RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18TH JANUARY 2017

COUNCIL CORPORATE AND SERVICE SELF ASSESSMENTS

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE 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 for Members to consider the corporate and service self assessments of the Council for 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1 Review the corporate self assessment and consider whether it is an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council and its services.

2.2 Require the Chief Executive to make any appropriate adjustments and to present this report to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee for their review at the next possible meeting.

2.3 Request that the areas for improvement identified in the corporate and service self assessment are incorporated into the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2017/18, which is audited by the Wales Audit Office.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 All organisations, whatever their size, the product or service they offer, public or private sector, need to know themselves well, identify their agenda for improvement, promote innovation and sector-leading

practice and improve the quality of their products and services to meet the changing needs and demands of their customers or service users.

4.2 The basis of this process is called self evaluation or self assessment. Crucially, in the public sector, where the self assessment process focuses on impact and outcomes of the services being delivered, it leads to improvements in the experiences and the outcomes for the service user, whether that is, for example, educational outcomes of learners or enabling more older people to live independently in their own homes.

4.3 Self assessment is a process, not a one-off event. It is the first, essential step in a cyclical process of bringing about change and improvement. It is based on professional reflection, challenge and support among practitioners and professionals. Effective self assessment involves taking wide-ranging decisions about actions which result in clear benefits for all service users. Most of all, it is about striving for excellence within the resources available.

4.4 At the heart of self assessment are three questions:

- **How well are we doing?**
- **How do we know?**
- **How can we improve things further?**

4.5 While every aspect of the Council's provision is a legitimate focus for self assessment, the emphasis should always be on outcomes, i.e. on an evaluation of the impact of each aspect of service provision on the outcomes for the customer/resident/user etc.

4.6 The process of self assessment should be **continuous** and an embedded part of the Council's working life. Self assessment should be based on a wide range of information about strengths and areas for improvement which is collected throughout the year (though it will often be appropriate to conduct some aspects of self assessment at longer intervals, and not necessarily each year). The Council and its partners should use information from self assessment to plan for improvements, to undertake improvement work and to ensure a regular cyclical process of monitoring and evaluation that leads to further improvement.

The diagram below shows the cyclical nature of effective self assessment:

4.7 This is the second year the self assessment process has been undertaken. Over the three month period to Christmas 2016, Cabinet Members, officers and staff from across the Council have contributed to the corporate and service self assessments. There is no single formula or approach for self assessment. The services we provide can vary from simple stand alone provision to complex processes, frequently requiring highly effective partnership and collaborative working arrangements, with the Council at the core. However, a standard model of service self assessment has been adopted building on the model developed last year. A copy of the model adopted is in Appendix A.

4.8 The corporate self assessment considers the performance of the corporate body of the Council. The corporate self assessment was based on the Wales Audit Office questions that are posed to local authorities as part of the WAO's Corporate Assessment audits. At the centre of the corporate self assessment undertaken in 2016 are the following questions:

1. Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?
2. Does the authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?

3. Do the authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?
4. Is the authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?
5. Are the authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?
6. Is the authority effectively managing its improvement programme?

4.9 The completed Council corporate self assessment, is set out in Appendix B.

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

4.11 The outcome of the service self assessment is that each service area has to:

- Set out 5 key priority actions it will deliver in 2017/18;
- Set out a small number of performance measures and targets from which Members and officers can assess the performance of the service.

4.12 This information will form the basis of a Delivery Plan for each service for 2017/18 and which will form the basis of the WPI Plans reported to Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees each quarter. The actions arising from the corporate self assessment process will not be included in a separate action plan but are incorporated within the Delivery Plans of individual services.

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

5.1 The performance of the Council has improved consistently over the past three years, and for 2015/16 the Council was the most improved council in Wales. This improvement has been evidenced in particular in education, waste management, social services and highways services. Good progress has also been made in reducing the number of performance measures in the lower two quartiles when compared with other Welsh councils, however further progress is required on a number of performance measures that remain in the bottom quartile.

5.2 The Council benefits from strong and focused leadership from the Leader and Cabinet. The Corporate Plan is now in place after being

subject to pre-scrutiny by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee and resident and staff consultation.

5.4 Political leadership of the Council has been stable for a number of years, and this has led to consistency in managing the necessary reductions in public sector funding, maintaining a strong financial base and a focus of improvement in service delivery. In its recent Annual Improvement Report, the Wales Audit Office reported that *"With a strong corporate focus upon the effective use of its resources, supported by strengthened service planning and governance arrangements, the Council is well placed to overcome some significant future challenges"*.

5.5 The Council has recognised the weaknesses, previously raised by the Wales Audit Office, in the political scrutiny arrangements, and in May 2015, reorganised the committee structure and its modus operandi to increase the level of scrutiny, accountability and challenge within and across portfolios and achieve an effective focus on performance improvement. The most recent WAO Annual Improvement Report states that the *"Council is actively reviewing the effectiveness of its arrangements for managing improvement and making positive changes including increased challenge at a political and senior management level, and developing the role of scrutiny. We consider that the role of scrutiny in this process needs to embed further in order to help drive improvement and demonstrate impact."*

5.6 Building on the new approach to community engagement by the Leader and Cabinet last year, the Council has sought to further improve the way in which it engages with the public and its staff. A range of open access consultation events and service specific consultations have been held during 2016, alongside the continued development of the use of social media.

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

5.8 During the year, the review of the Council's earmarked reserves and its proactive approach to generating efficiency savings early in the financial year has enabled the Council to invest over £20 million in key infrastructure projects, focused on "investing for the future". The Council has a three year capital programme exceeding £200m and can demonstrate that spend and investment follows policy and corporate prioritisation, for example in relation to Education (21st Century

Schools), Wellbeing, Waste Management, Highways and Children's services.

5.9 The Council has strengthened its performance management framework during the year and sought to ensure that it is consistently applied. Steps have been taken to improve target setting, in particular the use of aspiring targets to drive improvements in performance data; the quality of service and action planning through new delivery plans; and the creation, monitoring and evaluation of individual staff development plans, currently being piloted for officers graded GR15 and above.

5.10 The recruitment, development and management of our staff has also been effective over the past few years, managing a reducing workforce yet still investing in the development of staff and the appointment of graduates and apprentices to the Council. Nearly 50 graduates and apprentices were appointed in 2016, creating excellent job and training opportunities across a range of key service areas. Progress has been made during the year to improve the productivity of the Council's workforce through improved sickness absence management, however the level of sickness absence is still too high.

5.11 The Council has made good progress in reducing office accommodation as part of its Asset Management Plan. Further opportunities to maximise occupancy of existing buildings are being explored and a number of services across the Council have adopted agile working approaches reducing accommodation requirements of this group of staff and improving their productivity. There are plans in place to expand this across the Council services.

5.12 A priority in 2016 has been to digitalise as many as possible of the Council's services to provide the customer experience now expected by the public. A £500,000 investment has been made to improve the ICT infrastructure, improving processes and the website, and as a result there has been a significant increase in the take up of Council services on-line, having a positive impact on service improvement and reducing overhead costs.

5.13 Regeneration is a priority for the Council, and through effective working with Welsh Government, a number of schemes that, including the Taff Vale Development, impact on the Greater Pontypridd area are being developed and implemented. This is coupled with the recent investment in a number of major highways and rail schemes, funded by the Council and Welsh Government, which will have a significant impact on the town centres of Porth, Treorchy, Mountain Ash and Llantrisant.

5.14 The commitment of the Welsh and UK Governments to a £1.229bn City Deal for the Cardiff Capital Region in March 2016, underwritten by the

10 South East Wales councils creates the opportunity for the Council to capitalise on the planned infrastructure improvements. The Council is: a key stakeholder in the City Deal; leading on the transportation infrastructure aspect of the Deal; and is committed to maximising the benefits of this investment for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5.15   The Council shows good community leadership in its driving of and investment in, the newly created Cwm Taf Public Service Board. The Council is working effectively with its partners to introduce the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales). It has an open culture with good working relationships between councillors, officers and partners.

5.16   The Council is also using partnerships to help deliver its own strategic plans. Priorities are based on a sound understanding of local needs, which have been developed with the help of effective research and consultation exercises. Shared priorities, in particular, are benefiting from closer partnership working, for example, in the areas of community safety and health. A good example is the new early intervention service in the two A&E hospitals with social workers working alongside medical staff in the initial assessment of possible A&E admissions and being based in the hospitals focused on ensuring an early but safe discharge from hospital.

5.17   This is a positive initiative, however, there are still other opportunities to improve the way we interact with our partners such as Mental Health Services for children and adult. It is important that the Council continues to prioritise these issues and takes the lead on delivering the necessary change/improvement as part of the Public Service Board.

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

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

6   HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THINGS FURTHER?

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

- Through the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, set out how the PSB will work together to deliver better outcomes for the people in Cwm Taf and improve the joint planning and delivery arrangements;

- Continue to focus attention on areas where the Council's performance, when compared to other councils in Wales, is amongst the worst, e.g. delayed discharges of care and numbers of children looked after.
- Continue to gather and understand the views, needs and aspirations of residents to provide inform and support decision making at all levels of the Council;
- Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to further support service delivery and improvement;
- Continue to review the governance arrangements to ensure they are supporting improved challenge, support, scrutiny and pre-scrutiny across the Council;
- Continue to develop the use of technology, such as Modern Gov software and appropriate hardware to enable all elected Members to more effectively manage and scrutinise the Council's business after the local government elections in May 2017;
- Update the HR Strategy so that it brings together the range of organisational development and people management practices to help address the workforce challenges faced by the Council and its services over the next few years;
- Continue to improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management;
- Introduce and implement a new Digital Strategy in 2017 that includes a supporting Information & Data Management Plan;
- Continue to challenge and review the collaborative arrangements to ensure that they are fit for purpose and have the capacity to deliver;
- Further strengthen the performance management arrangements in order that they increase accountability for performance and continue to improve the scrutiny and challenge processes.

7   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

8   CONSULTATION

8.1   One of the key areas of challenge in the corporate and service self assessment has been to seek residents/customers/service users views on the services provided. During 2016 the Council and its services have sought residents/customers/service users feedback on the services we provide. This information is being used by individual

services to inform how they plan and deliver services. This continues to be an area for improvement and will be developed further in 2017.

9   FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

10   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1   There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

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

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

12   CONCLUSION

12.1   The Council has undertaken its second annual corporate and service self assessment of its services to better inform its improvement planning arrangements to ensure it delivers its services efficiently and effectively. Already we have seen services use this information to inform and improve the planning and delivery of key services. This improvement is reflected in many of the performance measures.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers:

None

Contact Officer

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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18TH JANUARY 2017

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR A MORGAN

Item: **COUNCIL CORPORATE AND SERVICE SELF ASSESSMENTS**

Officer to contact: Chris Bradshaw 01443 424026

Service Self Evaluation 2016
to inform
2017/18 Business Planning

Service	
Head of Service	
Service Director sign off & date	
Group Director sign off & date	
Portfolio Holder sign off & date	

Contents

Background – Brief explanation of the structure and function of the service		
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1.2	**How well do we understand and meet the needs of our residents?**	This question is about consultation, involvement & communication with residents
1.3	**How well do we collaborate with others?**	This question is about working with internal services, partnerships & community groups
1.4	**How inclusive, equal and fair is our service provision?**	This question is about equalities
1.5	**How good is our service provision through the Welsh language?**	This question is about Welsh Language provision and includes reference to Welsh Language Standards
Section 2 – To what extent is Leadership and Management supporting service delivery and improving outcomes for the community?		
2.1	**How clear is our strategic direction and what is the impact of Leadership on the service?**	This question is about strategic direction, service planning, leadership & management
2.2	**How does the work of elected Members impact on the service?**	This question is about engagement and involvement of Elected members with the service
2.3	**How well is the service developing its staff to meet the needs of the Council and Community?**	This question is about people management and workforce planning *Responses to this section will be informed by or will inform challenge and support meetings with HR in respect of People Management and Workforce Planning issues.*
2.4	**How well does the service manage resources and provide value for money?**	This question is about efficiency & effective resource management, including finance, procurement, accommodation, digitalisation, agile working
2.5	**How 'future proof' is the service?**	This question is about innovation and change, long term thinking and sustainability
Section 3 - What needs to improve?		
3.1	**Overall summary: What needs to improve & next steps**	This section should briefly summarise the main findings in sections 1 & 2 – where the service is performing well and where can it improve
3.2	**Service Key Priorities for 2017/18**	This section identifies the key priorities for the service in 2017/18, which will be the priorities in your Delivery plan.
3.3	**Key measures that will help to accurately measure performance in this service**	This section identifies the existing key performance measures which will be reported in your Delivery plan
3.4	**3.4 Additional Data / information requirements to be developed to accurately measure the performance in this service**	This section is about additional data requirements that need to be developed.
Appendix 1 – Corporate Safeguarding Requirements		
This information is required to demonstrate service compliance with the Corporate Safeguarding arrangements which will in turn inform the Director of Social Services annual report		

