

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016/17

COMMITTEE:

AUDIT COMMITTEE

20th March 2017

Item No. 4
The Council's response to Wales Audit Office 'Proposals for Improvement'

REPORT OF:-

GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES

Author: Paul Griffiths – Service Director - Performance and Improvement

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to up date Audit Committee on the steps taken by the Council to monitor the implementation of 'proposals for improvement' included within the following Wales Audit Office (WAO) reports:

- Local authority arrangements to support safeguarding children follow up (**Appendix A**); and
- Good governance when determining significant service changes (**Appendix B**).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Review the adequacy of the steps taken by the Council to monitor the implementation of 'proposals for improvement' made within the WAO reports 'Local authority arrangements to support safeguarding children follow up' and 'Good governance when determining significant service changes'; and
- 2.2 Determine whether there are matters of governance, internal control or a risk management nature that require further action or attention.

3. ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING WAO PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 3.1 The Council recognises the important role WAO Reports play in supporting on-going improvement to governance and service delivery, and uses the oversight of Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committees to oversee arrangements and the monitoring of progress.

Audit Committee

- 3.2 The Terms of Reference of the Council's Audit Committee include the responsibility to *'Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on the appropriateness of the Authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements, and providing the opportunity for direct discussion with the auditor(s) on these'*.
- 3.3 The specific arrangements included at 3.2, namely 'risk management', 'internal control' and 'corporate governance' cover the **processes** the Council has in place to primarily identify risk, decide on appropriate responses to deal with it and confirm or otherwise if the chosen responses are effective. A core responsibility of the Council's Audit Committee is to assess the appropriateness or adequacy of these processes.
- 3.4 With the above core responsibility in mind, Audit Committee Members will be requested, on an on-going basis, to form an opinion on the adequacy of the Council's arrangements for **monitoring** 'proposals for improvement' reported by the WAO.

Scrutiny Committees

- 3.5 In parallel with Audit Committee's responsibility is the role of reviewing and challenging the progress the Council is making toward implementing agreed actions and also considering what impact their implementation is having. Members will note that this responsibility is discharged via the Council's scrutiny function with Audit Committee able to refer on matters that relate to, for example, 'progress' or 'impact', to the relevant Scrutiny Committee for further review.

4. WALES AUDIT OFFICE – PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 4.1 For the specific purposes of this report, Audit Committee are requested to form an opinion on the adequacy of the Council's arrangements for monitoring 'proposals for improvement' included within the following WAO Reports:
- Local authority arrangements to support safeguarding children follow up (Appendix A) – this was reported to Cabinet on the 2nd November 2016 and is scheduled to be reported to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd March 2017; and

- Good governance when determining significant service changes (Appendix B) – this was reported to Cabinet on the 9th March 2017. As yet, no date has been set for the report to be presented to a Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2 To assist Audit Committee’s considerations, examples of lines of enquiry could include (but are not restricted to):
- The adequacy of the suite of information that has been reported to Cabinet?
 - How clear are arrangements around how progress will be monitored?
 - Where there are matters of an internal control nature within the Council’s action plans, the adequacy of the action(s) being taken.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Council recognises the important role WAO Reports play in supporting on-going improvement to governance and service delivery, and uses the oversight of Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committees to oversee arrangements and the monitoring of progress.
- 5.2 With specific regard to Audit Committee, it is the role of this Committee to form an opinion on the adequacy of the Council’s arrangements for monitoring ‘proposals for improvement’ for the WAO Reports ‘Local authority arrangements to support safeguarding children follow up’ and ‘Good governance when determining significant service changes’.
- 5.3 The reporting of the above to Audit Committee, in parallel with other internal control / governance related information during the year, aims to assist the Committee in formulating an opinion on the Council’s overall control environment for the 2016/17 financial year.

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
20th March 2017

Report of the Group Director, Corporate & Frontline Services

Author: Paul Griffiths - Service Director – Performance and Improvement

Item

4. The Council's response to Wales Audit Office 'Proposals for Improvement'

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

2ND NOVEMBER 2016

**WALES AUDIT OFFICE – LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FOLLOW UP**

**REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES, AND
GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR A MORGAN**

Author: Lesley Lawson, Performance Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report updates Cabinet on the outcome of the follow-up visit undertaken by the Wales Audit Office ("WAO") in respect of the Local Authority's Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children, together with a progress report in respect of actions taken to address overall recommendations in relation to our Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the WAO report '*Local Authority arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children follow up*'
- 2.2 Review and challenge the Council's progress to date against the planned actions as set out in the Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan endorsed by Cabinet in March 2016.
- 2.3 Refer the WAO report and associated Delivery Plan to Audit Committee to further challenge the overall governance arrangements in place.
- 2.4 Refer the WAO report and associated Delivery Plan to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure that Cabinet is aware of WAO findings and recommendations and is able to challenge the progress made to date in respect of actions taken to improve the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, which specifically include arrangements for safeguarding children as per the WAO review, but also ensure that adults are safeguarded and protected.
- 3.2 Safeguarding and protecting children and adults at risk is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and 'is everyone's business'.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Since October 2014, the Council has received three reports from the Wales Audit Office in respect of its safeguarding arrangements:

1.	Assessment of RCT's Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children	Local Report, issued October 2014
2.	'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales'	National Report, issued in July 2015
3.	Follow up of Assessment of RCT's Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children	Local Report, issued in May 2016

- 4.2 In 2014, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) conducted a '*Review of Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*' and produced individual reports in respect of arrangements in each local authority.

- 4.3 The local report issued to Rhondda Cynon Taf set out four recommendations:

1. Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
2. Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.
3. Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.
4. Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.

