

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE

28 January 2016

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

WALES AUDIT OFFICE – ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT (AIR) ON BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 2015

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To introduce the report of the Auditor General to Audit Committee (attached as Appendix 1).

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 The report includes an assessment of whether the Council met statutory continuous improvement duties contained within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. It focuses on the Council's delivery of its improvement objectives that were defined for 2014-15 and its planning of improvement for 2015-16.

3. Background

- 3.1 Each year, the Auditor General is required to audit the improvement planning and reporting arrangements of each Welsh improvement authority and prepare an Annual Improvement Report (AIR) to summarise the findings.
- 3.2 For 2014-15, the Auditor General undertook improvement assessment work under three themes: performance; use of resources; and governance. Individual projects undertaken by the Wales Audit Office and other regulators are listed on pages 5-6 of the attached report.
- 3.3 The report also includes a summary of the key findings from reports issued by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) and the Welsh Language Commissioner.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The overall conclusion of the report is positive, as follows:

The Council continued to make progress in delivering improvements in its priority areas and recognises the need to support improvement of children's services; its forward planning arrangements and track record suggest it is well placed to secure improvement in 2015-16 (p.5 of the attached report).

- 4.2 Headline findings under each theme are summarised below:

Performance

- National indicators for 2013-14 showed a mixed picture of performance with a particular fall in performance in children's services indicators.
- The Council is driving improvement in education.
- The Council has made some progress in addressing the key areas for improvement identified by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales but significant challenges remain.
- The Council is delivering most aspects of environmental health services above or at minimum standard.
- The Council made good progress in committing its discretionary housing payments but it is not able to judge the effectiveness of its work in addressing the impact of welfare reform.
- The Council continues to take action to extend the provision of Welsh in the delivery of its services.

Use of resources

- The Council has complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources (audit of the Council's accounts).
- The Council is maintaining a robust approach to its Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Council arrangements for identifying and making savings demonstrate most of the factors required for achieving success.

Governance

- The Council has successfully adopted alternative methods of service delivery in the past, is currently managing them effectively and is exploring options for the future.
- Arrangements for meeting safeguarding responsibilities to children were adequate.

4.3 The Auditor General did not make any statutory recommendations, but made 13 specific proposals for improvement. A summary of the key findings is included in the attached report (p.7) so is the summary of the proposals for improvement (p.9).

4.4 The attached report was presented to both Cabinet and Council by the Chief Executive in December 2015.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and the Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 No equality impact assessment has been undertaken as the Auditor General's Annual Improvement Report is essentially a retrospective assessment of the Council's performance.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That Audit Committee notes the Annual Improvement Report produced by the WAO.

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22 January 2016

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Background documents

None