Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report

Executive Response

June 2019

The following is a progress report on the Proposals for Improvement contained in response to the Annual Improvement Report published June 2019.

Report Title	Proposals for Improvement including overall lead.	Action response	RAG Status
Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of the Green Council: maximising the recovery and recycling of waste.	**Long term** There is a need to think longer term and for the Council to develop its own regional and local needs, challenges and opportunities to help it deliver its 2050 aim of zero waste. Chief Officer – Streetscene and Transportation	This is embodied within the Council's five-year Waste Strategy.	G
	Prevention Although the Council regularly monitors the total amount of waste generated within the county and the proportion being recycled, it could take further action to reduce overall waste volume. Chief Officer – Streetscene and Transportation	This is embodied within the Council's five-year Waste Strategy.	G
	Prevention Improve the customer experience at HRCs with better support from staff. Chief Officer – Streetscene and Transportation	We will work with the Wales Audit Office on their Service User perspective at our HRC sites.	G
	Integration		G

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	The Council should give more consideration to how it can integrate its well-being objectives and assess their impact on the well-being objectives of other bodies. Chief Executive	The Council will be re-setting its well-being objectives as part of the Council Plan setting, which will include not just the work led by the Council, but also consideration of partnership working and its impact on the well-being objectives of other bodies.	
	Involvement Sometimes the Council may benefit from engaging with stakeholders earlier in the process. For example, by involving stakeholders in the early design stage of the HRC process, the Council may have avoided negative publicity and agreed on a final approach more quickly and easily. Chief Executive	We will review where we have been successful in other involvement exercises to apply lessons learned to future policy reviews.	A
	Involvement A more consistent approach needs to be taken to completing comprehensive equality impact assessments (EIA) and making them available to the decision-making process. Chief Executive	The work undertaken on developing the EIA approach into a fully integrated impact assessment (including the well-being goals and sustainable development principles) is currently on going and will continue to be developed.	A
	Involvement Members we spoke to reflected that, although they are confident that officers consider the WFG Act, this is not clearly demonstrated in the reports we receive. Chief Executive	Member's reports now incorporate work being undertaken and the thinking behind the WFG Act.	G
	Corporate arrangements The Council needs to assure itself that it is considering the five ways of working in the actions it takes to achieve its well-being objectives.	This will be undertaken as part of the re-setting of the Council's well-being objectives.	A

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	Chief Executive		
	Corporate arrangements The Council needs to consider how to include a learning cycle to help it further embed the five ways of working in setting and delivering its well-being objectives. Chief Executive	Setting and delivery of the revised set of well-being objectives will be fully integrated with the five ways of working.	A
		All the above 'Ways of working' The 'ways of working' and the Councils well-being objectives will be referred to in all Strategic Cabinet (and other relevant) reports from September 2019 as a significant positive, negative or neutral contribution. An overview of the integrated impact assessment will also be included to inform strategic decisions.	A
Local government use of data local report	**P1** The Authority needs to develop a more unified and corporate approach to using data. It can do this by: Continuing to embed its 'tell us once' project and build on the integration of datasets as was done with the datasets which informed the Council Plan. More generally, data tool respondents feel the Authority lacks a corporate ownership of data projects. A change in culture and a stronger leadership on data will support the creation of an environment that treats data as a key resource. This will help to extend the benefits of data-led decisions to all service areas. Chief Officer – Governance	We will review and publish our Information Management Strategy so that there is a clear and understood approach to data management. As identified within the report, Tell Us Once is a key part of Digital Strategy.	A

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	P2 The Authority collects data at almost every interaction with its citizens, whether face to face, over the phone or on social media and it needs to ensure it continues to protect the information it holds whilst making the best use of this wealth of data. Updating data sharing protocols and providing refresher training – focusing on what people can do rather than what they cannot do – will help to ensure that service managers know when and what they can share, thereby helping to make better use of shared data. Chief Officer – Governance	Following work on compliance for GDPR we are working on how best to use data and information between portfolios in the provision of services for our customers and service users. We are reviewing how we balance security with the proactive use of data.	**A**
	P3 Our national report highlights Flintshire County Council's approach to building capacity and driving a more collaborative culture across the county. Whilst the Digital Flintshire 2017-2022 strategy outlines how digital information and technology will be used to support the Authority's improvement priorities and strategic plans, and ensuring customers have the digital skills to access services and information online, having the right staff with the right skills to turn its wealth of data into usable evidence remains a challenge. Indeed, ensuring adequate resources and sufficient capacity are ongoing challenges for all local authorities. A significant proportion who responded to our data tool do not believe the Authority has sufficient staff with the skills to maximise the use of data. Without upskilling staff to make better use of data the Authority risks missing opportunities to better use data to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Investing to make better use of data will result in better outcomes for citizens and create long-term efficiencies for the Authority. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the perfect impetus for the Authority to think long term.	We are developing a comprehensive plan within our digital strategy programme to ensure that each project contains as standard a strong emphasis on training and the development of digital skills. We are reviewing how we can have better control, visibility of and confidence in our data to support effective design and delivery of services.	**A**

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	P4 Understanding the data and the level of analysis provided to inform business planning and decision making is an area for improvement for all local authorities. The Authority should review the range and quality of the information needed by decision makers and the format it is presented in. This will enable the Authority to set corporate data reporting standards to ensure the data that is presented to senior officer and Elected Members is accessible, easily understandable and equips decision makers to fulfil their responsibilities as effectively as possible. Chief Executive	Work is being undertaken around the structure of reports to ensure that risks and options are well presented. This will also cover the presentation of data.	A