- 4.4 An update of actions taken to address these recommendations, was reported to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2016 and a link to a report for that meeting is attached below:
<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/ChildrenandYoungPeopleScrutinyCommittee/2016/03/21/Reports/Item3ArrangmentsforSafeguardingChildren.pdf>

- 4.5 Subsequent to the publication of the local report on '*Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*', in July 2015, the Wales Audit Office issued a national report '*Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales*'.

- 4.6 The recommendations contained in this national report superseded the recommendations in the earlier local report and helped to inform the Council's current Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.7 The development of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, which included a programme of accountability, policy development, training and communication, was set out in a report to Cabinet on 17th March 2016. At this meeting, Cabinet adopted the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, endorsed a Delivery Plan and Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register. Cabinet also recommended that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on the 11th April 2016. Links to these reports are included below:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2016/03/17/Reports/AgendaItem11CorporateSafeguarding.pdf>

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/CorporateParentingBoard/2016/04/11/CorporateParentingBoard11Apr2016.aspx>

5. **CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 The Wales Audit Office's follow up review of '*Local Authority arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children*' took place in February 2016. Following the review, a report was sent to the Council in May 2016. A copy of the report is provided at Appendix 1. The report concluded that: '***The Council is strengthening its corporate arrangements to support the safeguarding of children and is making progress in addressing our previous proposals for improvement.***'
- 5.2 Given the timing of the publication of the report in May 2016, covering work carried out in its review in February 2016, the progress made in implementing the Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan was not fully reflected in the Wales Audit Office follow up report.
- 5.3 Work continues to address the recommendations made by the WAO within the overarching plans to strengthen and communicate the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements
- 5.4 Cabinet is requested to consider the attached updated Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan (Appendix 2) and Risk Register (Appendix 3), which provides an update in respect of progress made and next steps.

6. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 No specific consultation required at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Additional costs are likely given the scale and depth of training required, but these can be met from within existing resources.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Extracted from Safeguarding Policy:

- Social Services and Well Being Act 2014
- Education Act 2002 – plus 'Keeping Learners Safe' -The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002
- Children Act 1989 and 2004,
- 'Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004'.
- 'In Safe Hands' 2000
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998,
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Housing Act 2004
- Licensing Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998

10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP/FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

- 10.1 Links to the 'PEOPLE' priority of the Council's Corporate Plan.
Links to the 'SAFETY' Theme and 'SAFEGUARDING' Outcome of the current Single Integrated Plan.

Aligns with the Prevention aspect and the Healthier/More Equal/Cohesive Wales goals as set out in the Future Generation Act.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Council has made positive progress in implementing its Corporate Safeguarding arrangements which is evidenced in the Delivery Plan and Risk Register updates.

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Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

Improvement Assessment 2015-16: Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children Follow-Up

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Issued: May 2016

Document reference: 328A2016

Status of report

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 Code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties.

In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to the Wales Audit Office at info.officer@audit.wales.

The team who delivered the work comprised Tim Buckle and Colin Davies.

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The Council is strengthening its corporate arrangements to support the safeguarding of children and is making progress in addressing our previous proposals for improvement.

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Summary report

1. In October 2014 we reported our local findings to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (the Council) following our review of **Local Authority Arrangements to Support Safeguarding of Children**. The study focused on answering the following question: 'Do the Council's governance and management arrangements provide assurance that children are safeguarded?'
2. In reporting our findings we made four proposals for improvement to the Council that are set out below.

P1	Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.
P2	Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.
P3	Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.
P4	Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.

3. In February 2016 we reviewed the Council's progress in addressing the above proposals for improvement. We asked the question: 'Has the Council made progress in addressing the proposals for improving arrangements to support safeguarding of children?' We found that: 'The Council is strengthening its corporate arrangements to support the safeguarding of children and is making progress in addressing our previous proposals for improvement.' We came to this conclusion because the Council has:
 - developed a draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy;
 - developed a draft corporate safeguarding risk register, and intends to incorporate service risks into its service delivery plans;
 - identified key corporate performance measures for safeguarding, although not all of the measures are finalised; and
 - begun to deliver a training programme for staff, and there are plans to deliver training for elected members from May 2016.
4. Our findings are outlined in [Appendix 1](#).

Appendix 1

Proposals for improvement and findings

Proposal for improvement	Follow-up findings
<p>P1 Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.</p>	<p>In progress – the Council has developed a draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has developed a draft policy and intends to finalise this subject to Cabinet approval, in March 2016. The policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of a range of stakeholders. • The draft policy also sets out the governance arrangements for safeguarding with reference to the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board, the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Adult Board, the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Director for Social Services. • The policy also sets out contact details for officers/members who have a concern regarding safeguarding.
<p>P2 Ensure all safeguarding risks are identified; ensure corporate and service level risks are integrated; and agree actions to mitigate these.</p>	<p>In progress – the Council has developed a draft corporate safeguarding risk register, and intends to incorporate service risks into its service delivery plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has developed a draft corporate safeguarding risk register for safeguarding. • The Council intends to identify service risks in children and adult services through the service self-evaluation process and include identified risks in the subsequent service delivery plans. However, as the delivery plans have not yet been finalised for 2016-17 it is too early to review the robustness of these arrangements.
<p>P3 Improve the range, quality and coverage of safeguarding performance reporting to provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.</p>	<p>In progress – the Council has identified key corporate performance measures for safeguarding, although not all of the measures are finalised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has identified key corporate measures, although these are not yet all clearly defined. • It has not yet set targets for the measures as 2016-17 will be a baseline year.

Proposal for improvement

P4 Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.

