

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2009

AUDIT COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

WALES AUDIT OFFICE – REPORT ON SCHOOL MODERNISATION

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1** To introduce the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report on school modernisation that reflects the findings from work undertaken earlier this year. The report was considered by Cabinet on 11th August 2009. In accordance with the arrangements agreed with the WAO, all its reports are also scheduled for the information of the Audit Committee.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1** Each year, the Wales Audit Office and the Council's appointed auditors undertake a range of studies that help them assess progress with corporate priorities and the performance and financial standing of the Council. These studies also contribute to the audit opinion and the results of the work are reflected in the Auditor's Annual Letter.

3. Background.

- 3.1** School Modernisation is one of the Council's strategic programmes and involves significant capital investment. The Council's risk assessment indicates that if progress is not made with the School Modernisation Programme, schools will become unfit for purpose which will impact on pupil attainment levels and have other negative consequences.
- 3.2** The Regulatory Plan for 2008/09, agreed by Council, included the WAO undertaking a review of the Council's approach to school modernisation and the report attached as Appendix 1 provides a summary of the Auditors' findings.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1** The Audit office have concluded that the Council "...has a realistic and proactive approach to school modernisation". This is a positive assessment and one which fairly reflects the considerable work that has been done with all stakeholders that has helped avoid some of the difficulties that other Council's have experienced with this issue.
- 4.2** Some of the key findings reflected in the report are:-

- There is now a planned and costed approach to school modernisation which is building confidence and enabling the Council to address difficult issues in a structured way
- The Council is proactive in seeking funds to deliver its school modernisation programme and has committed £53million but still needs £175million, including £64million for which no potential source has yet been identified.
- The identified improvements to the organisation and project management arrangements have not yet been fully implemented.

4.3 Arising from their work, the auditors have made two recommendations that relate to securing:-

- greater clarity of outcomes,
- project management arrangements.

The detailed recommendations are contained in Paragraph 7 of the WAO report. These were discussed and agreed with officers.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

5.1 None.

6. Legal Implications.

6.1 There are no legal implications

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 The approved funding figures shown in Exhibit 2 on Page 8 exclude the recent bid to WAG for additional School Buildings Improvement Grant for 2010/13 of £2.9m to enable the Council to proceed with the adaptations and new build required at Litchard Primary School. The Council has recently been notified that this bid has been successful and will receive a 75% contribution from WAG to meet the costs.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That the Committee considers the Wales Audit Office report and notes the recommendations.

Contact Officer: Dave MacGregor
Asst. Chief Executive – Corporate Development & Partnerships

Telephone: (01656) 643687

E-mail: david.macgregor@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Civic Offices, Angel Street, BRIDGEND. CF31 4WB

Background documents

Wales Audit Office Report Ref 901A2008

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