

Improvement Proposals in External Audit Reports 2013-2018

1. **Good Scrutiny? Good Question** - National Report by the Wales Audit Office published May 2014

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

1. Explain the roles of executive members and senior officers in contributing to the scrutiny process.
2. Ensure that scrutiny members, specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and assistance in order to ensure that they possess all skills required to conduct effective scrutiny work.
3. Further develop scrutiny forward planning processes in order to:
 - Prepare a clear logic for selecting subjects
 - Focus more on outcomes
 - Ensure that the most suitable scrutiny method for the subject field and the desired outcome is used.
4. Reconcile scrutiny programmes and performance management, self-evaluation and Council improvement arrangements.
5. Ensure that the impact of scrutiny is appropriately appraised and that it is implemented in order to improve the function; including conducting follow-up work on proposed actions and auditing results.
6. Carry out regular self-evaluations of scrutiny arrangements by using the 'effective outcomes and features of effective overview and scrutiny arrangements for local government' developed by the Wales Scrutiny Officers Network.

Progress against improvement proposals

Following the publication of the above-mentioned report we commenced a comprehensive process of self-evaluating our scrutiny arrangements, and of learning from others. This work resulted in several models of new scrutiny structures for the Council to consider. The Council adopted the amended scrutiny arrangements at its meeting on 2 March 2017 and these came into force with the new Council in May.

Five meetings of the Scrutiny Forum have been held since the new procedure was adopted with the Scrutiny Forum exercising its main role of ensuring that the correct matters are scrutinised and investigated across the Council. Part of the Scrutiny Forum's annual work programme will include conducting a continuous self-review of scrutiny arrangements and the process of prioritising matters to be scrutinised. Since

May 2017, we have adopted a new system where two members from the scrutiny committees sit in on internal performance review meetings where the Cabinet Members challenge the performance of the service for which they are responsible. This has strengthened the relationship between the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees and has led to identifying matters to be included on the 'scrutiny investigation log' (which in turn could be matters being officially scrutinised). In addition, a joint meeting between Scrutiny Forum Members and Members of the Leadership Team was held in order to ensure a joint understanding of the role of scrutiny in Gwynedd. We have also held a series of training courses in February 2017 and again in September for members of all scrutiny committees (including the Audit and Governance Committee) on chairing skills and questioning skills in order to scrutinise effectively.

We are continuing to assess whether or not the new arrangements have managed to create a successful system for scrutinising decisions. The Wales Audit Office undertook a further review into the field of scrutiny in November/December 2017 and we are still awaiting its report. The findings of the report will feed into the continuous assessment of the new arrangements.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that each improvement proposal be noted as being "in progress".

2. Annual Performance Appraisal of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) 2013/14 - Local report to Gwynedd published October 2014

Improvement Proposals arising from the report -

1. The national LAC review identified the need to develop opportunities for looked after children to use basic health services and moving on accommodation. As part of its corporate parenting responsibilities, the Council should ensure that it is possible for the children in its care to use basic health care.
The performance for registering with a GP within 10 days fell from 92.5% in 2012/13 to 78.4% in 2013/14. Although the percentage of the health assessments of looked after children has risen from 15% to 46%, it continues to be much lower than the average percentage for Wales, which stands at 81%.
2. The Council has reduced the number of looked after children from 203 in 2012/13 to 185 in 2013/14. It has secured substantial improvement in its performance in terms of the timeliness of conducting reviews of LAC care plans, with 94.3% being carried out within statutory time-scales, compared with 75.4%

in 2012/13. However, this remains below the average percentage in Wales (95.9%).

3. Quality assurance - Adults, Health and Well-being Department:

The Council's ability to provide detailed reports on performance has continued to improve. The risk assessment arrangements in the service have improved by regularly utilising a risk register and updating it. The Council has not established a corporate quality assurance system. It intends to do this in 2014-15. The need to improve quality assurance arrangements was highlighted by the CSSIW in its annual appraisal report last year. In addition, it is an area earmarked for improvement in the national reviews recently held and in the adoption inspection report. The Council will introduce a cross-cutting safeguarding children and adults quality assurance team.