Follow-up findings

In progress – the Council has begun to deliver a training programme for staff, and there are plans to deliver training for elected members from May 2016

- The Council has begun to develop and deliver a training programme for staff.
- It will produce a training programme for elected members by April 2016 with a rolling training programme to be implemented from May 2016.

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Corporate Safeguarding arrangements – Delivery Plan 2016/17	
What are we trying to achieve, the outcome	The implementation of a framework that will protect Children and adults at risk across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
Why we need to do it:	<p><i>The number of children on the child protection register reduced by 22 (5%) in 2014-15 (449 compared to 471). However, the long term trend for Rhondda Cynon Taf is high and currently has the highest rate of child protection registration in Wales. (455 at 30th June 2016)</i></p> <p><i>The number of children in care reduced by 10% during 2014-15 but Rhondda Cynon Taf has the 4th highest rate of looked after children in Wales. (633 CLA at end of June 2016/17 compared to 623 at end of 2015/16)</i></p> <p><i>We have increased the number of adult protection referrals where risk has been managed and is above the Welsh Average. However, the number of referrals increased from 180 in 2013/14 to 200 in 2014/15 (201 in 2015/16) (Performance amongst the best in Wales for % of adult protection referrals where the risk has been managed, 100%)</i></p>
Which of the Council's Priorities, as outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan, will this plan support?	People – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone
Which of the current Single Integrated Plan Theme(s) will this support	Safety theme <i>Safeguarding outcome Children and Adults at risk are protected from harm</i>
To which of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act Well-being Goals does this plan contribute?	A Healthier/More Equal/Cohesive Wales
What difference will delivery of this objective make to Service Users/ residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf	Children and adults at risk across RCT are protected from harm.
Risks – extracted from (CS RR)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If robust performance monitoring and management arrangements in respect of corporate safeguarding are not in place then the ability to track progress, ensure on-going review and scrutiny could be hindered. 2. If staff do not possess the relevant skills and knowledge in respect of identifying and reporting a potential safeguarding issue then the safety of a child and/or an adult at risk may be compromised. 3. If the Council cannot demonstrate delivery of training to all relevant staff then its ability to evidence robust and adequate training in respect of corporate safeguarding is hindered. 4. If safeguarding concerns are not reported to an appropriate central service then the consistency in respect of these are assessed and managed could be compromised which could result in the safety of a child and/or an adult at risk being compromised.

How will we measure our progress against the outcome		Data 15/16	2016/17 Target	Owner
Description		<i>if available</i>		
PI	<p>% of (non specialised) staff trained in Corporate Safeguarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Level • Management Level 	<p>Management briefings delivered to 560</p> <p>Managers</p>	50% of managers and staff trained	DH
PI	<p>Measure around people who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aware of their responsibilities in respect of Safeguarding <p>Found it easy to access information if they had reason to report eg I know what to do if I have concerns about..similar to extract from WAO Childrens report.</p>		TBD	DH
Survey Results	<p>Links to above,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff survey • WAO measures (Children's Report) 		TBD	
Inspection Feedback	<p>The findings from the follow up on the WAO Study report issued in October 2014.</p> <p>These findings from the follow up were issued in May 2016. The fieldwork for the follow up was carried out in February 2016. The progress between February and May was not reflected in the WAO report.</p>	<p>Extract from WAO Report</p> <p>'The Council is strengthening its corporate arrangements to support safeguarding of children and is making progress in addressing our previous proposals for improvement' because</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed a draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy 2. Developed a draft CS risk register and intends to incorporate service risks into its service Delivery Plans 3. Identified key corporate performance measures for safeguarding although not all of the measures have been finalised 4. Begun to deliver a training programme for staff and there are plans to deliver training for elected Members from May 2016 		

NB any measures used to demonstrate and scrutinise progress within Cabinet Performance reports will be subject to a Data Assurance Process which will include review of target setting rationale

Action		Ref	Key Milestones/Sub Actions	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Progress if not complete
1	Put in place robust governance and scrutiny that will deliver strengthened Council wide Safeguarding arrangements for Children and Adults at Risk.	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and confirm lead officer accountability for Corporate Safeguarding. Identify and confirm lead Cabinet Member accountability for Corporate Safeguarding. 	Complete Complete	CL AM	COMPLETE
		1.2	Establish a working group that is tasked with critically reviewing the Council's current Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, taking into account the recommendations received from the Wales Audit Office, and putting in place a delivery plan for improvement where they are identified.	Complete	CL	COMPLETE
		1.3	Produce a Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan setting the out the required actions and measures for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit it to Cabinet for approval put in place appropriate scrutiny arrangements by ensuring that Corporate Safeguarding is included within the workplan of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Ensure that the risks to achieving the Delivery Plan are set out in a Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register 	Complete 17/3/2016 Complete Complete	CL KM MC	COMPLETE
		1.4	Agree and distribute a template that can be used across the Council to collect information in respect of Corporate Safeguarding activity that can be used to inform the Director of Social Services Annual Report. Previously 31/3/2016 agreed to extension 22 April 2016 Include agreed template in SSE for SLT Establish information collection and reporting arrangements to inform the Annual Corporate Safeguarding aspects of the Director's Report	31/7/2016 31/3/2016	SLT LAL/LP	COMPLETE
		1.5	Ensure that the Corporate Safeguarding arrangements are subjected to Internal Audit review during 2016/17.	Complete	MC	COMPLETE

