

## AGENDA ITEM 2

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### CABINET

21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2016

#### COUNCIL'S CORPORATE AND SERVICE SELF EVALUATIONS

#### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN)

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#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the progress in further strengthening the Council's planning for improvement processes and to consider the corporate and service self evaluation of the Council and the services it provides.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Review the corporate self evaluation and consider whether it is an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council's services.
- 2.2 Require the Chief Executive to make any appropriate adjustments and to present this report to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee for their review at the next possible meeting.
- 2.3 Request that the areas for improvement identified in the corporate and service self evaluation are incorporated into the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2016/17, which is audited by the Wales Audit Office.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To continue to improve the Council's corporate and service planning processes that result in better, more efficient and effective public services.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 All organisations, whatever their size, the product or service they offer, public or private sector, need to know themselves well, identify their agenda for improvement, promote innovation and sector-leading practice and improve the quality of their products and services to meet the changing needs and demands of their customers or service users.
- 4.2 The basis of this process is called self evaluation. Crucially, in the public sector, where the self-evaluation process focuses on impact and outcomes of the services being delivered, it leads to improvements in the experiences and the outcomes for the service user, whether that is, for example, educational outcomes of learners or enabling more older people to live independently in their own homes.
- 4.3 Self-evaluation is a process, not a one-off event. It is the first, essential step in a cyclical process of bringing about change and improvement. It is based on professional reflection, challenge and support among practitioners and professionals. Effective self-evaluation involves taking wide-ranging decisions about actions which result in clear benefits for all service users. Most of all, it is about striving for excellence within the resources available.
- 4.4 At the heart of self-evaluation are three questions:
- **How well are we doing?**
  - **How do we know?**
  - **How can we improve things further?**
- 4.5 While every aspect of the Council's provision is a legitimate focus for self-evaluation, the emphasis should always be on outcomes, i.e. on an evaluation of the impact of each aspect of service provision on the outcomes for the customer/resident/user etc.
- 4.6 The process of self-evaluation should be **continuous** and an embedded part of the Council's working life. Self-evaluation should be based on a wide range of information about strengths and areas for improvement which is collected throughout the year (though it will often be appropriate to conduct some aspects of self-evaluation at longer intervals, and not necessarily each year). The Council and its partners should use information from self-evaluation to plan for improvements, to undertake improvement work and to ensure a regular cyclical process of monitoring and evaluation that leads to further improvement.

**The diagram below shows the cyclical nature of effective self-evaluation:**



- 4.7 Across the Council, some services have traditionally undertaken an annual self evaluation that has been reviewed and tested by external regulators such as Estyn or CSSIW. However, there has been no standard model for self evaluation across the Council for at least 10 years and no formal “whole authority” corporate evaluation has been carried out for a similar period.
- 4.8 The changes in political and the managerial leadership of the Council has created the opportunity for Cabinet Members and officers at various levels in the organisation to undertake a corporate and individual service self evaluations to inform the improvement planning processes and to improve the quality of the services we provide to deliver better outcomes to service users, learners, residents etc.
- 4.9 Over the three month period from 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015, Cabinet Members, officers and staff from across the Council have contributed to the corporate and service self evaluations. There is no single formula or approach for self-evaluation. The services we provide can vary from simple stand alone provision to complex processes, frequently requiring highly effective partnership and collaborative working arrangements, with the Council at the core. However, a standard model of service self evaluation has been adopted based on combining the Estyn self

evaluation methodology and Audit Scotland approaches to best meet our requirements. A copy of the model adopted is in Appendix A.

4.10 The corporate self evaluation considers the performance of the corporate body of the Council. The corporate self evaluation was based on the Wales Audit Office questions that are posed to local authorities as part of the WAO's Corporate Assessment audits. At the centre of the corporate self evaluation undertaken in 2015 are the following questions:

1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?
2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?
3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?
4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?
5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?
6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?

4.11 The completed Council corporate self evaluation, including the executive summary is set out in Appendix B.

4.12 The service self evaluations have been challenged, reviewed and signed off by the respective Cabinet Member and the Group Director, and are being subject to an independent challenge by the Deputy Leader and Chief Executive. A list of the service areas that have completed a service self evaluation are listed in Appendix C.

4.13 The outcome of the service self evaluation is that each service area has to:

- Set out 5 key priority actions it will deliver in 2016/17;
- Set out a small number of performance measures and targets from which Members and officers can assess the performance of the service.

4.14 This information will form the basis of a Delivery Plan for each service for 2016/17 and which will form the basis of the WPI Plans reported to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees each quarter. The actions arising from the corporate self evaluation process will not be included in a separate action plan but are incorporated within the Delivery Plans of

individual services. For example, the actions in respect of the Scheme or Delegation are incorporated within the Legal Services Delivery Plan.

## **5 HOW WELL ARE WE DOING AND HOW DO WE KNOW?**

- 5.1 The performance of the Council has improved consistently over the past two years, and for the past two years the Council was the fourth most improved council in Wales. This improvement has been evidenced in particular in education, waste management, and highways services. However, when compared to the all Wales performance measures, the Council has too many indicators in the lower two quartiles when compared with other Welsh councils, with only Blaenau Gwent, Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil performing at a lower level.
- 5.2 As highlighted in the recent Director's report to Cabinet the Council is seeking to modernise its Social Services in line with the direction of travel set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.
- 5.3 The Council benefits from strong and focused leadership from the Leader and Cabinet. With recent changes to the senior management, including the Chief Executive, it has now strengthened its managerial leadership via a corporate re-structure which has a sharper focus on key priorities and on preparing itself for the future. A new draft Corporate Plan has been prepared and has been subject to pre-scrutiny by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee and is subject to resident and staff consultation.
- 5.4 Political leadership of the Council has been stable for a number of years, with the new Leader appointed in May 2014, having been a Cabinet Member for six years. This has led to consistency in managing the necessary reductions in public sector funding, maintaining a strong financial base and a focus of improvement in service delivery. In its recent Annual Improvement Report, the Wales Audit Office made reference to the fact that the political leadership has been prepared to make difficult decisions to deliver service improvement, such as school modernisation proposals to raise education standards, changing to fortnightly waste collections to improve recycling rates, and changes/reductions to a range of services in order to deliver a balanced revenue budget.
- 5.5 The Council has recognised the weaknesses, raised by the Wales Audit Office, in the political scrutiny arrangements, and in May 2015, reorganised the committee structure and its modus operandi to increase the level of scrutiny, accountability and challenge within and across portfolios and achieve an effective focus on performance improvement.

- 5.6 Historically, the Council has not actively sought the views of residents, businesses and the Council's own staff to seek their feedback on the services provided and how they can be improved. Since his appointment, the Leader of the Council has actively sought to engage with the public through a range of approaches, including social media, and open access consultation events. Nevertheless, there is still scope to further strengthen engagement with public and staff in setting the strategic direction of the Council and informing the performance of specific services.
- 5.7 The capacity of the Council is enhanced by sound financial management and capable senior officers. The Council has robust arrangements in place to develop and implement savings plans to manage the reduction in public sector funding and has a track record of delivering the plans to ensure the Council delivers a balanced budget each year.
- 5.8 The broad picture on achieving value for money is positive, there is a low comparative spend in the corporate services (based on the Welsh Government/KPMG benchmarking report) and generally good performance. The Council can demonstrate that spend and investment follows policy and corporate prioritisation, for example in relation to Education (21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools), Wellbeing, Waste Management, Highways and Children's services.
- 5.9 The Council has a performance framework in place that has changed very little over the past few years but its implementation is inconsistent. Systems that need strengthening include target setting, in particular the use of aspiring targets to drive improvements in performance data; the quality of service and action planning; and the creation, monitoring and evaluation of individual staff development plans.
- 5.10 The recruitment, development and management of our staff has also been effective over the past few years, managing a reducing workforce yet still investing in the development of staff and the appointment of graduates and apprentices to the Council. The HR Service has been particularly effective in the recruitment, retention and exit strategies for senior managers in schools, which has had a significant impact on educational outcomes. However, there are further opportunities to improve the productivity of the Council's workforce through improved sickness absence management.
- 5.11 The Council has made good progress in reducing office accommodation as part of its Asset Management Plan. Further opportunities to maximise occupancy of existing buildings are being explored and a mobile working pilot has commenced with 20 staff with the aim of reducing accommodation requirements of this group of staff.



There are plans in place to expand this pilot across the Council services.

- 5.12 Ten years ago, the Council committed to developing a customer care approach that focused mainly on a number of One 4 All Centres, a telephone contact centre and improved internet access. This approach has had some success. However, the Council has not continued to modernise this provision and has fallen behind many councils across the UK in the digitalisation of services. To provide the customer experience now expected by the public, the Council has to modernise its services and ICT infrastructure to positively impact on service improvement and to reduce overhead costs.
- 5.13 Regeneration is a priority for the Council, and through effective working with Welsh Government, a number of schemes that impact on the Greater Pontypridd area are being developed and implemented. This is coupled with the recent investment in a number of major highways and rail schemes, funded by the Council and Welsh Government, which will have a significant impact on the town centres of Porth, Treorchy, Mountain Ash and Llantrisant. Furthermore, the Council is very open to working with developers to stimulate housing and other private sector investment, as evidenced by the fact that in 2014/15, more new and affordable houses were built in the County Borough than in 19 other Welsh local authorities.
- 5.14 The recent commitment of the UK Government to a £1.28bn City Deal for the Cardiff Capital Region, underwritten by the 10 South East Wales creates the opportunity for the Council to capitalise on the planned infrastructure improvements. The Council is a key stakeholder in the City Deal, is leading on the transportation infrastructure aspect of the Deal and is committed to maximising the benefits of this investment for Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 5.15 The Council shows good community leadership in its driving of and investment in, the Local Service Board and the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board. The LSB is improving and its ambitions are genuinely built on community based needs. The Council is working effectively with its partners to achieve the clear and challenging ambitions set out in the Single Integrated Plan which augers well for the introduction and delivery of the Future Generations Act. It has an open culture with good working relationships between councillors, officers and partners.
- 5.16 The Council is also using partnerships to help deliver its own strategic plans. Priorities are based on a sound understanding of local needs, which have been developed with the help of effective research and consultation exercises. Shared priorities, in particular, are benefiting

from closer partnership working, for example, in the areas of community safety and health.

- 5.17 However, the partnership arrangements are still often on the periphery of the core services delivered by partners and some of the key service improvement /integration priorities between social care and health in developing and delivering joint services are not being addressed quickly enough. For example, significant pressures exist in terms of Mental Health Services for children and adults and Delayed Transfers of Care/community based responses continues to be a priority which requires an even greater emphasis on effective joint working with the focus on the individual. It is important that the Council continues to prioritise these issues and takes the lead on delivering the necessary change/improvement as part of the new proposed Public Service Boards.
- 5.18 The Corporate Assessment has sought to challenge the status quo and deliver an accurate appraisal of the Council. Within each section there are a number of potential areas for improvement and the associated action will be included in the respective Corporate Service Business Plan.
- 5.19 These actions will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team quarterly and a summary shared with the Cabinet.

## **6 HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THINGS FURTHER?**

- 6.1 The key priority areas for improvement identified as part of the Corporate Self Evaluation are to:
- Set a clear strategic direction and Council vision, with a reduced number of priorities, a set of challenging targets that compare favourably with the best in Wales, through consultation with the general public and Council staff;
  - Simplify the way in which financial and performance management information is organised, presented and analysed so that they are easier to read, understand, challenge and scrutinise to drive service improvement;
  - Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services;
  - Refresh the Council's performance management framework and in particular ensure all staff have an annual individual staff performance management/development review;



- Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to further support service delivery and improvement;
- Update the Scheme of Delegation, along with appropriate training and staff awareness, particularly given the changes in management at all levels;
- Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management;
- Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services;
- Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities.

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required with regard to the corporate and service evaluations.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 One of the key areas of challenge in the corporate and service self evaluation has been to seek residents/customers/service users views on the services provided. This has been recognised as an area for improvement and a subsequent report will be brought forward for Cabinet's consideration on how the Council's service regularly seeks residents/customers/service users feedback on the services we provide.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. Any investment required to address any of the recommendations will be reported and considered separately.

## **10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **11 LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.**



- 11.1 This report seeks to improve the services the Council currently provides within its existing resources. As a result, it is consistent with the requirements and aspirations of the Single Integrated Plan.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 The Council has undertaken a corporate and service self evaluation of its services to better inform its improvement planning arrangements to ensure it delivers its services efficiently and effectively. This will become an annual process to ensure that the Council and its services respond to the needs of the communities it serves and deliver the essential services well.



**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee:***

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee

***Background Papers:***

None

***Contact Officer***

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# Appendix A

## Service Self Evaluation 2015 to inform 2016/17 Business Planning

<b>Service</b>	
<b>Head of Service</b>	
<b>Completion date</b>	
<b>Group Director sign off</b>	
<b>*Cabinet Member sign off</b>	

In the Background section, please provide a brief explanation of the structure and function of your Service.

In sections 1 and 2

please complete the **Evaluation** and **Evidence** for each of the questions

- a. be evaluative rather than descriptive and focus mainly on the impact and outcomes of the service.
- b. be brief and point to supporting evidence that can be found elsewhere including hyperlinks.

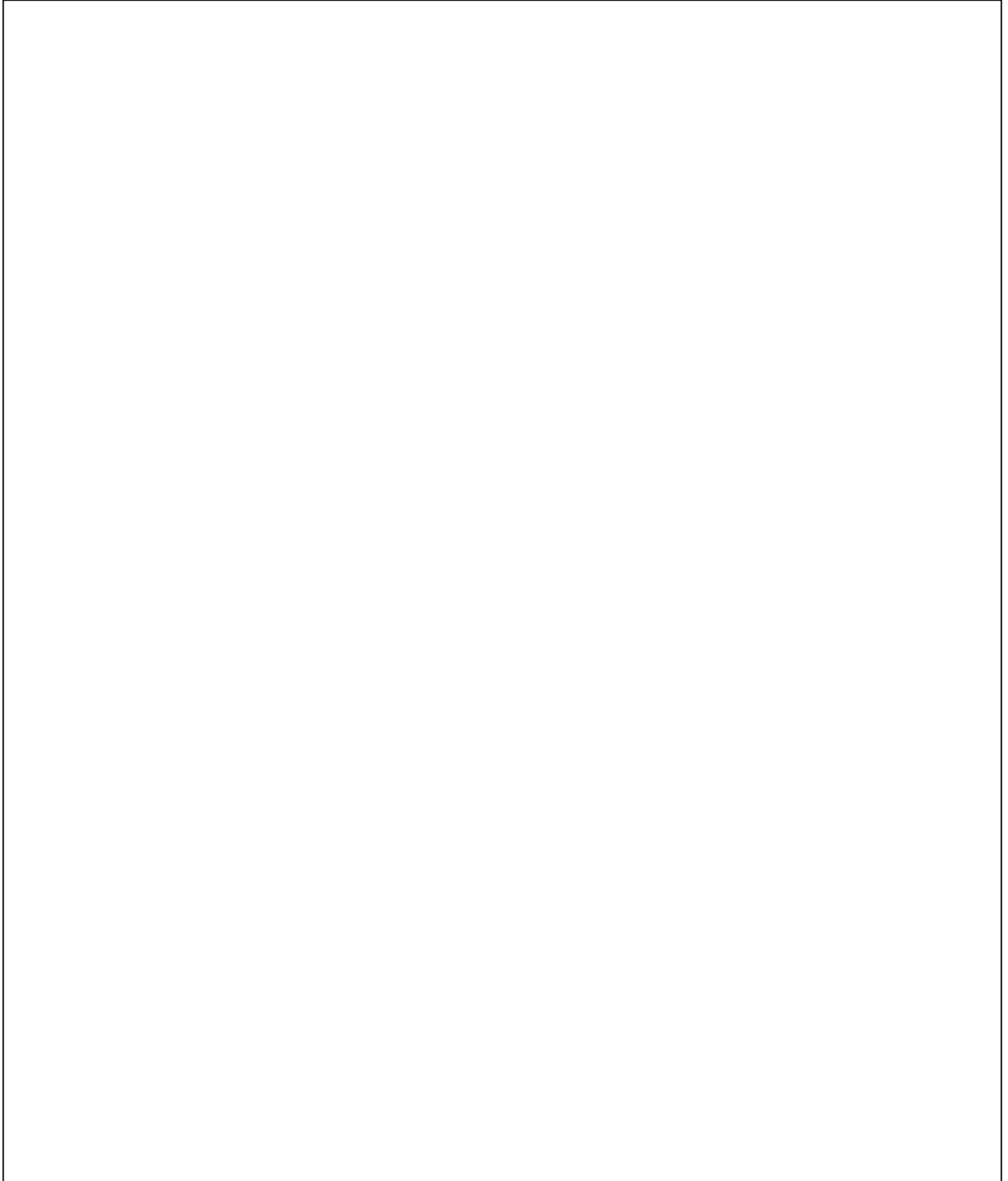
Section 3 - **What needs to improve?** Don't forget your five key measures

**Please Note:**

**Deadline for Cabinet Member sign off of the Service Self Evaluation is 30 October**

\*This sign off will evidence that the Cabinet Member has satisfied themselves that the **Service Self Evaluation** reflects the current service and that the Evaluation can be shared with the Council Leader and other Cabinet Members.