4. Quality assurance - Children and Supporting Families Department:

The Council's ability to provide detailed reports on performance has continued to improve. The risk assessment arrangements in the service have improved by regularly utilising a risk register and updating it. The Council has not established a corporate quality assurance system. It intends to do this in 2014-15. The need to improve quality assurance arrangements was highlighted by the CSSIW in its annual appraisal report last year. In addition, it is an area earmarked for improvement in the national reviews recently held and in the adoption inspection report. The Council will introduce a cross-cutting safeguarding children and adults quality assurance team.

5. The Council has taken positive steps in terms of its corporate parent arrangements; however, these now need to be developed further. The corporate parenting panel will work with looked after children during 2014-15 to provide an outline of the action steps that the Council will take in order to assist looked after children. Members will need to provide more assistance to ensure effective ownership of the strategic aims and that they are translated into actions across the Council's services and partner agencies; and to ensure appropriate health care, greater educational assistance and temporary employment in the Council for looked after children.

Progress against improvement proposals

The Children and Supporting Families Department continues to give due attention to matters in improvement proposal 1 above. There has been an improvement in the number of health assessments being carried out in a timely manner for looked after children, with 65% undertaken on time. There is room for further improvement and the matter matter is being regularly addressed in discussions between the Local

Authority and the Health Board. The Corporate Parent Panel continues to monitor the situation closely and during the past year (17/18), it has set-up task groups that specifically examine multi-agency practice in the field of health and after-care support and supported accommodation for those leaving care. These groups are being led by Panel members and they report back to Panel on progress and on any matters that require further attention. During a full review of the children's service by CIW in May 2018, it was noted that the Panel's approach was robust and developmental and ensured that due attention was given to the needs of looked after children and young people.

As circumstances at the end of 2017/18 were considerably different from the situation in 2013/14, we are unsure whether or not the expectations described in improvement proposal number 2 remain relevant. An increase in the number of looked after children by Gwynedd Council corresponds to the national pattern. There were 222 looked after children at the end of May 2018. This leads to a higher number of reviews being undertaken. An application was submitted for additional resources to employ an Independent Reviewing Officer to respond to the increase; however, this was not successful. Despite this, performance in terms of the timeliness of statutory reviews for looked after children is good - 89% (end of year). We continue to monitor reasons for failure to adhere to the time-scale in some cases and these are regularly reported upon to the service's performance challenge arrangements.

In response to improvement proposal 3 above, a Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit has been set-up in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. The Unit's work programme lays a foundation to collect information and data that will set the baseline for quality assurance and for being proactive in identifying potential problems early to facilitate preventative work. We continuously review and monitor the service.

The Department continues to strengthen its work in the field described in improvement proposal 4 above. The service has a comprehensive audit programme in place and has agreed on fields that will be addressed over the coming year. During a full review of the service by CIW in May 2018, it was reported that the programme was comprehensive but that partners should be included more in the process than previously, and this development is already being incorporated.

In response to improvement proposal 5 above, we can confirm that a Corporate Parent Strategy is in place and the Council, via Corporate Parent Panel arrangements, is taking action by means of five task groups which examine five main fields in order to improve the experiences of looked after children and young people.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposals 1, 3, 4 and 5 be noted as "completed", and improvement proposal 2 as being "in progress".

3. Delivering with Less - the impact on environmental health services and citizens - National Report by the Wales Audit Office published October 2014

Improvement Proposals arising from the report -

1. Amend the best practice standards in order to:
 - reconcile work in the environmental health field,
 - note the more extensive contribution of environmental health towards achieving the strategic priorities of Welsh Government,
 - note the benefits and impacts of environmental health services in terms of safeguarding citizens.

2. Engage better with local residents regarding plans to cut budgets and change services by:
 - consulting with residents on the proposed changes in services and use the findings to drive decisions;
 - outline which services will be cut and how these cuts will affect residents, and
 - note plans to increase payments to change service standards.

3. Improve efficiency and value for money by:
 - Noting the statutory and non-statutory duties of Councils' environmental health services
 - Agreeing on environmental health priorities for the future and the role of councils when delivering these
 - Determining an 'acceptable standard of performance' for environmental health services (maximum and minimum) and publicise them amongst citizens
 - Improving efficiency and maintaining performance on the agreed level by doing the following
 - Collaborating and/or integrate with others in order to reduce costs and/or improve quality
 - Awarding services on external contracts where they can be provided in a more cost-effective way in accordance with the standards agreed upon
 - Introducing and/or increasing payments and focusing on activities that generate income
 - Using grants in a strategic way in order to ensure the greatest impact and profit
 - Reducing activities in order to focus on core statutory and strategic priorities.

