

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15**

**COMMITTEE:**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**6<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

|   |
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| <b>Item No. 4(c)</b>  |
| <b>Draft Annual Governance Statement 2014/15 – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council</b> |

**REPORT OF:-**

**GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES**

**Author: Marc Crumbie (Operational Audit Manager)  
(01443) 680779**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This report provides Members with an overview of the Council's governance arrangements for the financial year 2014/15.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order for Audit Committee to discharge the duties as outlined in Section A of its Terms of Reference: *“Review and recommend for certification the Annual Governance Statement”* it is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Critically review the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), suggest any material amendments and recommend its certification by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive in readiness for inclusion within the Council's 2014/15 Statement of Accounts.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (regulation 5) states:

**“Responsibility for internal control and financial management**

(1) *The relevant body must ensure that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of that body's functions and which includes*

- (a) arrangements for the management of risk; and  
(b) adequate and effective financial management.*

(2) *The relevant body must conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and shall include a statement on internal control, prepared in accordance with Proper Practices.”*

Proper Practices are deemed to be the Code of Practice for Local Authority accounting which specifies:

*“A local authority shall undertake a review of its system of internal control in accordance with best practice. Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, published by CIPFA and SOLACE, recommends that the review be reported in an Annual Governance Statement.”*

3.2 The draft AGS relating to the activities of the Council for the 2014/15 financial year is attached at Appendix A. The format of the AGS uses the framework and principles contained within the ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’ publication.

3.3 Section 4 of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework states:

*“Annual Review & Reporting*

*Authorities should undertake regular, at least annual, reviews of their governance arrangements to ensure continuing compliance with best practice as set out in the Framework. It is important that such reviews are reported on both within the authority, to the audit committee or other appropriate member body, and externally with the published accounts, to provide assurance that:*

- *governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice, or*
- *where reviews of the governance arrangements have revealed gaps, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in future.*

*The process of preparing the governance statement should itself add value to the corporate governance and internal control framework of an organisation. It should be submitted to the authority for consideration.”*

3.4 The Council’s ‘review of effectiveness’ has been embedded into the main body of the annual governance statement (instead of being presented in a separate section of the AGS). The document now describes the arrangements in place, challenges their effectiveness, and where necessary provides recommendations for improvement. With Section 4 of the Framework in mind, Members will hopefully see a clear thread between the descriptive elements of the AGS and the review of effectiveness, all of which is aimed to provide assurance on, and add value to the overall governance arrangements in place.

3.5 The document has been compiled by the Annual Governance Statement Working Group (as recommended by the Wales Audit Office), which met twice. The AGS Working Group consists of a cross section of Officers from all Groups of the Council and also includes one Member (Cabinet Member for Council Business & Corporate Affairs).

- 3.6 In addition to the challenge and input from the AGS Working Group, the AGS has also been reviewed and challenged by the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 3.7 Subject to Audit Committee approval of the Head of Internal Audit Annual Report 2014/15 (being considered on the same agenda) then the Annual Governance Statement can be considered and recommended for certification.

**4. SUMMARY**

- 4.1 Based on the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken during 2014/15, sound governance arrangements were in place, key systems were operating as intended and there were no fundamental weaknesses.

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972**  
**as amended by**  
**THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, 1985**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**  
**AUDIT COMMITTEE**  
**6<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

**Report of the Group Director for Corporate and Frontline Services**

Author: Marc Crumbie (Operational Audit Manager).

| <b>Item</b>   | <b>File Ref:</b> |
|---|------------------|
| <b>5. Draft Annual Governance Statement 2014/15</b> | IA / MC          |

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF

### ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

|           |                                |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Scope of Responsibility</b> |
|-----------|--------------------------------|

- 1.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (The Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 identifies that the Authority has a 'general duty to improve'.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes the arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Council's Annual Governance Statement aims to provide an accurate representation of the governance arrangements in place for financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 and where appropriate recommend areas for improvement.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>2.</b> | <b>The Purpose of the Governance Framework</b> |
|-----------|--|

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems, processes and cultural values by which the Council is directed and controlled, and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.
- 2.2 For Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, governance is about ensuring that the Council does the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.
- 2.3 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage the risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.
- 2.4 The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's priorities, to evaluate the likelihood and impact of those risks materialising, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.5 The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work conducted by external agencies and internal arrangements, including performance management arrangements.