**Background - Please provide a brief, easy to read explanation of the structure and function of the service area that would make sense to a resident of Rhondda Cynon Taf**





**Section 1 – How well is the service contributing to and delivering outcomes for the community?****1.1: How good is our service and how do we compare to other Councils?**

*Consider service performance, where it is doing well and not so well. What are the performance trends over a range of measures and time, and also how they compare with other Welsh Councils.*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>Evaluating Performance is not just about PIs            To what extent can we show that our service deliver on local and national priorities?            How is the service currently performing?            Over the last 3 years            What is the performance trend?            How does performance and progress compare with the rest of Wales, e.g. quartile and average?            Which indicators have shown the strongest/weakest performance?            Which targets for 2014/15 have been achieved or not achieved? Do we know why?            How have we performed in external scrutiny/ inspections?            What evidence do we have that our work complies with statutory requirements?</p>	<p><b>Potential Sources of evidence</b></p> <p>PIs contained in Quarterly Performance Reports/CPR/            Corporate Performance pages on RCT Website            Benchmark data e.g. – <a href="http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk">www.statswales.wales.gov.uk</a>;  <a href="http://www.mylocalcouncil.info/">http://www.mylocalcouncil.info/</a>            External evaluation reports,            Regulators' Reports            Project Delivery</p>

**1.2: How well do we meet the needs of our residents?**

*Show how the service is not working in isolation and is accessing and analysing information about residents and customers through customer engagement, feedback and other Council processes. What information does the service collect and how is it used?*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>How does the service collect views of residents/clients about the services they need (includes users and non users)</p> <p>What does feedback tell you about your service over time?</p> <p>Does consultation/engagement include hard to reach groups?</p> <p>Is the service aware of the Impact of any Service Changes on the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf</p> <p>How are residents/clients involved and engaged in the development of future service delivery?</p> <p>What systems do we have to ensure that we engage with service users and residents stakeholders to identify and meet their specific needs?</p>	<p><b>Potential Sources of evidence</b></p> <p>Completed questionnaires, user satisfaction or residents' surveys</p> <p>Focus groups of service users/citizens' panel</p> <p>Obtaining feedback by attending other events organised by the Council</p> <p>Corporate Feedback scheme</p> <p>Customer Care</p> <p>Availability of independent advice, support and/or advocacy to service users on a range of matters</p> <p>Staff training programmes related to supporting service users and the community</p>

<b>1.3: How well are services delivered ?</b> <i>How well is the service delivered? Is there quantitative data about performance outputs and also qualitative data? Where the service is working with the community to support self-help initiatives?</i>	
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>Do we have plans in place for service delivery that are available to and understood by staff?            To what extent do we provide clear information to residents/clients on the services we deliver, in particular the effect of changes in service provision?            How robust is service data?            How well is Risk identified and managed?            How effectively does this service work with other services within this Council?            What has been the impact of any service change on the community ?</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Priority and Improvement plans            DAP/Internal/External Audit reports            Annual Performance reports            Feedback from service users on service change proposal/impact            Evaluations from external audit/inspection reports</p>

**1.4: How does the service evaluate the effectiveness of joint working and/or partnership arrangements ?**

*Is the service is clear what it is trying to achieve in any partnership or joint working arrangements in place. Are the appropriate governance, financial and monitoring arrangements in place? Are these arrangements producing improved services for residents? Is there an exit strategy in place for any joint arrangements?*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>What is the authority for the joint project or partnership arrangement? e.g. legislative, prescribed or voluntary?</p> <p>Are the aims and or scope of any joint project or partnership arrangement clearly set out?</p> <p>What funding/commissioning arrangements are in place?</p> <p>What are the governance, performance processes in place? Do they need to meet external requirements?</p> <p>To what extent can the joint project or partnership arrangement evidence it is leading to/delivering improved outcomes for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf?</p> <p>To what extent can the joint project or partnership arrangement evidence that it is providing value for money?</p> <p>To what extent has our provision resulted in communities developing self-help and social enterprise initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Community Needs Assessment</p> <p>Progress against SIP -Delivering Change</p> <p>The results of collaborations with others</p> <p>Partnership with third or private sector</p> <p>Trend analysis of partnership performance data over time</p> <p>Annual Performance reports</p> <p>Feedback from service users</p> <p>Evaluations from external audit/inspection reports</p> <p>Community Groups established inc <b><i>RCT Together</i></b></p>

**1.5 How inclusive, equal and fair is our service provision?**

*Is the service confident that it is reaching all sections of the community, particularly groups that are traditionally hard to reach. In the light of the drive to increase access to services in Welsh, is the service aware of and complying with the relevant Welsh language Standards?*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>Do we offer equal access to services for all the community?</p> <p>How well do we ensure that the physical environment is appropriate for customer's/service users'?</p> <p>Are residents able to get to service location and are opening hours suitable and visible?</p> <p>Have there been any legal challenges to service provision?</p> <p>How effective are our systems for recording, analysing and addressing under representation of groups of users?</p> <p>How well do we provide for the Welsh language?</p> <p>Do we monitor and effectively address any issues or complaints that arise including specific instance of discrimination?</p> <p>Do we provide appropriate equality training for staff?</p> <p>What evidence do we have that we provide effective services and safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable service users and comply with best practice?</p> <p>Do we have effective recruitment, disciplinary and reporting arrangements to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers, and do our arrangements meet legal requirements?</p> <p>Do staffing levels need to reflect the community demographics?</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Data available from equalities monitoring,</p> <p>Equalities strategy and policies in place inc Council's Strategic Equality Plan,</p> <p>Survey results</p> <p>Equalities monitoring for recruitment and employment</p> <p>Information on the accessibility of Council services</p> <p>Complaints and satisfaction levels and how they are dealt with</p> <p>Equalities Impact assessments</p>

**Summary of 'How well is the service contributing to and delivering outcomes for the community' ?**

*This sets out how well the service is contributing to and delivering improved outcomes for the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It sets out an overall judgement about strengths and areas for development in the service. This will contribute to the 2016/17 Service Business Plan as part of the Reflection and Service Priorities.*

**How can the Service better contribute to, and deliver, improved outcomes for the community?**



## Section 2 – To what extent is Leadership and Management supporting service delivery and improving outcomes for the community?

### 2.1 What is the impact of Leadership on the service?

*Is the service clear about how its priorities link to the Council's strategic direction. Do staff recognise and understand the service priorities and are they supported and empowered so that they can best contribute to achieving them?*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>Does the service contribute to the outcomes of the Single Integrated Plan?</p> <p>Do we communicate the Council's vision well and explore how to achieve it, in collaboration with others?</p> <p>Are all staff well supported in continuous development opportunities?</p> <p>How are staff managed in order to help them to improve their performance?</p> <p>Does individual performance management identify whole-authority/whole-service training and development needs clearly, are they prioritised and addressed?</p> <p>Do staff have targets for improvement that support the delivery of the strategic aims in service and other action plans?</p> <p>Are there effective management structures and processes which contribute to effective joint working?</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Vision Statement, values and aims</p> <p>Team meeting minutes</p> <p>121 Performance reports</p> <p>Supervision</p> <p>Staff surveys</p> <p>Record of multi agency working groups etc</p> <p>Outcomes from partnership working</p> <p>Achievement of joint targets</p> <p>Outcomes of residents' survey</p> <p>Development Plans</p> <p>Training Needs Analysis</p>

**2.2 How clear is our strategic direction?**

*Is the Service meeting the needs of the residents of RCT and does it have visible, robust and measurable plans in place to do so.*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>Does the service have clear aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies that are focused on meeting customers'/residents'/service users' needs?</p> <p>Is the Service clear about local and national priorities and are included in service plans?</p> <p>Are there clear identifiable links between strategic and service plans which includes SMART targets?</p> <p>Are plans appropriately focused? are they being implemented and monitored in a timely way?</p> <p>Are roles and responsibilities of senior and middle management well defined, viable and balanced?</p> <p>How do team meetings focus on performance and service delivery, generate clear action points and deadlines?</p> <p>How well do we set targets and use data to monitor performance?</p> <p>To what extent are our policies well implemented, monitored, evaluated and updated?</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Planning cycle for reviewing policies, plans and guidelines</p> <p>Business plans</p> <p>Staff action plans</p> <p>Monitoring progress evidence-team meeting minutes, update reports etc</p> <p>Meeting minutes and actions</p> <p>Joint working structures, minutes, outcomes</p>

**2.3 How does the work of elected Members impact on the service?**

*How well are elected Members kept informed about issues that are facing the service. Is the service sufficiently supported and challenged by elected Members through Cabinet and Scrutiny ? How effective is the governance in any partnerships in place?*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p>How does the service make sure that elected Members</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. have clear and timely information about the service, including any partnership arrangements, and the issues that affect it?</li> <li>2. are able to hold the service to account for performance</li> </ol> <p>How effective is the work of Scrutiny Committee? Have they called in any decisions made by cabinet?</p> <p>How effective is the governance in any joint working/partnerships in place?</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Cabinet/Scrutiny Committee Reports</p> <p>Member Working Groups</p> <p>Briefing notes</p> <p>Member Training</p> <p>'Call ins'</p>

## 2.4 How well does the service manage resources and provide value for money?

*Are the service's resources well managed? How does the service identify, prioritise and focus on what matters most so that it makes best use of its resources. Do services provide value for money? Are staff managed and supported to give of their best? How are spending decisions made? Is the service making best use of accommodation and equipment?*

Evaluation	Evidence
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>Are priorities and areas for development identified and resources allocated appropriately and according to clear criteria to reflect our agreed objectives?</p> <p>Is there any comparison with service spend and quality with other similar Councils?</p> <p>Are the costs of existing service delivery known and reviewed to ensure it is cost effective?</p> <p>Are there systematic and accurate budgeting arrangements?</p> <p>How well is accommodation and equipment managed?</p> <p>How well used are partnership and collaborative arrangements to make the most efficient and economic use of resources?</p> <p>Is there good use made of the funding we receive?</p> <p>How effectively is income generated from sources, including funding other than the Welsh Government?</p> <p>Are resources managed sustainably?</p> <p>To what extent are members of the community encouraged and supported to develop social self help and social enterprise initiatives?</p> <p>How is sickness monitoring/management addressed in the service</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Welsh Audit Office (WAO) reviews</p> <p>Additional funding being secured to undertake planned initiatives</p> <p>Business plan</p> <p>Project action plans and evaluations</p> <p>Service Asset Management Plans</p> <p>Cost/Benefit analysis</p> <p>Budgeting monitoring</p> <p>Succession planning</p> <p>Evidence of Sickness</p> <p>Monitoring</p>

**2.5 How is the quality of services improved?**

*How the service challenges itself to continually improve, innovate and change. How does the service use the information it has available e.g. data, inspection, consultation and other feedback to challenge what it does? Are staff participating in professional groups that share knowledge and best practice?*

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<p><b>Points to consider</b></p> <p>How do we evaluate the quality of our services? How effective are these processes?</p> <p>What user feedback do we collect? How effective are we in responding to feedback and using this to improve the services we provide?</p> <p>How do we engage our staff and elected members in seeking their views on the quality of the service and how it can improve? How is the result feedback?</p> <p>Has the service had feedback from the respective regulator or internal audit? If yes, have any recommendations raised been addressed in full?</p> <p>How does the service challenge itself to innovate and change?</p> <p>What is our track record in making improvements over recent years?</p> <p>Is self evaluation a regular part of service monitoring?</p> <p>How effectively is this information used to plan for improvement?</p> <p>Are all staff involved in assessing outcomes and their own performance?</p> <p>Are staff supported to participate in professional networks to share knowledge and practice?</p> <p>Does the service use evidence to identify and address under performance?</p> <p>Are we developing collaboration within and across local authorities and other agencies?</p> <p>Do we engage with the broader community, including employers and the voluntary sector, to benefit our residents/service users?</p>	<p><b>Sources of potential evidence</b></p> <p>Residents feedback</p> <p>External inspection and or evaluation</p> <p>Complaints records and outcomes</p> <p>Improved trends in performance evidenced by robust data</p> <p>Self-evaluation</p> <p>Information from external audit/inspection/improvement studies</p> <p>Partnership plans and evaluation reports</p> <p>Staff training and development records</p> <p>Quality Standards</p>

**Summary of ' To what extent is Leadership and Management supporting service delivery and improving outcomes for the community?'** *This tells the reader about Leadership and Management of the service, how it aligns to the Council's overall vision and improved outcomes for the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It sets out a judgement about strengths and areas for development. This will contribute to the 2016/17 Service Business Plan as part of the Reflection and Service Priorities.*

*This will form part the self assessment in your 2016/17 Business Plan and support the decisions about your service priorities*

**How can Leadership and Management better support service delivery and improved outcomes for the community?** *This will support the decisions about your service priorities in your 2016/17 Business Plans*



### Section 3 Next Steps - What needs to improve?

**Overall summary** *this will form part your self assessment in your 2016/17 Business Plan and support the decisions about your service priorities*

**The 5 measures, that will help to accurately measure performance in this service are:**

**NB You should also identify the relevant reporting frequency, e.g. weekly, monthly, quarterly, termly.  
These measures will form part of reduced quarterly performance reports and be subject to Data Assurance processes.**

**Some of the corporate and other officers who can help you find some of the information you need to complete your Service Self Evaluation**

	Claire Crews	Performance Coordinator - Corporate and Frontline Services and the Chief Executive's Division	claire.a.crews@rctcbc.gov.uk
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# Appendix B

## Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council – Corporate Self Assessment

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### Executive Summary

#### Introduction

The Senior Leadership Team and managers and staff across the Council have undertaken a Corporate Self Assessment and Service Self assessments during the autumn of 2015, to evaluate the Council's performance, determine the agenda for improvement and to identify and promote innovation and good practice across all services. Corporate and Service Self Assessment is a process, not a one-off event. It is the first, essential step in a cyclical process of bringing about change and improvement. It is based on professional reflection, challenge and support amongst staff across the Council and elected Members.