4. Improve strategic planning work by:
 - noting, gathering and analysing financial data, data on performance and data on demand/need in relation to environmental health services;
 - analysing the data gathered in order to drive and understand the relationship between 'cost:benefit:impact' and use this information as grounds to decisions on Councils' health services in the future;
 - agree how digital information can be used to plan and develop environmental health services in the future.

Progress against improvement proposals

In order to respond to improvement proposal 1 above, the Department notes that it aims to achieve the basic practice standards, although this is not easy due to financial constraints.

In order to respond to improvement proposal 2 above, the Department has already undertaken a review of the Service's structure in order to respond to the practical impact of losing two front-line jobs as part of the financial cutbacks. The review of fees undertaken in 2016/17 is now operational and we charge fees for services by regaining costs for offering advice. A further review of taxi licensing fees will happen in 2018/19. The Department will continue to investigate ways of working more efficiently, and of using staff resources flexibly across the Public Protection Unit.

For proposal 3, all relevant fees associated with the services offered are reviewed so that services can move towards recovering costs. Potential options of integrating or working more closely with other services within the Council have been considered to discover whether or not it would be possible to further increase efficiency and reduce costs. To this end, there has already been a reduction in non-statutory activity. The relevant policies are reviewed so that the public is clear in terms of what is expected as a service. The Department is also moving towards providing more information on-line and to increase the capacity of self service.

The Public Protection Unit is already looking into opportunities to work with other service units within the Environment Department, and across the Council. Opportunities to increase income, where it is statutory possible to do so, are being considered. A further review into the costs of processing licenses has also been held, with relevant fees being raised in order to regain costs for the service.

Local performance measures of the Environment Department are being reviewed to be certain of our ability to measure the demand for services effectively, and that the public receive a quality and timely service. The measures will be used to plan if there is a need to review how the service unit resources are divided.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposals 1, 2, 3 and 4 are noted as "in progress".

4. Managing early retirements in various Welsh public bodies - National Report by the Wales Audit Office published February 2015

Improvement Proposals arising from the report -

1. Public bodies should monitor the expected and secured savings as a result of early retirements and they should provide a report on them as part of their internal governance arrangements. This will be of assistance when plans are made to reduce costs in the future.

Progress against improvement proposals

This Council keeps detailed records regarding decisions relating to early retirement, including the associated costs. This includes monitoring savings that derive from early retirements and the restructure that follows. This will continue when the Council acts on the need to realise further savings over the next three years.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposal 1 be noted as "completed".

5. Annual Performance Appraisal of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) 2014/15 - Local report to Gwynedd published October 2015

Improvement Proposals arising from the report -

1. Safeguarding is a priority for the Council, and it has put corporate arrangements into action to improve safeguarding practices. It now needs to put changes into action in its adults safeguarding processes.
During the year, 178 POVA referrals were received, six fewer than in the previous year. Of these referrals, 100% were completed with the risk being managed. The Council contributed towards a Review of Adult Services Practice, which noted that improvements were required in the Council's POVA practices. When operational, these would increase the involvement of care providers and make the investigation and its outcome clearer. Adult safeguarding will be a field where CSSIW will take follow-up steps in 2015-2016.
2. The Council has started to develop a mental health commissioning strategy, and mental health services will be a field where CSSIW will take follow-up steps in 2015-2016.
3. Assistance for Carers -

The Council assessed or reviewed the needs of 241 adult carers in 2014-2015, which is less than 298 carers assessed in the previous year. This is a cause for concern as the number of those caring for adults and who receive an assessment of their own needs has increased over the past four years in Wales, despite the fact that the number has been falling continuously in Gwynedd. The number of adult carers assessed or re-assessed in their own right during the year in which a service was provided for them was 132.

4. Timeliness of child protection conferences -

The Council's performance in holding initial child protection conferences has improved slightly, but it is lower than the Wales average (85% compared with 93%). Also, a drop was seen in the Council's performance in holding statutory reviews and child protection review conferences. The loss of the child protection coordinator and staff sickness contributed to the drop in performance in these fields. The timeliness of child protection conferences is a field that still requires improvement. Also, the Council needs to maintain and improve the timeliness of LAC reviews, which are currently managed by the safeguarding and quality unit.