- 2.6 The governance framework outlined below has been in place at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 (and up to the date of approval of the 2014/15 annual Statement of Accounts).

|           |                                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| <b>3.</b> | <b>The Governance Framework</b> |
|-----------|---------------------------------|

- 3.1 The Council has used the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (CIPFA / SOLACE) 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework' in compiling its Annual Governance Statement. This framework illustrates best practice and recommends that local authorities must be able to demonstrate compliance with the six principles of good governance:

- Focusing on the purpose of the Authority and on outcomes for the community, and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
- Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.
- Making informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.
- Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective.
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

- 3.2 The Council has applied these principles to structure its Annual Governance Statement for financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. The Council's 'review of effectiveness' has been embedded into the main body of the annual governance statement (instead of being presented in a separate section of the AGS). The document now describes the arrangements in place, challenges their effectiveness, and where necessary provides recommendations for improvement.

3.3 **Focusing on the purpose of the Authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area**

Developing and promoting the Council's purpose and vision for its citizens and service users

**Single Integrated Plan "Delivering Change"**

- 3.3.1 The Council has adopted the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Board Single Integrated Plan ([www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan)). The Single Integrated Plan sets the strategic direction for organisations in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 3.3.2 The joint vision of the Local Service Board is stated within the Single Integrated Plan "Delivering Change" as follows:

*"People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous."*

- 3.3.3 The Single Integrated Plan is used as the strategic driver for the Council's Corporate Plan<sup>1</sup>, shapes the University Health Board's corporate priorities and the Police & Crime Commissioner's Crime Reduction Plan.

#### **Single Integrated Plan – Annual Report 2013/14**

- 3.3.4 Welsh Government guidance for the production of Single Integrated Plans requires the Local Service Board to prepare an annual report. An annual report should reflect on the work undertaken during the period and also 'look forward' with a view of seeing 'what's next'. The Local Service Board approved their first annual report at their meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014. A copy of the [Single Integrated Plan - Annual Report 2013/14](#) was presented to Full Council held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014. The Single Integrated Plan Annual Report 'looked back' at delivery during 2013/14 and also 'looked forward' to 2014/15.

- 3.3.5 The Annual Report 2013/14 evaluated the impact that "Delivering Change" had during 2013/14, as follows:

*"The Single Integrated Plan has been successful in some ways: partners have been brought together, encouraging better collaboration and allowing organisations to align their corporate plans to a common vision; efforts have been made to make the partnership structure more effective and focussed on actions; and the performance of services in some areas has been better communicated and discussed.*

*But, despite the good work individuals and organisations have done in 2013/14, this review has suggested that more work is needed to co-ordinate actions across our teams, departments and organisations with the aim of achieving better outcomes for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf.*

*The challenge of doing this well is reflected by the latest population measures in 'Delivering CHANGE'. Although we recognise that these issues require long-term solutions and some are affected by things outside of our control, we are failing to make the necessary impact on our measures of success. For example, the rates of smoking, mental illness and obesity are getting worse and, when studied on a local area basis, the measures are even more stark.*

*For instance, some communities have high levels of poverty, low educational attainment and low employment prospects, whereas others are prospering. This illustrates the need to get better at collecting relevant local information and engaging with communities, to help us to understand what differences there are across Rhondda Cynon Taf.*

*This review demonstrates that there is a lot of effort and activity going on in Rhondda Cynon Taf to tackle these issues. But collectively, we are not delivering the changes necessary across our outcomes to improve people's lives. This provides us with the opportunity to reflect and decide whether 'delivering the changes' needed requires a different approach."*

