

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2013-2014**

**EDUCATION & LIFELONG
LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9TH APRIL, 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR,
LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item No 5

**PROPOSED SCRUTINY PROCESS OF
THE CORPORATE PLAN 2014/15.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed scrutiny arrangements for the production of the Council's 2014/15 Corporate Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that Members:
- 2.1.1. Approve the proposed process and timescales, as set out in the report.
- 2.1.2. Establish a working group to scrutinise the relevant WPI Action Plan(s).

3. CONTEXT / LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1. The Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009) sets out that Local Authorities have a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Improvement, in this context, *"...means more than just quantifiable gains in service output or efficiency, or the internal effectiveness of an organisation. Rather it should mean anything that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for local citizens and communities."*
- 3.2. The Local Government (Wales) Measure also sought to link Authorities' short-term, annual planning with longer term, strategic planning (at the time, the 'community strategy').
- 3.3. Authorities must publish their Improvement Objectives annually, in the form of 'Wales Programme for Improvement action plans'. In RCT, this is discharged through publication of an Annual Improvement Plan (known in RCT Council as the 'Corporate Plan'), which is published in June of each year. (The Council's backward-looking Annual Delivery Report, assessing progress against improvement objectives, is published in October of each year).
- 3.4. The Corporate Plan in RCT has traditionally consisted of a 'front end' section, setting out context, background and summarising the document; and a series of Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) action plans.

3.5. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) hold Authorities to account on discharging their duties with respect to the Local Government (Wales) Measure. Recent feedback of the 2013/14 process of compilation, sign-off and scrutiny of WPI action plans has been provided by WAO, which has been considered in these proposals for the 2014/15 arrangements.

4. PROPOSED TIMESCALES FOR 2014/15 PROCESS

- 4.1 In previous years, the process for the development of the WPI action plans has mainly involved officers up until the point that the plans are presented to Cabinet as part of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.2 However, following feedback from WAO with regards to the scrutiny arrangements attached to WPI action planning, it is proposed that this approach is amended for 2014/15.

5. PROPOSED SCRUTINY AND APPROVAL PROCESS

- 5.1 In order to strengthen scrutiny arrangements, it is proposed that Scrutiny Working Groups are established to scrutinise each of the WPI action plans. (Details of the proposed Working Groups, their corresponding WPI action plan(s) to be scrutinised and the proposed working group dates are illustrated below).
- 5.2 It is proposed that a Joint Education & Lifelong Learning and Community & Children's Services Working Group be formed, to scrutinise two cross cutting WPI action plans i.e. Education and Children's Services.
- 5.3 It is also proposed that the appropriate Cabinet Member(s) be invited to the relevant scrutiny working group meeting.
- 5.4 It is proposed that the findings of each of the scrutiny working groups be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 5.5 It is proposed that Council approves and endorses the Corporate Plan 2014/15 at its meeting in June, prior to the statutory deadline of the 30th June.

5.6 Proposed Timetable

WORKING GROUP	DATE	WPI ACTION PLAN
Community & Children's Services	6 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adult Services
Corporate Services	7 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Regeneration & physical Regeneration
<i>Joint</i> – Education & Lifelong Learning & Community & Children's Services	8 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children's Services ▪ Education
Overview & Scrutiny	14 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Term Service Planning
Environmental Services	19 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Streetcare ▪ Public Health & Protection
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	9 th June	To receive feedback from the Scrutiny Working Groups
Council	June TBA	Approve and endorse the Corporate Plan prior to statutory deadlines.

- 5.7 It is recommended that each working group consists of between eight to ten Members.
- 5.8 It is recommended that the Joint Scrutiny Working Group comprises of an equal number of Members from each of the two Scrutiny Committees. In the event that this is not possible, membership shall comprise of eight to ten Members from either of the Committees.

6. OTHER ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 6.1 If the proposed process proves to be successful for the WPI action plans contained in the Corporate Plan, then the same arrangements can be implemented for the scrutiny of plans contained in the Annual Delivery Report (the backward-looking plan). This would be during Summer-Autumn of 2015, as Members will need to 'follow' these WPI plans through a full cycle of reporting before being able to scrutinise activity and performance.
- 6.2 At the Council meeting in June, Members will also be asked to approve the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) Annual Report. Closer links have been forged in recent years between the Council's short-term planning and partnership community planning. The non-statutory guidance on the SIP Annual Report has also stated that this should be a forward-looking document. As such, it is intended that explicit links are made between the 2014/15 Corporate Plan and the SIP Annual Report.