5. Timeliness of looked after children reviews -

The Council's performance in holding initial child protection conferences has improved slightly, but it is lower than the Wales average (85% compared with 93%). Also, a drop was seen in the Council's performance in holding statutory reviews and child protection review conferences. The loss of the child protection coordinator and staff sickness contributed to the drop in performance in these fields. The timeliness of child protection conferences is a field that still requires improvement. Also, the Council needs to maintain and improve the timeliness of LAC reviews, which are currently managed by the safeguarding and quality unit.

6. Timeliness of health assessments for looked after children -

The Council only made small improvements in the percentage of looked after children receiving health assessments during the year, and this remains substantially lower than the Wales average (51% compared with 81%).

Progress against improvement proposals

In order to respond to proposal 1 above, the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit has been set-up in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to take responsibility for the POVA work. The Unit's work is continuously reviewed and monitored.

In order to respond to proposal 2 above, the work to review packages has already commenced and a category officer attends these reviews in order to discuss needs with the provider. By now, any request for a new package is scrutinised by the senior manager and Area Leaders and are discussed with the category officer.

In order to respond to proposal 3 above, we are collaborating with our third sector and health partners to develop a Gwynedd and Anglesey Carers Partnership Strategy. The information from the carers needs assessment has been inputted in the plan. The Carers Emergency Card scheme has been welcomed by carers in Meirionnydd and the intention is to promote its use in other areas. Further action is taken to support carers with a permanent fund of £114,000 which has been referred to the Council and to the Department through the settlement.

In response to improvement proposals 4 and 5 above, 82% of initial child protection conferences were held on time during 2017/18. The service retains a detailed record of the reasons why some conferences are late and this feeds into the performance challenge arrangements. 90% of child protection review conferences were held on time during the year and the reasons why some are late again are reported upon to performance challenging arrangements. A request was made for an additional child protection co-ordinator by means of the Council's internal arrangements to satisfy progress in the field and to maintain performance. The request was unsuccessful. We have already elaborated on progress made on this matter in the response.

In response to proposal 6 above, the Children and Supporting Families Department continues to give due attention to the matters in question. There has been an improvement in the number of health assessments being carried out on time for looked after children, with 65% conducted on time. There is room for further improvement and the matter is being regularly addressed in discussions between the Local Authority and the Health Board. The Corporate Parent Panel continues to monitor the situation closely and during the past year (17/18), it has set-up task groups that specifically examine multi-agency practice in the field of health and after-care support and supported accommodation for those leaving care. These groups are being led by Panel members and they report back to Panel on progress and on any matters that require further attention. During a full review of the children's service by CIW in May 2018, it was noted that the Panel's approach was robust and developmental and ensured that due attention was given to the needs of looked after children and young people.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposal 1 be noted as "completed", improvement proposal 2 as "plan in progress", and improvement proposals 3, 4, 5 and 6 as "in progress".

6. **Helping People to Live Independently: Do Councils Do Enough?** -

National Report by the Wales Audit Office published October 2015

Improvement Proposals arising from the report -

1. Improve the strategic planning work and better coordinate activities for older people.
2. Improve the engagement and information for older people and the arrangements for disseminating that information.
3. Ensure effective management of the performance of the range of services assisting older people to live independently.

Progress against improvement proposals

In response to improvement proposal 1 above, adopting the 'Age Well in Gwynedd Plan' by the Cabinet on 17 January 2017 was a way to ensure that this agenda captured attention. It involved communicating across many Departments to bring a wide range of 18 action points together into one document. It is monitored by the Well-being Manager. Good progress has been made on all action points which means that there has been good collaboration between departments e.g. the Bridging the Generations Scheme which has been planned between the Adults and Education Departments. Implementing the Scheme has raised awareness within every Department of matters that are important to older people and is a good foundation for ensuring continuation of integrated collaboration between different Council departments.

In response to proposal 2 above - following reorganisation within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, five new Area Teams were established so that our older citizens can obtain better access to information locally. The role of a 'Community Connector' has been developed in these teams to ensure that good networks are developed within communities and in order to discover which informal community services are available. The five teams offer an 'Information, Advice and Support' service so that our older citizens can get in touch and find a range of information that can help them, all through one contact point.