Background - Please provide a brief, easy to read explanation of the structure and function of the service area that would make sense to a resident of Rhondda Cynon Taf
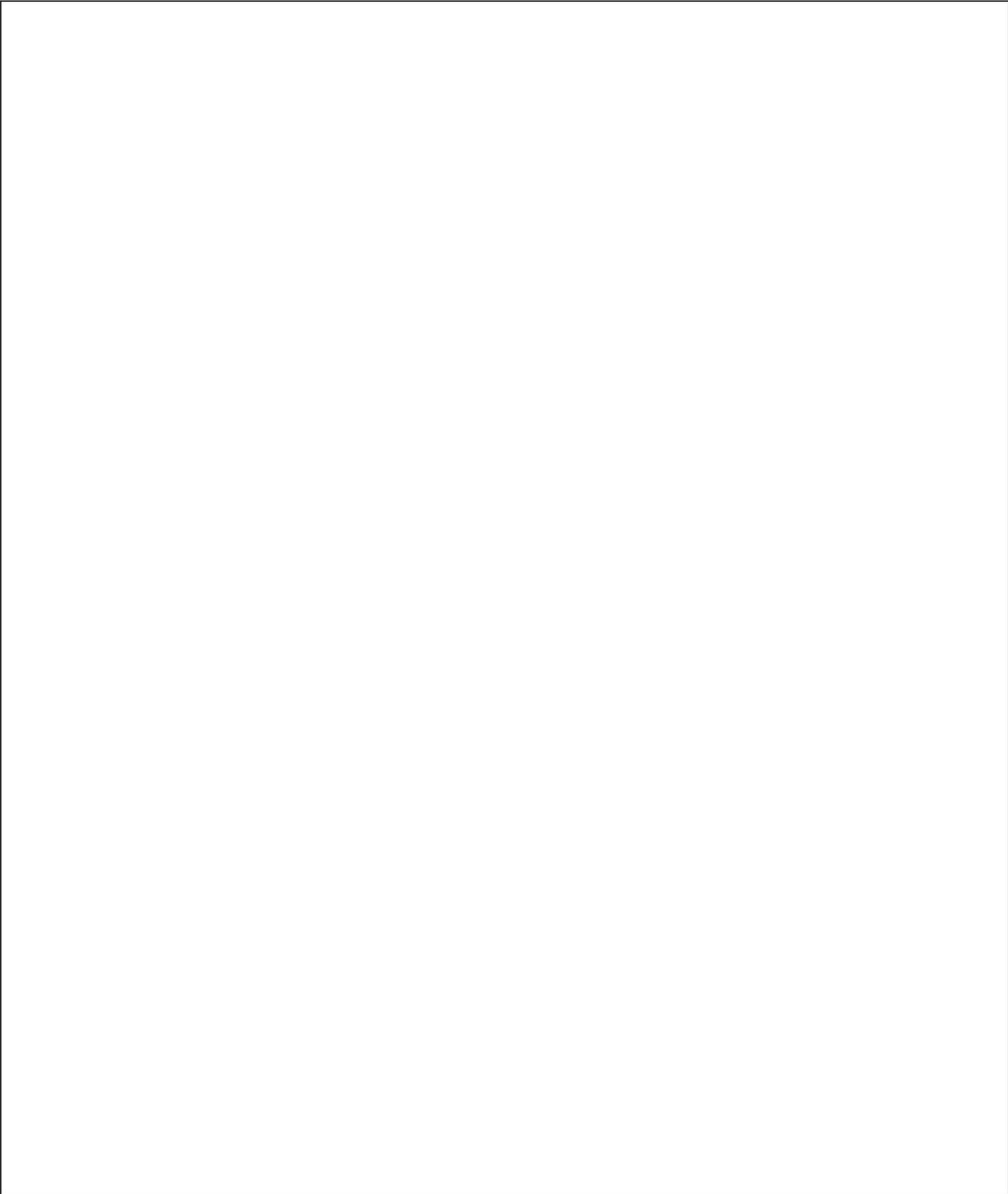
Section 1 – How well is the service contributing to and delivering outcomes for the community?

1.1: How good is our service and how do we compare to other Councils?	
This question covers performance, service delivery, risk management & data	
The service should indicate: a) how well services are currently delivered. b) how it is currently performing, where is it doing well and not so well. c) to what extent it delivers on local and national priorities. d) what performance trends show over a range of measures and time and how they compare with other Welsh Councils e.g. quartile and average. e) which targets for 2015/16 have been met/not met and if the reasons why are known. f) if it is collecting the right data/PIs to inform decision making. g) if processes are in place to ensure data is sufficiently robust. h) how its work complies with any statutory requirements. i) how well it identifies and manages risk. j) the extent to which any recommendations arising from regulatory reviews or inspections have been addressed, including reports to audit & overview and scrutiny committees. k) what progress has been made since the last service self evaluation.	**Potential Sources of evidence** Performance indicators Benchmark data Priority and Improvement plans Annual Performance reports Internal / external audit & regulatory reports
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

1.2: How well do we understand and meet the needs of our residents?	
This question covers consultation, involvement & communication with residents	
The service should indicate:	**Potential Sources of evidence**
a) how it provides clear information about the services, in particular the effect of changes in provision. Do residents know what services are available and how to access them?	Completed questionnaires, user satisfaction or resident surveys
b) how it knows if residents and clients are satisfied with the service e.g. type, quality, speed of provision.	Focus groups of service users/citizens' panel
c) how it knows if it is meeting residents' needs effectively.	Feedback from Council events
d) how it uses views and experience of residents/clients, both users and non users, to shape services.	Corporate Feedback scheme Customer Care
e) if it involves residents/clients in the development of future service delivery. Does it know what services residents/clients need and want, and which aspects they value most.	Availability of independent advice, support and/or advocacy to service users
f) if it engages people through appropriate channels taking into account their preferences e.g. digitally, face to face.	Staff training programmes related to supporting service users and the community
g) if it consults/involves the whole community including hard to reach groups.	
h) if it utilises all available information sources when reviewing service provision e.g. joint consultation, customer feedback scheme, Council wide consultation.	Feedback from service users on service change proposal/impact
i) how it knows if it is meeting residents needs effectively.	
j) if it communicates the results of consultation and involvement and their outcomes with residents.	Consultation strategy
k) what progress has been made since the last service self evaluation.	
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

1.3: How well do we collaborate with others?	
This question covers working with internal services, partnerships & community groups	
The service should indicate:	**Sources of potential evidence**
a) if it works with other RCT services, external organisations and/or community groups to achieve shared goals, and how effective this is. b) if it is clear what it is trying to achieve in any partnership or joint working arrangements. Are the aims and/or scope clearly set out? c) if its work is well integrated with other organisations and groups working towards similar goals. Is there overlap or duplication? Is consideration given to conflicting priorities? d) if appropriate commissioning, governance, financial and monitoring arrangements are in place. Do they need to meet external requirements? e) if it has enabled communities to develop self-help and social enterprise initiatives. f) if/to what extent it can evidence partnership arrangements are leading to/delivering improved outcomes for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. g) if an exit strategy in place for any joint arrangements. h) any opportunities and barriers to working with other internal services. i) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation.	Community Needs Assessment The results of collaborations with others Partnership with third or private sector Trend analysis of partnership performance data over time Annual Performance reports Community Groups established inc *RCT Together*
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

1.4 How inclusive, equal and fair is our service provision? This question covers equalities	
The service should indicate: a) to what extent it can evidence it offers equal access to services for all the community. b) whether it is confident that it is reaching all sections of the community, particularly groups that are traditionally hard to reach. c) how well it ensures that the physical environment is appropriate for customers/service users. d) if residents are able to get to service locations and if opening hours are suitable and visible. e) if there have been any legal challenges to service provision regarding equal access. f) how effective systems are for recording, analysing and addressing under representation of groups of users. g) how it monitors and effectively addresses any issues, complaints or any instances of bullying or harassment in respect of service delivery, including specific instance of discrimination. h) if appropriate equality training is provided for staff. i) the extent to which staff skills/characteristics are representative of community demographics where relevant e.g. gender of carers, other language speakers, awareness of specific cultural issues. j) what equality impact assessments have been undertaken for any service change and who was consulted. k) if/how the service is promoted as being specifically inclusive of LGBT users. l) any specific equality or diversity targets in the service Delivery Plan. m) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation.	**Sources of potential evidence** Data available from equalities monitoring, Equalities strategy and polices in place inc Council's Strategic Equality Plan, Survey results Equalities monitoring for recruitment and employment Information on the accessibility of Council services Complaints and satisfaction levels and how they are dealt with Equalities Impact assessments
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

1.5 How good is our service provision through the Welsh Language?

This question is about Welsh language provision

Please see http://inform/en/supportservices/translationandwelshservices/translation.aspx for more detailed guidance on Welsh Language obligations

The service should indicate:	Sources of potential evidence
a) how well it provides services through the Welsh language. To what extent does it comply with the new Welsh Language Standards and how gaps are being addressed b) if services are offered in Welsh as well as English, so that Welsh is treated no less favourably, including digital and social media channels c) if there have been any public complaints and/or formal Commissioner investigations regarding provision of services/information in Welsh d) how it monitors and effectively address any issues or complaints that arise e) how effective systems are for recording and analysing Welsh Language usage and service requests f) if it considers positive or negative effects on Welsh language service delivery when introducing or revising policies g) how both current and new staff are advised of Welsh language requirements e.g. via induction/. briefings. h) if appropriate targets and effective recruitment and training and development is in place to ensure staff have language skills at a level suitable for their role, including spoken and/or written Welsh. i) how many staff have the confidence and fluency to deliver services through the medium of Welsh. j) if/how it has begun to actively offer/promote services in Welsh and encourage and facilitate the use of Welsh in the workplace. k) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation.	Data available from equalities monitoring, Equalities strategy and polices in place inc Council's Strategic Equality Plan, Survey results Equalities monitoring for recruitment and employment Information on the accessibility of Council services Complaints and satisfaction levels and how they are dealt with Equalities Impact assessments
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

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

2.1 How clear is our strategic direction and what is the impact of Leadership on the service? This question covers strategic direction, service planning & leadership	
The service should indicate: a) if it is clear how it contributes to local and national priorities and if these are included in delivery/service plans e.g. Corporate Plan, Social Services & Wellbeing Act. b) if it has clear priorities that are focused on meeting customers'/residents'/service users' needs. Are they being implemented and monitored in a timely way? c) what steps have been taken to ensure that staff recognise and understand the service priorities. d) if staff are involved in the development of service priorities. e) if it is supported to achieve its priorities through effective leadership. f) to what extent it can evidence it has a culture which promotes performance and accountability and delivers continuous improvement. g) if it sets challenging targets with clear accountability. h) if/how it uses data effectively to monitor performance. i) if it reviews service planning with partners and community organisations to ensure no duplication/integrated services j) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation	**Sources of potential evidence** Outcomes from partnership working Delivery plan Quarterly monitoring Meeting minutes and actions Joint working structures, minutes, outcomes
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

2.2 How does the work of elected Members impact on the service?	
This question covers engagement and involvement of Elected members with the service	
The service should indicate:	**Sources of potential evidence**
a) how well elected Members are kept informed about issues that are facing the service. b) what information Elected Members receive that enables them to hold the service to account for performance c) if it is sufficiently directed and challenged by elected Members through Cabinet and Scrutiny. d) how staff are made aware of Cabinet/Scrutiny work programmes. e) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation.	Cabinet/Scrutiny Committee Reports Member Working Groups Briefing notes Member Training 'Call ins'
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

2.3 How well is the service developing its staff to meet the needs of the Council and Community? This question covers people management and workforce planning *Responses to this section will be informed by or will inform challenge and support meetings with HR in respect of People Management and Workforce Planning issues.*	
The service should indicate if/how: a) staff are able contribute to the development of Delivery and Team plans. b) Delivery and Team plans are made available to and understood by staff. c) staff have individual improvement plans in place that support the delivery of service priorities. d) staff are appropriately trained/qualified in order to meet current and future service requirements. e) staff are supported in their continuous development. f) staff performance is managed, i.e. helping them improve or further develop or addressing poor performance. g) personal development reviews are up to date. Do they clearly identify and prioritise whole authority/whole service training and development needs? h) staff are included in service development and decision making. i) succession planning/workforce development planning is in place. j) effective is recruitment. k) sickness/turnover levels are monitored and managed. l) current management/teams/structures are appropriate and effective. m) well is information communicated within the service. How and how often do senior managers engage with staff? n) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation.	**Sources of potential evidence** Staff PDRs/action plans Workforce development plan Team meeting minutes 121 Performance reports Supervision Staff surveys Development Plans Training Needs Analysis Sickness absence / turnover data & monitoring
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

2.4 How well does the service manage resources and provide value for money?	
This question covers efficiency & effective resource management, including finance, procurement, accommodation, digitalisation, agile working	
The service should indicate if/how:	**Sources of potential evidence**
a) resources are allocated to reflect agreed priorities. How are spending decisions made. b) the costs of existing service delivery are known and reviewed to ensure they are cost effective. c) there is any comparison with service spend and quality with other similar Councils. d) systematic and accurate budgeting arrangements are in place. e) effectively income is generated, including funding other than the Welsh Government. f) services and goods are procured/commissioned to ensure value for money. g) it is making best use of accommodation and equipment. h) it has utilised technology to improve efficiency e.g. agile working, digitalisation. i) well used partnership and collaborative arrangements are to make the most efficient and economic use of resources e.g. joint commissioning, joint procurement, shared service delivery. j) resources are managed sustainably e.g. diverting resources to prevention initiatives, invest to save, development of social enterprise initiatives. k) what progress has been made since the previous service self evaluation.	Outcome of Wales Audit Office (WAO) Studies Additional funding being secured to undertake planned initiatives Delivery plans Project action plans and evaluations Service Asset Management Plans Cost/Benefit analysis Budget monitoring Digitalisation Plans Agile Working Plans
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

How future proof is the service?	
This question covers innovation and change, long term thinking, sustainability and needs assessment	
The service should indicate if/how:	**Sources of potential evidence**
a) it considers the long term effects of its actions in service planning and delivery. b) long term effects are balanced with the current needs of residents/clients. c) it is planning to adapt to future risks and opportunities e.g. ageing population, climate changes, technological advances, political change. d) it is changing to become more proactive to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse. e) it considers environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability during service redesign. f) it has fully evaluated the impact of any service changes on the community and effectively mitigated any negative or unintended consequences of changes. g) it innovates and take calculated risks to improve service delivery e.g. collaborative working. h) it uses the information it has available e.g. data, inspection, consultation and other feedback to challenge what it does. i) it utilises and applies best practice, including outside Wales/local authorities where relevant.	Residents feedback External inspection and or evaluation Population/ Needs Assessments Population Estimates Equality Impact Assessments Research & Policy Documents Information from external audit/ inspection/ improvement studies
Overall judgment:	
Evaluation	**Evidence**

Section 3 Overall Summary: What needs to improve & next steps

3.1 Overall Summary This section should briefly summarise the main findings in sections 1 & 2 – where is the service performing well and where can it improve?