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<sup>1</sup> Corporate Plan – a public document produced annually and approved by the Full Council of RCTCBC each year, setting out its improvement priorities for the financial year ahead

3.3.6 In its 'forward look', the Annual Report looked at "What's next for 2014/15":  
*"The information and statistics that we have about Rhondda Cynon Taf suggest that the outcomes ('Safety', 'Health' and 'Prosperity') and priorities of 'Delivering CHANGE' are the right ones and we will continue to focus on achieving success by tackling these over the next few years.*

*This review has shown where we have successfully completed actions in some areas and, therefore, a refreshed set of actions for 'Delivering CHANGE' 2014/15 will be published on our website in Summer 2014. Most of the new actions also appear in our organisation's corporate plans and will therefore continue to be delivered by individuals and teams across Rhondda Cynon Taf.*

*But, to make a significant impact and move closer to achieving our vision that 'People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous', a different approach is needed.*

*The way services are delivered, and by whom, has to change over the next few years because, due to the economic climate, Councils, Health Boards, emergency services and the voluntary sector cannot continue to provide the services they have done for so many years. Although this is a difficult time, it also presents us with an opportunity to work differently and work better.*

*Fewer financial resources mean we have to work together and spend money wisely. Although difficult decisions will need to be made, this is an opportunity to make a lasting change in our communities. What may now be short-term investment in prevention and early intervention will have a long-lasting effect, providing sustainable changes for communities now, and in the future, of Rhondda Cynon Taf."*

3.3.7 Over the summer months of 2014, an Operational Steering Group considered how best to move forward with partnership working across Rhondda Cynon Taf and returned to the Local Service Board with proposals in September 2014. Briefly, these were that:

- **'Education & Employability' becomes the outcome that informs strategic partnership working. (Hereby referred to as 'Skills & Jobs'.)**
- **Subject to appropriate transitional arrangements, the partnerships of Safety, Health, Prosperity and Fframwaith are stood down.**
- **Geographically focussed task and finish work groups are developed when required to support decisions made by the Local Service Board.**
- **The terms of reference of the Local Service Board, Operational Steering Group and any other relevant groups are amended to reflect this approach.**

3.3.8 The members of the Local Service Board agreed to these proposals, but stressed that the operational mechanisms and relationships built up between partners could not come to an end. The Local Service Board concluded that partnership boards were no longer the most effective mechanism by which work could be planned, co-ordinated, delivered and evaluated.



3.3.9 Noting the changes in the governance arrangements, during 2014/15 ['Delivering Change'](#) continued to be the strategic document for the Local Service Board.

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2014/15**

3.3.10 In accordance with the underpinning guidance set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Council produced a Corporate Plan 2014/15.

3.3.11 The Corporate Plan 2014/15 identified the following priorities:

| <b>The Council's priorities</b>   | <b>Key Link To "Delivering Change"</b> |
|---|--|
| Public health and protection – protecting people from harm and tackling anti social behaviour   | Safety                                 |
| Streetcare services and the natural environment – keeping RCT clean and green   | Safety                                 |
| Maintaining people's independence - supporting adults and older people to live independently  | Health                                 |
| Children and family centred services - keeping all children and young people safe and improving the life chances of vulnerable children | Health                                 |
| Education – a top quality education for all: "Every School a Great School".   | Prosperity                             |
| Regeneration of our communities - improving our communities   | Prosperity                             |
| Medium term service planning – making the best use of our budget  | Bringing it all together               |

3.3.12 The priorities for 2014/15 were informed by the Outcomes in the Single Integrated Plan ("Delivering Change"); an assessment of ongoing performance levels; recommendations reported by external regulators; legislative changes; the increasingly difficult financial climate; feedback from stakeholders; and Welsh Government national priorities as set out within 'Programme for Government'.

3.3.13 To support and strengthen the engagement in and scrutiny of the Council's 2014/15 Priority Plans, they were compiled following both officer and elected Member challenge. The elected Member challenge took place in Scrutiny Working Groups and subsequently the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Priority Plans formed the basis of the Council's Corporate Plan which was subsequently agreed at a meeting of Council on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014 ([Full Council – Approval of Corporate Plan 2014/15](#)).