In response to proposal 3 above, the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-23 states that "Living with dignity and independently for as long as possible" is one of the full Council's seven Well-being points and, as it corresponds with the well-being aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, it ensures that the Council integrates a range of services that help older people live independently, into the Council's main activities. A unit on 'Community Resilience' is included in the Council Plan where it states that "Our intention over the coming years is to continue to look at opportunities to build on the strengths within our communities and try to co-produce a full range of preventative support in order to make it easier for people to continue to live

independently in their communities". Again, one can see how this theme is a means of coordinating and ensuring high level management of the range of services that promote older people to live independently.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposal 1 above be noted as "completed", and improvement proposals 2 and 3 as being "in progress".

7. National review of care and assistance for people with learning disabilities (Joint-review carried out by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and the Health Care Inspectorate) - Local report for Gwynedd published June 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report -

1. Strategic planning with health colleagues is needed in order to develop long-term aspirations and plans. A joint commissioning strategy should be developed between health and social services based on an analysis of needs.
2. The local authority should continue to develop and improve its communication with service providers, and include them in the work of drawing up a statement of the market's position and in discussions about a joint commissioning strategy with the health sector.
3. The Local Authority should review its arrangements for safeguarding adults, ensuring the clarity of the quality assurance functions and responsibilities.
4. The local authority should review the way it safeguards people's rights where they are deprived of their liberty (DoLS) to ensure that human rights are supported and properly protected.

Progress against improvement proposals

In response to improvement proposal 1 above, the Council, the Health Authority and all other stakeholders now serve on the Local Services Board and, as they complete their Well-being Assessments, it is anticipated that this agenda will feature high up in their work programme and that they will determine appropriate measures to measure progress across all services. A progress report will be submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee before the end of 2018.

In response to improvement proposal 2 above, the Transformation Group is driving the work programme for the future commissioning strategy. Emphasis is placed on co-producing work schemes on matters such as respite care and providing services

within County boundaries. Every transformation project now includes key providers - the Health Board and the families/adults we support as needed. We hold regular engagement sessions. A progress report will be submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee before the end of 2018.

In response to improvement proposal 3 above, the Department has set-up a Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit, functions within the unit are clear and rigorous arrangements are in place. A progress report will be submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee before the end of 2018.

In response to improvement proposal 4 above, the work-stream of deprivation of liberty safeguards (DoLS) is managed in the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit. A DoLS co-ordinator has now been appointed on a permanent basis and there are arrangements in place for best interests assessors from the rest of the Department to help cope with the challenging workload. A progress report will be submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee before the end of 2018.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposal 3 be noted as "completed", and improvement proposals 1, 2 and 4 as being "in progress".

8. Asset management [Land and Buildings] - Local report to Gwynedd published October 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

1. The Council should lead the way by reopening discussions with local and regional partners regarding the development of a systematic way of joint asset planning, including opportunities to: agree on joint performance management systems, and use them; establish a joint property services provision body; establish a joint asset retention bodies.

Progress against improvement proposals

In receiving the approval of this recommendation, the Public Services Board (Gwynedd and Anglesey) established a Property Asset work-stream and asked the Fire Service to lead on the work. The work has now come to an end and it did not lead to substantial changes in our work arrangements. However, a relationship has been established with asset management leaders within the other bodies and good practice is also shared; information sharing has also improved. Everyone also contributes towards the government's central system of sharing information about the assets that are surplus to requirement etc. As a Council, we have significantly moved the asset management agenda forward over the past few years and we will

adopt our second Asset Management Plan for the 2019-2029 period before Christmas this year.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that the improvement proposal above be noted as being "in progress".

9. Information Technology Review - Local report to Gwynedd published October 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

Review the terms of reference and membership of the IT Governance Group to ensure that its effectiveness in agreeing on priorities and making recommendations to senior managers and Members. In addition, the group needs to ensure consistency in terms of: the IT project prioritisation model; preparing business cases for each IT project; reviewing each IT project after its implementation; using the project management method adopted by the Council for each major IT project.