3.2 Service Key Priorities for 2017/18 As a result of the findings above, this section should set out the key priorities for the service in 2017/18. These will be the priorities in your Delivery plan.

3.3 Key measures that will help to accurately measure performance in this service

Identify a small set of <u>existing key measures with available data</u> which will be used to monitor the performance of your service in 2017/18. These measures will form part of your delivery plan. They may also be used in Corporate reporting and subject to data assurance processes.

3.4 Additional Data / information requirements to be developed to accurately measure the performance in this service

Do the above measures provide an accurate picture of service performance against key priorities? Outline below where there are data gaps and what measures require development. Also include any qualitative information currently not available to the service e.g. consultation, customer feedback.

Appendix 1

Service - ....
Service Checklist in respect of
Corporate Safeguarding requirements
This information is required to demonstrate service compliance with the Corporate
Safeguarding arrangements which will in turn inform the
Director of Social Services' annual report

	Points to be addressed	Service Progress
Training and awareness	Have all of your staff undertaken Safeguarding awareness/training relevant to the requirements of their post? How many staff have not been trained? Are there additional service training needs in respect of Safeguarding e.g. in respect of Safer Recruitment practices? • Recruitment/Vetting of Staff • DBS checks • Whistle blowing • Allegations against staff (CTSCB/CTSAB) How is this being managed?	
Policies, reporting and monitoring	Is the Service Manager satisfied that all staff are aware of their reporting responsibilities under the Corporate Safeguarding Policy agreed by Cabinet on 17 March 2016 Does the service require a separate or additional policy/procedure? Please confirm that any existing separate or additional policies/procedures have been approved by the Corporate Safeguarding Board.	
Procurement	Are the managers responsible for procuring Services aware of the requirements of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy.	

Rhondda Cynon Taf – Draft Corporate Assessment - December 2016

1. Is the Authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Set a clear strategic direction and Council vision, with a reduced number of priorities, a set of challenging targets that compare favourably with the best in Wales, through consultation with the general public and Council staff • Simplify the way in which financial and performance management information is organised, presented and analysed so that they are easier to read, understand, challenge and scrutinise to drive service improvement

Response to Key Priorities 2015

With its new [Corporate Plan, 'The Way Ahead](#), the Council has set a clear strategic direction and vision with a reduced number of priorities and a set of challenging targets that compare favourably with the rest of Wales. These targets have been the subject of consultation with residents and staff as part of the consultation on the Corporate Plan and its priorities. The Corporate Plan has also helped to inform the Council's spending decisions in respect of its spending priorities, as set out in the report to [Council on 10 March 2016](#).

The quarterly performance reports have been simplified with the data/information. The data information it contains is now presented in a way that is easier to read, understand, challenge and scrutinise and ultimately drive improvement. This change is format has also supported the pilot 'Modern Gov' arrangements for paper free meetings. Feedback on the revised format from elected Members to date has been positive and there are plans in place to extend this after the elections in 2017.

1.1 Is the Authority helping to deliver better outcomes for people who live in the area?	The links between the Council's current strategic plan (Single Integrated Plan), its delivery and priority plans and strategic risks are clearly visible in the Council's current key performance documents. There is evidence of improved outcomes in many areas. Progress has been made in improving engagement with residents. The survey and road shows together with the wide ranging engagement undertaken for the well-being and population assessments will inform the ambition and priorities of the Council.
	In 2013, the RCT Local Service Board (LSB) set out a clear vision to be delivered in partnership, i.e. *People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous.* The broad outcomes that the community can expect to see and the underpinning priorities for partnership improvement are set out in a Single Integrated Plan (SIP) for Rhondda Cynon Taf 'Delivering Change'. This plan will be in place until April 2018, when a new 'Well-being Plan' for Rhondda Cynon Taf will be published by the newly established Cwm Taf Public Services Board as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015).
	'Delivering Change' currently sets out what the partnership will do and how people will know if the work of the partnership is making a difference. The Council's Improvement Priorities are focused on delivering these outcomes. The Council's improvement priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and previous iterations, reflects the broad outcomes and the extent to which the Council is contributing to them. The Council's current Delivery and Priority Plans are similarly structured. However, we could do more to collate this information from services that are not directly linked to the SIP

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| | outcomes to demonstrate our contribution. Within the Council's partner organisations, such as Police and the Health Board, both strategic corporate plans have references to the Single Integrated Plans within their boundaries. This will be more fully addressed as part of the arrangements in respect of the WFG Act.

 The latest report setting out progress of 'Delivering Change' was prepared in 2016 www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan and set out progress of partnership working to achieve the outcomes of the SIP, as well as evaluate what difference the SIP had made to partnership working.

 Many of the measures used in the SIP to evidence Council's part in progressing the priorities in 2015/16 have shown improvement e.g. more people feel safe at home after dark; teenage conceptions and low birth weight babies have decreased over recent years and the percentage of young people achieving good grades at GCSE has increased to its best performance that RCT has seen. Although there is still work to do when benchmarking against other areas in Wales, we need to understand that some of the measures need to be contextualised in order for them to be compared across the 22 local authorities. For example, when the education indicators for KS 3 & 4 are contextualised based on socio-economic factors, the Council's performance has exceeded the Welsh Government benchmarks, set for each council, for the past three years, one of only two councils in Wales to do so.
 The findings outlined in the Annual Report prompted a change to partnership governance structures in the region during 2015/16, outlined in the SIP Annual Review 2014-16 www.rctcbc.gov.uk/singleplan and LSB Newsletters, until the LSB was stood down in March 2016. A review of strategic partnerships was begun across the areas of community safety, public health and protection; and mental health, led by South Wales Police and assisted by all partner organisations in Cwm Taf. This has developed already mature relationships with the University Health Board and Merthyr Tydfil and grown partnerships with South Wales Police, Public Health, Natural Resources Wales and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. As a result, partnerships were rationalised and regionalised across the thematic areas of public protection, safeguarding, mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse to make the best use of resources and provide opportunities to join up work more effectively.

 Both the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act encourage collaboration and put the citizen at the centre of delivering public services. The Cwm Taf Social Services and Well-being Partnership Board have already agreed to statements of intent, relating to older people, carers and people with learning disabilities; setting out how the partner organisations will work together to deliver better outcomes for |

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	people in the region. Further statements and plans will follow in 2017/18. The inaugural meeting of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board took place in May 2016. The Board has agreed an interim programme of work being taken forward by a sub-group, the Strategic Partnership Board. This programme includes a series of work streams that seek to put in place the mechanisms and support the culture for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Acts. The work streams include establishing a way of measuring progress against collective outcomes. There continue to be a number of partnerships not directly associated with delivering the Single Integrated Plan but all make a specific contribution to the priorities of the SIP e.g. the 'RCT Together' approach, which is delivered through a Voluntary Sector Liaison Steering Group, and some of the regional or national footprints for partnership working, such as Wales Purchasing Consortium meetings and South East Wales Directors of Economic Regeneration. However, officers attending these meetings have a general knowledge of the Single Integrated Plan and its priorities
1.2 Is the Authority delivering better results for service users?	The Council has made positive progress in the vast majority of performance measures in 2015/16. This has been achieved despite the reductions in funding we have experienced and the changes we have had to make to the way we deliver some services. The Data Unit's most recent performance bulletin shows that whilst there are opportunities for further improvement in some performance measures, Rhondda Cynon Taf is the most improved Council in Wales. As part of the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report, we have prepared a more detailed analysis of all comparable data measures and trends over time which shows Measure of success where the Council is delivering better results and are amongst the best in Wales include • Visiting children in our care, in line with regulations • Adult protection referrals where risk has been managed • The cleanliness of our highway that have been inspected

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	An example of the impact of increased focus and scrutiny of performance is '*the % of carers of adults who were offered an assessment of their need in their own right during the year'*. As a result of continuing poor performance where we were the worst in Wales for two consecutive years, the service was set an improvement target by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 October 2015. In response to this increased focus, 2015/16 performance is now amongst the best in Wales. Measures where we are improving our performance over time and remain Council priorities include • The high numbers of our residents that we support in care homes – we were the worst in Wales • The number of young people leaving our care who we are in contact with at age 19 In the first 6 months of this reporting year, our performance against the measures we set to monitor our Corporate Plan has been positive, particularly given the level of ambition in many of the targets has increased. Of the 32 measures reported against a target in Q2 • 59% met the target, 19 measures. • 16% were within 5%, 5 measures • 25% missed target by more than 5%, 8 measures. The areas that continue to be prioritised for improvement include delayed transfers of care, numbers of children looked after, re-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register and the rise in exclusions in the primary school sector**.** Of the PIs that we are required to collect and report nationally via the PAM return, in Q2 2016/17, we can compare 19 PIs to the most recent all Wales average 2015/16. Against these 19 measures, we are performing above the Wales average for 10 of the measures and below the Wales average in 8 of the measures. We are performing at the same level as the Wales average in the remaining measure. We have also missed our locally set targets against 5 of the measures where we are currently performing below the all Wales Average.

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	The strengthened challenge and support of service delivery and target setting introduced in 2015 is continuing i.e. • directly by the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team in a series of scheduled presentations as part of the SLT agenda • the Chief Executive and Deputy Leader's Challenge and Support sessions using the Service Self Evaluations, in place from November to March. • Group Director and Cabinet member sign off of Service Self Evaluation as part of Delivery Planning for 2016/17. Staff have also received feedback in respect of performance as part of the Joint Cabinet and Officer planning session held in September 2016 and subsequently in an email from the Chief Executive setting out the Council's progress. We also continue to provide quarterly monitoring reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees, which are made available on the Council's website, as well as in the reports and minutes. In quarter 1, 2016/17, we refreshed the quarterly reporting format and simplified the format to provide a clearer focus on the Council's priorities and the links between finance and performance and enable more robust scrutiny of performance, which is being further tested as part of the paper free meetings pilot with SLT and Cabinet. It is too early to establish where this is helping Members to better understand the data/information and the story behind it but we will continue to keep this under review and develop these first positive steps to make further improvements. The changes we have put in place to the reporting arrangements also respond to the feedback from managers and elected Members as part of the first Joint Cabinet and Officer planning session held in September 2015 which was referenced in last years Corporate Assessment and included • Clarity of, communication of, and understanding of a corporate vision which was embedded into actions; • Manage community expectations but encourage/enable community aspirations to be high; • Too many priorities, need more focus, greater staff engagement and streamlining of messages; • Alignment of priorities through to business plans – need the golden thread; • Clarity of the outcomes we want/need to achieve – are they the right outcomes and will they have the right impact – important to evaluate progress; • In engaging staff in the self assessment process need to clarify and simplify the use of language; • Need greater clarity of the various corporate systems in particular member/officer processes.

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1. Is the Authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Set a clear strategic direction and Council vision, with a reduced number of priorities, a set of challenging targets that compare favourably with the best in Wales, through consultation with the general public and Council staff • Simplify the way in which financial and performance management information is organised, presented and analysed so that they are easier to read, understand, challenge and scrutinise to drive service improvement
	The direct link between individual and organisational performance is being further developed within the new Individual Performance Review currently being piloted for GR15 and above, see section 4 below.

Potential Areas for Improvement 2016

1. **Through the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, set out how the PSB will work together to deliver better outcomes for the people in Cwm Taf and improve the joint planning and delivery arrangements.**
2. **Continue to focus attention on areas where the Council's performance, when compared to other councils in Wales, is amongst the worst, e.g. delayed discharges of care and numbers of children looked after.**
3. **Continue to strengthen the challenge and support of service delivery and target setting introduced in 2015/16.**
4. **Continue to improve the Quarterly Performance Report so that it provides elected Members and residents with useful, relevant and timely information and to seek feedback to test this is the case.**

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services

Response to Key Priority 2015

The Council is improving the ways in which it is engaging with residents. The methods and frequency of engagement and the increased involvement and visibility of Cabinet members are contributing to a wider range of feedback. Following analysis, this information will be used to better inform decisions and shape service delivery. However, we know we need to continue to strengthen to collection and analysis of information from all feedback channels

| 2.1 Does the Authority establish a clear vision and sense of purpose which reflects local needs, the views of local people, national priorities, and will secure improved outcomes effectively? | **The Council with its partners identified the wider vision of what it wants to achieve for its residents, through the Single Integrated Plan, 'Delivering Change, published in 2013. This vision has previously guided the Council's improvement priorities. However, in February 2016, the Council agreed its own strategic vision within that wider framework. The Council's vision, set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-20, - 'The Way Ahead' has been widely publicised, has set out the Council's priorities, helped to shaped the Council's priority and spending plans and is currently being monitored quarterly by Cabinet and Scrutiny.**

The vision within the current SIP, that 'People in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous', provided the wider context when the Council set its priorities. Our work previously contributed directly to many of the 14 outcomes which underpinned that Vision. Within the Corporate Plan, there is a more direct link with the Council's own priorities and the lower level ambitions and challenges we face. The Council's quarterly performance reports, priority plans and Delivery Plans are structured around these three themes, as is the annual Corporate Performance Report for 2016.

