Technology Review Feedback

Vale of Glamorgan Council

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Status of report

This document has been prepared for the internal use of Vale of Glamorgan Council as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions, the Code of Audit Practice and the Statement of Responsibilities issued by the Auditor General for Wales.

The person who delivered the work was Janet Villars.

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1. Effective use of technology is essential for transforming the delivery of public services, improving outcomes for citizens and delivering efficiency savings. Technology can support different ways of working, delivering services and engaging with citizens, enabling councils to deliver more for less. The way in which technology is delivered and managed has a direct impact on the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of work undertaken across the Council and affects almost every council worker. Poor ICT governance can lead to the use of inappropriate systems, system unavailability and frustration throughout the organisation.

2. In 2010, the Wales Audit Office identified that many local authorities were grappling with ensuring technology was used effectively to support service transformation and achieve efficiency savings, and as a result, reviews of technology are being undertaken at all councils in Wales.

3. This review sought to answer the question "Are the Council's arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology likely to support continuous improvement?" Our review of The Vale of Glamorgan Council (the Council) concluded that: The Council's current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are likely to support continuous improvement. The Council has established sound technology foundations and ICT governance arrangements and is using technology to secure sustainable, effective use of technology, deliver efficiencies and transform service delivery. We came to this conclusion because:

   - arrangements were sound, but the Council could make better use of limited ICT skills and resources, and

   - performance was good, with evidence of sustainable service improvement, there was scope to improve the customer access channel arrangements through the use of performance information.

4. In July 2012, we reviewed the Council's progress at implementing our five proposals for improvement arising from the review. We found that: "the Council had made some progress in implementing our proposals for improvement, but none had been fully implemented and plans to progress delivery were unclear. The Council's arrangements to manage, monitor and evaluate the implementation of our proposals for improvement were not fully supporting improvement."

5. Our findings are outlined in the table below.

Proposals for Improvement

- The report had not been formally presented to the Audit Panel.
- The Council's Performance Management system is the formal system for overseeing the delivery of Wales Audit Office proposals for improvement; however we did not find that it was effectively supporting the implementation of the proposals for Improvement.
- Responsibility for responding to Improvement Proposals had not been formally allocated; responsibility informally fell to the Head of ICT who was not always the appropriate officer.
- All proposals for improvement were included in the ICT Service Business Plan even though some were clearly outside of the services control.
- Progress at implementing proposals for improvement was not formally monitored.

P1	Revise the ICT Strategy to reflect how plans to use technology will support the delivery of the Council's Improvement Objectives and the expected outcomes.	**No progress, but plans** • In 2012 the Council will align the development of a corporate plan for the period up until the next election (four years) with the annual budget approval cycle. The reasons for this are: − Community Strategy was revised in 2012; − Council has a new Administration and change in Political control following the election; and − The Financial situation. • A report was submitted to Cabinet 30 July, outlining plans to review the Corporate Plan. A draft plan will be taken to cabinet and Scrutiny Nov/Dec 2012 at the same time as the budget proposals for 2013/14. • A review of the Corporate Plan has commenced in July 2012 and publication of the approved plan is scheduled for April 2013. • The Council developed its ICT Strategy in 2010, it was reviewed in 2011. The Council is due to review and update it in December 2012, this will enable it to reflect the changes to the Corporate Plan and update it following the introduction of a corporate contract for the provision of PCs, the introduction of a Microsoft software Enterprise Agreement and the changes to mobile technology. • There is no improvement or evidence of impact to report at this time.

Proposals for Improvement		
P2	The Council aligns its transformation ambitions with its capacity and skills to develop, support and deliver project-based technology without impacting on the quality of the ICT service provided.	**Some Progress** • The Council has reduced its transformation ambitions by reviewing and revising the "One Vale Programme".
P3	Make better use of the Council's ICT skills, expertise and capacity either by, merging Education ICT with the Corporate ICT team, or establishing professional accountability to the Head of ICT to align and develop ICT capacity, skills and professional standards with the delivery of Council priorities.	**Limited Progress.** • A report was submitted to Scrutiny 24 January 2012. Although both Heads of Service agreed that a merger would help to improve service to schools and could generate some savings from doing so, they considered the level of savings to be insufficient to warrant a merger of the two teams at this time. Ten per cent savings equated to approximately £190k. • The proposal for improvement was considered to be subsumed into the Joint Education Service (JES) arrangements and was not progressed. It has since been clarified that JES will not include schools ICT support. • There is no improvement or evidence of impact to report at this time.
P4	The annual IT service plans submitted by services to the ICT Service to inform their work plans are an example of good practice, however, compliance with this process requirement needs to be addressed because only six out of a possible 22 service plans have been submitted for 2011-12.	**No Progress** • A process to ensure compliance with the requirement for ICT plans to be submitted as part of individual Service Plans was agreed between the ICT Service and the Central Performance Team. • During service planning workshops, all Heads of Service/OMs are reminded to consider the ICT implications of their activities and also to complete the departmental annual ICT Strategy statement whilst liaising directly with their relevant Account Managers within ICT. • However, only six ICT service plans were submitted for 2012-13 and compliance was not enforced. • There is no improvement or evidence of impact to report at this time.

Proposals for Improvement	
P5 Use performance information relating to the usage and cost of transactions across different customer access channels to inform its Customer Access Strategy and reduce transaction costs.	**Limited Progress** • The Council is developing its performance information relating to the cost and usage of transactions across its access channels. • There is some evidence of channel shift in terms of payments made to the Council with face to face transactions reducing and telephone and self-service transactions showing growth. • The cost of telephone transactions to the Council is well understood and measured, however there are gaps in the Council's understanding of the specific cost of service delivery through other channels and this is to be a key area for development in 2012-13. • There was some improvement but limited evidence of impact to report at this time.