2. Ensure increased awareness of the new IT Strategy across the Council.
3. Improve ownership and responsibility for the IT Strategy across the ICT Service by ensuring that there are clear links between service plans and individual evaluations and the strategy.
4. Prepare regular updates on the journey of the IT Strategy to senior managers and Members.
5. Draw up a comprehensive ICT Service Plan which is in line with the new IT Strategy.

Progress against improvement proposals

Membership of the IT Governance Group has been reviewed during the past year. A work programme has been agreed and the responses to the proposals are in progress. Minutes of the meeting in which the terms of reference and group membership were reviewed have been shared with group members and the Heads of Departments. Account managers are collaborating with Council officers to prepare business cases for IT projects and are a practical aspect of major projects' governance.

In response to improvement proposal 2 above, Account Managers are raising awareness of the Strategy at departmental management meetings, and feed back responses to the IT Team.

In response to improvement proposal 3 above, the programme management unit has now been set-up and work is underway to engage regularly with our stakeholders by visiting individuals and management teams in departments and services. There is also contact between this group and the Ffordd Gwynedd team and the role is now visible within the Council.

In response to improvement proposal 4 above, progress against the IT Strategy is reported upon at every performance management meeting which, in turn, is reflected in the Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Resources. The same update is reported upon at the IT Governance Group and the Senior Managers Group.

In response to improvement proposal 5 above, the development work programme is being shared as part of the performance management process and is a visible record that the task is being completed. Work schemes are available for the programme and infrastructure management unit, but these are only reported upon to the IT management team.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that the above mentioned improvement proposals be noted as "completed".

10. Community Safety in Wales - National Report by the Wales Audit Office published October 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

1. Improve strategic plans in order to better co-ordinate community safety by establishing a national strategy supported by regional and local plans that focus on achieving community safety priorities agreed on a national level, instead of the existing planning framework.

Improve strategic work with partners by formally creating effective safety community boards instead of the existing community safety structures, that formalise and unify the work of Welsh Government, the Police, local authorities, the health boards, the fire and rescue authorities, WACSO and other key stakeholders.

Ensure that community safety performance is effectively managed by: setting appropriate measures on every level in order to enable members, officers and the public to judge the progress of completing actions for community safety

services; ensure that the information on performance includes the work of all relevant agencies; establish measures to judge the inputs, outputs and the impact in order to be able to understand the effect of investment decisions and to support the scrutiny and overview work.

Improve the engagement and communication work with citizens through the public services boards by: developing plans and priorities for community safety; agree on priorities for implementation; and report on performance and evaluating the impact.

Progress against improvement proposals

There has been no further development on the first recommendation since the previous meeting of the Committee in November as we are awaiting further guidance from Welsh Government and the Home Office regarding a national strategy. In the meantime, a regional and local plan is in place.

Again, there have been no developments on the second recommendation either. The Regional Board is in place, and local statutory partnerships are in place, but we cannot move forwards until we receive further guidance from Welsh Government and the Home Office, and until the results of the review commissioned by Welsh Government are received.

In order to ensure effective performance management (3 above), a Regional Plan is in place with relevant measures, but this work is again dependent on Welsh Government's review results.

Following a public consultation on priorities for community safety, the results were analysed and used to formulate an action plan for 2018/19.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposal 4 be noted as "completed", and improvement proposals 1, 2 and 3 as being "in progress".

11. People Strategy - Local report to Gwynedd published November 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

Ensure Members take full ownership of the People Strategy by scrutinising and formally approving it.

2. Update all people management policies and the guidance for managers to reflect the new People Strategy.
3. Put a comprehensive corporate workforce plan in place.
4. Introduce the new evaluation process to all staff.

Progress against improvement proposals

The "People Plan" was formally adopted by the Cabinet on 1 November 2016. The progress of the prioritised work streams within the Plan was reported to the performance challenge meetings of the Cabinet Member (where two members of the Audit and Governance Committee were present). The People Plan will be reviewed in 2018 since the current period of the Plan comes to an end at the end of the year.

The Project Group, under the leadership of the Human Resources Advisory Service Manager, reviews the content of each element of the current local work conditions. One of the Human Resources Advisors works as a Project Manager, with the Senior Manager and the Head of Department acting as Senior Users. A number of policies have been reviewed to correspond with the culture of empowering, armouring and delivering, and work will continue over the next 12 months.