At the time the SIP was developed, it was informed by the views of a wide range of range of stakeholders. The Corporate Plan was also the subject of extensive consultation throughout 2015 and 2016, and also subject to pre-scrutiny by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 9th December 2015, The draft Corporate Plan was also included in the public consultation undertaken as part of the 2016/17 budget proposals consultation. Council staff were also encouraged to feedback their thoughts on the draft Corporate Plan via the Council's intranet site and by email directly to the Chief Executive. The feedback from this consultation provided a clear mandate supporting the Council's Vision, its three priorities and the four principles setting out the way the Council will work.

Views are sought annually during the budget setting exercise and by individual services for specific feedback e.g. satisfaction or service change proposals. The WAO AIR 2016 indicated that we could do more to evaluate the impact of service change and this work which is currently being addressed. Work is also continuing to establish a timely and all encompassing mechanism to gather and understand the views, needs and aspirations of all residents that will provide the necessary 'organisational intelligence'. This will be strengthened by the requirements of both the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act to produce in depth assessments.

Under both Acts, the Council and its partner have a statutory duty to undertake a series of assessments; including a well-being assessment, to assess the state of the population's well-being in the area and a population needs assessment, to asses the care and support needs of different groups of the |

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services
	population, both now and in the future. Partner organisations across the Cwm Taf region are working collaboratively to produce these assessments by March 2017. The findings will set out the key geographic, demographic, economic, social, environmental, social and cultural context for service providers and the residents. Producing the assessments involves widespread engagement with people living in Cwm Taf and using services, as well as a large data-gathering process. Once complete, these assessments will inform the Cwm Taf Public Services Board Well-being Plan, which will be published in 2018 as well as the plans for health and social care services across Cwm Taf. The process of undertaking the population and well-being assessments has been positively recognised by Welsh Government and the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA). The Cwm Taf region being used as a pilot area to inform the SSIA/WLGA population assessment toolkit. The way in which partners have utilised resources to engage with a variety of professional stakeholders and residents has also been nationally commended, with a 'pre-engagement' phase of compiling briefing documents for the assessments, a 'second-stage engagement' period made up of stakeholder workshops and online feedback and a further period of professional stakeholder engagement planned for early 2017. This whole process has adopted the branding '*Understanding our Communities'* and members of the community have been encouraged to facilitate their own conversations that will feed into this assessment. All of the information relating to the population and well-being assessment process is available on the Cwm Taf Engagement Hub Some elements of planning are aligned with partners e.g. the Community Safety priorities within the Council are aligned to the Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities, but mostly the alignment is not considered strong enough e.g. Health produces a 3 year integrated plan which acknowledges Council priorities. This has been reflected as a national issue in a recent Wales Audit report in respect of Community Safety in Wales. Alignment will be improved by the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations Act for partners to work together and integrate their objectives to meet the seven national well-being goals. The views of a wide range of stakeholders were sought in the development of the Council's Corporate Plan and residents' views are sought annually to inform budget setting and by individual services for specific feedback e.g. satisfaction or service change proposals. The Council's participation in 'Understanding our Communities' also seeks responses to a series of open questions, the results of which will ensure that our plans for the future reflect what matters to local communities and, more importantly, involves people in the design and delivery of services. This work is being carried out as part of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. Both acts require public services to **assess** community wellbeing and/or need for care and support and then to produce plans for improvement based on the

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services
	findings. This is one of a number of our new approaches to engaging with residents. A programme of ongoing face to face conversations is replacing the more traditional Resident Survey questionnaire approach. A significant amount of information and intelligence has been gathered using this approach and this will be analysed and used to inform and shape service delivery. We started this new approach to engagement in Summer of 2016 and it allows ongoing face to face discussions with our residents and allows us to "dig deeper" into original responses and find out why people think what they do about where they live and also the services they receive. This new approach recognises that residents have strong views and affiliations with their local communities and we have found this to be the case across Rhondda Cynon Taf. As a result of this we have visited a large number of locations across the County Borough and used a map/spatial based approach to encourage people to take part and talk about where they live. The Corporate Plan has set ambitious targets, which are being tested in relation to quarter 2 performance. The 2015-16 national data comparison indicate that we have reduced the number of measures in the bottom quartile from 15 to 8, this is hugely positive, although we know we still have more to do and to challenge the level of ambition of service areas in respect of key performance indicators. With the launch of the new Corporate Plan in February 2016 and the Delivery Plans in 2016, the hierarchy of plans is becoming less complex and more focused. The strengthened performance and challenge arrangements reinforce the priorities in the plan hierarchy and reduce the overlap of actions and measures. The new Performance Improvement Framework which was agreed at Cabinet in December 2016, contributes to the Council's overall governance framework, sets out the plan hierarchy and aligns other plans in a wider context for staff. This framework will be reviewed in line with the RCT Well-being plan once this is agreed by the PSB.
2.**2 Does the Authority demonstrate open and inclusive leadership, which is focused on securing continuous**	**The Council's Leadership continues to clearly focus on what matters strengthening its approach to delivering continuous improvement in priority areas, supporting alternative methods of service delivery in the community and engaging with residents. However, it is too early to assess the full impact of these approaches.** The Council's approach to securing continuous improvement continues to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, Wales Programme for Improvement. However, this approach has been strengthened significantly by the Council setting out clear priorities in the Corporate Plan, which in turn has focused the process to set out its detailed actions to deliver these priorities. The Scrutiny and challenge of the 2016/17 priorities involved greater involvement, support and challenge by elected Members through scrutiny of the individual priority plans as well as the complete Corporate Performance Report which was agreed by Council on 29 June 2016. The effectiveness of this approach is currently being tested in the monitoring and scrutiny of progress set out on the quarterly performance report.

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?	Key Priority Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services
improvement in staff performance, partnership working, and outcomes for citizens?	There continues to be a strengthening of arrangements between the Corporate Vision of senior leaders and Members and operational activity. The clear steer in respect of Council priorities set out in the Corporate Plan is being tested and informed by increasing engagement with residents, with more opportunities for them to relate to the Leader and Cabinet Members directly, this includes events in respect of service changes. Work to improve our communication with residents will continue, and the information arising from the Health and Well being and Population Assessments will also provide a rich source of feedback that will help to inform our service priorities, provision and processes. There are some good examples of the Council maximising the benefits of partnership working to secure improved outcomes e.g. the statements of intent and joint commissioning undertaken by the Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board and the @Home integrated assessment service, a new service linking A&E and the Clinical Decision Unit in hospitals to social care and third sector/community providers, helping people to avoid unnecessary admission and make a safe and timely return home. The link from the current SIP to the Corporate Plan and its priorities, ambitions and challenges not only shapes the Council's priorities it also allows those service that do not link directly to priority areas to see how they contribute to the Council's work, although we need to do more to make this information more transparent. To continue the alignment from Council Strategy to delivery, staff development processes including the Personal Development Reviews have been designed to ensure that staff training/development activity is focused on delivering the Council's priorities. Last year it became clear that the 'Managing People and Their Performance' approach and the Personal Development Reviews were not embedded or consistently conducted across all services. To address this, a new Performance Development Review process has been developed and is currently being rolled out in a pilot for officers at GR 15 and above and has started with the Chief Executive and Group Directors. The reviews consist of three parts • Individual performance in relation to the Delivery Plan • The extent to which staffing issues are being addressed with particular emphasis on key HR Policies • Reflection leading to individual development needs This is addressed in more detail in section 4 below. Once this approach is tested and rolled out, the Council, we will be better able to more clearly evidence that the Council has capacity to deliver continuous improvement outside of the activities identified within the Priority Plans. Whilst there has been a reduction in staff numbers and a loss of experience and knowledge, it could be argued that the impact is lessened by the reduced number of priorities, changes in the ways of working and a strengthening in performance culture. Evidence of this is the latest Wales comparative data set out in the Data Unit's latest Performance Bulletin, which indicates the RCT is the most improved Council in Wales in respect of the 40 comparable measures

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services

between 2014-15 and 2015-16, having improved in 29 of the 40 measures, i.e. 73%.

In the past it has been difficult to evidence staff awareness of the Council's priorities. In the last year there has been an increased focus on communication, including through Service Self Evaluation and Assessment, Delivery Planning and Personal Development Reviews. In the first staff consultation in April 2016, the Council Priorities were not widely known. However, since then and following the publication of the Corporate Plan, for the first time, all the Council's Delivery Plans have been published on the Intranet site. We are hopeful that once these and other processes become embedded more staff will be able to identify and relate to the Council's priorities. This will be tested as part of a future staff consultation, but anecdotally managers have found access to all Delivery Plans to be helpful and informative.

The quarterly Cabinet and senior officers briefing sessions are an important mechanism for communicating key messages such as Council priorities, budgets, member expectations, etc to all senior managers. The next meeting has been scheduled for 5 January 2017.

The WAO has recently completed a review of Service Change arrangements which was reported to Cabinet on 23 June. The report concluded

- *'The Council has strengthened its decision-making processes in relation to service change but corporate arrangements for assessing the impact of service changes are underdeveloped*
- *The Council has well-developed processes for determining its service change proposals and is redefining its vision to be clearer about priorities for future service change*
- *The Council is more proactive in engaging stakeholders and is providing information on a wider range of options to support decision-makers but revised scrutiny arrangements need to embed to enable effective oversight of decisions*
- *The Council has begun to assess the impact of some service changes but corporate arrangements for assessing impact are underdeveloped'*

The report also set out two proposals for improvement, i.e.

- 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.
- 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.

Improvements to the Cabinet forward work programme had already started and were further strengthened as set out in a report to Cabinet in September 2016. In relation to service change proposal, there is now a more systematic process in place which means that progress and impact of

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?	Key Priority Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services
	major service changes are reported back to Cabinet and Scrutiny, on a six monthly basis during the first year of change. The Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee 16 November will receive reports on Community Meals Services and Youth Engagement and Participation following the implementation of service changes, and reports on other areas will follow.

Potential Areas for Improvement 2016

1. **Continue to gather and understand the views, needs and aspirations of residents to provide inform and support decision making at all levels of the Council.**
2. **Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to further support service delivery and improvement.**
3. **Continue to improve our communication with residents, elected Members, and staff and ensure that the data and information arising from the Health and Well being and Population Assessments are used to inform our service priorities, provision and processes.**
4. **Ensure the new reporting arrangements in place in respect of the impact of service changes are in place and adhered to establish whether anything further needs to be addressed or lessons learnt to inform future service change.**

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3. Do the Authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?	Key Priority Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to further support service delivery and improvement; • Update the Scheme of Delegation, along with appropriate training and staff awareness, particularly given the changes in management at all levels

Response to Key Priority 2015

We are taking positive steps to strengthen the scrutiny arrangements so that they support service delivery and improvement. There are many examples of new arrangements being put in place described below. It is too early to be able to fully demonstrate the effectiveness of these changes but early signs are encouraging. We are confident that these early foundations will be well embedded for the new Council in 2017 and so can also be clearly reflected in the induction arrangements for new Councillors.

Good progress has been made in respect of the Scheme of Delegation, with more accessible information, support and training already in place with further support scheduled. Elected Members and Officers are now able to progress matters more quickly through transparent and appropriate authority.

3.1 Do clear roles and responsibilities enable good governance and strong accountability?	New Governance structures, supported by training advice and guidance were put in place in May 2015. This included changes in both Cabinet Portfolios and Scrutiny arrangements. The roles and responsibilities are becoming embedded with both Councillors and staff. The positive start following the initial changes has continued. Scrutiny Members' are increasing knowledge, skills and familiarity with their roles which has resulted in increased confidence with their new roles and expectations, enabling them to more fully participate and challenge more effectively at meetings. The Scheme of Delegation was amended and implemented in July 2016 to reflect additional arrangements around call in. The new Scheme of Delegation has been widely communicated following agreement at the AGM in May 2015. This includes: • Awareness Raising for Managers and Cabinet Members (December 2015) • Presentation of detailed Handbook to Senior Leadership Team (July 2016) • Specific training delivered to report writers by the Director of Leadership and Democratic Services and the Director of Cabinet and Public Relations The Council's statutory officials, Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democratic Services, are referred to in the Council's current constitution and deliver their statutory functions accordingly. These functions are monitored by the appropriate Scrutiny Committees. The roles/responsibilities of these statutory officials are becoming more widely understood and communicated inside and outside the Council. Managers are receiving training in respect of the Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and Procedures, Standing Orders etc. The first element of this training, focused on the Scheme of Delegation was held on 1 December 2015, at the Joint Cabinet Member and Officer Planning Session.