Action	Ref	Key Milestones/Sub Actions	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Progress if not complete	
2	Put in place a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that reflects the Council's overarching Safeguarding responsibility and the service specific policies already in place.	2.1	Establish those existing policies that need to be reflected within Corporate Safeguarding Policy	Complete	LP/LAL	COMPLETE
	2.2	Devise a draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy Submit draft Policy for review and approval by Cabinet. To be accompanied by the Corporate Safeguarding Delivery Plan and Risk Register.	Complete March 2016	LP/LAL LP/LAL	COMPLETE	
	2.3	Deliver Initial Briefing sessions on Corporate Safeguarding with Senior Managers as part of Manager briefing sessions <i>(First session took place on 11 February 2016)</i>	Feb/March 2016	DH	COMPLETE	

Action	Ref	Key Milestones/Sub Actions	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Progress if not complete
<p>Increase awareness of staff, elected Members, volunteers, partners and contractors of Corporate Safeguarding and whistle blowing across all Council services</p> <p>Officer Training</p>	3.1	Identify staff that require different levels of training/information on Safeguarding	April 2016	DH	Complete
		Produce programme(s) of training for staff identified	April 2016	DH	Complete
		<p>Prioritise and implement rolling training programme – original date May 2016 extended to July 2016 in 22/4 meeting</p> <p>*e learning and face to face training launched</p>	*October	DH	Ongoing
<p>Elected Member training</p>	3.2	a) Provide a report in respect of elected Members' Corporate Safeguarding training requirements to Democratic Services Committee	Complete	DH/LAL	Complete
		b) Provide a briefing note to Members in respect of DBS Checks	May 2016	RE	Complete
		c) Develop programme and schedule of training	May 2016	DH	Complete
	NEW @23/5	d) Ensure elected Member Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities are included in role descriptions to be agreed as part of the constitution following AGM in May	July	AW (in KM absence)	Complete
	NEW @23/5	e) consider options for ongoing engagement and training/awareness raising in respect of their responsibilities for Safeguarding	October 2016	DH/KM	On target

Action	Ref	Key Milestones/Sub Actions	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Progress if not complete
Record of Training undertaken	3.3	<p>Develop/implement arrangements that will ensure that all information about staff and elected Members trained in respect of Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities is reported quarterly to the SSG.</p> <p>Provisional data e learning launched to 1,443 1,456 staff on 3 October , 380 outstanding to be picked up by the end of the year 2,000 require face to face training 3,400 school staff will be trained by existing school arrangements</p>	July 2016 to accommodate 1 st quarter data	DH	Provisional Baseline *3,600 staff trained to date
	3.4	<p>Review HR policies to ensure that the reference to Corporate Safeguarding requirements is included where necessary</p> <p>Original date April 2016 extended to September in April meeting</p> <p>NEW Added on 24/8 List of all policies considered by HR to be provided to Corporate Safeguarding Group</p>	Sept 2016	RE	On target
	3.5	<p>Agree internal 'branding' and campaign for Safeguarding to include IT and non IT access methods eg</p> <p>Intranet pages Payroll insert booked for May 2016 Source</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete Complete Complete</p>	<p>LAL</p> <p>LAL CD AB</p>	COMPLETE
	3.6	<p>Start to implement campaign to align/introduce Council wide training programme</p>	April 2016	CD	COMPLETE

Action	Ref	Key Milestones/Sub Actions	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Progress if not complete	
	NEW@ 23/5 3.6 a	Agree approach to roll out of Policy through NETConsent	July 2016	CL/GI	Complete	
		Clarify Users requiring consent (4,000 staff in place) Agree approach e.g. staggered/prioritise Identify how queries/declines will be managed (eg shared in box)	September 2016	LAL	Complete	
		Implement – (staggered roll out starting October)	October 2016	LAL	On target	
	Procurement and commissioning	3.7	For all relevant contracts, ensure that the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy is included.	Post Cabinet approval	SL	COMPLETE
	Recruitment	3.8	Ensure that recruitment processes enable the safe recruitment of all staff	April 2016	RE	COMPLETE
	Evaluation	3.9	Test the extent that staff and managers are aware of their Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities as part of the staff survey scheduled for 2017 NB This action will be dependent on the progress of the training programme	TBD	LAL/DH	
3.10 NEW @23/5		Revise MASH data collection processes to identify sources of staff contact to MASH (both children's and adults) that will help to establish the impact of training and awareness raising on Keeping children and adults at risk Safe Review process six months after implementation (October 2016) to ensure systems are fit for purpose	December 2016	LP/JN	Complete	
			April 2017	LP/JN	On target	

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register

Update – Qtr 1 Update 2016/17

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Corporate Safeguarding risk register sets out the key risks to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in achieving its vision of delivering embedded Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.
- 1.2 The risks are categorised in terms of their likelihood and impact.
- 1.3 The aim is to manage each risk so as to reduce the likelihood and/or the impact, by putting measures in place to support and delivery robust governance arrangements in respect of Corporate Safeguarding.
- 1.4 In addition to the risks set out in this register, there are operational risks that are managed within the Children's and Adult's Service Directorates respectively.
- 1.5 All risks across the Council are subject to a periodic review.
- 1.6 Risks change over time – new ones emerge or existing risks become more or less significant as a result of external or internal factors. This Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register is a living document; it is reviewed regularly, monitored and updated.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING RISK REGISTER									
CSRR REF	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	RISK DESCRIPTION	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES	Original Risk Rating			Current Risk Rating		
				I	L	RATING	I	L	RATING
1	Chris Lee & Giovanni Isingrini	If robust performance monitoring and management arrangements in respect of corporate safeguarding are not in place then the ability to track progress, ensure on-going review and scrutiny could be hindered.	Reportable major injuries to several people or death of an individual. Intervention in a key service. National adverse publicity / bad press.	4	4	16	4	2	8
QUARTERLY UPDATE (INCORPORATING ACTIONS TAKEN TO MANAGE)									
<p><u>QTR 4 Update 2015/16</u></p> <p>Positive progress has been made during quarter 4.</p> <p>A Strategic Corporate Safeguarding Group of Officers was established, tasked with overseeing and delivering improved safeguarding governance arrangements. A detailed delivery plan was developed that addressed, amongst other actions, all recommendations of the Wales Audit Office.</p> <p>Lead Officer & Cabinet Member responsibility for Corporate Safeguarding was confirmed during quarter 4.</p> <p>A draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy & Procedure was adopted by Cabinet on the 17th March 2016. The report to Cabinet included the delivery plan and the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Risk Register.</p> <p>The Children's and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the 21st March received an update on the recommendations arising from the WAO report of 'Safeguarding of Children and Young People in RCT'.</p> <p>The Council's ability to track progress has improved, given the establishment of the Strategic Group, the delivery plan and progress made to date. The risk rating has therefore been adjusted to reflect this with the likelihood being reduced from 4 to 3.</p> <p><u>QTR 1 Update 2016/17</u></p> <p>Governance arrangements have now been established and embedded. In addition to this, a section relating to Corporate Safeguarding has been developed for inclusion within the Service Self Evaluation in readiness for 2016.</p> <p>Given the improvements put in place during Qtr 4 2015/16 and developed further during 2016/17 the likelihood score has be reduced from 3 to 2.</p>									