This document focuses on the Corporate Self Assessment only, with the Service Self Assessments to follow. The Corporate Self Assessment considers the performance of the corporate body of the Council. At the centre of the Corporate Self Assessment process undertaken in 2015 are the following questions:

1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?
2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?
3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?
4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?
5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?
6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?

These questions form the basis of the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessments of local authorities across Wales.

## Executive Summary

The performance of the Council has improved consistently over the past two years, and for the past two years the Council was the fourth most improved council in Wales. This improvement has been evidenced in particular in education, waste management, and highways services. However, when compared to the all Wales performance measures, the Council has too many indicators in the lower two quartiles when compared with other Welsh councils, with only Blaenau Gwent, Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil performing at a lower level. As highlighted in the recent Director's report the Council is seeking to modernise its Social Services in line with the direction of travel set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. The Council benefits from strong and focused leadership from the Leader and Cabinet. With recent changes to the senior management, including the Chief Executive, it has now strengthened its managerial leadership via a corporate re-structure which has a sharper focus on key priorities and on preparing itself for the future. A new draft Corporate Plan has been prepared and is currently subject to pre-scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and for staff consultation.

Political leadership of the Council has been stable for a number of years, with the new Leader appointed in May 2014, having been a Cabinet Member for six years. This has led to consistency in managing the necessary reductions in public sector funding, maintaining a strong financial base and a focus of improvement in service delivery. In its recent Annual Improvement Report, the Wales Audit Office made reference to the fact that the political leadership has been prepared to make difficult decisions to deliver service improvement, such as school modernisation proposals to raise education standards, changing to fortnightly waste collections to improve recycling rates, and changes/reductions to a range of services in order to deliver a balanced revenue budget.

The Council has recognised the weaknesses, raised by the Wales Audit Office in the political scrutiny arrangements, and in May 2015, reorganised the committee structure and its modus operandi to increase the level of scrutiny, accountability and challenge within and across portfolios and achieve an effective focus on performance improvement.

Historically, the Council has not actively sought the views of residents, businesses and the Council's own staff to seek their feedback on the services provided and how they can be improved. Since his appointment, the Leader of the Council has actively sought to engage with the public through a range of approaches, including social media, and open access consultation events. Nevertheless, there is still scope to further strengthen engagement with public and staff in setting the strategic direction of the Council and informing the performance of specific services.

The capacity of the Council is enhanced by sound financial management and capable senior officers. The Council has robust arrangements in place to develop and implement savings plans to manage the reduction in public sector funding and has a track record of delivering the plans to ensure the Council delivers a balanced budget each year.

The broad picture on achieving value for money is positive, there is a low comparative spend in the corporate services (based on the Welsh Government/KPMG benchmarking report) and generally good performance. The Council can demonstrate that spend and investment follows policy and corporate prioritisation, for example in relation to Education (21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools), Wellbeing, Waste Management, Highways and Children's services.

The Council has a performance framework in place that has changed very little over the past few years but its implementation is inconsistent. Systems that need strengthening include target setting, in particular the use of aspiring targets to drive improvements in performance data; the quality of service and action planning; and the creation, monitoring and evaluation of individual staff development plans.

The recruitment, development and management of our staff has also been effective over the past few years, managing a reducing workforce yet still investing in the development of staff and the appointment of graduates and apprentices to the Council. The HR Service has been particularly effective in the recruitment, retention and exit strategies for senior managers in schools, which has had a significant impact on educational outcomes. However, there are further opportunities to improve the productivity of the Council's workforce through improved sickness absence management.

The Council has made good progress in reducing office accommodation as part of its Asset Management Plan. Further opportunities to maximise occupancy of existing buildings are being explored and a mobile working pilot has commenced with 20 staff with the aim of reducing accommodation requirements of this group of staff by at least 40%. There are plans in place to expand his pilot across the Council services.

Ten years ago, the Council committed to developing a customer care approach that focused mainly on a number of One 4 All Centres, a telephone contact centre and improved internet access. This approach has had some success. However, the Council has not continued to modernise this provision and has fallen behind many councils across the UK in the digitalisation of services. To provide the customer experience now expected by the public, the Council has to modernise its services and ICT infrastructure to positively impact on service improvement and to reduce overhead costs.

Regeneration is a priority for the Council, and through effective working with Welsh Government, a number of schemes that impact on the Greater Pontypridd area are being developed and implemented. This is coupled with the recent investment in a number of major highways and rail schemes, funded by the Council and Welsh Government, which will have a significant impact on the town centres of Porth, Treorchy, Mountain Ash and Llantrisant. Furthermore, the Council is very open to working with developers to stimulate housing and other private sector investment, as evidenced by the fact that in 2014/15, more new and affordable houses were built in the County Borough than in 19 other Welsh local authorities.

The recent commitment of the UK Government to a £1.28bn City Deal for the Cardiff Capital Region, underwritten by the 10 South East Wales creates the opportunity for the Council to capitalise on the planned infrastructure improvements. The Council is a key stakeholder in the City Deal, is leading on the transportation infrastructure aspect of the Deal and is committed to maximising the benefits of this investment for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Council shows good community leadership in its driving of and investment in, the Local Service Board and the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board. The LSB is improving and its ambitions are genuinely built on community based needs. The Council is working effectively with its partners to achieve the clear and challenging ambitions set out in the Single Integrated Plan. It has an open culture with good working relationships between councillors, officers and partners.

The Council is also using partnerships to help deliver its own strategic plans. Priorities are based on a sound understanding of local needs, which have been developed with the help of effective research and consultation exercises. Shared priorities, in particular, are benefiting from closer partnership working, for example, in the areas of community safety and health.

However, the partnership arrangements are still often on the periphery of the core services delivered by partners and some of the key service improvement /integration priorities between social care and health in developing and delivering joint services are not being addressed quickly enough. For example, significant pressures exist in terms of Mental Health Services for children and adults and Delayed Transfers of Care/community based responses continues to be a priority which requires an even greater emphasis on effective joint working with the focus on the individual. It is important that the Council prioritises these issues and takes the lead on such discussions as part of the new proposed Public Service Boards.

The Corporate Assessment has sought to challenge the status quo and deliver an accurate appraisal of the Council. Within each section there are a number of potential areas for improvement and the associated action will be included in the respective Corporate Service Business Plan.



These actions will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team quarterly and a summary shared with the Cabinet.

The key priority areas for improvement identified as part of the Corporate Self Assessment are to:

- Set a clear strategic direction and Council vision, with a reduced number of priorities, a set of challenging targets that compare favourably with the best in Wales, through consultation with the general public and Council staff;
- Simplify the way in which financial and performance management information is organised, presented and analysed so that they are easier to read, understand, challenge and scrutinise to drive service improvement;
- Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services;
- Refresh the Council's performance management framework and in particular ensure all staff have an annual individual staff performance management/development review;
- Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to further support service delivery and improvement;
- Update the Scheme of Delegation, along with appropriate training and staff awareness, particularly given the changes in management at all levels;
- Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management;
- Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services;
- Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities.

## APPENDIX 1

## Detailed Draft Corporate Assessment

1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	
<p><b>1.1 Is the authority helping to deliver better outcomes for people who live in the area?</b></p>	<p>The links between the Council's current strategic plan (Single Integrated Plan), its business and priority plans and strategic risks are clearly visible in the Council's current key performance documents. There is evidence of improved outcomes in some areas. Progress has been made in improving engagement with residents, however, more could be achieved in encouraging residents to have a greater say in setting the ambition of the Council, its outcomes and targets.</p> <p>RCT is the lead organisation of the Local Service Board, which has set out a clear vision to be delivered in partnership, i.e. <i>People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous</i>. The broad outcomes that the community can expect to see and the underpinning priorities for partnership improvement are set out in a Single Integrated Plan (SIP) for Rhondda Cynon Taf 'Delivering Change'. 'Delivering Change' sets out what the partnership will do and how people will know if the work of the partnership is making a difference. The Council's Improvement Priorities are focused on delivering these outcomes. The Council's current Corporate Performance Report, as well as previous iterations, is structured to reflect the broad outcomes and the extent to which the Council is contributing to them. The Council's Business Plans and priority plans are similarly structured. However, we could do more to collate this information from services that are not directly linked to the SIP outcomes to demonstrate our contribution. Within the Council's partner organisations, such as Police and the Health Board, both strategic corporate plans have references to the Single Integrated Plans within their boundaries.</p> <p>The Cabinet and Council were consulted as part of the formal consultation process of the Single Integrated Plan in 2012. Both the original SIP and Annual Report in 2014 were also approved by Cabinet and Council for publication. Some Elected Members have been members of the Local Service Board Scrutiny Working Group, which, in the past, has looked in more detail at Local Service Board delivery of the SIP priorities. Many of the Council's procedures also include a reference to the SIP, which increases Elected Member knowledge e.g. the Expression of Interest process for 'RCT Together' asset or service transfer.</p> <p>An Annual Report of 'Delivering Change' was prepared in 2014 see <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan</a>. Both a 'technical' version, outlining progress against each action and measure, and a summary version are available.</p> <p>The Annual Report attempted to evaluate what difference the SIP had made to partnership working. It was through this process that the strategic partnership boards were stood down, as partnership working had evolved and was becoming more effective without the need for board meetings. A targeted approach to working in partnership was decided as a more effective way of delivering improvements - area based partnership working. Whilst there was no annual report prepared in 2015, the LSB has continued to receive quarterly updates on population measures and progress against its priorities.</p> <p>Many of the measures used in the SIP to evidence Council's progress in 2014/15 have shown improvement e.g. Safety by fewer victims of antisocial behaviour and bringing empty properties back into use; Healthy by managing care packages so that fewer people need on going services and getting more people back on their feet more quickly and Prosperous by preventing more people from becoming homeless and supporting more people to get jobs and gain qualifications. There is still work to do ensure that the Council does not remain amongst the worst in Wales for many of the population measures set out in the SIP e.g. the high numbers of our residents that we support in care homes; the length of time it takes for us to get older residents who need further support at home or in care homes, out of hospital; our primary and secondary school pupil's attendance; our pupils achieving Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, our pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including A*-C in English, Welsh (first language) and Maths and the high number of changes of school that are</p>

<b>1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</b>	
	<p>experienced by children in our care. Nevertheless, we need to understand that some of the measures need to be contextualised in order for them to be compared across the 22 local authorities. For example, when the education indicators for KS 3 &amp; 4 are contextualised based on socio-economic factors, the Council's performance has exceeded the Welsh Government benchmarks (set for each council) for the past two years, one of only two councils' in Wales to do so.</p> <p>There are a number of partnerships not directly associated with delivering the Single Integrated Plan but all make a specific contribution to the priorities of the SIP e.g. the 'RCT Together' approach, which is delivered through a Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group, and some of the regional or national footprints for partnership working, such as Wales Purchasing Consortium meetings and South East Wales Directors of Economic Regeneration. However, officers attending these meetings have a general knowledge of the Single Integrated Plan and its priorities.</p> <p>The Council also has mature relationships with the Local Health Board and the neighbouring council of Merthyr Tydfil. This has allowed for an increase in collaborative working and commissioning in several areas of adult and children's services and will be expanded further in 2014-15 and beyond. This is not without its challenges and the Council's Director of Social Services has highlighted that the pace of change must increase in some areas.</p>
<p><b>1.2 Is the authority delivering better results for service users?</b></p>	<p>According to the most recent Data Unit Wales Annual Performance Bulletin, Sept 2015, RCT is the 4<sup>th</sup> most improved Council in respect of the performance measured by comparable indicators. This indicates the Council has maintained it's rate of improvement since 2014, when it was also the 4<sup>th</sup> most improved Council in Wales. <a href="http://www.dataunitwales.gov.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=79&amp;fileid=1052&amp;mid=459">http://www.dataunitwales.gov.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=79&amp;fileid=1052&amp;mid=459</a></p> <p>As part of the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report we have prepared a more detailed analysis of all comparable measures and trends over time which includes Wales average and quartile analysis. <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/RelatedDocuments/OurperformancecomparedtotherestofWales201415.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/RelatedDocuments/OurperformancecomparedtotherestofWales201415.pdf</a></p> <p>Measures of success where the Council is delivering better results and are amongst the best in Wales include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational qualifications of children in our care, pupils leaving school with a qualification.</li> <li>• the rate of older people that we support in the community,</li> <li>• the % of young people formerly in our care that are in education, training or employment at age 19.</li> </ul> <p>Measures where we are improving our performance over time and remain Council priorities include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recycling rates, where our Q2 performance compares with the best in Wales</li> <li>• attainment at the L2 threshold plus English and Maths, data to confirm our latest position will be available in quarter 3,</li> <li>• educational attainment at Key Stage 2 where our latest data shows performance is not longer among the lower quartile in Wales and</li> <li>• the rate of older people supported in care homes, where despite improving our performance, we remain amongst the lower quartile in Wales.</li> </ul> <p>There is a growing understanding of the stories behind performance e.g. there are also measures that have been identified by elected Members and regulators as cause for concern, e.g. carers assessments where performance has been amongst the worst in Wales for two consecutive years. This measure has now been</p>

### 1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?

given an improvement target by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.  
<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/HealthandWellbeingScrutinyCommittee/2015/09/02/Minutes/Minutes.pdf>

Performance of all local and national measures is reported to Cabinet and scrutinised by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in well established quarterly performance monitoring reports.  
<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/Councilperformance.aspx>

These reports include the quarterly updates in respect of the Council's priority plans and associated risks. The reasons for the levels of performance that are not on target are highlighted and challenged. The reports contain a good range of performance data but, there is scope to improve the way that this data is organised, presented and analysed in order for the reader to better understand and challenge the data and/or support progress. There are also opportunities to better align data arising from service change so that elected Members can be clear whether decisions made as part of this process are having the intended impact.

More recently there has been a strengthening of challenge and support of service delivery and target setting in a number of ways

- directly by the Chief Executive and also with the Senior Leadership Team in a series of scheduled presentations as part of the SLT agenda
- the Chief Executive and Deputy Leader's Challenge and Support sessions in place from November to March
- Group Director and Cabinet member sign off of Service Self Evaluation as part of Business Planning for 2015/16
- A project on target setting has been established in the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work programme for 2015/16.  
<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/FinanceandPerformanceScrutinyCommittee/2015/10/07/Minutes/Minutes.pdf>

It is too early to measure the effect of this strengthened and more inclusive approach on performance.

A new Corporate Plan has been made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at their request, for pre-scrutiny before being considered by Cabinet and being consulted upon. The Plan sets out a clear vision, purpose and 3 priorities for future years which will be used to allocate resources, ensure action plans are in place to deliver these priorities and better demonstrate whether the Council is delivering better results for residents.