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3. Do the Authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to further support service delivery and improvement; • Update the Scheme of Delegation, along with appropriate training and staff awareness, particularly given the changes in management at all levels
	There have been five Joint Cabinet Member and Senior Officer Planning sessions since September 2015 which have helped to improve networking and appreciation of Officer and Member roles as well as well as increasing knowledge of the Council's priorities, services and arrangements. More could be done to ensure that this information is cascaded and made available to all staff and arrangements are being made to publish a stand alone Scheme of Delegation on the Intranet and Internet.
3.2 Do elected members and officers exhibit appropriate values and behaviour?	Both Officers and elected Members exhibit appropriate behaviour and this can be evidenced in the latest report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales which was presented to the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 5th September, 2016. The report identified that during 2015/16 there were no complaints taken into investigation by the Ombudsman. Also during 2015/16 no complaints against elected Members under the local protocol were reported to the Council's Standards Committee. The local protocol as agreed by the Standards Committee in 10 July 2015. There is also a Member/Officer protocol within the Council's Constitution which sets out the appropriate working relationships to be adhered to. At the Council's Annual Meeting on 25th May, 2016, elected Members received information in respect of recent changes to the `Local Authorities Model Code of Conduct` for Local Government. As a consequence of these national changes, a revised Members' Code of Conduct was adopted by the Council. This revised code took effect from 26th May, 2016.
3.3 Are there adequate arrangements in place to support members and senior officials to be effective in their role?	The Local Government (Wales) Measure, 2011 introduced legislative requirements for corporate governance and Member support and development. In 2012 the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development was developed to enhance and enable these legal requirements. The Council was awarded the Advanced Charter for the Corporate Governance in 2010 and has retained the award since then. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business & HR and the Head of Democratic Services have received training from the WLGA and are now part of the Member/Officer Peer Assessment Team for charter assessments as prescribed by the criteria. Each year, the Democratic Services Committee is advised of the training and support received by elected Members to enable them to carry out their roles effectively and efficiently. The Committee also receives an annual report on the sufficiency of resources within the Democratic Services team. Following remodelling of the Democratic Services Section, two Democratic Services Officers were recruited in July 2016. Since their appointment, they have undergone intensive training, facilitated both in-house and externally, to enable them to

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	effectively carry out the democratic services functions and thus support Members in their role. Examples of training for elected Members during 2015/16 include: • Corporate Safeguarding – Democratic Services Committee – March, 2016 • Corporate Safeguarding – prior to a Council Meeting on the 27 April, 2016. • Well-Being of the Future Generations Act, 2015, specifically dealing with the Scrutiny role – 31st March, 2016 – Facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny - Joint Venture with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council • Chairing Skills for newly appointed Chairs/Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees following the AGM in May, 2016 – facilitated by the WLGA • Treasury Management – Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee – 17th October, 2016 • Effective Scrutiny for Positive Outcomes and Different Ways of Working in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015 – Facilitated by the Head of Democratic Services and the WLGA – Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 29th October, 2016 • Dealing with complaints referred to the Council by the Ombudsman. At the Council's Annual Meeting on 25 May, 2016, elected Members were also informed of Members' salaries and allowances following the publication of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for Wales' Eighth Annual Report. Approval was sought for Members' salaries and allowances for the Municipal Year 2016/17. The Chairs of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services across Wales interviewed annually by the IRP on their draft report. The results of this national consultation assist the Panel in compiling its final report. Following representations made in respect of the 2016/17 draft report, the Panel amended the report, in particular in relation to the two levels of salaries proposed for Cabinet Members and Chairs of Committee. Whilst the two levels remained, it is at the discretion of the individual authorities as to which level is paid for each of these senior roles.

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3.4 Is decision making across the Authority robust and effective?	Decision making processes are considered to be robust. These processes have been improved and strengthened following the implementation of the revised Scheme of Delegation, referred to in 3.1 above. Officer decisions are made in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and are published on the Council's website with links emailed to all elected Members. This allows non-executive Members to 'call-in' such decisions in accordance with the Scrutiny Rules 17.1 and 17.2 of the Council's Constitution. To date, no call-ins have been made since the scheme was implemented on 1 July, 2016. Whilst Executive Procedure Rules stipulate that decisions made at Cabinet Meetings are to be published within two working days, Rhondda Cynon Taf endeavours to publish such decisions on the day. A link to the decision notice is emailed to all elected Members in order that, such decision(s) can be 'called-in' if appropriate. Whilst there is no requirement to do so, the Cabinet has also started to record minutes of its meetings as well as the publication of Decision Notices. This has been acknowledged by WAO as good practice. Draft minutes of Council Meetings, including Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees are published within 10 days of the meeting date, and in most cases are published within 5 days. In the Council's new arrangements, members will be nominated for membership of Scrutiny Committees only after they have received appropriate Scrutiny training, this will provide a more consistent as well as strengthened Scrutiny.
3.5 Do challenge, scrutiny and review processes ensure a range of informed views are sought and actively considered to aid decision making and improvement?	A revised Scrutiny structure, which addressed the findings of the WAO National report Good Scrutiny? Good Question! was implemented in May 2015. The structure reflected the need to better meet future challenges and adopt best practice. As a result of the new structure, there was a reduction in the number of elected Members in each of the five Scrutiny Committees from 17 to 14. This reduction did not affect the representation from the opposition Groups. In agreeing the new structure, the Council also took into consideration the Notice of Motion that was adopted by Council on the 27th April, 2016 viz: - "*This Council instructs the Director of Legal & Democratic Services to present a report to the Annual General Meeting setting out a proposal to enable all non-executive members to participate in the scrutiny process".* This was addressed at the AGM when it was agreed that two Members of the Democratic Alliance Group and the Council's unallocated Member be given the opportunity to attend meetings of a Scrutiny Committee of their choice, on an ex-officio/co-opted basis for which they may have a particular interest or expertise. One year after the implementation of the new arrangements for Scrutiny and with the benefit of experience, it was felt that the remit of one of the Scrutiny Committees, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was not allowing equal consideration to the areas of Education and Children's

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	Social Services. As a result of this, the arrangement for Scrutiny in these key areas would be best served by being separated. This would also make best use of time for Members, including co opted Members and Officers. Proposals for changes to the Scrutiny of these areas were agreed by Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 14 July. The impact of the changes are that meetings now take place on a 3 weekly cycle • Week 1 - Children and Young People • Week 3 – Education • Week 6 – Combined This revised approach will be reviewed by Members at the meeting of the Committee in December, 2016. The pre-scrutiny arrangements have developed and improved over the past year. These improvements have been assisted by the changes to the Cabinet Work Programming. These changes provide more detail about the work programme which is over a longer period, i.e. from three to twelve months in advance, subject to three monthly review. Once the Cabinet Work Programme is established, the Deputy Leader who also holds the portfolio for Council Business & HR, together with the Director of Cabinet & Public Relations attend meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to respond to questions in respect of the Cabinet Work Programme. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the respective themed Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee are also invited to this meeting to identify any topic on the Cabinet Work Programme they wish to undertake pre Scrutiny as part of their respective Scrutiny Work Programmes. An example of this is Overview and Scrutiny on 5 July 2016. Another strand to the strengthened Scrutiny arrangements is the increased challenge by the Chair of Scrutiny. The Chair of O&S meets with the Scrutiny Chairs to challenge the progress of the respective Scrutiny work programmes and the difference this work is a making for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The changes in the Scrutiny, pre Scrutiny, project scoping and planning arrangements identifying clear outcomes together with the increased focus on performance is reflected in the 2015/16 Scrutiny Annual report. Again, it is too early to establish the effectiveness of this approach but early

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	signs of this more inclusive and transparent approach are encouraging. As set out in Section 1 above, the format of Quarterly Council Performance reports to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee was changed with effect from quarter 1 2016/17 at its meeting on 17th October, 2016. As a result of the 'Modern Gov' pilot to put in place for paperless Cabinet Meetings, as well as Cabinet Sub Committee meetings, by Cabinet in May, 2016, Members of the Cabinet were provided with IT tablets with 'Modern Gov' software. This consists of a range of annotation tools to allow elected Members and officers to make notes, highlight sections etc and receive an alert when papers are available to download. This approach will result in a reduction in the annual costs for printing and paper. It was agreed at the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 5 October, 2016 that this facility would be extended to Chairs of Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees, supported by the necessary training. It was proposed that this facility and equipment will be provided to all new and returning Members following the County Borough elections in May, 2017. The Council is a mature organisation. There is an increasing clarity of direction and strengthening of Scrutiny and pre Scrutiny and the Audit Committee receives assurance that systems of internal control are in place across the Council via the delivery of a balanced Internal Audit Work Plan and external Regulators Reports. The annual work plan is compiled by the Chair of Audit and the Internal Audit Manager. The aim of the work plan is to provide elected Members with the relevant information to enable them to deliver their Terms of Reference of the Committee, standard items including Internal Audit performance and finalised audit assignments. The 2016/17 work plan was agreed by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 12 September 2016. The Council continues to improve and strengthen its evaluative approach within its annual Governance Statement. The Assurance Summary in the most recent Annual Governance Statement published in May 2016 indicates: *"The Council's governance arrangements throughout 2015/16 have helped the delivery of key services to our citizens. The Council's internal quality assurance systems have identified robust systems of control and areas of good practice. They have also identified areas for improvement and strengthening, and the Council is committed to implementing the necessary recommendations.* *It is also proposed over the coming year to take steps to address the recommendations made by external regulators and ensure that the recommendations identified within this Annual Governance Statement are monitored (by the Audit Committee) and implemented. The Council is*

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	committed to enhancing its governance arrangements further. *Based on the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken during 2015/16 it is concluded that sound governance arrangements are in place, key systems are operating as intended and there are no fundamental weaknesses".* Chairs and Vice of all Scrutiny Committees together with the Scrutiny Performance Management Coordinator are appointed members of the Finance and Performance Committee, excluding the Chair and Vice of Overview and Scrutiny. The Chair and Vice of Audit Committee also attend the F& P Scrutiny Committee as ex officio Members. This aims to improve Member's knowledge and to strengthen and more effectively align Scrutiny arrangement. The Council's introduction of reporting all Regulatory reports is continuing, and we are starting to get a sense of how this is strengthening challenge etc. Depending on the nature of the report, as a minimum all regulatory reports and actions in response to the recommendations are presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and also Audit Committee to inform its view on the Council's Governance arrangements. This was referenced in the WAO Annual Improvement Report which set out *"The Council has recently put in place arrangements to ensure that reports from external regulators are communicated internally within the Council, and are reported to the appropriate Committee. Upon receipt of reports, the Council now ensures that senior managers, as well as either the Audit Committee or appropriate scrutiny committee receive them. The Council has also recently established a register of recent reports of external regulators, that includes reference to when the Council's response to any report of an external regulator has been considered by an appropriate Committee. The Council has also developed a template to be completed by Officers outlining progress in addressing recommendations for presentation to the relevant Committee"* *"As the introduction of these arrangements is relatively recent, it is too early to assess the extent to which the Council's response to all regulatory reports will be subject to appropriate challenge and monitoring arrangements. There is, however, an opportunity to strengthen arrangements further through clarifying the role of respective committees in receiving regulatory reports. Arrangements could also be strengthened by establishing clear arrangements for monitoring the Council's progress in addressing any recommendations or proposals for improvement from external regulators".*

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	Any plans arising from Regulatory reports are now being monitored, e.g. Arrangements to support Safeguarding of Children, the most recent report on progress was presented to Cabinet on 2 November. This transparent approach is being taken a step further by the introduction of a webpage in Performance Management section of Council's intranet and web sites. These pages set out separately all regulatory reports received by the Council since December 2015 making them more accessible and transparent. Also, the new Performance Improvement Framework includes a section that clarifies the general roles in respect of Performance Management which includes Executive and Scrutiny arrangements.
3.6 Does the engagement that the Authority has with its stakeholders support real accountability?	The Council is continually evolving and improving the way it engages with residents, including traditionally hard to reach groups such as Mental Health Service users, and there are also now more ways through which residents can engage with us. There are clear examples of where residents' views have informed policy changes. However, what is less clear is how the various strands of feedback received are acted upon by service managers. Following the introduction of a more comprehensive approach to consultation and engagement, described in section 2.1 above, which includes greater involvement by elected Members, there are now a number of ways that residents and stakeholders can engage and communicate directly with the Council. The new ongoing face to face approach has introduced wider use of Social Media and more direct contact between residents and the Cabinet, including the Leader of the Council, who is more visible and directly accessible at engagement events. All consultation undertaken by the Council is shaped by Participation Cymru National Principles for Public Engagement. All of the service change consultations are evaluated against the national Principles for Wales framework and this has been recognised as best practice by the WAO. However, the evaluation of consultation and engagement activity needs to be more thorough across the board. Quarterly Performance Reports and the Corporate Performance Reports are published on the Council's intranet site. Some community groups e.g. OPAG are also contacted directly and are provided with information. Hard copies of the easy to read Corporate Performance Report are distributed to the Council's public buildings. Also all Regulators' Reports are now being made available to both Scrutiny and Audit Committees. This allows residents to see for themselves the regulators views of performance and progress through committee structures. As indicated earlier they are also published separately on the Council's Performance pages. These topic and/or thematic reports supplement the higher level annual reports from Regulators which are presented to Council and published as a matter of course i.e. the Annual Improvement Report (WAO) and the Performance Evaluation (CSSIW). There are a number of opportunities through which residents can give their views to the Council, and these are within a single '*Get Involved*' banner on the Council's website. These range from specific consultations and campaigns to ideas to help to deliver services with reduced resources.

