

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

### **Cabinet Meeting: 5 September, 2016**

#### **Report of the Leader**

### **Outcome of the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Report 2016 incorporating the Annual Improvement Report 2015-16**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The report informs Members of the extremely positive outcome of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Corporate Assessment 2016 which incorporates the Annual Improvement Report 2015-16

#### **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the content of this report and the outcome of the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Report 2016 incorporating the Annual Improvement Report 2015-16.
2. That a copy of the report is referred to Audit Committee for consideration.
3. That Cabinet receives an update on progress towards the Proposals for Improvement within 6 months of the date of this report.

#### **Reasons for the Recommendations**

1. To note the outcome of the Corporate Assessment process.
2. To ensure that Audit Committee considers this report
3. To ensure that progress against the Proposals for Improvement is undertaken efficiently and in a timely manner.

#### **Background**

2. In 2013-14, the WAO commenced a four year cycle of Corporate Assessments of authorities in Wales, this being in addition to an annual programme of improvement studies and audits of Council activity. The Corporate Assessment of this Council was carried out during the early part of this year and the report was published on 25 August 2016. The purpose of the Corporate Assessment, as described by the WAO, is to provide a position statement of an authority's capacity and capability to deliver continuous improvement. The assessment process considers an authority's track record of performance and the key arrangements in place to deliver continuous

improvement. The focus is on the extent to which arrangements contribute to delivering improved performance and service outcomes for citizens.

3. Members will recall that fieldwork (visit to site) was undertaken during March 2016. Auditors from the WAO carried out a range of one to one interviews with staff and Members, focus groups with Members and officers and gathered evidence to inform the outcome of the assessment process. This fieldwork was preceded by considerable research. Prior to the publication of the final report on 25 August, the Managing Director of the Council has been afforded an opportunity to comment on the findings of the WAO and, where appropriate and accepted, his comments have been taken into account and reflected in the final report.

## Relevant Issues and Options

4. A copy of the full report is attached at [Appendix A](#) and also on the following link: [https://gallery.mailchimp.com/99566004543c1bbaf2572c5fa/files/453A2016\\_VoG\\_AI\\_R\\_english.pdf](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/99566004543c1bbaf2572c5fa/files/453A2016_VoG_AI_R_english.pdf)
5. A copy of the WAO press release issued on 25 August is attached at [Appendix B](#). That press release makes it clear that the Council has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve and that current work is helping ensure that the Council is well placed to continue securing improvement. The Auditor General for Wales, Huw Vaughan Thomas is quoted as saying: 'It is very positive to see a local authority receive such a good report and see that they have committed to looking at developing key services, such as ICT to deliver more efficient services. I encourage the authority to continue this high standard as they deliver their proposed changes to key services'.
6. A press release issued by Mark Drakeford, Local Government Secretary is also attached at [Appendix C](#). Mr Drakeford A.M. is quoted as saying; 'I'd like to congratulate the council on this excellent report. As the Auditor General points out, there is a clear line of sight in what the local authority wants to achieve and how it intends to improve the lives of the people it serves'. He goes on by saying: 'the cabinet is working very effectively with senior managers to drive change and meet local needs....I'm confident that through the effective leadership already demonstrated, the council will be able to make key changes to public services'.
7. The report is extremely welcome. It provides firm and robust evidence that, despite increasing pressures on our budgets and demands on our services, we are performing efficiently. In summary, the WAO also found that the Council's vision reflects local needs and national priorities and that senior political and officer leadership is engaging effectively with staff to support change and planning for the future. It is also made clear that the change agenda is supported by effective leadership and there are clear lines of responsibility which are securing improvement. In addition, effective governance arrangements have secured improvements and scrutiny arrangements have been refined to evaluate outcomes, with information about the Council's performance being readily available. The WAO also advise that the human resources service and extensive staff engagement is supporting Council priorities and the change agenda. In this regard, Members' attention is drawn to pages 23 to 25 of the report which describes very positively staff engagement and staff development, highlighting the leadership café as a case study.
8. Following a Corporate Assessment, the WAO can take one of four steps. Where it has concerns, it can ask Welsh Government to intervene, conduct a special investigation, or make formal recommendations for improvement. In this particular case, none of these measures are required. It is however common and expected

that the WAO make “proposals for improvement”. These are suggestions of areas in which the Council could be doing more and five such proposals are listed. These relate to: performance management and implementing proposed changes to the performance management framework; providing more information as part of financial reporting; completing work that is already underway on developing a vision and objectives for the ICT service; and accelerating the gathering of data and necessary training in relation to buildings compliance. It is for the Council to implement the proposals.

9. The attached report at [Appendix A](#) lists these Proposals for Improvement in full, both in the summary report on page 5 and by sub heading in the main report. The main report includes a rationale for making the Proposals for Improvement and Members will note that, in many instances, these proposals reflect work that is already underway or planned. A key area for the Council will be to embed new performance management arrangements and Members will be fully aware that the new approach to performance monitoring and refocusing Scrutiny around Corporate Outcomes has been implemented to ensure effective monitoring of corporate outcomes and objectives.
10. Following the outcome of the Assessment, the WAO will keep track of the Council's progress in responding to Proposals for Improvement. In this regard, I am recommending that an update report is brought back to Cabinet within the next 6 months on progress against the Proposals for Improvement. I am also recommending that this report be referred to Audit Committee for consideration. Finally, I will be providing all members with a copy of this report for their information, given the significance of the findings.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

11. None over and above those identified in the body of the report. Members will note that a key element of the Corporate Assessment process involved an assessment of the Council's approach to financial management and people management.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

12. None directly attributable to this report, although the Corporate Assessment process does consider the way in which the Council manages its assets.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

13. None over and above those identified in the body of this report.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

14. None directly attributable to this report

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

15. None directly attributable to this report

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

16. This report links to the performance and reputation of the Council in terms of its capability and capacity to deliver quality services to citizens and to deliver its vision of 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future' as well as all corporate outcomes and related objectives.

## **Policy Framework and Budget**

17. This is a matter for Executive decision.

## **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

18. Corporate Performance and Resources

## **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

19. As this report is not Ward specific, no consultation has been undertaken.

## **Background Papers**

WAO Corporate Assessment Report 2016 (incorporating the Annual Improvement Report 2015-16)

WAO Press release dated 25 August 2016

## **Contact Officer**

Rob Thomas

## **Officers Consulted**

Corporate Management Team

## **Responsible Officer:**

Rob Thomas  
Managing Director