Providing this clear strategy and direction also aims to address issues fed back during a joint officer/Cabinet planning event on 8 September that discussed the service self assessment and corporate assessment processes i.e. participants wanted:

- Clarity of, communication of, and understanding of a corporate vision which was embedded into actions;
- Manage community expectations but encourage/enable community aspirations to be high;
- Too many priorities, need more focus, greater staff engagement and streamlining of messages;
- Alignment of priorities through to business plans – need the golden thread;
- Clarity of the outcomes we want/need to achieve – are they the right outcomes and will they have the right impact – important to evaluate progress;
- In engaging staff in the self assessment process need to clarify and simplify the use of language;
- Need greater clarity of the various corporate systems in particular member/officer processes.

**This is being followed up by new "Delivery Plans" for each service area being prepared and signed off by Cabinet Members by 31/1/16.**

<b>1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</b>	
<b>Section 1 potential areas for Improvement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set out a clear strategic direction and Council vision, with a reduced number of focused priorities.</li> <li>2. Engage with residents to assess whether they agree with the vision, level of ambition and are clear about the outcomes the Council is aspiring to achieve.</li> <li>3. Ensure that the LSB/PSB has a comprehensive annual update on partnership progress towards delivering outcomes.</li> <li>4. Focus attention on those national performance measures, which are local priorities, and for which Rhondda Cynon Taf is consistently worst in Wales</li> <li>5. Improve the way that data and information is organised, presented and analysed within the quarterly reports so that they are easier to read, understand, challenge and scrutinise.</li> <li>6. Better align data arising from the implementation of service changes so that elected Members can measure implementation and whether decisions made as part of this process are having the intended impact.</li> </ol>

<b>2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?</b>	
<p><b>2.1 Does the authority establish a clear vision and sense of purpose which reflects local needs, the views of local people, national priorities, and will secure improved outcomes effectively?</b></p>	<p><b>The Council with its partners has identified the wider vision of what it wants to achieve for its residents, through the Single Integrated Plan, 'Delivering Change'. This vision guides the Council's improvement priorities. However there is scope for the Council to develop its own strategic vision within that wider framework and make it widely available to all staff, elected Members, residents and stakeholders.</b></p> <p>The vision within the SIP, that 'People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous', provides the wider context when setting Council direction and forms the framework in which the Council sets its priorities e.g. Safety, Health and Prosperity and our work also contributes directly to many of the 14 outcomes which underpin the Vision. The Council's quarterly performance reports, priority plans and business plans are structured around these three themes, as is the annual Corporate Performance Report.</p> <p>The views of a wide range of stakeholders were sought in the development of the SIP and residents' views are sought annually during the budget setting exercise and by individual services for specific feedback e.g. satisfaction or service change proposals. However, there is currently no coordinated, timely and all encompassing mechanism to gather and understand the views, needs and aspirations of all residents that will provide the necessary 'organisational intelligence'. There are many disparate forms of 'needs assessments' available that already provide much of this information, e.g. Understanding What Matters (SIP needs assessment) and a number of strategies, audits and plans also hold this information, such as the Local Development Plan; Childcare Sufficiency Audit; the Corporate Performance Report. However this information is a snapshot in time and to deliver a specific outcome e.g. plan or reconfiguring service delivery. We could do more to better coordinate this information and to make it more widely available.</p> <p>Work to prepare for the introduction of a statutory requirement under the Future Generations Act and the Social Services &amp; Well Being Act to conduct regular needs assessments to understand the needs of the population and demonstrate the long term impact of the Council's policies and interventions, will help to bridge this gap in 'organisational intelligence'. It will also allow the Council to better understand whether or not it has secured improved outcomes as a result of its work. Work to scope the needs assessment has already begun and will be completed in 2016. There will be an expectation that this will be completed every 4 years. The Council is also investigating a refreshed approach to conducting a Residents' Survey which has not been conducted since 2006. This approach which will include Social media, focus groups and County Borough wide surveys of communities of interest will allow the Council to better understand what residents think about Services and whether they feel the Council is securing better outcomes for them. It is anticipated that this approach will be implemented in the late spring/early summer of early 2016.</p> <p>Some elements of planning are aligned with partners e.g. the Community Safety priorities within the authority are aligned to the Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities, but mostly the alignment is not considered strong enough e.g. Health produces a 3 year integrated plan which acknowledges Local Authority priorities but there is little alignment.</p> <p>The Council currently produces priority plans in order to deliver or contribute to improved outcomes for residents as well as meet the improvement planning requirements set out in Part 1 of the LG Measure 2010. The WAO's Annual Improvement Report 2015 indicated that '<i>The Council discharged its statutory improvement planning duties through a more reader-friendly Corporate Improvement Plan with improved clarity around the scope of the Council's improvement ambitions</i>'. In previous years the Council was criticised by WAO for not being clear about the scale of the ambition within these plans and has taken early steps to address this by strengthening target setting challenge and processes particularly where service budget cuts have resulted in a consequent reduction in service standards. Whilst progress around challenging targets is evident in some services e.g. Education, it is not consistent across the Council. Work to further develop this has started through support and challenge sessions and through a Scrutiny Working Group project. However this needs to be kept under review as in the</p>

<b>2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?</b>	
	<p>2015 AIR, <i>"Within CPR targets have not been assigned to some measures in the detailed action plans, e.g. where indicators are new, therefore for some measures the extent of the Council ambition is unclear".</i></p> <p>The level of ambition of service areas in respect of key performance indicators is mixed. Some services have high aspirations and strive to be above the Welsh average or top quartile while other services are consistently bottom quartile performers. The new Corporate Plan seeks to address this mixed lack of ambition and stretching targets are set for all the key performance indicators.</p> <p>Knowledge of the hierarchy of plans and how they align within the Council is mixed depending on the audience. Anecdotally, individuals are not always clear about what plan they are contributing to, especially where there is overlap e.g. priority plans, outcome agreements and partnership plans. This confusion could be addressed by refreshing the Performance Management Framework, or similar, so that it sets a simple relevant context to which all staff can relate.</p>
<p><b>2.2 Does the authority demonstrate open and inclusive leadership, which is focused on securing continuous improvement in staff performance, partnership working, and outcomes for citizens?</b></p>	<p><b>The Council's Leadership is more clearly focusing on what matters with a strengthening and more transparent approach to delivering continuous improvement in priority areas, supporting alternative methods of service delivery in the community and engaging with residents. It is too early to assess the full impact of these approaches.</b></p> <p>The Council's approach to securing continuous improvement is currently delivered via the WPI process which identifies the Council's improvement priorities. The process to set the 2015/16 improvement priorities continued to develop greater involvement, support and challenge by elected Members through scrutiny of the individual priority plans as well as the Corporate Performance Report. This was recognised by the WAO in its AIR 2015, although it also set out there was more to do to effectively embed these processes.</p> <p>There is also a strong corporate approach to scrutiny and monitoring progress of the identified improvement priorities.</p> <p>Up until recently there has been a 'gap' between the Vision of senior leaders and Members and operational activity, this is not unique to RCT. However, this is being now being addressed by Cabinet Leadership which is providing a clearer 'steer' on the direction of the Council through the increased engagement with the public, press releases, use social media and communication with staff. Mostly, this is communicated through to staff and partners, through senior leadership. There is scope to develop this further, particularly given the opportunities Social Media provides, as part of a wider communication strategy.</p> <p>The Council's Leadership has focused on making difficult decisions supported by robust evidence that enables them to make informed decisions. Examples include the school modernisation programme and the range of budget cuts over the past two years. Since the appointment of the new Council Leader in May 2014, the Council has actively sought to better engage with the community through a series of Leader engagement events across the County Borough. These have been supplemented with improved community consultation in respect of service change proposals. These consultation events have provided a further evidence base and a challenge to the service change proposals and have informed Cabinet's decisions to reshape the proposals in the light of the feedback, for example the Music Service and Home to School Transport.</p> <p>There is link from the SIP to the Council's priority plans and business plans but the current absence of Council specific strategic objectives does not help those services that are not contributing to an improvement priority, to see where they can contribute to a Council outcome. This will be addressed as part of the new Corporate Plan.</p>

<b>2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?</b>	
	<p>There is recognition of the impact of a specific focus and inclusive leadership in the AIR 2015. <i>“Following Estyn inspection LA produced detailed post inspection action plan, clear steps to improve education for children and young people. Elected Members and senior officers have demonstrated a clear commitment to improve provision and using resources effectively”</i> This approach is now being rolled out across the Council.</p> <p>To continue the golden thread to staff, staff development processes including the Personal Development Reviews have been designed to ensure that staff training/development activity is focused on delivering the Council's priorities through service business plans as part of the 'Managing People and Their Performance' approach. However, the service self assessments are evidencing that the Personal Development Reviews are not embedded or consistently conducted across all services. It is therefore difficult to clearly evidence that the Council has the culture and capacity to deliver continuous improvement outside of the activities identified within the WPI Plans. This is further compounded by the impact of reduced staff numbers and the associated loss of organisational information, knowledge and experience.</p> <p>It is also difficult to evidence staff awareness of the Council's priorities. The Improvement priorities are published on the Intranet and are drawn to the attention of Managers and Partners. However, there is currently no way of knowing the extent to which staff are informed about, or where relevant involved in discussion in respect of Council priorities. The new draft Corporate Plan will be shared and consulted upon with all staff. The recently introduced quarterly Cabinet and senior officer (GR15 and above) briefing sessions are an important mechanism for communicating key messages such as Council priorities, budgets, member expectations, etc to all senior managers.</p> <p>However, the Council recognises the need for a refreshed performance management framework to be produced to clearly set out the hierarchy of all plans so that all staff can more clearly identify where they fit it. Knowledge of current priorities should be reinforced through the management processes defined in the 'Managing People and Their Performance' approach and via ongoing 121s and performance reviews but data on compliance with these requirements is not currently available. This also makes it difficult to understand or evidence if continuous development in staff performance is embedded within the Council's culture.</p> <p>The service change agenda is separate from, but running in parallel with, the process to identify improvement priorities and so are currently not directly aligned. Feedback from a recent WAO study on Decision Making Arrangements in Relation to Service Change will better inform this process. The Council will benefit from the implementation of the new draft Corporate Plan with an agreed vision for the future which will act as a transformation plan to set the direction for these and other processes for all services and drive the continuous improvement across the whole Council.</p> <p>There are some good examples of the Council maximising the benefits of partnership working to secure improved outcomes e.g. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to protect children and vulnerable adults, early signs that a joint approach is delivering improved outcomes are positive. Many partnership arrangements are restricted to information sharing and joint planning rather than joint delivery including the Local Service Board.</p>
<p><b>Section 2 potential areas for improvement</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Set out a clear strategic direction and Council vision, with a smaller number of focused priorities and make it widely available to all staff, elected Members, residents and stakeholders.</b></li> <li><b>2. Collect and coordinate timely, regular and relevant views of the Council and its services from residents and staff.</b></li> <li><b>3. Ensure that information about Council services already received through existing feedback channels is coordinated and made available to inform corporate and service planning and delivery.</b></li> <li><b>4. Continue to strengthen target setting and challenge arrangements, ensuring they are consistently applied and the level of ambition is clear.</b></li> <li><b>5. Simplify and refresh the Performance Management Framework so that it contains relevant Council priorities and targets and processes</b></li> </ol>



**2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?**

6. Continue to strengthen Scrutiny arrangements so they better support service delivery and improvement.
7. Further develop the communication between Leadership and officers at all levels in the context of a wider communication strategy
8. Undertake an assessment of the Personal Development Reviews to assess whether they are embedded and consistently conducted across all services.
9. Review partnership arrangements in the light of Future Generation Act so that they focus on delivering outcomes.

<b>3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</b>	
<b>3.1 Do clear roles and responsibilities enable good governance and strong accountability?</b>	<p><b>Following recent changes to strengthen Cabinet and Scrutiny arrangements, new revised roles and responsibilities and ways of working are currently being embedded. It is too early to evidence the difference the changes are making but early indications are positive.</b></p> <p>New Governance structures were put in place in May this year. However, these changes in both Cabinet Portfolios and Scrutiny arrangements roles and responsibilities are not yet fully embedded with Councillors or staff. Relevant training, advice and guidance to support these changes are being delivered to elected Members by external and internal sources. It is too soon to be clear about their effectiveness but early indications are positive as elected Members are growing more familiar with their new roles and expectations, giving them the confidence, knowledge and skills to participate and challenge more effectively at meetings. The Scheme of Delegation is currently being amended further to reflect additional arrangements around call in and will be implemented once completed. However, lessons could be learnt from the communication of the existing Scheme of Delegation as it is not widely understood or accessible by Council managers. Awareness sessions to managers and elected Members commenced in December and plans are in place to continue to provide training and support over the next few months.</p> <p>The Councils statutory officials (Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democratic Services) are referred to in the Council's current constitution and deliver their statutory requirements accordingly. These functions are monitored by the appropriate scrutiny committees. However, the roles/responsibilities of these statutory officials are not widely understood or communicated inside or outside the Council. With the recent significant turnover of senior and middle managers in the Council, it is important that training is provided to all managers in respect of the Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and Procedures, Standing Orders etc. The first element of this training, focused on the Scheme of Delegation will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015, at the Cabinet Member and Officer Meeting.</p>
<b>3.2 Do elected members and officers exhibit appropriate values and behaviour?</b>	<p>Both officers and elected Members generally exhibit appropriate behaviour. Where this is not the case, they are dealt with under the appropriate policies/regulations. There are two recent examples of misconduct by elected Members, both of which resulted in the elected Members being suspended for a period of 6 months and 4 month respectively following the investigation by the Council's Standards Committee. The most recent report to the ombudsman can be seen here.  <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/StandardsCommittee/2015/07/10/Reports/annualreportoftheombudsm anfor201415.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/StandardsCommittee/2015/07/10/Reports/annualreportoftheombudsm anfor201415.pdf</a></p> <p>The Code of Conduct contained within the Council's constitution (<i>section 5</i>) is clear about the behaviour expected of elected Members, and Members received direct training and e learning is also available on RCT source. The Council's constitution is available on the Council's website and is regularly updated and widely available for elected Members. However, it is not easy to find, nor is the content easy to read or understand, especially for staff and residents with no access to IT.  <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncilConstitution/CouncilConstitution.aspx">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncilConstitution/CouncilConstitution.aspx</a></p> <p>Expectations of elected Members are also supported by local protocols as agreed by the Standards committee.  <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/StandardsCommittee/2015/07/10/Reports/annualreportoftheombudsm anfor201415.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/StandardsCommittee/2015/07/10/Reports/annualreportoftheombudsm anfor201415.pdf</a></p> <p>There also a member/officer protocol in place which sets out the appropriate working relationships to be adhered to.  <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncilConstitution/RelatedDocuments/Part5CodesandProtocols.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncilConstitution/RelatedDocuments/Part5CodesandProtocols.pdf</a></p>