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Through its range of social media accounts, the Council engages with over 60,000 residents and service users. In order to support improvements, the Council uses a social media monitoring platform 'Social Signin' which provides useful data such as engagement demographics and sentiment. This data can also be split for different social media campaigns or accounts. It can also be split for sentiment of messages in i.e. how happy residents and service users are with the information they receive about Council services and, decisions taken etc. We need to develop our analysis of this data to establish what it means and how we can feed relevant information back to relevant service areas, and we are currently recruiting a Digital Communications Officer to drive this work forward.

The Council has started to do more with the feedback it receives from all sources, including comments, complaints and compliments and Customer Care, to create a more complete picture of performance that can inform service delivery and improvement. There is a significant amount of work being carried out in respect of consultation both in terms of the Council's own consultation processes and those in respect of the WFG and SSWB Assessments. However there remains much to be done. Whilst the Council's engagement with residents is improving, there is recognition that it can be improved through, for example, better integration with CRM and back office systems used to track service requests made by residents.

The Council continues to develop its arrangements to help elected Members better engage with Stakeholders, as described earlier. Also, the Council's Corporate Performance Report for 2016 continued to improve the way the Council reports its plans and performance. A more comprehensive user friendly summary was made widely available which contained both progress on 2015/16 plans and also set out plans for 2016/17. Both elected Members and officers have indicated that the timely reporting helped them to better understand issues within a priority area as well as improve the alignment with the Council's reporting frameworks. No detailed feedback has been received from WAO as a result of these changes to date, although the Council has received the necessary certificates of compliance for reporting requirements under the LG measure, which suggests any feedback will not be over critical. Despite these improvements, there is still scope to continue to improve the evaluation of our progress and target setting. These improvements would also include greater use of organisational intelligence as well as widening the scrutiny arrangements to further develop the involvement of co opted members to strengthen the direct input of stakeholders.

As indicated in section 1, the Council is investigating a refreshed approach to conducting a Residents' Survey which has not been conducted since 2006. This approach which will include Social media, focus groups and County Borough wide surveys of communities of interest will allow the Council to better understand what residents think about Services and whether they feel the Council is securing better outcomes for them. Importantly, this approach will also include focused consultation with staff so that as key stakeholders, their views are also taken account of.

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	The new approach to staff consultation which is described in detail in section 4, is enabling staff to have a greater say in the issues that affect them. The themes arising from the first phase of staff consultation have been built into the pilot Personal Development Reviews, i.e. • Visibility and Accessibility of Management • Improving Communication • Improving Management and communication of Change • Employee Well-being, particularly in respect of increasing work loads. The continuing improvements in communication will help to encourage and facilitate more staff to respond to consultation in respect of key decisions.
3.7 Does the Authority ensure that effective governance and accountability is maintained when the Authority delivers services through companies, trusts or other external entities?	**The Council delegates/delivers a number of key services through other external entities. These** include the following: • Joint Committees – County Supplies, Central South Education Consortium, Llwydcoed Crematorium; • 100% owned companies – the LAWDAC (AMGEN Cymru Ltd); • Joint Ventures – associate companies – the Capita Engineering Joint Venture in partnership with Bridgend and Merthyr CB Councils. In respect of these external organisations, robust governance arrangements are in place to protect the Council's interests. The Council has a full understanding of the financial commitments, risks and rewards of these organisations and there are effective arrangements in place to ensure they deliver the specified service. In respect of AMGEN and the Capita JV, the Council has appointed directors/a representative and these directors are clear of their roles and responsibilities both to the Council and their fiduciary duties to the company in which they have been appointed as a director, as a result of their Council employment.

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Potential Areas for Improvement 2016

1. **Continue to review the governance arrangements to ensure that they are supporting improved challenge, support, scrutiny and pre scrutiny across the Council.**
2. **Produce a simplified version of the Scheme of Delegation and ensure it is available and easily accessible on the Intranet and Internet.**
3. **Continue to strengthen Scrutiny function with a focus on impact of the decisions made.**
4. **Continue to develop the use of technology to enable elected Members to more effectively manage and scrutinise the Council's business and put in place appropriate equipment and Modern Gov software for all new and returning Members following the local government elections in May, 2017.**
5. **Continue work to identify all strands of customer and resident feedback coming into the Council and how it can be coordinated, analysed and made available to better inform service planning and improvement.**
6. Further develop consultation arrangements in relation to clear and consistent staff communication, including the Staff Advisory Panel is maintained.

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management • Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services

Response to Key Priority 2015	
Staff absence management is being tackled in a number of different ways, ranging from strengthened individual management, more regular and robust sickness reporting and monitoring through SLT, Sickness Policy compliance challenge discussions and more focussed Occupational Health intervention. All these steps are becoming more embedded throughout the Council and although it is too soon to be clear about the medium to long term impact of this approach, early signs are encouraging. There has been a step change in the approach to ICT to enable the digitalisation Council Services and a recent WAO report has recognised this in a recent follow up of the corporate arrangements for ICT and Information Governance which recognised the clear vision for ICT in the context of the Council's overarching aims and goals. Good progress has been made in setting a strategic Digital Workplace principle described below. This is being supported by investment in infrastructure upgrades and Wi-Fi deployments at the Council's strategic sites and improved resilience of the Council's e mail.	

4.1 Are Council services continuing to deliver their statutory obligations and improvement objectives with fewer resources?	The Council has a consistent track record over a number of years of delivering savings plans that have helped it to achieve balanced revenue budgets at the same time as a generally improving trend in the performance of services. This is evidenced by: • The compilation and delivery of annual savings plans being directed and managed as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements. The most recent report on which was presented to Cabinet on 22 September 2016. • A corporate approach to the development and implementation of saving proposals with services and back-office support functions working together. This is in parallel with review, challenge and monitoring by management and SLT at each stage. Where saving proposals have involved changes to frontline services, these have been subject to detailed business cases that were reviewed internally, and if appropriate, then considered by Cabinet to determine if the changes should be implemented. The outcome of this approach has supported the consistent delivery of revenue savings plans/balanced budgets i.e.: • **2014/15 -** a budget gap of £15.2M at the start of the year and a council wide year end underspend of £0.812M • **2015/16** a budget gap of £16.4M at the start of the year and a council wide year end underspend of £0.219M and • **as at 30-9-16** for 2016/17, a budget gap at the start of the year of £14.3M with a projected year end underspend of £0.231M. The reduction in funding received by the Council and the resultant budget gaps necessitated over 25 service changes being identified, processed,

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| | approved and implemented. These changes were in addition to a programme of efficiency savings that that do not impact directly on frontline services.

In addition to the delivery of balanced budgets, this approach has also helped create in-year savings e.g. through savings being realised earlier than originally planned. These savings have been utilised to fund one-off frontline service investment in priority areas, as set out in the report to Council on 10 March 2016.

This has approach has been considered by the Wales Audit Office as part of its reviews into Financial Resilience. The findings were reported to Cabinet in June 2016. The report was generally positive, i.e.

Financial planning

"The Council has a robust corporate framework for financial planning; however, there remains scope to enhance the links between the Council's Corporate and Medium Term Financial Planning processes."

Financial control

"The Council's financial management and control arrangements are fit for purpose and are being effectively managed".

Financial governance

"The Council's framework for reviewing and challenging financial performance is well established."

However, there were three proposals for improvement:
• The Council should further align its Corporate and Medium Term Financial processes including more clearly demonstrating the links between the allocation of resources and the Council's priorities to help inform decision making.
• The Council should consider developing a policy and register for fees and charges with associated guidelines on concessions.
• The Council should enhance the description and reporting of its proposed use of earmarked reserves in reporting to councillors when developing its budget strategy.

The alignment of the Corporate and Medium Term Financial processes and the proposed use of reserves were addressed in the MTFP which was |

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	agreed in September2106 and the register of fees and charges will be addressed as part of the budget setting arrangements for 2017/18. Subsequent to the Financial Resilience Assessment, the WAO reinforced it positive message in respect of financial arrangements in its Annual Improvement Report which was presented to Council on 20 July. This set out: *"With a strong corporate focus upon the effective use of its resources, supported by strengthened service planning and governance arrangements, the Council is well placed to overcome some significant future challenges".* Savings plans are compiled with budget holders and finance officers prior to the start of the financial year, built into services' budgets and monitored during the year. Budget monitoring and operational performance up dates are provided for review and challenge as part of the quarterly reports to Cabinet and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee. This enables services, SLT, elected Members and external stakeholders to scrutinise financial performance including the effect of savings plans, alongside operational performance results/outcomes.
4.2 Does the Council have effective arrangements in place to manage and utilise its workforce?	As a result of the strengthened challenge arrangements in 2015, HR is taking a more performance driven, evidence based approach to its arrangement. The development of HR challenge arrangements uses data dashboards to present a range of HR information, in relation to staff management, including sickness absence, to SLT and is supported by direct challenge sessions by HR Managers with the with Heads of Service. In the first set of meetings 31 Heads of Service were met with a further 12 meetings taking place with service areas that do not have the Head of Service tier. This approach established support for the current centralised HR model. The approach has also helped to identify key themes where managers identified additional support may be required:- • Vision Housekeeping – to ensure vacancies within the system were reflective of actual staffing vacancies • Phased returns & Reasonable Adjustments – additional support and training to managers in this area • Management of complex sickness cases –assistance from a senior HR manager at an earlier stage may assist in expediting the management of sickness together with providing valuable learning for individuals managing the absence. • Escalation of complex D&G cases and Dignity at Work cases – escalation of support to senior HR manager for support with significant or complex discipline and grievance and dignity at work cases. • Recruitment – review of the frequency of change control and fast tracking 'Hard to Fill' roles through the recruitment system These key themes will help to inform, prioritise and strengthen the HR function so that the productivity of the workforce is maximised and that robust staff performance management arrangements are applied consistently across the Council to meet the needs of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	Key Priority Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management • Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services

The Council's current HR strategy 2013-18 links to the SIP outcomes and sets out 8 Key Objectives

- 1.Contribute to Council's overall aims within MTSP through workforce planning
- 2.Identify, manage and mitigate risks and challenges re equal pay/equal value claims
- 3.Continue to develop collaborative working with other public service organisations
- 4.Continually develop and improve the use of technology to support aspects of the HR process
- 5.Make improvements that will be of lasting benefit to the quality of life for everyone that lives, works or does business within Rhondda Cynon Taf
- 6.Meet the challenges set out in the WG Health at Work Corporate Standard
- 7.Promote alignment between competence at individual and organisational levels and the Council's aims and priorities
- 8.Support the Council in meeting the IIP standard

This strategy is currently being refreshed and feedback from the Head of Service challenge meetings, together with a review of service pressures and service developments will help shape the changes. This will help to better determine and direct the HR needs of services. The new strategy will be in place in the new financial year focussing on a reduced number of priorities

As part of its 'Risk based assessment of the Council's Corporate Arrangements', the Wales Audit Office has recently undertaken a review to establish if the Council has effective arrangements in place to manage and utilise its workforce. The findings have been made available in a draft report which reflects the positive progress made and once finalised, will help to inform our work to refresh our HR strategy.

The new Performance Improvement Framework reflects the strengthened arrangements for individual performance management and ensures that they integrate and align with organisational priorities and wider performance arrangements

There are a number of HR risks that are being managed and mitigated

Equal Pay

This associated risk is ever diminishing and will be completely mitigated by 31st May 2017. This date is the deadline which employees can claim for inequality of pay following the implementation of Single Status along with a new Pay & Grading Structure in 2011. Also as a result of the work to date and agreements with Trade Unions in place, we anticipate few claims will be lodged between now and May 2017.

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Sickness Absence

Work continues to address sickness absence across the Council following the introduction of a new sickness absence policy in September 2016. Following initial training for all managers, core managers' briefings, the middle management tier (@600 managers) have been held with managing mental health and musculoskeletal disorders being key topics. . In addition 14 'Time to Talk' sessions were held during 2015/2016 with the aim of reducing stigma associated with mental health conditions by encouraging employees to have discussions about mental health in the workplace.

Management of change processes

A continuing focus for HR is supporting the Management of Change process for the Council. The results of the staff consultation surveys reference below has indicted the need to revise the policy and approach for the Service Review process. The revised approach will focus particularly on supporting staff/services post Service Review. This focus will include the implementation of mechanisms to obtain feedback in relation to the service change processes and how they could be improved in the light of experience.

Trade Union relationships

HR continues to maintain productive relationships with Trade Unions which help to mitigate risks arising from potentially contentious issues. There are no wider HR risks, apart from those already highlighted, appearing on the Corporate Risk Register.

Health and Safety risks

Incident and accident data from across the Council together with information from other reliable information sources such as the HSE, to identify both current and emerging trends in respect of Health and Safety Risks

As indicated above, the HR model in place continues to be a centralised HR function that currently located on split sites between strategic and operational functions. This has been reinforced by feedback from Service Managers, arising from the Head of Service challenge meetings.

As well as the HR function provided within RCT, the HR also provides certain HR functions on behalf of Merthyr Council, these are
 • delivery of apprenticeship programmes
 • occupational health Service
 • the provision of learning and development activities, where there is an SLA in place

There is also an SLA in place with the Central South Consortium, CSC, and the Education School Support model for Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, RCT and Vale of Glamorgan Councils the RCT delivers the operational HR arrangements on behalf of the CSC. RCT also leads HR officers from the four other

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Councils in the CSC, in the development of common school based employment policies across the region's 400+ schools. This group is also charged with reviewing working processes and case management across the region and identifying the HR capacity to support the school improvement agenda. This currently includes providing briefing sessions to all Head teachers on individual performance management and capability.