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING RISK REGISTER									
CSRR REF	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	RISK DESCRIPTION	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES	Original Risk Rating			Current Risk Rating		
				I	L	RATING	I	L	RATING
2	Chris Lee & Giovanni Isingrini	If staff do not possess the relevant skills and knowledge in respect of identifying and reporting a potential safeguarding issue then the safety of a child and/or an adult at risk may be compromised.	Reportable major injuries to several people or death of an individual. Intervention in a key service. National adverse publicity / bad press.	4	4	16	4	3	12
QUARTERLY UPDATE (INCORPORATING ACTIONS TAKEN TO MANAGE)									
<p><u>QTR 4 Update 2015/16</u></p> <p>Management briefings were delivered to 560 Service Managers during quarter 4 with Elected Members due to receive a safeguarding briefing during quarter 1 2016/17.</p> <p>Work in respect of planning, prioritising and rolling out training to all staff across the Council commenced.</p> <p>In order to raise awareness to all staff, work commenced on developing content for the Council's Intranet site and this went 'live' at the end of quarter 4. Plans to communicate to all staff using workplace posters and Payroll inserts are due for quarter 1 2016/17.</p> <p>Work to manage this risk has commenced however; no changes to the risk scores at this stage.</p> <p><u>QTR 1 Update 2016/17</u></p> <p>Work continues in terms of raising awareness to staff with Payroll inserts being issued to all staff during Qtr 1. Where the Council procures external services, the Corporate Safeguarding Policy has now been included within the standard suite of contract documentation.</p> <p>The roll out of training continues and good progress is being made in accordance with the delivery plan.</p> <p>Member awareness training was delivered during April 2016 with the role descriptions of Members being updated to include responsibility for safeguarding.</p> <p>Work is progressing in accordance with the agreed delivery plan, as a result the likelihood score has been reduced from 4 to 3.</p>									

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING RISK REGISTER									
CSRR REF	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	RISK DESCRIPTION	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES	Original Risk Rating			Current Risk Rating		
				I	L	RATING	I	L	RATING
3	Chris Lee & Giovanni Isingrini	If the Council cannot demonstrate delivery of training to all relevant staff then its ability to evidence robust and adequate training in respect of corporate safeguarding is hindered.	Intervention in a key service. National adverse publicity / bad press.	4	3	12	4	3	12
QUARTERLY UPDATE (INCORPORATING ACTIONS TAKEN TO MANAGE)									
<p><u>QTR 4 Update 2015/16</u></p> <p>During quarter 4 it was decided that a central record of all safeguarding training delivered was not feasible. A solution to centralising access to training records will therefore be considered during quarter 1 with the aim of addressing this risk.</p> <p>No changes to the risk scores at this stage.</p> <p><u>QTR 1 Update 2016/17</u></p> <p>Baseline data is available. Need to test arrangements for data collection.</p> <p>Work is progressing in accordance with the agreed delivery plan but no change suggested to risk rating at this stage</p>									

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING RISK REGISTER									
CSRR REF	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	RISK DESCRIPTION	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES	Original Risk Rating			Current Risk Rating		
				I	L	RATING	I	L	RATING
4	Chris Lee & Giovanni Isingrini	If safeguarding concerns are not reported to an appropriate (central) service then the consistency in respect of these being assessed and managed could be compromised which could result in the safety of a child and/or an adult at risk being compromised.	Reportable major injuries to several people or death of an individual. Intervention in a key service. National adverse publicity / bad press.	4	3	12	4	3	12
QUARTERLY UPDATE (INCORPORATING ACTIONS TAKEN TO MANAGE)									
<p><u>QTR 4 Update 2015/16</u></p> <p>A central number has been agreed and put in place. This was included within the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy & Procedure and provided to all Service Managers during the awareness sessions delivered to date. The contact details are also provided on the Council's Intranet site.</p> <p>Actions to raise awareness to all staff are scheduled to commence during quarter 1 & 2 2016/17.</p> <p><u>QTR 1 Update 2016/17</u></p> <p>Actions are in place within the delivery plan to test awareness of staff and managers in respect of their Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities (this will include the knowledge of the central contact details). Following completion of this evaluation, the risk rating will be reviewed.</p>									

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

9TH MARCH 2017

**WALES AUDIT OFFICE - GOOD GOVERNANCE WHEN DETERMINING
SIGNIFICANT SERVICE CHANGES REPORT**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE
RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL,
COUNCILLOR A MORGAN**

Author: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive - 01443 424026

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the latest Wales Audit Office (“WAO”) report to be issued and note the action to be taken by the Council in response to the proposals for improvement raised.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report;
- 2.2 Consider whether the Council’s response to the WAO proposals for improvement are sufficient.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is important that WAO proposals for improvement are considered by Cabinet and appropriate action is taken in response to the matters raised.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of the Audit of the Council for the financial year 2016/17, Wales Audit Office has undertaken a review that has focused on the effectiveness of the Council’s governance arrangements for determining significant service changes. The WAO has taken the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy’s (CIPFA) revised framework for “Delivering good governance in local

government” as an appropriate standard and has provided the Council with a baseline from which to plan further improvement.