<b>3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</b>	
	<p>In the last six months, there have been changes in the extent and level of joint working between officers and elected Members. Examples of these new joint working arrangements include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Cabinet Member and Officers Planning meeting (8 September and 1 December)</li> <li>• Cabinet Members being directly involved in the Service Self Evaluations, particularly through the sign off arrangements in place</li> </ul> <p>The Staff Advisory Panel which has been in place since June 2014, is an example of constructive working relationships between Members that have helped to deliver tangible outcomes in terms of budget savings</p> <p>The expectations of staff behaviour are outlined in the 'Basic Rules' booklet which are supplied to all staff with their contract of employment and also within each member of staff's contract of employment. They are also set out in the competency frameworks. The competency frameworks are used throughout the recruitment, selection, induction and performance review processes. However, these are not easily accessible to those staff who do not have IT access. Aspects of unacceptable behaviour are also addressed in specific policy decisions e.g. drinking alcohol in working hours and smoking on Council premises.</p>
<p><b>3.3 Are there adequate arrangements in place to support members and senior officials to be effective in their role?</b></p>	<p>There is an elected Member training Strategy in place as part of the requirements of the Charter for Member Support and Development.  <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/democraticservicescommittee/2012/10/02/reports/report-for-democratic-services-cttee--(021012).pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/councildemocracy/democracyelections/councillorscommittees/meetings/democraticservicescommittee/2012/10/02/reports/report-for-democratic-services-cttee--(021012).pdf</a> no longer on the site - awaiting update</p> <p>The Council has been awarded all three levels of the Wales Charter, the only LA in Wales to achieve this. Training for Scrutiny Members has been supported by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and training has included crime and disorder matters, INLOGOV training provided on scrutiny, listening and questioning skills, WLGA training has included charring skills. Internal training has also been delivered to elected Members through both Democratic Service and HR. This includes 'Understanding the Council's budgets', Treasury Management and scheduled future training includes understanding and interpretation of data.</p> <p>Cabinet members are also trained in presentation and media skills, as are Chief Officers. Other examples of training for senior officers include Media Training, Transform, Aspire, Mercury, Head teacher development programme, and more recently, training in the management of absence.</p> <p>The Head of Democratic Services provides the Democratic Services committee with an annual report which sets out the training and support the elected Members have received and training/support needs to meet to carry out the Democratic Services functions.</p> <p>Report in response of the IRP in 2014 <a href="http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/localgov/150223-irp-report-february2015-v1-en.pdf">http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/localgov/150223-irp-report-february2015-v1-en.pdf</a>, see link below, indicated that</p> <p><i>"The Panel has determined that each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to appropriate information". Work to address this determination was underway as part of the requirements of the charter and has now been completed. All training and support needs for elected Members are identified as part of the regular personal development reviews.</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/DemocraticServicesCommittee/2014/11/05/Reports/agendaitem5birpdr aftannualreport.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/DemocraticServicesCommittee/2014/11/05/Reports/agendaitem5birpdr aftannualreport.pdf</a></p>

<b>3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</b>	
	<p>For senior staff (SLT) all appointments are informed by a robust Assessment Centre process All Head teachers are appointed by School Governors, by a robust Assessment Centre process through HR and the Council's/ Consortium's School Improvement services. The remuneration arrangements for SLT are agreed by Council in line with the WLGA recommendations and SLT is also subject to the Management of Change arrangements in place across the Council.</p>
<b>3.4 Is decision making across the authority robust and effective?</b>	<p><b>Decision making processes are considered to be robust. The Council has recently been subject to legal challenges on its decision making in respect of a number of school closures and nursery school provision and the High Court has supported the Council's decision making arrangements.</b></p> <p>The first legal challenge the Council faced in respect of proposed nursery school changes, which resulted in the Council's decision being considered to be not legal, due to two legal duties the Council had to consider not being presented to Cabinet as part of the decision making process. This has resulted in a strengthening of the quality of the reports required to support the decision making processes. This improvement is evidenced by the fact that the Council has had the High Court confirm the legality of its decision making in three consecutive recent legal challenges.</p> <p>An example of where elected Members and senior officers have demonstrated a clear commitment to taking difficult decisions, not linked to service change was referenced in the WAO AIR 2015. This stated, <i>"the robust post inspection action plan and monitoring that was put in place post inspection 2012, and the clear steps that were put in place to achieve improvement in education resulted in the Authority being removed from Estyn monitoring in 2014 and being removed from further follow up"</i></p> <p>The Service Change reports and other Cabinet reports are comprehensive and provide members with a clear rationale for change and the options for consideration. This process has since 1 November 2015 been strengthened by a change in the structure of the Cabinet reports, requiring consideration of equalities, legislation, financial implications, consultation requirements etc.</p>
<b>3.5 Do challenge, scrutiny and review processes ensure a range of informed views are sought and actively considered to aid decision making and improvement?</b>	<p><b>"Progress in further embedding and developing scrutiny has been mixed". AIR 2015.</b> <a href="http://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/Rhondda_Cynon_Taf_CBC_AIR_English_2015.pdf">http://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/Rhondda_Cynon_Taf_CBC_AIR_English_2015.pdf</a></p> <p>Examples referenced by WAO were positive in respect of ESTYN and the scrutiny arrangements in respect of Education and related partnership services were set out in the ESTYN monitoring letter of July 2014. However conversely, in January 2015, CSSIW <i>Inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours – January 2015</i> set out <i>"Members did not provide sufficient challenge to ensure the best outcomes were achieved for looked after children and care leavers, including the most vulnerable and challenging"</i></p> <p>The AIR 2015 also indicated that the O&amp;S Annual Report described the topics considered by committees rather than a summary of the outcomes generated and/or an evaluation of the effectiveness of scrutiny arrangements. <i>'Whilst there are some examples of outputs/recommendations arising from scrutiny, a review of a sample of committee minutes and reports highlighted a number of examples of scrutiny committees 'noting' reports, with no obvious output arising</i></p>

### 3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?

*from consideration of the item. Therefore there remain opportunities for the Council to further develop and embed scrutiny practice including developing a clearer focus on the outcomes of scrutiny activity'. The Council has already put in place measures to address the issues identified above, e.g. through training and support and we will continue to monitor progress in this area. As part of the work programme for 2015-16 there is a review of the Council's response to the recommendations arising from Good Scrutiny? Good Question! The Auditor General's improvement study on scrutiny in local government May 2014, through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.*

Work to strengthen challenge and scrutiny processes is ongoing. Scrutiny Committees have prepared relevant work programmes in order to prioritise work and provide clarity in relation to both the expectations of the Scrutiny function as well as the measures of success of the specific projects within the work programmes. This will facilitate a more evaluative approach to be taken at the end of a Scrutiny Project as well as providing more robust data/evidence to inform the annual Scrutiny Report. Improved forward planning for a relevant and timely work programme will also allow elected Members to consider and prepare more focused and meaningful challenge.

In relation to the statutory reporting requirements of the LG Measure, we continued to develop and strengthen arrangements to scrutinise the CPR from the initial steps taken in 2014. Feedback from WAO (AIR 2015) which referred to 2014 scrutiny arrangements in place, included that Members were not clear about their role and there was an inconsistent approach. This feedback was taken account of in 2015 arrangements and changes were made which resulted in smaller, more focussed working groups of Scrutiny committees, who were assisted by the provision of potential lines of enquiry for the groups to consider and also developing and strengthening the involvement of community representatives by co opting them onto the Scrutiny Working Groups. Feedback to this revised approach from elected Members and the co opted members involved (OPAG) was positive and the Council is seeking to develop and broaden this model further in 2016.

Scrutiny and challenge is continuing to develop and be strengthened e.g. through pre Scrutiny arrangements and Members being more involved in setting the Scrutiny Work programme, but this work is still in its early stages. The progress of the revised scrutiny arrangements is being closely monitored by Overview and Scrutiny. In November, the Scrutiny Committees started a pre-cabinet scrutiny programme initially selecting the proposed new Leisure Strategy and the proposed new Corporate Plan. Cabinet's Forward Plan has also been improved, providing scrutiny members with the opportunity to pre-scrutiny a range of forthcoming reports.

Audit committee's annual work plan is compiled by the Chair of Audit and the Internal Audit Manager, the aim of the workplan is to provide members the relevant information that will enable them to deliver their Terms of Reference of the Committee, standard items including Internal Audit performance and finalised audit assignments. The 2015/16 workplan was agreed by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 7 September 2015:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/AuditCommittee/2015/09/07/Reports/item3auditcommitteeworkplan.pdf>

Audit Committee has recently asked for more detailed information in respect of the performance of Internal Audit along with the outcomes it achieves in terms of its reports. This more 'hands-on' approach is enabling elected Members to more effectively challenge the management of the Internal Audit Service and it's delivery of the work plan as well as increasing the level of assurance provided within specific audit assignments and the ratings applied to recommendations. Audit Committee has previously referred matters to scrutiny committee for escalation, requested follow-up reviews and on one occasion, called in the Director

### 3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?

of Education for challenge on a safeguarding matter.

An example of how Audit Committee has demonstrated its effectiveness in driving improvement in the Council's overall control environment and ensuring that Internal Audit resources are focused on areas of high risk and priority, relates to Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS). During the Audit Committee meeting in January 2014 an issue was noted in respect of a member of staff commencing in their post at a school prior to receipt of a cleared (Council) DBS check. Following discussion, Audit Committee resolved:

*That the Operational Audit Manager undertake an audit review to provide assurance that no other members of staff have commenced duties within a school environment without the necessary processes having been followed.*

The audit review (March 2014) reported five instances whereby members of staff commenced in post prior to the sight and/or receipt of a cleared DBS check. In September 2015, following intervention processes by the Director of Education, HR and Internal Audit, an Internal Audit review confirmed there were no instances of staff commencing work in a school environment without a DBS being in place. The audit of DBS checks in schools now forms part of the annual audit plan.

The Council continues to improve and strengthen its annual Governance Statement. Following a review by the WAO in February 2014, an Annual Governance Statement Working Group was established, the group comprises a cross section of Officers from across the Council and the Cabinet Member. The focus of the most recent Governance Statement is more evaluative than previous iterations and also now includes recommendations for improvement the monitoring of which is included in Audit Committee's work plan. There has been no feedback from WAO to date but the Council is confident that improvements made will support strengthened governance. It will continue to review and improve its effectiveness.

The Assurance Summary in the most recent Governance Statement published in May 2015 indicates:

*"The Council's governance arrangements throughout 2014/15 have helped the delivery of key services to our citizens. Our external regulators and internal quality assurance systems have identified robust systems of control and areas of good practice. They have however; identified areas for improvement and strengthening and we are committed to embracing their recommendations and observations.*

*We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the recommendations of our external regulators and also ensure that the recommendations identified within this annual governance review are monitored (by the Audit Committee) and implemented. The Council is committed to enhancing its governance arrangements further.*

*Based on the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken during 2014/15 we have reached the opinion that sound governance arrangements are in place, key systems are operating as intended and that there are no fundamental weaknesses"*

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/AuditCommittee/2015/05/06/Reports/item4annualgovernancestatement201415.pdf>

Chairs and Vice of all Scrutiny Committees together with the Scrutiny Performance Management Coordinator are appointed members of the Finance and Performance Committee, (excluding the Chair and Vice of Overview and Scrutiny). The Chair and Vice of Audit Committee also attend as ex officio Members. This aims to improve Member's knowledge and to strengthen and more effectively align Scrutiny arrangements e.g. PSD's original brief to consider mobile library usage following service change was expanded to look at the library service usage as a whole after the service change in 2014 rather than overload the

<b>3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</b>	
	Finance and Performance Committee.
<b>3.6 Does the engagement that the authority has with its stakeholders support real accountability?</b>	<p><b>The Council has previously acknowledged that it needed to do more to improve how we communicate and engage with residents and stakeholders. This has been improved and there are now more ways through which residents can engage with the Council, and also clear examples where residents' views have informed policy changes. However, what is less clear is how the various strands of feedback received are coordinated and provided to services to support improvement/change and/or analysed to inform wider Council processes.</b></p> <p>Following the introduction of a more comprehensive approach to consultation and engagement which includes increased involvement by elected Members there are now a number of different ways that residents and stakeholders can engage and communicate directly with the Council. This new approach has introduced wider use of Social Media and more direct contact between residents and the Cabinet, including the Leader of the Council, who is more visible and directly accessible at engagement events. All consultation undertaken by the Council is shaped by Participation Cymru National Principles for Public Engagement.</p> <p>As part of the revised approach to consultation there have been a number of communications directly from the Leader to staff on issues around service change. In June 2014, A staff advisory panel was established <a href="http://inform/en/staffadvisorypanel/staffadvisorypanel.aspx">http://inform/en/staffadvisorypanel/staffadvisorypanel.aspx</a> in order to seek ideas from staff to save money. The Panel consists of staff and Trade Union representatives and elected Members. Suggestions from the Panel for savings which included improving mobile phone tariffs and removing water coolers, were agreed for implementation by Cabinet in Feb 2015 <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2015/02/12/Reports/agendaitem8staffpanelreport.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2015/02/12/Reports/agendaitem8staffpanelreport.pdf</a></p> <p>These proposal were subsequently reflected in the Budget Strategy <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Council/2015/03/04/Reports/item7revenuebudgetstrategy201516.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Council/2015/03/04/Reports/item7revenuebudgetstrategy201516.pdf</a></p> <p>The last staff panel meeting took place in July 2015 and there are plans to refresh the updates on the Website imminently.</p> <p>Staff views will be sought as part of a wider general consultation planned for 2015.</p> <p>In 2014 the AIR set our that <i>'The Council's financial planning arrangements remain sound but improved communication and engagement with citizens is needed around the scale of the Councils improvement ambitions and the impact of service changes in its priority areas'</i> extract from WAO AIR. This is being addressed by the Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee which will be evaluating the service user impact of specific service change projects implemented.</p> <p>The Children &amp; Young People Scrutiny Committee has benefitted from having representatives from school governing bodies and trade union representatives appointed to the Committee. This additional challenge and scrutiny from individuals outside the auspices of the Council has increased accountability for performance and has brought a different perspective to the Committee that has strengthened its effectiveness.</p> <p>The Council also recognises that it can do more with the feedback it receives from all sources, including comments, complaints and compliments and Customer Care, to create a more complete picture of performance that can inform service delivery and improvement.</p>

<b>3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</b>	
	<p>The Council continues to develop its arrangements to help elected Members better engage with Stakeholders, as described earlier. Also, the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2015 continued to improve the way the Council reports its plans and performance. A more comprehensive user friendly summary was made widely available which contained both progress on 2014/5 plans and also set out plans for 2015/16. Both elected Members and officers have indicated that the timely reporting helped them to better understand issues within a priority area as well as improve the alignment with the Council's reporting frameworks. No detailed feedback has been received from WAO as a result of these changes to date, although the Council has received the necessary certificates of compliance for reporting requirements under the LG measure, which suggests any feedback will not be over critical. Despite these improvements, there is still scope to continue to improve the evaluation of our progress and target setting. These improvements would also include greater use of organisational intelligence as well as widening the scrutiny arrangements to further develop the involvement of co opted members to strengthen the direct input of stakeholders.</p> <p>As indicated in section 1, the Council is investigating a refreshed approach to conducting a Residents' Survey which has not been conducted since 2006. This approach which will include Social media, focus groups and County Borough wide surveys of communities of interest will allow the Council to better understand what residents think about Services and whether they feel the Council is securing better outcomes for them. Importantly, this approach will also include focused consultation with staff so that as key stakeholders, their views are also taken account of.</p>
<b>3.7 Does the authority ensure that effective governance and accountability is maintained when the authority delivers services through companies, trusts or other external entities?</b>	<p>The Council delegates/delivers a number of key services through other external entities. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Committees – County Supplies, Central South Education Consortium, Llwydcoed Crematorium;</li> <li>• 100% owned companies – the LAWDAC (AMGEN Cymru Ltd);</li> <li>• Joint Ventures – associate companies – the Capita Engineering Joint Venture in partnership with Bridgend and Merthyr CB Councils.</li> </ul> <p>In respect of these external organisations robust governance arrangements are in place to protect the Council's interests. The Council has a full understanding of the financial commitments, risks and rewards of these organisations and there are effective arrangements in place to ensure they deliver the specified service.</p> <p>In respect of AMGEN and the Capita JV, the Council has appointed directors/a representative and these directors are clear of their roles and responsibilities both to the Council and their fiduciary duties to the company in which they have been appointed as a director, as a result of their Council employment.</p>
<b>Section 3 potential areas for Improvement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Monitor the impact of the changes in governance arrangements to ensure that they are supporting improved challenge, support and scrutiny.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Implement the revised Scheme of Delegation alongside appropriate training and awareness raising and make an easy to read summary available.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Continue to strengthen decision making and improve the focus and impact of scrutiny.</b></li> <li>4. <b>Continue to take steps to implement relevant recommendations arising from Good Scrutiny? Good Question!</b></li> <li>5.</li> <li>6. <b>Refresh the approach to the planned Residents Survey to more effectively engage with residents.</b></li> <li>7. <b>Identify all strands of feedback coming into the Council and how it can be coordinated, analysed and made available to better inform service planning and improvement.</b></li> </ol>