Another SLA arrangement in place is for HR to provide both an advisory and transactional service to all RCT schools including voluntary and faith schools. Positive feedback has been received from Head teachers and Governors in respect of these services. The evidence shows that the service is valued and has been identified as a model of effective service delivery within the Central South Consortium. At the a request of Bridgend Council and its schools, since September 2016, RCT has assumed the line management of Bridgend Council's HR staff and is providing advisory support to Bridgend schools. This collaborative approach is being delivered on a trial basis for 12 months. At which point the arrangements will be reviewed before any final decision to continue the arrangements is taken. Whilst this arrangement is in its infancy, Bridgend's Education Director has recently reported that the feedback from Bridgend schools is already positive and they are appreciative of the new support arrangements. Discussions are also ongoing with Merthyr Tydfil Council to explore a similar model of delivery.

Addressing workforce capacity remains a key theme for HR. Apprenticeship programmes continue to assist in addressing workforce planning gaps and a new approach to building capacity in specific areas being introduced more recently to address particular areas of workforce deficits.

The strengthening of performance management, the increased focus on leadership and accountability and the continuing support and challenge arrangements has necessitated in the acceleration of leadership development programmes such as ILM, Mercury as well as the introduction of two Transform Leadership cohorts for senior management. A specific managers' induction programme and the re-introduction of the Aspire management programme for the middle managers in also being planned for new financial year.

Core Manager briefings continue on a six monthly basis to ensure that key information is cascaded to the middle management tier. The briefings are used as a vehicle to provide key information in relation to people management issues together with wider policy issues. The briefings are supported, where necessary, with mandatory e-learning produced by HR and deployed via the RCTSource.

Partnership approaches with TU colleagues have been evident through TU colleagues assisting in the staff consultation exercise, attending all core manager briefings and sponsoring the annual recognition event for apprentices.

A revised performance review process for GR15 officers up to Chief Officer grade was implemented in September 2015 as a pilot. These pilot

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arrangements clearly link service and individual performance planning arrangements and will test the Council's aim to ensure that these officers are clear about what they are accountable for, how they are performing and what training development and support they may need to improve further in order to deliver the Council's priorities.

In other aspects of our HR arrangements, there continues to be numerous policies and procedures in place which seek to maximise individual capability and capacity, e.g., Health and Safety, Capability, Secondment and Health and Safety policies, the Strategic Equality Plan, Workforce Development Strategy, Disciplinary and Grievance procedures. Work to establish the extent to which these policies and strategies are utilised by Managers to maximise service capacity and staff capability, is in its early stages.

A policy review group has been established to ensure that Council's HR policies and arrangement comply with the Welsh Language Standards. The next stage for the policy review group will be to develop a communication strategy for the communication of policies and to establish a monitoring mechanism for review of policy usage.

In addition HR continues to focus on improving attendance and continues to deliver:-

- initiatives that support early intervention and diagnosis such as Fast tracking, ultrasound scanning and shockwave treatment.
- targeted interventions designed to combat specific health issues identified within the Council service areas for example injection therapy, trauma support and ear irrigation. We introduced these interventions as within the Councils communities we are starting to see a decline in these interventions being offered by the GPs.
- an interim review of the Sickness Absence Policy
- an online management referral system designed to improve the communication process for referrals and to support the new policy changes such as the Day 1 and day 14 referrals.
- dashboards for management highlighting compliance levels with the Sickness Absence Policy
- case reviews held each month for all absences over 28 days. This equates to 250 cases a month. A review of the pilot "First Care" Day 1 Absence Management Service is underway taking into account the Residential Services pilot feedback and whether the pilot reduced sickness absence in the pilot areas.

In 2015/16 there were 2,114 referrals to Occupational Health. In the first half of 2016/17, there have been 1,131 referrals. This would suggest the success of the strengthened focus on compliance with sickness referrals and also the introduction of the Day 1 and 14 referrals in September 2015. The recent introduction of the Officer challenges through the HR Dashboards has also drawn attention to policy compliance. It is too soon to be clear

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about the medium to long term impact of this approach, early signs are encouraging

We have been able to use information provided as part of the first round of Service Self Evaluations in 2015 to start to identify the information that will be used alongside quantitative data to produce a draft workforce plan for 2017-18. This will be refined as the 2016 Service Self Evaluations are known and as elements of the revised Performance Improvement Management Framework is embedded.

HR continues to use ICT systems to enable managers to manage by: accessing information, e.g. RCT Source; providing inbuilt compliance with policies e.g. payroll system; and providing training e.g. e-learning. The use of e-learning to support face to face training and core manager briefings has expanded to meet demand and to support efficiencies and effectiveness of the training. The use of the RCTSource has been expanded to meet the needs of the Education and Lifelong Learning group with a specific site being developed to replace the use of the current Moodle platform.

An Agile Working policy has been developed that is currently being trialled across a number of service areas. The development of this agile model allows staff to use their time more effectively and avoid the need to continually travel between their fixed base and client groups e.g. schools. As part of the pilot, ICT provision for the staff in question has been upgraded to allow them access from any suitable Wi-Fi enabled site. Hot desk arrangements are also being put in place within the respective service areas which is assisting the Council's review of its accommodation strategy. The pilots will be monitored to establish the impact on service delivery but with the potential for travel time to be reduced it is anticipated that interaction with client groups will be enhanced.

Staff consultation and engagement remains a key priority for the Council and the method of consultation has been changed in order to increase the quality and quantity of responses. By changing from questionnaire based to more face to face methodology the consultation undertaken in April 2016 yielded richer and more robust key findings. The findings are included in the Individual Performance Review pilot currently being rolled out across the Council for GR15 and above, where managers are being asked to consider how the findings relate to their service and what improvements that can be made. The areas are:

- Improving the visibility and accessibility of management at all levels;
- Improving communication
- Improved management and communication of change
- Employee Well being

The affect of the Performance Review discussions to improve these areas will be tested in future surveys. In the mean time the next staff consultation

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	scheduled for November-December 2016. This will start to establish the extent to which individual performance management is embedded within the Council. Joint planning meetings of Cabinet and officers continue to be held quarterly. The structure and topic areas is changing to address feedback from participants and to enable Cabinet Members and managers to mix more readily. The last two planning meetings in June and September have been attended by the Wales Audit Office and anecdotal feedback about the content and format of the sessions has been positive. Manager Briefings for the middle management tier, @600 managers, which deal with relevant core Council issues, continue to be held twice yearly. The most recent briefings held in October/November covered the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Muscular Skeletal conditions, Unconscious Bias, Staff Consultation and Staff Benefits. The Staff Benefits session is setting out the expanded Staff Benefits Scheme which has also been communicated more widely through pay slip inserts and the Intranet. As set out above the Council maintains effective and constructive relationships with Trade Unions. One of the ways this is achieved is though monthly meetings between HR and RCT TU representatives. At these meetings, any perceived employment issue is discussed, which often alleviates an employee relations matter or avoids damaging disputes which other organisations have faced e.g. issues with Job Evaluation, Equal Pay and individual school strike action. Relationships with the teaching trade unions are positive, a formal JCC arrangement takes place each term. Joint Council/ HR and TU meetings with Merthyr Council also take place to explore ways of working in a more collaborative way e.g. both Councils have agreed a recruitment protocol to assist wherever possible in managing potential redeployment issues. At a Consortium level meetings also take place with all recognised unions (teaching and support staff) and this regional interaction is used as the conduit to develop the school based employment policies.
4.3 Do the Authority's asset management arrangements support robust and effective decision making and improvement?	Since the last Corporate Self Assessment was completed in late 2015, the Council has agreed and implemented its Corporate Plan – '*The Way Ahead'*. The Plan sets out a clear vision and direction for the Council, see previous sections. Among other things, '*The Way Ahead'* shapes and directs the Council's Asset Management arrangements and is also focused on helping communities through '*RCT Together'* and making sure that we do everything we can to reduce the Council's running costs, including on its buildings and associated costs, i.e. *"Working in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things, to limit the impact on the Council taxpayer......."* The ambition and actions to which Asset Management directly contributes are set out below. • Reducing office accommodation floor space by 20% by 2020, further reducing back office costs • *Investing in new IT to enable staff to work more flexibly across a range of locations, allowing them to be closer to the residents they work with*

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	• *Continuing to increase energy efficiency measures for the Council, including carbon reduction across services and renewable energy schemes for our own land and property* • *Collaborating more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions* • *Working with suppliers and contracted service providers to reduce the costs of supplies and service* • *Creating a more business-like footing with the community and voluntary sector through better, more coordinated commissioning by the Council."* Progress to date is on target on actions to deliver these priorities and updates can be found in the Quarter 2 Performance Report. In 2015 WAO undertook a review of the Council's Strategic Approach to Asset Management, the WAO concluded that Asset Management "*has a high profile and is being driven at a strategic level within the Council by both political leadership and senior management*". The report included only one proposal for improvement. '*The Council should develop mechanisms for reporting a comprehensive picture of the management of its assets to senior managers and elected members to enable ongoing oversight and to inform decision making.' See 4.3d below.* The full WAO report containing the detailed findings and the response to the proposal for improvement were reported to Audit Committee 31 March 2016 and subsequently Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5 July 2016. The WAO report concluded that the "*recent senior management restructure has strengthened corporate working in relation to asset management with the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) supporting the Medium Term Service Plan*". Another consequence of changes in senior management is the focus on shared priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. This is also bringing about an associated cultural shift. This cultural shift is facilitating closer working between services in order to achieve shared goals, e.g. Asset Management's role in the delivery of agile working and the digital work plan working alongside ICT. The WAO report recognised the Council's early work in engaging communities in taking a proactive approach to the future management assets. The implementation and maturing of the '*RCT Together*' Strategy and the asset management transfer to community organisations have improved local relationships, and actively demonstrate the views of local people to reflect local need.

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Up to October 2015, six assets had been successfully transferred to community organisations e.g. the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd, the Abercynon War Memorial Pool, Beddau and Maerdy Libraries. Since October 2015, a further two buildings have been sold, i.e. the former Treorchy Community Education Centre to 'Too Good to Waste Ltd' and the former Penygraig Library to Valleys Kids. In addition, leases have been granted in respect of the Cynon Valley Museum, Courthouse Street Pontypridd, the former Llewellyn Day Centre, Pentre and Barry Sidings Café and Toilets. As of 4 January 2016, 111 formal expressions of interest and 57 informal enquiries had been received. Of these the majority were for assets held by Leisure. These include proposals for the transfer of community paddling pools in Aberdare, Penygraig, Ystrad, Penrhiwceiber, Maerdy and Treherbert. Lee Gardens, Penrhiwceiber and Aberdare Park Paddling Pools are being progressed. We are also planning on organising a joint workshop, in partnership with Interlink, to support the individual groups to work collaboratively with community groups in relation to Penygraig Park, Pentre and Ystrad Paddling Pools. There has been an increased demand for accessible buildings to house childcare facilities. Proposals have focussed on closed primary schools including Ynyswen Infants, Ferndale Infants and Rhiwgarn Infants.

RCT continues to work in partnership with other public sector organisations, and Strategic direction is provided through the Public Service Board with tactical management delivered through the Cwm Taf Asset Management Group. Information on property ownership is shared across participating organisations through a common information system (ePims) sponsored by Welsh Government. Through this group, partner organisations have shared and discussed key aspects of respective property strategies, seeking to identify issues of mutual benefit. However, although there are some examples of innovation in shared asset use e.g., locating police community support officers within new school buildings to provide a service closer to the community, these are currently not widespread. Development of shared services such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), located at Pontypridd police station, is contributing to the shared use of assets and the Council's Asset Management Plan 2013-18, sets out the Council's commitment to working in partnership with other organisations.

In its report on the Council's Strategic Approach to Asset Management, the WAO made only one proposal for improvement i.e.

"*The Council should develop mechanisms for reporting a comprehensive picture of the management of its assets to senior managers and elected members to enable ongoing oversight and to inform decision making*".

As a result of this recommendation, steps have been taken to strengthen performance management of assets by:
   • providing biannual reports to Cabinet in respect of progress against the CAMP, to include 21st Century Schools programme,
   • more regular reporting in respect of Energy Management and Carbon Reduction as well as the management of assets. Most recently, both of

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	these items were reported to the Asset Management Working Group, 19 October, with further updates scheduled for February and June, • providing Cabinet Members with quarterly updates in respect of disposals and acquisitions of Freehold and leasehold interests, the first of which is currently being agreed with the Property Portfolio Holder The management and direction of the Council's Asset Management arrangements to support decision making is being strengthened by the strategic vision in place through the Council's Corporate Plan. The accelerated rationalisation of the Council's property portfolio is continuing to improve and maximise the use of resources. We are becoming more innovative in the provision of shared community resources, both via asset transfer and better utilisation of existing assets, but whilst there are still relatively few examples of this across the Council, good progress has being made over the past year. These include the former Llewellyn Pentre Day Centre which is now a busy hub of activity for Pentre residents and is offering learning skills and employment activities as well as pre school, mother and toddler groups and clubs for older residents. The local group 'Canolfan Pentre' run by local volunteers is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and has signed a 25 year lease on the building. The group is working to help reduce poverty, increase educational achievement and support community development. Another example is in Courthouse Street Pontypridd which has been leased to 'Bright Futures' for 25 years and is actively supporting a range of tenants within the Community Hub including Artis Community, Muni Project Veterans Group and 'Our Place' a young mums' support group. Service provision continues to be impacted in some areas by the condition and suitability of buildings that do not meet modern expected standards, for example many Council residential homes do not have en-suite facilities, which is a requirement for all new residential homes. The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2013-18, was agreed by Cabinet in June 2013. The CAMP is monitored and updated annually and is prepared in consultation with Service Directors to reflect service needs and priorities. The CAMP is the strategic document for asset management and aligns with Corporate priorities. The CAMP sets out the asset strategy for Property Assets for 2013/2018 and has been developed to ensure that asset management is applied in terms of the long term strategic view of the land and property portfolio. The Council has been pursuing an active programme of disposing of surplus property assets over a number of years though the Land Review and Asset Rationalisation Programmes set out in the CAMP. The Council has been reducing the size of the Office accommodation portfolio to ensure that premises are fit for purpose and provide greater synergy between services to improve operational efficiency, reduce accommodation costs and release capital for reinvestment as set out in the Office Accommodation Strategy. An interim update of the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2013-18 was presented to Cabinet on 19 July 2016, where progress was noted. Plans are in place to provide more regular updates of progress of the CAMP, with the next report to SLT and Cabinet currently scheduled for November 2016.