3.3.14 A copy of the Corporate Plan 2014/15 can be found at the following link: [Corporate Plan 2014/15](#).

3.3.15 During 2014/15 each Scrutiny Committee received updates in terms of progress made for each priority. The information provided was supported by increased support for Members to give them the necessary information with which to scrutinise the information in a more informed way.

- 3.3.16 In addition to the 'internal' scrutiny of progress and performance, during 2014/15 the Council was also subject to external inspection from its regulatory bodies, namely the Wales Audit Office, Estyn and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. These regulators focus on the work undertaken across the Council and link directly with some of the Council's priorities.

### **Wales Audit Office**

#### *ISA260 Report*

- 3.3.17 The Audit of Financial Statements Report ([ISA260](#)) was presented at the Council meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

- 3.3.18 The auditor issued an unqualified audit opinion and stated (in Appendix 2 to the ISA260 Report):

*"In my opinion the accounting statements and related notes:*

- *give a true and fair view of the financial position of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as at 31 March 2014 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and*
- *have been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2013-14."*

### **Estyn**

- 3.3.19 Following Estyn's inspection of education services for children and young people in March 2012, the authority was identified as requiring follow-up through Estyn monitoring.

- 3.3.20 Estyn made the following recommendations in its initial inspection dated March 2012:

- **R1** - raise standards in schools particularly in key stage 4;
- **R2** - improve attendance rates in all schools;
- **R3** - improve the evaluation and analyses of data across service areas and partnerships to drive improvements in outcomes for learners;
- **R4** - use the full powers available to the authority to improve leadership and management in schools;
- **R5** - reduce surplus places; and
- **R6** - improve the rigour and the level of scrutiny and challenge across all services and partnerships.

- 3.3.21 The Council's commitment to deliver the stepped improvements required by Estyn was included within its Annual Governance Statement 2013/14 as a significant governance issue and was supported by the detailed priority plan 'Education – a top quality education for all: "Every School a Great School".'

- 3.3.22 A plan for follow-up visits was agreed with Estyn link inspectors. The Council's progress against recommendations 4 & 5 were reviewed by Estyn during November 2013.

- 3.3.23 During 2014/15, two follow-up visits took place.

31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014

- 3.3.24 Estyn reviewed the progress made against Recommendations 2 & 3. The outcome of this visit was reported to Cabinet at its meeting held on 23rd June 2014.

30<sup>th</sup> June – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

- 3.3.25 Estyn reviewed the progress of the Council against Recommendations 1 & 6, and revisited Recommendations 2, 3, 4 & 5 after previously reviewing these recommendations in monitoring visits in November 2013 and April 2014. **This formed a ‘full’ follow-up of all of the six recommendations made in March 2012.** A copy of Estyn’s letter was reported to Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 ([Estyn Letter - August 2014](#)).

- 3.3.26 Based upon the visit that took place between 30<sup>th</sup> June – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014, Estyn concluded that:

*“Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the inspection of March 2012. As a result, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales considers that the authority is no longer in need of Estyn monitoring and is removing it from further follow-up activity”.*

- 3.3.27 In response to the Estyn letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014, in his covering report that presented the letter to Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning concluded:

*“Members are aware there is still a considerable amount of work to be completed to ensure every school in the County Borough is at least a good school and that all pupils strive and are supported to achieve their full potential. Estyn recognise this and their recommendation to the Council is to:*

*“The authority should continue to work to raise standards across all key stages, and to improve attendance. It should also continue its work to improve how it undertakes its scrutiny functions, and develop Fframwaith further so that it undertakes its role effectively”.*

*The Council’s corporate plan already has a series of actions that seek to address Estyn’s recommendations, and progress against the plan will continue to be rigorously scrutinised by Cabinet and the Education Scrutiny Committee.”*

- 3.3.28 During 2015/16 the Council will continue to strengthen its arrangements by putting measures in place that all share the objective of improving the educational outcomes for its citizens.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council should ensure that ‘Education’ remains a priority for 2015/16. The priority action plan should (amongst others things) aim to address the outcomes of the Estyn Report dated 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014.