<b>4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</b>	
<p><b>4.1 Are Council services continuing to deliver their statutory obligations and improvement objectives with fewer resources?</b></p>	<p><b>Performance data for 2014/15 indicates that despite reducing resources, performance results are generally positive. RCT's position as the 4th most improved Council remains unchanged from 2013/14.</b></p> <p>The performance of the majority of national measures was the same or better than last year and most statutory targets have been met despite reducing resources, e.g. increased recycling, improved attainment results and investment in roads and regeneration. In 2015 AIR the WAO referenced that Environmental Health Services were continuing to be delivered at the highest levels despite budget cuts. However, generally, the impact of service change on service users is not thoroughly understood. The WAO review on Decision Making Arrangements in Relation to Service Change will provide an opinion on this. This is being addressed by the Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee which will be evaluating the service user impact of specific service change projects implemented in 2014, i.e. Libraries, Day Centres, Youth/E3 and Meals on Wheels. The approach, detailed scope and timescales are currently being determined.</p> <p><a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/FinanceandPerformanceScrutinyCommittee/2015/10/07/Reports/Item5FPWorkProgramme.pdf">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/FinanceandPerformanceScrutinyCommittee/2015/10/07/Reports/Item5FPWorkProgramme.pdf</a></p> <p>Within Social Care, resources are being stretched owing to increasing demand, e.g. Looked After Children, which has previously affected performance. The Group Director of Community &amp; Children's Services in his annual performance report referenced that the timely completion of assessments in both Adults and Children's services are poor. In Children's Services this is being addressed by the reconfiguration of the Service, with the focus on prevention and a greater quality assurance of assessment and care management. This approach is already having a positive impact on performance. Within Adults' Services there has been particular focus on performance in respect of Carers Assessments, the high numbers of people in Residential Care and also the Delayed Transfers of Care by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. Adult Services is currently being reconfigured to address these issues and the requirements of the SS&amp;WB Act.</p> <p>Comparing the Council's performance in 2014/15 with the rest of Wales,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, 29 indicators showed that performance has improved, although for 3 of the 29 our performance was amongst the worst in Wales,</li> <li>• We were among the best in Wales for 11 of 43 indicators, which was better than last year when 7 of the indicators were among the best in Wales,</li> <li>• We were amongst the worst in Wales for 7 of our indicators which is better than last year when we were among the worst in Wales for 14 indicators,</li> <li>• Performance in 13 of our indicators showed that performance had fallen.</li> </ul> <p>Performance in these national measures together with the comparative position and target setting for 2016, has been discussed in the Senior Leadership Team and will also form part of the Chief Executive and Deputy Leader's Challenge and Support sessions that started on 16/11/15. For more detail see <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/Comparingcouncilperformance.aspx">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/Comparingcouncilperformance.aspx</a></p> <p>The Council has robust arrangements in place to develop and implement its savings plans. This track record of delivering savings plans has enabled the Council to deliver a balanced budget each year. There is a corporate approach to medium term financial planning that allows corporate services (Estates, Finance, HR and Legal Services) to work in partnership with all Council services to identify savings proposals and implement those that are agreed. Where savings proposals require changes to policy or frontline services, these are reported publicly to Cabinet and where appropriate, are subject to public consultation before final decisions are taken by Cabinet. Agreed savings plans are evidenced based and only those that have been confirmed as legal, robust and achievable are included in the Council budget strategy each year.</p> <p>On-going medium term financial planning forecasts during the year provide the 'scale of the financial challenge' and set out how the Council will address it.</p>

<b>4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</b>	
	<p>This includes future financial modelling, a structured approach to reviewing all areas of the Council's budget, template(s)/support in place to help services to review their functions; identification of areas for investment; and the overall programme of work owned by the Senior Leadership Team.</p> <p>The strategy/approach has been able to maintain a balance between service contraction and investment in infrastructure e.g. efficiencies delivered within the Highways Service at the same time as retaining appropriate capacity to deliver a long term programme of highways investment (PIs have shown maintained and for some categories of roads, improvement). Other areas of investment have included an energy efficiency invest to save programme.</p> <p>The approach has also enabled the Council to manage its resources to support implementation of its savings plans. This has included reducing the workforce by re-deploying officers into different roles and voluntary leavers; collaborative working with local community groups to help maintain certain functions within communities e.g. Pontyclun Day Centre, Muni Arts, Centre and Cynon Valley Museum; collaborative working with other councils to share and save resources e.g. MASH and support for investment opportunities where they arise e.g. Hawthorn Leisure Centre gym.</p> <p>The Council has also taken the opportunity to review its earmarked reserves and balances and challenge the level of risk/prioritisation. As a result the Council has agreed to release £10.5m from earmarked reserves to fund a range of mainly capital projects that address highways infrastructure issues, improve leisure gym facilities, invest in reducing energy costs, invest in stimulating housing development in the north of the County Borough, improve playgrounds, and increase the number of apprenticeships within the Council.</p> <p>The Council monitors agreed savings as part of its financial management arrangements and reports publicly to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. However, the impact of the savings plans on the performance of the services, improvement priorities or on residents affected, is currently not reported back to Members as a discreet item on a regular basis. WAO have stated in the most recent AIR' <i>"The Council has generally robust financial management arrangements which have served it well, although there is scope to further develop the links between service and financial planning and performance and, given the increasingly challenging financial climate, to review its arrangements to ensure that they remain fit for purpose service"</i></p>
<b>4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</b>	
<b>4.2 Does the Council have effective arrangements in place to manage and utilise its workforce?</b>	<p><b>The Council exhibits many strengths in the way in which it manages and utilises its workforce. This is recognised by schools and other councils who have recently made use of the Council's HR service to support their own, examples include Bridgend and Merthyr. However, there are opportunities to further strengthen the way in which we maximise the productivity of the workforce and ensure that robust staff performance management arrangements are applied consistently across the Council.</b></p> <p>The Council has a strategy for its Human Resources Service (HR Strategy 2013-18), which links to the SIP outcomes and sets out 8 Key Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contribute to Council's overall aims within MTSP through workforce planning</li> <li>2. Identify, manage and mitigate risks and challenges re equal pay/equal value claims</li> <li>3. Continue to develop collaborative working with other public service organisations</li> <li>4. Continually develop and improve the use of technology to support aspects of the HR process</li> <li>5. Make improvements that will be of lasting benefit to the quality of life for everyone that lives, works or does business within Rhondda Cynon Taf</li> <li>6. Meet the challenges set out in the WG Health at Work Corporate Standard</li> <li>7. Promote alignment between competence at individual and organisational levels and the Council's aims and priorities</li> <li>8. Support the Council in meeting the IIP standard</li> </ol>

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Whilst the strategy is clear, it is not easily accessible by staff that cannot access IT. However, hard copies of the strategy were widely distributed to management teams when it was launched in 2013. The strategy covers 2013/18 and informs HR businesses planning priorities which are monitored quarterly. When the priorities of the new Corporate Plan have been agreed by Council following consultation, the Strategy will benefit from a refresh and re-launch to ensure that the HR Service focuses on a reduced number of priorities which will in turn support the challenges currently faced by the Council and its services. It is anticipated that one area will be to continue to work with service areas to maximise the productivity of the workforce by reducing sickness absence, minimising the risks of injury in the workplace, providing targeted training to groups of specific staff, and improving the skills of council managers at all levels. In advance of the Plan being agreed, the HR service has already embarked on addressing sickness management by re-launching the Council's Sickness Absence Policy which has involved undertaking briefing sessions with all Chief Officers and over 700 line managers, along with a requirement to undertake an e-learning model following the sessions. Online and hard copies of guidance documents have been produced and distributed across the organisation. Whilst over the past three years the Council has reduced the number of employees it has continued to maintain the vast majority of services.

As well as ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations in respect of employment law etc, the main focus for HR currently is to support the Managing Change processes associated with an incremental ongoing Service Change agenda. This supports the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This has involved HR ensuring that managers involved in staff redundancies, redeployment and retirement are supported and comply with internal and statutory requirements, as well as being a key partner in Service Change by providing wider advice and assistance to officers and elected Members. In recent years, there has been an acceleration of staff reductions which are tangible and visible. Some services have maintained service levels with reduced staff levels. In others, services/standards have been reduced to reflect the reduced resources. Whilst it is clear that there is HR support to deliver the service change and consequent savings, what is less evident is the take up of the processes that are in place to support staff/services remaining and to help them to address the staffing issues as a result of the service change. HR will prioritise and capture this element of support as part of its review of the HR strategy in line with the implementation of the new Corporate Plan. There are currently no formal internal mechanisms in place to seek feedback in relation to the Service Changes processes and how they could be improved in the light of experience. However, anecdotal evidence from managers and the education consortium/schools is extremely positive about the HR services provided. Workforce planning is not currently integrated into service business or priority planning processes, albeit HR has previously provided Managers with a Workforce Planning framework to help them to integrate this element into service planning, and delivered information advice and guidance through Group Management arrangements. The review of the Performance Management Framework will include the need for a clear link between service and people planning arrangements. In the meantime, the Council's current priority plans indicate that resources are in place to ensure outcomes are delivered.

The WAO AIR 2015 identified that Workforce Capacity remains an issue in Children's services and HR is currently working with the Service to provide support to manage solutions. Across wider Council services, a recognition of the lack of organisational capacity led to the implementation of the Graduate and Apprenticeship Schemes which are continuing following reviews at the end of each programme/scheme.

In other aspects of the HR arrangements, there are numerous policies and procedures in place which seek to maximise individual capability and capacity. Policies include Learning & Development, Health and Safety, Capability, Secondment and Health and Safety policies, the Strategic Equality Plan, Workforce Planning Strategy, Disciplinary and Grievance procedures. The extent to which these policies and strategies are utilised by Managers to maximise service capacity and staff capability, and the difference they are making to the organisation or service delivery, is difficult to fully evaluate as service implementation of and compliance with these policies is not consistently monitored or reported.

The HR business plan contains service level risks that could impact on the service's ability to achieve its priorities, and contains actions that would

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	<p>manage/mitigate these risks. Quarterly monitoring arrangements are in place to assess progress which are reported and discussed at the HR SMT meetings. HR maintains productive relationships with Trade Unions which help to mitigate risks arising from potentially contentious issues. There are no wider HR risks e.g. Equalities Claims, appearing on the Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>The HR model in place is a centralised HR function that is on split sites between strategic and operational functions. Whilst informal processes are in place, there has been no recent or regular formal staff/management survey that would provide evidence to inform any decisions about HR structure or function. There are plans to better engage with all Council staff, across function and grade, in the next few months which could help to address this gap. In the meantime, there have been improvements in staff engagement though the Leader's Staff Advisory Panel referenced in more detail in section 3.6 above. Staff are engaged in service change projects directly through the staff panel and in specific changes individually and through Trade Union representatives.</p> <p>HR has implemented various ICT systems which enable managers to manage by: accessing information, e.g. RCT Source; providing inbuilt compliance with policies e.g. payroll system; and providing training e.g. e-learning. However some of these systems are less accessible as a result of the IT infrastructure, e.g. recently e-learning in the Absence Management module has been found to be less easy to access/complete if a user is operating within the virtual environment. The use of the RCT Source and the user experience within Source is evaluated. The delivery of training to over 700 managers could not have been achieved in such a timely manner in such a short period of time if the RCT Source had not been used as the vehicle for delivery. However, as the roll out of training has only recently been completed, it is too early to establish the impact of the training on levels of sickness absence. The Vision system which is used to record data for use in service level absence management and corporate reporting of sickness under the Absence Management Strategy and Maximising Attendance sits with Payroll and not HR.</p>
<p><b>4.3 Do the authority's asset management arrangements support robust and effective decision making and improvement?</b></p>	<p><b>The Council's asset management arrangements in part support decision making and improvement, but this is hampered by lack of a clear strategic vision. Rationalisation of the Council's property portfolio is improving use of resources and we are becoming more innovative in the provision of shared community resources, both via asset transfer and better utilisation of existing assets, but whilst there are still relatively few examples of this across the Council, good progress has being made over the past year. Targeted investment in our schools aims to improve educational outcomes and provide wider benefits for local communities, and it is already having a positive impact. For example, the new secondary school in Aberdare, created from the closure of three other schools, has seen an 11% improvement in the Level 2 threshold including English and maths indicator when compared to the three legacy schools. Service provision is impacted in some areas by the condition and suitability of buildings that do not meet modern expected standards, for example many Council residential homes do not have on-suite facilities, which is a requirement for all new residential homes.</b></p> <p>Recent developments through the emerging 'RCT Together Strategy' and the asset management transfer to community organisations have improved local relationships, and actively demonstrate the views of local people to reflect local need. It is not clear that this was the case previously. Since a more proactive process commenced in January 2014, six assets have been successfully transferred to community organisations e.g. the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd, the Abercynon War Memorial Pool, Beddau and Maerdy Libraries and arrangements are in hand to transfer a further five.</p> <p>The Council has a Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) which is monitored and updated annually and is prepared in consultation with Service Directors to reflect service needs and priorities. The CAMP is the strategic document for asset management and aligns with Corporate priorities. The lower level Service Asset Management Plans (SAMP) set out in more detail the impact on assets of changing service requirements. They are produced annually by service managers and inform the production of the CAMP. Strengthening the links between service and asset management planning is crucial to improving front line</p>

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service delivery but the lack of a Corporate plan and clear strategic vision for the Council makes this alignment less clear.

Asset management is focussed on the cross cutting aims of improving operational and financial performance of assets by reducing the overall size of the portfolio and decreasing the proportion of the portfolio that is leasehold tenure; and reducing energy use and CO2 emissions. Active management of the Council's property assets can make a positive contribution to the financial position of the Council by reducing costs, generating revenue income and releasing capital for reinvestment. Processes to identify surplus and underused assets are managed actively and capital is released for reinvestment in policy priorities. The percentage of buildings with a completed condition survey has risen above 50% for the first time, but is still too low. Prospective improvements in assets to enhance service delivery are kept under review, however there are instances where the physical condition of buildings is currently hampering service delivery e.g. libraries and leisure centres. In recent years the Council has invested in AMR technology to improve the accuracy of data collection relating to energy usage. This data is used to target investment for 'invest to save' initiatives such as renewable energy and to comply with CRC requirements. However, better use needs to be made of the wealth of information available to improve overall energy management on all sites and there needs to be an increased focus on water management.