The Human Resources Advisory Services Manager leads on presenting the planning arrangements of the comprehensive workforce to the Council. Alongside this, the Research and Analytics Team work together closely in order to provide key information about the nature of the current workforce. Work has already commenced with the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to test arrangements before they are rolled out on a wider scale.

Alternative evaluation arrangements were submitted to staff (based on continuous evaluation, rather than an annual event) across the Council. An informal review of arrangements displayed the need to establish the practice of continuous evaluation across the Council. This work will be one of the main priorities in 2018/19.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposal 1 above be noted as "completed", and improvement proposals 2, 3 and 4 as being "in progress".

12. Local authority arrangements to charge a fee for services and generate income - National Report by the Wales Audit Office published November 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

3. Always use the checklist to assess impact when considering changing payments.
4. Find opportunities to procure companies from the private sector to collect payments in order to improve efficiency and economy when collecting income.
5. Improve the arrangements for managing performance, governance and accountability by: reporting any changes to payments to the scrutiny committee(s); improving monitoring work in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of requested changes to fees and payments, and on achieving objectives; benchmark and compare performance with others more thoroughly; and provide more comprehensive information to elected members so that it is possible to make firm decisions.
6. Improve the arrangements for anticipating income from payments by planning scenarios and conducting sensitivity analyse.

Progress against improvement proposals

Our action on recommendations 3 and 4 are ongoing. We will use Impact Assessments when there is a substantial change in payments (3), at the same time, we will consider all options when considering whether companies from the private sector would be most effective when collecting income (4).

Performance management arrangements (5) have already changed within the Council, and two members from scrutiny committees now sit in on the Cabinet Members' performance challenge meeting. In the Council's Constitution, the responsibility and power for determining and reviewing fees and prices have been delegated to relevant departments, to be implemented annually by the Cabinet Member and the Head of Department. Ultimately, the scrutiny agenda is managed by the scrutiny committees, and this committee has a role to do so within the field of finance.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that improvement proposals 3, 4 and 5 be noted as "completed".

- 13. Risk Management - An assessment that is based on the risk of the Council's corporate arrangements** - Local report to Gwynedd published January 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

The Council's risk management arrangements would benefit from: developing a tracking or summary of risks document as part of its Corporate Risk Register; delivering greater consistency when determining and managing risks in papers and reports submitted to the Members; giving greater attention to the concept of 'willingness to face risk' in its work of managing risk; submit a Risk Strategy and Operations Handbook to comply with the Council's amended arrangements; train the officers and the Member about risk management as part of the wider initiative to raise awareness.

Progress against improvement proposals

It was reported to the Audit Committee on 9 February 2017 that:

- The Governance Group will review our arrangements;
- The risk management culture will evolve so that it is not a "ticking the box practice";
- The training for officers will be reviewed.

A specific report on this will be submitted to a subsequent meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that the improvement proposal above be noted as being "in progress".

14. Good governance when determining significant service changes - Local report to Gwynedd published March 2016

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

1. Provide an opportunity for the scrutiny committees to review and challenge business cases in changes to services in a timely manner before the Cabinet makes a final decision.

Progress against improvement proposals

Since the new scrutiny model was adopted in May 2017, the emphasis is on promoting the forward scrutiny of the proposed changes to services and policies, etc. A review of the success of new arrangements will take place later on in 2018/19.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that the improvement proposal be noted as being "in progress".

15. Savings Schemes - Local report to Gwynedd published March 2017

Improvement Proposals arising from the report –

1. Strengthen the financial planning arrangements by ensuring that delivery timetables in business cases are robust
2. Strengthen the financial planning arrangements by establishing a more corporate method of determining income opportunities

Progress against improvement proposals

It is intended to make every effort to ensure that delivery timetables in business cases are robust. This will be more practical with cuts, but large scale efficiency saving plans will become increasingly challenging and the timetable will be subject to several complex factors (e.g. Leisure project). Due consideration will be given to this in the new savings regime which is about to commence.

The Chief Executive has already consulted informally with the Cabinet and we will deal with / consider the key income streams corporately by identifying new savings against 2018/19 and 2019/20. Due consideration will be given to this in the new savings procedure which is about to commence.

Conclusion

Based on what is noted above, the Audit and Governance Committee is asked to agree that the two improvement proposals be noted as being "in progress".