

**WALES AUDIT OFFICE CORPORATE ASSESSMENT FOLLOW
ON REPORT – STATEMENT OF ACTION UPDATE**

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA ITEM: 2

PORTFOLIO: LEADER (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS)

Reason for this Report

1. To provide an update to Cabinet on progress made during 2016/17 to implement the various commitments contained within the Council's Statement of Action, which was developed in response to the recommendations made in the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Follow On report.

Background

2. The Auditor General for Wales must report on an annual basis on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement in delivering their services. In addition, the Auditor General for Wales must conduct a Corporate Assessment of every local authority in Wales once every 4 years and has powers to:
 - make proposals for improvement;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement;
 - conduct a special inspection and publish a report and make recommendations;
 - recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.
3. In March 2014, the Wales Audit Office undertook a Corporate Assessment of the Council which sought to assess if the Council was capable of delivering its priorities and improved outcomes for citizens. This assessment, which focused on performance in 2013/14, also drew on the work of other Welsh inspectorates, including Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Estyn.
4. On 1 September 2014, the Wales Audit Office published its findings in the form of a Corporate Assessment report, which was received formally by the Cabinet on 18 September 2014. The report also committed the Wales Audit Office to carry out a follow-on visit in 2015 to determine whether the issues identified in the Corporate Assessment report had been satisfactorily resolved. This was undertaken in September 2015.

5. The Wales Audit Office published its Corporate Assessment Follow On report on 26 February 2016 and the report was received formally by the Cabinet on 10 March 2016. The report contained one statutory recommendation and 14 proposals for improvement, which related specifically to the following key areas:
 - leadership & management;
 - governance;
 - performance reporting; and
 - corporate enablers (including human resources, use of assets, financial planning processes; IT arrangements and information governance arrangements).
6. The single recommendation of the Wales Audit Office Follow On report was that the Council must ensure that it addresses the 14 proposals for improvement to deliver improved outcomes within the next 12 months.
7. In response, the Cabinet agreed a Statement of Action and proposed timetable on 21 March 2016, as required by the Wales Audit Office and within 30 days of receipt of the Follow On report. An updated Organisational Development Programme was also agreed by the Cabinet on 16 June 2016, which had been reviewed and reshaped in order to address specifically the proposals for improvement contained within the Follow On report.

Issues

8. The Statement of Action constitutes the Council's mechanism for monitoring progress made during 2016/17 to implement the agreed actions in response to the one recommendation and 14 proposals for improvement made previously by the Wales Audit Office. For each action, details are provided of progress made to date and current status (i.e. ongoing or completed), the timescale within which it will be delivered and the senior officer responsible for implementation. A copy of the Statement of Action progress report (dated November 2016) is attached as **Appendix A** to this report.
9. Progress against the actions contained within the Statement of Action has been discussed at regular liaison meetings between the Council's Head of Performance & Partnerships and Wales Audit Office representatives, where agreement has also been made to revise some of the implementation dates, as necessary. In addition, the Leader, Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Resources) also meet regularly with Wales Audit Office representatives.
10. An update report on the Statement of Action was considered by the Council's Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 15 November 2016. A copy of the subsequent letter received from the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee (dated 23 November 2016) is attached as **Appendix B** to this report.

11. The Council will continue to monitor implementation of the Statement of Action during 2016/17 and liaise accordingly with the Wales Audit Office on progress made. In addition, the Wales Audit Office will look to incorporate relevant areas of the Statement of Action into related thematic reviews in order to assess the overall effectiveness of improvements made by the Council.

Reason for Recommendation

12. To enable the Cabinet to consider progress in implementing the various commitments contained within the Council's Statement of Action.

Financial Implications

13. This is a progress update on the implementation of the Council's Statement of Action. In the event of any resource requirements arising in delivering further progress on the implementation of improvement actions contained within Appendix A, then funding will be found from within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

14. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report and the contents. However Cabinet should be aware that failing to meet the obligations set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 as judged by the Auditor General for Wales could ultimately result in intervention by the Welsh Government.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to note the progress made in implementing the Council's Statement of Action during 2016/17.

PAUL ORDERS

Chief Executive

9 December 2016

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix A: Statement of Action Progress Report (November 2016)

Appendix B: Letter from the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee (dated 23 November 2016)

The following background papers have been taken into account:

Cabinet Report, 21 March 2016: Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Follow On Report – Statement of Action

Cabinet Report, 10 March 2016: Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Follow On Report