The Council's 21st Century schools programme supports the Education Priority 'every school a great school' and is an example of asset management directly supporting service delivery. The programme seeks to improve the network of schools within communities and ensure the size and locations of schools meet the needs of the communities they serve. The programme will increase the efficiency of services by removing in the region of 2,638 surplus places by 2018/19. £3.6m has been saved to date in revenue costs, with savings of £15.64M in maintenance backlog, and further savings due to a reduction in energy consumption and CO2 emissions. More importantly, the programme will deliver modern Educational facilities to support new curriculum requirements by 2021 such as fully serviced laboratories and performing arts spaces and schools will be able to provide all pupils with the breadth and depth of curriculum to study all subject areas. In addition to Educational outcomes, many wider benefits are being derived from the programme. For example, targets for contractors providing apprenticeship places providing training and employment opportunities for young people. Facilities sharing with other services to utilise schools beyond the end of the traditional school day, most notably leisure facilities. It is too soon to fully evaluate the impact of new schools on educational outcomes, although early indications are promising, for example the educational outcome improvements at Aberdare Community School. These outcomes will be monitored following project completion.

RCT continues to work in partnership with other public sector organisations, and Strategic direction is provided through the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board, with tactical management delivered through the Cwm Taf Asset Management Group. Information on property ownership is shared across participating organisations through a common information system (ePims) sponsored by Welsh Government. Through this group, partner organisations have shared and discussed key aspects of respective property strategies, seeking to identify issues of mutual benefit. However, although there are some examples of innovation in shared asset use (for example, locating police community support officers within new school buildings to provide a service closer to the community), these are currently not widespread. Development of shared services such as the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub, located at Pontypridd police station, will also contribute to the shared use of assets.

The Corporate Office Accommodation Strategy delivers the council's continuing policy of reducing the size of its office portfolio. To date, the number of buildings used for back office purposes has been reduced by 19. A small number of sites have been identified as of strategic importance, providing the core of office accommodation and likely to be used in the medium to long term. Other remaining buildings may be suited to disposal, depending on circumstances.

An analysis of office accommodation capacity and utilisation undertaken in August/Sept 2014 concluded that overall occupancy is just below 90% of available

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	<p>desks which given the number of sites represents efficient utilisation. However, further improvements to utilisation will be investigated, particularly in areas undergoing service change. In order to ensure service delivery is supported and not hindered by the accommodation strategy, proposals for change will be developed with service managers as a result of considering service plans and the accommodation implications/opportunities arising from them. Furthermore, there are significant opportunities for agile working with many employees spending the majority of their working day away from their nominated base. A pilot project is being developed with the Education Psychology Service and it has been identified that the number of desks required has been reduced by 50%. The new draft Corporate Plan sets out the target of reducing office accommodation space by 30% through agile working and the digitalisation of front-line and administrative processes.</p>
<p><b>4.4 Is the authority's approach to using technology positively supporting improvement?</b></p>	<p><b>The authority's approach to using technology could better support improvement. There is a need to ensure that all key ICT infrastructures are proactively refreshed as part of a 5 year plan and appropriately funded. In addition, strategic governance arrangements need to be reinstated and wider support service plans aligned to enable digital transformation.</b></p> <p>There are plans in place to deliver current ICT arrangements, e.g. the Council's ICT Strategy and ICT Plan and the ICT Strategic Business Plan. The Council's ICT Strategy 2011-14, supported the Council's aims and promoted strong governance, (including project prioritisation) sustainability, alignment with service delivery plans and technology to enable new ways of working, and collaboration. It aligned with wider plans and the national ICT Strategy for Wales. A new Strategy is currently being developed that will encompass wider Digital themes, to be completed early 2016. However, in the absence of a wider organisation context, these plans and strategies are currently being produced in isolation and may not fully reflect or deliver operational/service requirements or address service need.</p> <p>ICT Governance arrangements were developed and matured to foster positive and productive ICT/stakeholder engagement via the Strategic ICT Steering Group. The Strategic ICT Steering Group accountable for the delivery of the ICT Strategy/plan was attended by representatives (HOS/SD Level) from each of the Group Directorates. However the steering group has not met since September 2014 following the retirement/resignation of key stakeholders.</p> <p>There is a clear ICT work programme in place aimed at delivering Council, service and ICT Strategy priorities. A process is in place for submitting service requests to support projects. Requests are reviewed and are prioritised based upon this alignment to enable Medium Term Financial Planning savings or mitigate identified risk. However the lack of recent ICT Strategic governance meetings of the Steering Group detracts from the robustness of prioritisation, final resource allocation and decision making.</p> <p>In recent years, some areas of ICT infrastructure such as Desktop, Broadband and Datacentre have benefited from investment. The Council has centralised, standardised and consolidated its technology infrastructure in these areas to improve security, agility, flexibility and reduce costs. Typically, all infrastructures should be proactively refreshed every five years to ensure robustness and service consistency. Availability of ICT systems to the council staff is evidenced as a positive trend although some recent infrastructure "outages" e.g. Email/LAN/Active Directory/Local Building Servers have been realised due to certain components ageing and requiring refresh.</p> <p>The ICT Service has implemented several "key technological building blocks" designed to provide flexibility to the workforce that could allow for empowered</p>

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	<p>staff to work at home, on site or in client\customers' homes, but we know that the technology is not being fully exploited. To allow for greater pace ICT strategy/plans need to be appropriately aligned with Human Resources and Corporate Estates policies to deliver a more integrated approach.</p> <p>The service can positively demonstrate financial savings, with the implementation of the following Council wide initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £80k savings through Managed Print via Multi-functional devices (MFDs);</li> <li>• £200k via Managed virtual desktop technology and £80k efficiency through collaboration with Bridgend CBC through a joint Datacentre venture.</li> <li>• £80k efficiency (joint in-house, alongside £400k cost avoidance through a collaborative Datacentre and virtual servers to include data replication with Bridgend CBC for the provision of more dynamic continuity services.</li> <li>• £2.8m RCB funded Schools ICT Transformation.</li> <li>• £220k efficiency through Telephony – Fixed lines / call charges</li> <li>• £130k efficiency in telephone-mobile inclusive of £100k for the Staff Panel. Informing Vodafone's 4G rollout plans.</li> <li>• Exploitation of PSBA Broadband WAN for local, regional and national collaboration. PSBA (1) derived a £306k efficiency.</li> <li>• Rationalisation of remote satellite file stores to centralised and consolidated Datacentre. Avoided £125k investment in localised infrastructure.</li> <li>• Over the past 5 years the service has realised £1M of savings which has been achieved by downsizing the workforce by 18 FTEs and via improved contracts and centralising budgets.</li> </ul> <p>The service monitors, evaluates and reports widely on its operational service and the technology it delivers. Improvements are needed in customer qualitative reporting, through user engagement to better inform current and future plans. Whilst the service monitors more "traditional" metrics e.g. internal LPIs/WLGA benchmarking it is currently unable to clearly demonstrate the impacts and benefits of technology.</p>
<p><b>4.5 Is the authority's approach to Information Management positively supporting Improvement?</b></p>	<p><b>The authority's approach to Information Management is likely to positively support improvement through supporting collaborative working. However it is too soon to evaluate the impact this has had on service delivery.</b></p> <p>In 2011, a WAO review concluded that the Council's plans/arrangements for Information management are likely 'in part' to support continuous improvement and the Council's Information management performance is 'in part' supporting it in providing efficient, effective and economical services.</p> <p>The report concluded that <i>'The Council has focused on the governance and management of electronic information and has not yet fully addressed the issues and risks associated with paper information; when strengthened and broadened to cover the entire information asset the arrangements have the potential to support improvement'</i>.</p> <p>Six key areas for improvement were identified, including ensuring accountabilities of Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) are allocated to a single manager; ensure responsibilities for Information Management &amp; security forum are properly discharged providing clear separation of electronic and paper information; continue to develop robust training plan for staff; establish more robust arrangements for the management of email, continue to improve FOI response times and ensure data held outside 9-mile limit (DR)</p> <p>In February 2013, the WAO progress review found that "progress has been made on all six proposals for improvement, strengthening and broadening the Council's arrangements for the governance and management of its information asset."</p>

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A comprehensive Information management plan was in place for 2011 - 14 and an updated version is currently under development. Key aims included new information management policies, improved training and communication to staff, improved ownership of data and systems through 'owner' responsibilities, improved electronic file management and risk assessing and improved management of paper records stored on Council sites. Progress has been made against all of these areas but further development is still required to keep pace with the growing demand for information sharing.

The Council has formalised Information management via a number of mechanisms. A Senior Information Risk Owner with overall responsibility for Information Management has been identified, as per audit recommendations. An Information Management Executive Group at senior level makes decisions that enable appropriate information sharing, while the Corporate Information Management and Security Forum looks at issues at a practical/operational level. Responsibility for data protection has transferred from Legal Services to ICT at the beginning of 2015/16, so that all strategic responsibility for all information management issues is now located in one team.

The profile of information management has been raised through various mechanisms including updating Job Descriptions to include Information Asset Owner responsibilities, with training provided to all IAO, and Information Management Awareness presentations to Elected Members and Officers. The Council has developed specific Information Management pages on its intranet, and also sends out regular information management bulletins, to enable staff to easily access policies, advice and links to other useful resources.

In the past 12 - 18 months ICT has supported the delivery and implementation of joint working arrangements in the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Cwm Taf Youth offending team and the Regional Adoption agency based at Ty Pennant. This has been done through sharing, implementing or consolidating business systems, information and ICT Networks all of which are underpinned by RCT infrastructure and systems and governed through Service Level Agreements and Data Processing Agreements. This support for information sharing and collaborative working across organisations is likely to support the Council in improving services and delivering efficiencies but it is too soon to evaluate the success of these arrangements.

The Council now has 14 WASPI (Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information) trained ISP facilitators to support the development of Information Sharing Protocols with other organisations. To date 8 Information sharing protocols have been agreed including those for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Mental Health and Common Housing Register. These have all been endorsed as good practice by WASPI.

Consideration of Information Management by the Regional Collaboration Board identified that there are likely to be disparities between organisations in terms of the development and implementation of their IM strategies, and that collaboration may enable the development of more efficient and effective solutions in future. A baselining exercise has been undertaken which will provide information about the strategies in place, progress in implementation, current and future priorities and available resources, so partners can see how they can best support each other in future.

A pilot of secure/encrypted email solution has resulted in this now being made available for wider use on a business need basis.

The Council actively monitors information management and security incidents, with regular reports provided to SLT. During 2014/15, 122 incidents/events were reported and subsequently investigated by the information management team. The majority of incidents related to communication errors e.g. information being sent to an incorrect address. As a result of investigations, service areas have amended policies and procedures to include additional checks such as verifying client details. In addition, general advice has been issued via information management bulletins covering areas such as correct use of mailing



<b>4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</b>	
	<p>lists and how to recall emails sent in error. The Council proactively self reported one incident that was deemed a 'serious breach' to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This related to a system error causing individual information to be erroneously shared with marketing companies. This error was experienced by a number of other local authorities and corrected by the supplier. A second less serious incident was reported to the ICO by a member of the public. The ICO's investigations concluded no further action was necessary in either case.</p> <p>The Council is annually accredited for Public Service Network requirements to ensure we comply with security and infrastructure requirements for sharing information with other public bodies.</p> <p>Future developments in working practices, for example more widespread agile working, will present additional risks which need to be assessed. Forthcoming data protection legislation is likely to formalise requirements to evidence that risks to individual data have been considered and mitigated and this will need to be incorporated into Council processes.</p> <p>The narrative above focuses on the security and collection/processing of data, not the effective use of the data to drive improvement. The Estyn Inspection of the Council's education services in March 2012 highlighted that the Council's use of data was ineffective in improving the performance of schools. The Council had already identified this and had invested in Capita One. The successful implementation of the various Capita One modules has allowed the Council to use the data to identify and address areas of underperformance and allow managers to hold individuals and schools to account for the data. This shift in the use of data to target interventions etc by the Council in our schools was recognised by Estyn in its final revisit in July 2014, when the Council was removed from Estyn monitoring. For example, the Council's schools have made significant progress in improving attendance levels and educational outcomes in FP to KS4 faster than the Welsh average which has improved the Council's ranking compared to other local authorities. Similar improvements have been achieved in Waste Services in respect of reducing the amounts of waste sent to landfill. Over the past year there has been a concerted focus on Looked After Children numbers and a challenge to Children's Service to safely reduce this number through early engagement and intervention. After six months of 2015/16, we are evidencing a consistent reduction in the number of LAC.</p>
<b>Section 4 potential areas for Improvement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Put in place arrangements to establish and understand the impact of service change on service users and staff.</b></li> <li><b>2. Continue to focus on challenging and supporting service improvements, where performance does not compare well with the rest of Wales and/or have been raised as areas of concern by regulators.</b></li> <li><b>3. Refresh and relaunch HR Strategy in line with the revised Corporate Plan and current organisational context so that it focuses on a reduced number of priorities and supports the challenges currently faced by the Council and its services.</b></li> <li><b>4. Put in place monitoring arrangements to establish the extent to which HR policies are being implemented across the Council and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of service delivery.</b></li> <li><b>5. Accelerate the asset transfer model in partnership with the communities and voluntary sector.</b></li> <li><b>6. Improve the utilisation of office accommodation, particularly in the light of ongoing service change and opportunities for agile working.</b></li> <li><b>7. Prepare an ICT delivery plan to deliver the Corporate Plan priorities. This should include arrangements to fund and refresh ICT infrastructure plan to better meet Council needs;</b></li> <li><b>8. Develop a digital transformation plan for implementation in 2016.</b></li> </ol>

<b>5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?</b>	
<b>5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?</b>	<p><b>Partnership arrangements can vary from a coming together to solve a joint problem to a multi-agency arrangement to deliver services differently, involving financial resources and legislative requirements. In some cases, it is not clear whether the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements are working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes, in others eg the Safeguarding Boards and the Social Services and Well-being Partnership there are clear arrangements outcomes in place.</b></p> <p>Most collaborative arrangements have a Terms of Reference, stating why the partners have come together and what they intend to deliver. In some cases, the need to collaborate is a legislative or funding requirement e.g. the Cwm Taf Area Planning Board; Cwm Taf Safeguarding Boards. In other cases, partners collaborate to deliver a specific project e.g. the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; and in some instances, the partnership is the way of working e.g. the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service. However, in other cases, there is a lack of evidence base for collaborating but a willingness to work together and share information, with the aim of avoiding duplication and creating efficiencies.</p> <p>It is not clear if all partners are committed to all forms of collaboration within which the Authority is engaged as this covers a broad spectrum. Good examples of joint working include the Intermediate Care Fund through the Social Services and Well-being Partnership, when Welsh Government awarded the Local Authority and its partners with funding to be spent in year. The voluntary sector partners took responsibility for some of this funding and partners were fully committed to seeing it work. Therefore, this was a successful collaboration. However, partnerships that exist more for sharing information and collaborating on specific projects do not always achieve full commitment from all organisations.</p> <p>Internal Strategic Partnership reviews were carried out in 2010 and 2011 across Cwm Taf, and a set of principles agreed for partnerships for Rhondda Cynon Taf. These, in part, clarified why and how partnerships should be established and the appropriate governance arrangements. However, in the proceeding years, new legislation, different ways of working and funding requirements have meant that new partnerships have emerged, with working groups also being set up to carry out tasks. Partnerships are also increasingly on a regional footprint (across Cwm Taf, South East Wales and wider), which can make lines of accountability less clear. Therefore, the partnership landscape is complex, which means that governance arrangements are not always clear and robust.</p> <p>The growth of partnership arrangements and the associated meetings required has meant that, in some cases, junior officers are required to attend meetings on behalf of their organisations. Very often, these officers do not have the mandate to make appropriate contributions to the meeting or make decisions. There is also an increasing focus in legislation on involving interest groups and community members in decision-making processes as co-production and co-delivery. This is not yet well-established, but under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, citizen voice and involvement are strong themes.</p> <p>The Local Authority scrutiny functions carry out some scrutiny on partnerships and collaboration, where the Authority has made specific decisions i.e. if Cabinet approve a proposal to collaborate, the relevant scrutiny committee will also challenge and comment. Until recently, a Local Service Board Working Group was set up under the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise and challenge the delivery of the Single Integrated Plan. In the past, the group have effectively scrutinised specific projects but in recent years have focussed on the performance of the Local Service Board against the Single Integrated Plan. The group are effective in scrutinising this, but the subject matter has proved too broad. There is a new model of partnership scrutiny being implemented. However, with the impending Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the decision has been made to stand down the group until the new legislation is in place, which demands a more effective scrutiny mechanism.</p>

