

Budget monitoring reports

Specific plans related to Improvement objectives, e.g. Community Safety; CYPP

Service Business Plans

Corporate engagement/consultation strategy and guidance

Asset Management Plan

ICT strategy

Workforce plan

Appraisal process

Training and Development strategy

Risk Register

Executive and Scrutiny work programmes

Any guidance documentation for council staff on business or service improvement plans

Performance Management Reports

Committee reports and papers (Council, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny, Audit, Standards, Democratic Services Committee reports) and any related sub-groups

Resident and/or stakeholder survey results

Staff survey results

Other self-evaluations and/or annual reports

Appendix 3

Sample interview schedule

Interviews

Chief Executive
Head of Policy and Performance (or equivalent)
Director/Head of Finance
Head of HR
Head of Risk Management
Monitoring Officer
Head of Democratic Services / Democratic Services Manager
LSB Lead officer
Head of ICT
Head of Asset Management
Lead Officer – specific service(s)/project(s)
Leader of the Council
Leader of the Opposition and leaders of other political groups
Chair of Audit Committee
Executive/Cabinet members – (e.g. Finance, performance, ICT, HR)
Chairs of key partnership forums
Key partners (including Police, Health, Voluntary sector, other Councils)
Chair of Standards Committee
Cabinet support officers
Scrutiny support officers

Focus groups

Corporate Management Team
Heads of Service Overview and Scrutiny Chairs
Service delivery teams (as appropriate)
Stakeholders (as appropriate)



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