4.2 A copy of the WAO report is included in Appendix 1.

5. THE WAO PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND THE PROPOSED RESPONSE

5.1 The WAO report is a positive report and reflects the fact that the Council has robust financial, service change and performance management arrangements in place. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to improve these arrangements and the WAO has made three proposals for improvement, which are as follows:

- P1 – The Council set out at the point of decision on service change proposals how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored;
- P2 – The Council clarify and promote the arrangements for public participation in its overview and scrutiny process in order to encourage and promote public involvement;
- P3 – The Council publish its overview and scrutiny committees’ forward work programme(s) as stand-alone documents(s) on the Council website to increase openness and transparency.

5.2 Appendix 2 to this report sets out an action plan with timescales that responds to the proposals for improvement.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications.

Appendix 1

Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes

APPENDIX 2

COUNCIL ACTION PLAN TO RESPOND TO WAO PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Proposal for improvement	Council response	Timescale for action	Officer responsible
P1 – The Council set out at the point of decision on service change proposals how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored.	Agreed. This recommendation will be implemented in setting future revenue budgets.	As appropriate	Chief Executive
P2 – The Council clarify and promote the arrangements for public participation in its overview and scrutiny process in order to encourage and promote public involvement.	Agreed. The Council will consider the opportunities to engage the public in the scrutiny process, learning from best practice across the UK. A report on this recommendation will be considered at the Annual General Meeting when it is convened early in the 2017/18 Municipal Year.	June 2017	Head of Democratic Services
P3 – The Council publish its overview and scrutiny committees' forward work programme(s) as stand-alone documents(s) on the Council website to increase openness and transparency.	Agreed. For the Municipal Year 2017/18, the work programmes of the various scrutiny committees will be available on the Council's website as a stand-alone item.	September 2017	Head of Democratic Services



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – **Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

Audit year: 2016-17

Date issued: February 2017

Document reference: 121A2017

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

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The section 45 code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding

disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to the Wales Audit Office at info.officer@audit.wales.

The team who delivered the work comprised Tim Buckle, Alison Lewis and Non Jenkins under the direction of Jane Holownia.

The Council has effective governance arrangements for determining significant service changes and has demonstrated a commitment to further improving them.

Summary report

Summary	4
Proposals for improvement	5

Detailed report

The Council has effective governance arrangements for determining significant service changes and has demonstrated a commitment to further improving them	6
The Council has a clear vision and strategy for determining service changes linked to its strategic priorities	6
Governance and accountability arrangements for service change decision making are clear and well understood	7
Options appraisals are well developed and transparent	8
The Council has effective consultation arrangements for key service changes and is committed to improving its engagement with stakeholders	9
The Council is improving its corporate arrangements for monitoring the impact of service changes	10
The Council has made improvements to its decision making processes to reflect learning from earlier service changes	11

Summary

- 1 'Governance is about how public bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which public bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities'.¹
- 2 Good governance is essential for the effective stewardship of public money and the continued delivery of efficient and trusted public services. The current financial climate and reduced settlements for local government as well as rising demand for some services mean that all councils are likely to continue to need to make decisions regarding the future configuration and level of service delivery. It is appropriate that public bodies continuously seek to improve. Small, incremental changes to service delivery are made at a managerial and operational level as part of normal, operational decision-making. However, good governance supported by effective planning and rigorous processes is critical when determining significant service changes. Such decisions are often controversial, generate considerable local interest and can have significant impacts on the individuals and groups affected.
- 3 From April 2016, councils are required to comply with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and associated Statutory Guidance. The Statutory Guidance states that: 'Together, the seven well-being goals and five ways of working provided by the Act are designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'² This legislation emphasises the importance of effective governance in achieving wellbeing goals.
- 4 The focus of this review is on the effectiveness of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (the Council) governance arrangements for determining significant service changes. We define this as any significant change in delivering services and/or any significant change in how services are experienced by external service users. This could include, for example, significant changes to the way the service is delivered, the level of service provided, the availability of the service or the cost of the service.
- 5 Taking the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) revised framework for 'Delivering good governance in local government' as an appropriate standard, this review provides the Council with a baseline, from which to plan further improvement. In this assessment, undertaken during the period

¹ CIPFA/SOLACE, **Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2007**

² Welsh Government: **Shared Purpose: Shared Future, Statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

September to November 2016, to inform our assessment of the Council's overall arrangements for developing and determining service changes we looked at aspects of decision-making arrangements in relation to a range of significant service change proposals. The examples of service changes we looked at included:

- social care transformation programme
- library services
- day care nursery provision
- bus routes
- youth engagement and participation services

We did not look in detail at each of the individual service change decisions, but rather used them as examples to draw from and inform how the Council goes about making decisions in relation to service changes.