<b>5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?</b>	
	<p>A piece of work is currently being undertaken with the mandate of the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board to further streamline partnership arrangements and aim to make the most efficient use of officer time. This will retain the statutory responsibilities of the organisations but aim to reduce the number of meetings people are required to attend. If successful, this will assist in clarifying governance arrangements and scrutiny.</p> <p>It is unclear whether all collaborative arrangements and partnerships do have the capacity to deliver. Currently, implementing legislation, austerity measures within the public and voluntary sectors and providing the innovation and flexibility required for partnership working is proving challenging for many colleagues. Due to the current financial constraints, there are very few cases where the collaboration is developing people/capability.</p>
	<p>Resources within some partnerships are generally well managed, targeted at priority areas and agreed by the relevant Partnership Board and linked to strategic priorities e.g. Delivering Transformation grant, Intermediate Care Fund, Supporting People Grant and the Social Care Workforce Development Partnership Grant and resources associated with other partnerships e.g. Safeguarding.</p> <p>In order to share resources and achieve efficiencies, the Council Works in partnership with other Councils mostly Merthyr County Borough Council. Example of these projects include e.g. Cwm Taf Joint Consultation Hub <a href="http://www.cwmtafhub.com/kms/news.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar&amp;strTab=AdminNews">http://www.cwmtafhub.com/kms/news.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar&amp;strTab=AdminNews</a> Youth Offending Service and Safeguarding Boards which have well development and long standing partnerships in place and also the more recent Workforce Development (Social Care) Group arising from the work to implement the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.</p> <p>One current example where partnerships, their links, resources and performance arrangements are being tested, is as part of a strategic review of the Council's approach to Tackling Poverty. The aim of the review is to inform the development of future delivery models and programme activity that will mitigate and minimise the impact of poverty in the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The principle programmes in place which form part of the work of the review include Flying Start, Communities First and Families First. However at both national and local levels it is recognised there are opportunities to improve the join up of these programmes, improve the coordination and approach on the ground and maximise the impact of the Council and its partners in delivering sustainable outcomes.</p>
	<p>In some cases, there is a clear performance management framework associated with the partnership's business e.g. the Children and Young People's Commissioning and Planning Group has a number of Service Level Agreements with the voluntary sector and other service providers to deliver services on behalf of the Council. These agreements include robust performance management arrangements including targets and outcomes. Other examples include the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership which has been established to ensure that the Councils and their partners meet the statutory requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. In this case there is a comprehensive action plan in place which is robustly monitored by the partner organisations and reported to the Executive Group.</p> <p>In instances where partnership arrangements involve funding, there is more likely to be performance management systems in place. However, in most cases, there is not an appropriate way of measuring the performance of the partnership as it is a forum for sharing information, collaborating on projects and setting up initiatives that improve the outcomes of people living in the area and so it they are less able to evidence their effectiveness.</p>

<b>5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?</b>	
	<p>It is not clear whether all of the collaborative arrangements the Council is engaged in are delivering improved outcomes. In many cases, people have come together to work in partnership on a difficult issue, which is solved through a joint approach. However, this happens on a micro scale and is seldom measured in any performance management system. Some partnerships are brought together to focus on one improved outcome, such as tackling obesity or smoking cessation. In these cases, the programmes commissioned by the partners are having a positive impact. See Director of Public Health, Cwm Taf, Annual Report on Childhood Obesity (2015) demonstrating some positive examples of programmes that are having an impact on obesity levels. <a href="http://www.cwmtafuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/274088">http://www.cwmtafuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/274088</a> and Smoking cessation programme for maternal smoking: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnxxnR0szzOA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnxxnR0szzOA</a></p> <p>In general, a principle of partnership working is efficiency and effective working. This has led to financial benefits in some cases, such as joint appointments across the Health Board and Local Authority, joint management arrangements - such as the Youth Offending Service and Cwm Taf Safeguarding Business Unit, and saving money over the longer term through innovative projects, such as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. However, in some cases, partnership arrangements are still often on the periphery of the core services delivered by partners and because of this, some key service improvement /integration priorities between social care and health in developing and delivering joint services, are not being addressed quickly enough. For example, significant pressures exist in terms of Mental Health Services for children and adults and Delayed Transfers of Care/community based responses continues to be a priority which requires an even greater emphasis on effective joint working with the focus on the individual. It is important that the Council prioritises these issues and takes the lead on such discussions as part of the new proposed Public Service Boards.</p>
<b>Section 5 potential areas for improvement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Strengthen partnership governance and scrutiny arrangements so that they are clear and robust.</b></li> <li><b>2. Review collaborative arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose and have the capacity to deliver their purpose, objectives and outcomes.</b></li> <li><b>3. Strengthen the partnership performance management arrangements so that they better inform challenge and scrutiny.</b></li> </ol>

<b>6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?</b>	
<p><b>6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?</b></p>	<p>The Council is effectively managing its improvement programme although it needs to continue to strengthen leadership, direction and associated performance management arrangements, improve Governance arrangements, strengthen links between service and financial planning and performance and ensure arrangements are fit for purpose.</p> <p>The Council has a good track record of delivering its improvement programme in line with the duties placed upon it by the Measure. The recent <a href="#">Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report (October 2015)</a> states:</p> <p><i>Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Measure during 2015-16.</i></p> <p><i>The Auditor General has reached this conclusion because:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the Council has generally robust financial management arrangements;</i></li> <li>• <i>elected members and senior officers have demonstrated a clear commitment to taking difficult decisions to improve education provision;</i></li> <li>• <i>the Council has put in place financial planning to meet current and future budgetary pressures in social services and advances have been made in reshaping service provision in adult services; and</i></li> <li>• <i>in 2014-15, the Council discharged its improvement planning and reporting duties under the Measure.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>A key challenge for the Council will be to continue to ensure that its financial management, performance management and governance arrangements remain fit for purpose in the context of reducing resources. During 2015-16 our work will include a financial management review that will look forward to 2016-17 budget setting and savings proposals, as well as reviews of the Council's decision making arrangements relating to its service change proposals, and arrangements for strategic asset management. The Council intends to revise its improvement planning and reporting arrangements for 2015-16 and we will examine the Council's revised approach as part of our review of the Council's arrangements for managing improvement".</i></p> <p><i>The report also sets out a proposal for improvement i.e. "the Council should review its working practices against the recommendations in the Auditor General's 2014-15 Local Government National Reports and implement improvements where appropriate". Work to establish to identify relevant reports and recommendations in currently being undertaken in line with steps to improve transparency of information and seek and learn from best practice.</i></p> <p>The Council's improvement programme is set out in the Corporate Performance Report. However as set out in Sections 2 &amp; 4 there is no clear 'Strategic Vision' that is specific to the Council within which the improvement programme aligns. The absence of this overall Strategy means that decisions could be seen to be made outside a transparent organisational context, e.g. service change and more recently investment priorities, which could create confusion, especially when the organisation is going through a time of rapid change and reducing numbers of both managers and staff. A clear strategy/transparent vision would provide this clarity and direction for both residents and staff. In the past performance targets have been set that were not challenging and which perpetuate under-</p>

## 6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?

performance. Some of the Council services have lacked ambition to improve and have been content to maintain the status quo. The focus has been on achieving a target, even though the target still ensured that the service was in the bottom quartile when compared to other Welsh councils. The reporting of these indicators would also be “green” and considered to be “good” when it was exactly the opposite.

A recent WLGA internal management report on the Council’s Service Self Assessment processes indicated that service and corporate planning processes are well established but indicated there was potential for integrating annual planning processes and service change processes.

Service Changes are perceived as reducing budgets and resources. More could be done to visibly manage these changes in ways that support innovation and service improvement and also deliver the Council’s priorities. Service Change is not transparent in the annual planning/priority setting processes nor are the resources that need to be deployed to deliver the resultant changes. Up until 2014/15 Medium Term Service Planning was included as one of the Council’s Improvement Priorities. However it was felt that as managing the finances of the Council is fundamental to everything in the Council, it should sit outside the priority plans where planning and reporting financial matters are not restricted to the requirements of the LG Measure. However, whilst a Medium Term Financial Strategy to close the budget gap was agreed by Council in March 2015, <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Council/2015/03/04/Reports/item7revenuebudgetstrategy201516.pdf> it is set out in detailed Council reports and not a separate plan.

However, despite these ‘gaps’, the Council’s approach to improvement planning continues to meet the requirements of the LG Measure as evidenced by the WAO AIR 2015. The Council has also demonstrated improved outcomes as set out in the Corporate Performance Report and as are currently monitored by Cabinet Performance and Resources the Finance in Performance Scrutiny Committee. There continues to be a need to focus on those services where performance is of concern.

Performance processes include business, service and priority planning and associated data assurance and target setting. Beyond the reported measures and priority plans, there has been no requirement to make service documents e.g. Business Plans, available across the Council. There is scope to reverse this so that all services can share information about priorities, plans and progress and, in the case of the support services help to shape their work programmes at an early stage.

The content and format of all relevant performance management documentation is reviewed annually to ensure that it supports services to demonstrate progress toward the SIP outcomes and demonstrate improvement. However, the current Performance Management Framework within which these processes contribute is out of date and does not currently provide a wider organisational context to which services can relate. A revised Performance Improvement Framework is currently being prepared. The steps that have recently been added to the PM processes i.e. Service Self Evaluation to identify areas of improvement and key measures; Challenge and Support sessions by the Chief Executive and Deputy Leader together with a new Corporate Plan with key measures of success, will help to shape and inform this new Framework. These steps, together with a clear and present focus on performance management and improvement will provide a solid platform for embedding a performance management culture including wider implementation of the ‘Managing People and their Performance’ approach.

As previously indicated, performance is reported to elected Members quarterly as part of the Cabinet Performance and Resources report. There is scope to simplify and improve these reports so that they provide more focussed data to better inform Support, Challenge and Scrutiny. Recently risk updates have been

<b>6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?</b>	
	<p>included in the reports as part of the drive to embed risk into Council processes, e.g. priority plans. The risks and mitigating actions identified in the priority plans are now monitored to establish the extent to which progress reported within the plan is also reducing any risks identified. This approach will be monitored to establish progress around the mitigation of strategic risks. However, more needs to be done to improve operational risk arrangements to ensure that service risks are subject to routine assessment and follow up.</p> <p>Progress updates on the Council's improvement priorities as set out in the quarterly performance reports are made available on the Council's Website, both as part of the Committee distribution and also as part of the Council's performance webpages. <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/Councilperformancemonitoringreports/Councilperformanceandmonitoringreports.aspx">http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/PerformanceBudgetsandSpending/Councilperformance/Councilperformancemonitoringreports/Councilperformanceandmonitoringreports.aspx</a></p> <p>As well as Cabinet Reports, these pages contain the Council's statutory performance documents e.g. currently the Corporate Performance Report and summary, Regulators'/Auditors' reports, How we compare with other Councils in Wales and also the Single Integrated Plan. The CPR and the summary version has also been distributed to public buildings including libraries and one4all centres. The AIR for 2015 reporting on 2014/15 Corporate Plan indicated that the Council had "<i>discharged its statutory improvement planning duties through a more reader friendly Corporate Plan with improved clarity around the scope of the Council's improvement ambitions,</i>" in relation to the Annual Delivery report the information was "<i>fair and balanced</i>", <i>although there was scope to improve the evidence base and evaluation of progress towards priorities</i>. This feedback does not take into account the steps made to further improve reporting in 2015/16.</p> <p>Current performance management arrangements are clear and enable the Council to meet statutory requirements. However, in the absence of a tangible and consistent performance culture and clear organisational strategic direction they are not consistently applied or adhered to. Much of the communication in relation to performance is web based and consideration could be given to additional ways of communicating performance to 'communities of interest'. The development of a more open culture of information sharing and a more streamlined quarterly report will support the development of more accessible and timely information data, that will enable stakeholder and residents to better hold the Council to account.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services report (ACRF) has highlighted strengths and modernisation priorities across Social Service and the CSSIW evaluation letter largely reflects the outcomes of this self evaluation process. The Council continues to show a strong commitment to deliver its modernisation agenda with a shift from crisis intervention to a more community focussed range of early intervention and preventative arrangements in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.</p>
<p><b>Section 6 potential areas for improvement</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Strengthen performance management arrangements through the implementation of corporate planning arrangements.</b></li> <li><b>2. Continue to implement recommendations contained in the Auditor General's 2014-15 Local Government National Reports and all Regulators' reports in respect of the Council and implement improvements where appropriate.</b></li> <li><b>3. Continue to improve governance arrangements through robust challenge and scrutiny of performance at all levels of the Council</b></li> <li><b>4. Continue to identify and focus support on services where performance is of concern.</b></li> <li><b>5. Simplify and refresh the Performance Management Framework so that it contains relevant Council priorities and targets and processes and can be consistently applied and adhered to.</b></li> <li><b>6. Consider ways that Action Plans for 2016/17 can be made widely available to officers and elected Members</b></li> <li><b>7. Continue to review the risks contained within the Council's Strategic Risk Register and improve the operational risk management arrangements in place.</b></li> </ol>





**Appendix C****Service Self Evaluations completed**

1. Adult Services - Long Term Intervention
2. Adult Safeguarding
3. Adult Services Short Term Intervention
4. Children's Services – Early Intervention
5. Children's Services – Intensive Intervention
6. Children's Safeguarding and Reviewing
7. Community Housing Services
8. Transformation – SS&WB
9. Domestic Abuse Services
10. Substance Misuse
11. Environmental Health, Trading Standards, community Safety and Licensing
12. Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service
13. Leisure, Parks, Countryside Registration & Bereavement Services
14. Accountancy Support & Performance Management Service
15. Operational Finance
16. Customer Care
17. Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
18. Corporate Design and Maintenance
19. Corporate Asset Management and Business Services
20. Fleet Management and Vehicle Maintenance
21. Highway Maintenance and Management
22. Transportation
23. Streetcare & Waste Services
24. Corporate Procurement Unit
25. Human Resources
26. Legal & Democratic Services
27. Arts Service
28. Heritage Service
29. Marketing, PR and Consultation & Engagement
30. Tourism and Events
31. Regeneration and Planning
32. Adult Education
33. Education
34. Libraries
35. Welsh Language Services