## **Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales**

### **Annual Review & Evaluation of Performance**

3.3.29 The [CSSIW Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2013/14](#) was reported to the Community & Children's Scrutiny Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

3.3.30 In their summary, the key messages from the CSSIW report included:  
*"Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) council effectively balanced its overall budget for social services in 2013-14. The authority spends more on social care per head than many other Welsh authorities although this is in the context of relatively high levels of deprivation. The council has outlined realistic savings and has demonstrated strategic financial planning to meet current and future budgetary pressures. In adult services, advances have been made in reshaping service provision. Further change in adult service provision plus an anticipated remodelling of children's services are planned for 2015-16. This is planned to align services to the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act ('the Act') and as a response to the current economic challenges.*

*The council 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 director acknowledges that the pace of change must increase in some areas.*

*The council has a wide ranging strategy to promote the Welsh language and was the locality used for the launch of 'More than just Words'.*

*Workforce capacity issues remain in children's services and this report highlights the continued use of unqualified workers to case manage and complete initial assessments. Children's services has seen an increase in referrals, a relatively high looked after population and the highest recorded number of young people on the child protection register from any council in Wales. The timely completion of assessments in both adult and children's services is poor and will affect the effectiveness of support and preventative work with vulnerable people and families. The council has identified that greater quality assurance of assessment and care management would improve service provision across social services. The assessment and support of carers (young carers and adult carers), deteriorated this year. The council states it will consider these areas for improvement as part of its overall review of services to ensure all change promotes the priorities dictated in the Act. The council has strong corporate parenting arrangements and improvements have been noted in the educational achievement of looked after children leaving school."*

3.3.31 Areas for improvement were identified within the Annual Report.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Council should ensure that services delivered to adults and children across the County Borough remain priorities for 2015/16. The priority action plan(s) should (amongst others things) aim to address the areas for improvement raised

within the CSSIW Annual Report.

CSSIW Inspection of Fostering Services 19 – 21st February 2014

3.3.32 The CSSIW undertook an inspection of Fostering Services between 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014. The outcome of the inspection was reported to the Corporate Parenting Board on [13<sup>th</sup> May 2014](#).

3.3.33 Within the covering report that presented the CSSIW Report to the Corporate Parenting Board, the Service Manager for Placement Services concluded:  
*“Although the Inspection highlighted a number of areas where practice has improved there are still areas where further improvements are needed. There were no areas that needed immediate urgent improvement and no non-compliance notices were issued on the service.*

*A plan will now be developed specifically to deal with the areas that need improvement. It will focus on improving the support to Foster Carers, in particular the support to Kinship Foster Carers, taking into account the increase in numbers in this area of work.”*

3.3.34 In response to the inspection, Officers established an action plan to address the recommendations made. The action plan was reported to the Community & Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee held on [8<sup>th</sup> October 2014](#).

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s Annual Delivery Report**

3.3.35 In October 2014, the Council produced an Annual Delivery Report that assessed the Council’s performance against its improvement priorities for the 2013/14 financial year.

3.3.36 To enable the production of the Annual Delivery Report, Council officers drafted an evaluation of performance for each improvement priority area for 2013/14; each evaluation was then subject to scrutiny via Member led Scrutiny Working Groups (including engagement with the Older People’s Advisory Group for the Maintaining People’s Independence priority) to determine whether the positions reported were fair, balanced and evidence based. Scrutiny working group meetings took place throughout September and October 2014 and an overall update was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

3.3.37 In parallel with the above process, Council officers updated each performance evaluation in line with scrutiny working group feedback (a summary of which was set out in the Overview and Scrutiny report of the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014), and compiled the Annual Delivery Report based on the revised performance evaluations.

3.3.38 Further to the final content of the Annual Delivery Report being approved by Council, the Report was made available on the Council’s internet and intranet sites by the statutory deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014. The Report was produced

bilingually and copies made available at public facing Council buildings and on request.