- 6 In the Council we undertook an earlier review of decision-making arrangements in relation to service change.³ This report provides an update on the progress made by the Council since our last review.
- 7 In this review we concluded that the Council has effective governance arrangements for determining significant service changes and has demonstrated a commitment to further improving them.

Proposals for improvement

Exhibit 1: Proposals for improvement

Proposals for improvement	
P1	That the Council set out at the point of decision on service change proposals how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored.
P2	That the Council clarify and promote the arrangements for public participation in its overview and scrutiny process in order to encourage and promote public involvement.
P3	That the Council publish its overview and scrutiny committees' forward work programme(s) as stand-alone document(s) on the Council website to increase openness and transparency.

³ Wales Audit Office: **Improvement Assessment 2015-16: Review of decision-making arrangements in relation to service change – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, May 2016**

The Council has effective governance arrangements for determining significant service changes and has demonstrated a commitment to further improving them

The Council has a clear vision and strategy for determining service changes linked to its strategic priorities

- 8 The Council has a clear framework for determining service change proposals linked to its strategic vision. The Council's vision is 'For the County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all.'⁴ The Council has been making service changes in response to budget pressures, and within the Corporate Plan the Council sets out its approach to 'meeting the challenge' associated with budget pressures by:
- providing essential services well;
 - helping people and communities to help themselves;
 - building a sustainable County Borough; and
 - living within our means.
- 9 The Council has involved stakeholders in the development of its vision for service change. The vision for service change is incorporated into the Council's Corporate Plan, which was consulted on as part of the Council's 2016-17 budget proposals consultation.
- 10 The Council differentiates between service change proposals and efficiencies. Service changes are defined as those likely to have a noticeable frontline service impact. Efficiencies are defined by the Council as 'cost reducing measures which will not have an impact on the level of services provided, that is, they will be unnoticeable to service users/customers'.⁵ In 2015-16 the Council made service changes that had a frontline service impact, However, for 2016-17 the Council's framework for meeting its budget strategy did not include 'service changes' under the Council's definition.
- 11 In addition to meeting its budget reduction targets the Council has also chosen to invest in areas targeted at the three priorities in its Corporate Plan. The Council's key strategic priorities are:
- economy – building a strong economy;

⁴ Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC: **The Way Ahead – The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020**

⁵ Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC: **Report to Cabinet, 10th November 2015 – Medium Term Service Planning – Service Change Proposals**

- people – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone; and
- place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

The Council has made policy changes to actively invest in areas which it feels support its priorities. For example, the Council changed its policy from shutting leisure centres to investing in them and making them sustainable by increasing income derived from the enhanced facilities.

- 12 The Council is developing its approach to service change in line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The senior leadership team of the Council is promoting a cultural change based on the organisation becoming more focused on: performance, prevention, being more customer centred, investing in the future and taking a longer-term view. An example of this approach is the policy being developed of basing social workers within hospitals to help prevent delays in patients being able to leave hospital.
- 13 The Council has undertaken a number of initiatives in relation to sustainable development. However, sustainable development is not embedded in the service change process. Sustainable development considerations do not form part of the options appraisal papers. The Council recognises that there are opportunities to better embed sustainability considerations in the service change process moving forward.

Governance and accountability arrangements for service change decision making are clear and well understood

- 14 Members and officers are clear about their roles and responsibilities around decision making on service changes. The Council has made changes to its procedures which have made processes more transparent. Under the new scheme of delegation, introduced in July 2016, all members are now notified when a Cabinet Member takes a delegated decision, this provides greater opportunity for timely scrutiny.
- 15 Service changes in frontline services in the Council are supported by specialist officers from finance, human resources and legal services. Officers from frontline services reported positively on the level of support they receive from these specialist officers through the service change decision making and implementation process.
- 16 Where required Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are completed for service changes, they are undertaken by a corporate support officer working in liaison with the operational service managers. One of the Council's lawyers will then ensure that the EIAs are reported correctly through the decision making process. There are opportunities to further strengthen the EIA process within the Council by:
- encouraging greater ownership/involvement in the development and use of the EIAs by the operational service managers;

- improving the availability of relevant data to inform the EIAs and to be clearer about specific impacts (the need to strengthen the data to support the EIA process is identified in the Council's Equalities Annual report as an issue);⁶ and
- reviewing the EIAs post service change to see if the impacts that were anticipated were successfully mitigated and/or whether there were any unintended impacts. This would help inform future EIAs.

Options appraisals are well developed and transparent

- 17 We looked at a number of examples of service changes as part of our review, and we found that a range of options, supported by detailed criteria, were considered. The Members we interviewed also felt that the information provided in the reports on options for service change was comprehensive.
- 18 The Council has improved its arrangements to enable the scrutiny and challenge of service change proposals. Following our earlier review in 2015-16, we made the following proposal for improvement, that 'The Council enhance the forward work programme for Cabinet by including details of the purpose and contents of reports, and making the programme accessible to facilitate opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny.'
- 19 The Council has addressed the proposal for improvement, and now publishes the Cabinet forward work programme, on a rolling basis, for the municipal year.⁷ The work programme is reported to Cabinet on a three monthly cycle to allow for regular updates. The work programme is set out in table form and includes information on: what the report is about, the proposed date to Cabinet, the responsible Cabinet Member/officer, whether the report is to be an open or exempt report and whether consultation is to be undertaken prior to a decision being made. To aid transparency, the work programme is also published on the main Cabinet pages on the Council website. The effect of this change on supporting the scrutiny and challenge of service change proposals is demonstrated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where Members are now asked to consider any items on the Cabinet work programme that they want to undergo pre-decision scrutiny.⁸
- 20 There are instances where items are considered and decided upon by Cabinet that have not featured in the Cabinet Forward Work Programme. The Council is working to minimise these instances.
- 21 The strengthening of the Council's arrangements for the scrutiny of proposals is also demonstrated in the budget engagement and consultation process. Following

⁶ Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC: **Annual Equality Report 2014-15**

⁷ Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC: **Report to Cabinet, 23rd June 2016 – Cabinet Work Programme 2016-17 Municipal Year**

⁸ Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC: **Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5th July 2016**

a request by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, the draft budget strategy was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny at the committee meeting on 27 January 2016. This enabled non-executive Members to examine proposals and help shape their development before Cabinet considered the full detail.