3.3.39 As part of the above process, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to provide feedback on the process. Their feedback was:

**Positives**

- Useful to inform scrutiny work programme
- Provided Members with the opportunity to consider the information
- Information could confirm your impression of a service

**Negatives**

- Timescales
- Too late to inform future priorities
- Need to align priorities with service changes

**RECOMMENDATION:**

From a review of the arrangements applied for the 2013/14 evaluations and taking account of Member feedback, it is recommended that:

- The draft 2014/15 performance evaluations and draft 2015/16 priority plans are considered together by scrutiny working groups;
- A draft 2015 Combined Performance Plan should be produced (based on the performance evaluations and priority plans) for publication and presented to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration
- Following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a final draft Combined Performance Report should be presented to Council and used to fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities as set out within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Working in collaboration

3.3.40 In the current austere climate within which the Council operates, the potential rewards of working collaboratively with partners could be an avenue by which the Council continues to provide quality services to its citizens. During 2014/15 the Council worked in partnership with a number of organisations in order to provide services to users that are of the highest possible quality (for example, Central South Consortium and the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board). In addition, plans were put in place for 'new' partnerships to become 'live' during 2015/16 (for example, the establishment of a Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Regional Adoption collaborative Vale, Valleys and Cardiff).

3.3.41 The Council's **Information Management** plan sets out a framework for Information Management. It provides a comprehensive and corporate approach to all aspects of information management and assurance. It seeks to apply consistent, corporate policies and standards of information management across all Council held electronic and paper based information, provide awareness and training to employees and enable effective information sharing across our wider collaboration and partnership agenda. In doing so, it reflects the increasing legal

framework that is now imposed on public sector bodies through legislation such as the Data Protection Act (1998), Freedom of Information Act (2000), Computer Misuse Act (1990) and the requirements for respect for private life and freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act 1998. In addition, the arrangements seek to embrace good practice standards by the Information Commissioners Office and the Wales Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI).

- 3.3.42 A key component of the Council's arrangements is to ensure 'accreditation' to the Public Service Network (PSN) on an annual basis. The 'PSN' is the Council's connection to the wider public sector network (Council to Council, Council to Government e.g. Department for Work and Pensions) to enable the Council to communicate and share data securely across all public bodies. The Council met rigorous compliance requirements and attained re-accreditation in September 2014.
- 3.3.43 The Council has a dedicated team that investigate all reported instances where the defined protocols may have been breached. All incidents / potential breaches are investigated, reported and where applicable, actions to improve controls are reported in the form of recommendations.
- 3.3.44 In line with the requirement placed upon the Council to raise awareness of the importance of managing the Council's information assets, dedicated training and awareness sessions took place during 2014/15. The sessions were delivered to Headteachers, Members and Officers (identified as Heads of Service or above).
- 3.3.45 A key part of the work is positively supporting the Council's collaborative arrangements, ensuring that information sharing protocols (ISPs) are produced for safe and appropriate sharing of personal information between the Council and other partners. Examples of ISPs developed in the last 6 months include Regional Adoption Service, Youth Offending Team, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (Adults), Careers Wales and Mental Health with South Wales Police.

#### 3.4 **Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles**

- 3.4.1 The Council's Constitution was adopted in May 2002 and sets out how it should operate, how decisions need to be made and the procedures to be followed to ensure they are efficient, transparent and available to local people. Since that time, amendments have been made with the aim of ensuring the document remains fit for purpose.
- 3.4.2 An overview is provided in Part 1 of the Constitution (Summary and Explanation) and Part 2 (Articles of the Constitution) explain the rights of citizens and how key parts of the Constitution operate including the roles and responsibilities of Council, the Executive, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the four Service Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees (Planning & Licensing), Democratic Services Committee; and the roles and responsibilities of senior officers, specifically the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), Chief Finance Officer (Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services) and Monitoring Officer (the Director of Legal and Democratic Services).











