- 22 Pre-decision scrutiny is still evolving within the Council but there have been examples of the pre-decision scrutiny of service changes including the work relating to the leisure investment programme and the service change on home to school transport. Scrutiny committees are always involved as a consultee on service change proposals.

The Council has effective consultation arrangements for key service changes and is committed to improving its engagement with stakeholders

- 23 The Council put in place comprehensive consultation arrangements for the service change proposals. The consultation process and materials were agreed by the Council's Senior Leadership Team. The consultation materials provided clear information in an appropriate and understandable format. In addition to the use of the Cwm Taf consultation hub web pages, there was a comprehensive circulation of paper copy consultation materials (over 47,000 copies of the consultation booklet were distributed). The Council also produced a YouTube video to provide an easy to understand introduction to the consultation, showing how people could engage in it as well as providing details of the service change proposals themselves. The consultation was widely promoted in the press and via social media. The Council held 13 engagement sessions. Young persons' versions of the consultation booklet were also developed for use at youth forums and school council sessions, young people were also invited to a youth engagement event at the Council's offices. The questionnaire asked respondents not just for their views on the proposed changes but also what the impact of the service changes would be on them as services users or their family.
- 24 The Council provides sufficient opportunities for Cabinet Members to review the information received from stakeholders as part of the decision making process. In addition to including comprehensive information in the reports to Cabinet, Cabinet Members are also able to view all responses received prior to the relevant Cabinet meeting. The Council can demonstrate that consultation responses are taken into account as part of the decision making process. For example, in the decisions not to go ahead with proposed changes to supported bus routes and single staffed libraries.
- 25 The feedback on the service changes is made available on the Cwm Taf consultation hub website and in the relevant Cabinet report. The Council does not webcast its meetings but the Council tweets the link to the reports and then post a record of the decision for Cabinet and Council meetings. Frontline services also inform service users as part of the service change implementation phase eg direct

information sent/made available at delivery sites ie information about changes to library opening hours, information to young people about changes to the Youth Engagement and Participation Service.

- 26 As well as consulting on specific service change proposals, the Council has also been keen to consult with the public and other interested stakeholders on its general budget strategy and how services are delivered. The Council are looking to be more proactive in engaging with communities and have set up an 'RCT Together' programme to support this approach. The 'RCT Together' approach is looking to get communities involved in helping to meet the challenges around future service provision. Communities have been asked to identify services and assets that they might be interested in running. Once an expression of interest is made the Council will put a project team in place to work with the community/group to help support them to do this. The Council is committed to continuing to develop this approach.
- 27 There is a lack of visibility of the overview and scrutiny committees' forward work programmes and a lack of clarity around arrangements for public involvement in scrutiny. The forward work programme for overview and scrutiny committees currently only exists within the scrutiny meeting papers so is difficult to access by members of the public. The openness and transparency of scrutiny would be enhanced by the Council publishing the forward work programme(s) for overview and scrutiny as a stand-alone document on the website, in the same way as the Cabinet work programme is now published.

The Council is improving its corporate arrangements for monitoring the impact of service changes

- 28 Following our earlier review in 2015-16, we made the following proposal for improvement, 'The Council develop an approach to systematically capture the impact of service changes and use this intelligence to inform future decision making in relation to service change.' The Council subsequently decided that, 'In the future, all major service changes will be reported back to Cabinet and Scrutiny on a six monthly basis for the first year of the change.'⁹
- 29 Scrutiny has already begun to monitor the impact of the service changes and further reviews have been built into the forward work programme. The arrangement for monitoring impact could be strengthened further by the Council setting out, at the point of decision on service change proposals, how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored.
- 30 Monitoring of the achievement of projected financial savings arising from service changes takes place via the Council's budget monitoring arrangements. Our report on the Financial Resilience of the Council found that, 'The Council achieved its

⁹ Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC: **Report to Cabinet, 23rd June 2016 – Wales Audit Office Corporate Reports**

2015-16 savings plans in full. This achievement is in part due to the fact that the Council only builds budget savings into its base revenue budget once business cases have been developed, and the relevant details agreed. This approach provides the assurance that the saving will be achieved in-year.¹⁰

The Council has made improvements to its decision making processes to reflect learning from earlier service changes

- 31 The Council has strengthened its arrangements for service change by applying learning from previous service changes. The Council is also learning from the outcomes of judicial reviews in other councils and is using this to improve its processes further. The key learning from earlier service changes was the need to improve communication. This included:
- keeping everyone (both staff and the public) better informed about the service changes. For the second phase of service changes the Council has prioritised improved communication with the public as well as more robust plans for keeping staff affected by the service changes informed.
 - there has been better engagement with young people in the second round of service changes but the Council identifies that this is an area that it wants to enhance further.
 - the Council has recognised the importance of social media. The Council has been more focused on using social media to support engagement and understanding around service change with the public.
- 32 The Council has responded positively to the findings of the earlier Wales Audit Office report into the decision making arrangements in relation to service change and has taken action to address the proposals for improvement.

¹⁰ Wales Audit Office: **Financial Resilience: Savings Planning – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, November 2016**

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