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	The lower level Service Asset Management Plans (SAMP) set out in more detail the impact on assets of changing service requirements. SAMPs are produced annually by service managers and inform the production of the CAMP. Last year's SSE for Property Services identified "*there is potential to improve outcomes by seeking more robust and consistent approach to SAMPs*". This was subsequently reinforced by the WAO which found *"that the quality of Service Asset Management Plans underpinning the CAMP is variable"*. A new template has been designed to make the SAMPs more user friendly and a new process has been formulated to provide additional support and assistance to Services directorates. The new template and process has been rolled out and its success will be evaluated. The next set of SAMPs is currently being prepared, completion is planned for December 2016. Strengthening the links between corporate and service asset management planning is improving as a result of the strategic direction set out in the Corporate Plan, but there is still work to do. Asset management is focussed on the Corporate Plan priorities of improving operational and financial performance of assets by reducing the overall size of the portfolio, 20% by 2020, decreasing the proportion of the portfolio that is leasehold tenure; and reducing energy use and CO_2 emissions. The Corporate Office Accommodation Strategy delivers the Council's continuing policy of reducing the size of its office portfolio. Up to 2015, the number of buildings used for back office purposes was reduced by 19. Since then, this has been reduced by a further 8 properties. As part of an Accommodation Review (2016-20) a small number of sites have been identified as being of strategic importance, providing the core of office accommodation and likely to be used in the medium to long term. The review also sets out a programme for reduction in office accommodation. To date, work as part of the review has also resulted in a potential 21% reduction in the office accommodation foot print with potential capital receipts of over £1million and property cost savings of approximately £654k per annum and a reduction in approximately 589 desk spaces. The strategy will continue to support the service changes and the associated opportunities and implications. The strategy will also support the new ways of working arising from the opportunities created by advances in technology, e.g. agile working and the digitalisation of front line and administrative processes. As part of its work programme, the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee identified Council Accommodation as an area for review. As part of this review a Scrutiny Working Group was formed where it also considered the Office Rationalisation Strategy. The findings from the working group were reported to the Finance & Performance Committee on 20 July. The recommendation contained in the report to ask the Cabinet to approve the Office Accommodation Strategy was agreed and will be presented to Cabinet shortly. The percentage of buildings with a completed condition survey has risen above 50% for the first time, but is still too low. Prospective improvements in assets to enhance service delivery are kept under review. However there are instances where the physical condition of buildings is currently

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	hampering service delivery e.g. libraries and leisure centres. In recent years the Council has invested in AMR technology to improve the accuracy of data collection relating to energy usage. This data is used to target investment for 'invest to save' initiatives such as renewable energy and to comply with CRC requirements. The AMR is also used by the Energy Team for DEC production and Energy Management. With the use of '*Systems Link'* the Energy Team as well as the various site managers and energy champions are now able to get accurate energy profiles to help identify energy wastage. There needs to be an increased focus on water management as current billing and metering arrangement is difficult to manage. The Council's 21st Century schools programme supports the current Economy Priority, having previously been aligned to the Education Priority, and continues to demonstrate how asset management directly supports service delivery. The programme seeks to improve the network of schools within communities and ensure the size and locations of schools meet the needs of the communities they serve. The programme will increase the efficiency of services by removing in the region of 2,638 surplus places by 2018/19. £3.6m has been saved to date in revenue costs, with savings of £15.64M in maintenance backlog, and further savings due to a reduction in energy consumption and CO2 emissions. More importantly, the programme will deliver modern Educational facilities to support new curriculum requirements by 2021 such as fully serviced laboratories and performing arts spaces and schools will be able to provide all pupils with the breadth and depth of curriculum to study all subject areas. In addition to Educational outcomes, many wider benefits are being derived from the programme. For example, targets for contractors providing apprenticeship places providing training and employment opportunities for young people. Facilities sharing with other services to utilise schools beyond the end of the traditional school day, most notably leisure facilities. It is too soon to fully evaluate the impact of new schools on educational outcomes, although early indications are promising, for example the educational outcome improvements at Aberdare Community School. These outcomes will be monitored following project completion.

4.4 Is the Authority's approach to using technology positively supporting Improvement?	The Council's Corporate Plan contains a clear ambition that the 'majority of customer interactions with the Council to be on line by 2020'. To enable this to be delivered, there is an Interim Digital Plan in place until March 2017, which includes actions to develop and implement a medium term Digital Strategy. The interim plan is supported by an investment fund. From April 2017, there will be a new three year plan in place. This has been developed and agreed as part of a series of engagements with lead politicians, members of the council's leadership team and key officers is currently in draft and will be subject to agreement by Cabinet. The plan includes 'Digital Resident' services and improvements that are underpinned by web and on line services. It sets out the Council's direction regarding medium term infrastructure 'building blocks' which should ensure the continuous reliability to the ICT infrastructure, which will in turn help to support digital transformation.
	
	What this will mean is
	    o digital services that ensure more processes are automated from the customer to point of delivery,
	    o self service for the customer where possible, both on the web and mobile,

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| | o providing advisor assistance where it is most needed, i.e. targeted at more complex processes whilst also encouraging self service,
o improved (paper) records management service where they are required to be retained within the Digital Organisation theme of the same plan.

As the customer access channels are managed in a single service, customer data is used to identify areas for improvement and the results of improvement (channel shift) can be clearly evidenced, see below. The service's annual work programme is closely aligned to Communications and Marketing priorities for the council at any time to ensure key investment areas have adequate on line provision and that social media feedback is supported by the contact centre where appropriate.

The services delivered by ICT and Customer Care are key to the delivery of Corporate Plan goals. To ensure continuing focus on this priority, the Head of Customer Care and the Head of ICT report to the Group Director Corporate and Frontline Services, the Chief Executive, the Leader and Deputy Leader on progress on a 6-week cycle. These review meeting are informed by Highlight reports and data.

ICT is working towards resetting its service/customer governance arrangements during 16/17, with a clear focus on regular Service Management Team engagements to ensure its resources are better aligned to the business and to inform its work programme. The ICT annual work programme forms the mainstay for technology improvement activities, with its focus upon interim Digital plan actions and key business projects e.g. Wales Community Care Information System, 21st Century Schools and service application/systems. The continued arrangements for the leadership team and political endorsement/oversight of the new 3-year Digital Strategy and underpinning work programme will remain key to securing continuous improvement.

ICT participates in benchmarking exercises with the Society of IT Leaders (SOCITM) to compare its performance with all Councils. Previous benchmarking has demonstrated that the service was comparable to other Councils overall with the outcome results of the 2016 exercise due in Q3. Outcome results will be used to inform plans to secure continuous improvement.

Key investments to assure infrastructure have been accepted as fundamental pre-requisites to deliver business efficiencies, service transformation and improvements. Key enabling technology has been planned and invested in during the year:-
• Network infrastructure upgrades and Wi-Fi deployments; have been provisioned to the Council's 8 strategic sites, Libraries, key Leisure and Community facilities.
• Email being the critical mainstay of council business communication has been made more resilient and now provides business continuity/archiving functionality as part of integration with cloud technology.
• End of life Council Telephony systems are being replaced with a modern Unified Communications Platform. |

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	• Microsoft licencing enterprise agreement, that allows for cloud transition. The Digital Strategy has a clearly defined 'Digital Workplace' principle that set out the ambition to drive innovation through the redesign of services and exploitation of technology. Key initiatives that are planned to enable service transformation & improvement during the year are:- • Piloting the implementation of Agile Working across the authority - clearly aligned to enable and support wider building asset reduction plans. The launch of a Regional Hot Desking approach within key buildings is imminent. This will test and validate perceived improvements such as improving staff productivity, better work life balance, cutting down on travel time and costs e.g. staff returning to and from the office. • Paperless Meetings with Cabinet & Senior Leadership Team • Mobile Field Working • Desktop Video Conferencing, Meetings & Collaboration • Reduce the need for paper assets The impact and benefits from the use of technology is regularly monitored as part of the meetings with the Leader and Senior Leader ship Team. Examples of progress/information contained in the highlight reports include; • On line 'location' services supporting changes in customer behaviour e.g. find bin day. Some processes have 100% on line take up, e.g. recycle bags, skips and scaffold licences. The rate of street care based services undertaken on line is 54%. • On line bookings for LIDO Ponty account for 70% of all capacity. 30% is deliberately held for 'drop ins'. Between April –September 2016 there were 19,226 bookings made on line. • The general take up for the Council's mobile view of the website available online is 57%. However, this increases significantly, to 80% in relation to Leisure services. As a result of this data we have upgraded the online tools available to residents to book and pay for Leisure activities. In addition, of the 3.9m web pages viewed between April and September 2016, 70% relate to residents' service and of that 39% relate to Sport and Leisure. This data is directly informing improvements and future arrangements. Another service with high digital use is school transport where 74 % School and 100% of college transport seats are booked/purchased online. • During 2016/17 a wider baseline of digital take up has commenced to establish 'How Digital is RCT?' in terms of its customers and wider data in regard to e.g. jobs/Education etc. ICT Service performance is measured, monitored monthly/quarterly, and yearly via traditional Local Performance Indicators and against its Service

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management • Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services
	Delivery Plan Actions. Actions from the interim Digital Plan form the basis of the Service Delivery Plan. Key components being Customer request for assistance completed in an agreed timescale and service (infrastructure/application) available for use when required by business users. As part of project take-on, initial business cases and projected outcome benefits are captured, however to ensure that that the impact and benefits from technology is effectively evaluated there needs to be a more formal approach to project sign-off closure and adoption of mechanisms for capturing future business states or benefits realisation As part of the WAO Risk Based Assessment of our corporate arrangements, in August 2016, ICT was subject to a review. The findings are positive and indicate that the service is moving in the right direction. The commentary includes: ➢ *The Council has a clear vision for (ICT) which is integrated with the Council's overarching aims and goals.* ➢ *Clear plans for using technology to support improvement…supporting the Council to deliver against its priorities, for example….. by increasing electronic access channels for citizens.* ➢ *The Council Leader takes a lead role in championing and challenging ICT activity, demonstrating commitment to the work of ICT from a political perspective. At the same time, the Council recognises that its ICT resources and capacity are finite, and takes appropriate steps designed to maximise efficiency and to allocate its resources in priority areas.* ➢ *The Council has introduced a number of improved online transactions for service users, such as Blue Badges, Bus Passes and Housing Benefits Claims. The Council, learning from its use of the 'My Council' app, is developing more smartphone and tablet access mechanisms. For example, its new leisure services app has good take up by citizens who find it particularly useful for booking leisure facilities. Such initiatives have helped reduce the number of calls and visitors to customer services sites. This in turn has helped the Council to reduce customer service staff costs.* ➢ *The Council is extending Wi-Fi access to its staff and to the public* ➢ The Council has a clear vision for Information & Communications Technology (ICT), which is integrated with the Council's overarching aims and goals ➢ ICT governance is robust with involvement by all services/departments through Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The ICT resource plan is a specific focus of attention, and SLT approves and prioritises the projects and developments that the ICT service undertakes

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management • Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services
	The ICT service is supporting the Council to deliver against its priorities, for example by delivering solutions to facilitate agile working and by increasing electronic access channels for citizens.
4.5 Is the Authority's approach to Information Management positively supporting Improvement?	The Council recognises the value of the information it holds and the potential benefits to the organisation to secure continuous improvement. This is reflected in the Information Management plan (2011-2014) which set out a framework of how the Council plans to manage its information assets effectively. The plan aims to support the work of the Council by improving the management of information and enabling a more effective and efficient exchange of information with external bodies. It is recognised that Information Management Plan has expired but its 'protect' principles remain valid and must be carried forward to a newly developed plan. The new plan should also encompass a clear direction to "exploiting" information assets that will be necessary to underpin the council's digital transformation ambitions. This medium term Information & Data Management plan will be developed to underpin the Council's Digital Strategy in 2017/18 Updated actions are captured within the ICT Service Delivery Plan with key themes mirroring the aims contained within the initial plan including: ➢ development of new information management policies and procedures, ➢ improved training and communication to staff, ➢ improved governance and ownership of data and systems through 'owner' responsibilities, ➢ improved records management and information handling e.g. retention and disposal, ➢ better assessment of data protection risks (privacy impact assessments) ➢ information sharing Progress has been made against all areas but further development is still required to keep pace with changes in working practices e.g. agile working, the growing demand for information sharing through collaborative working and changes in legislative requirements i.e. the forthcoming EU Data Protection Regulations. The Information Management function resides within the ICT Service with a designated Information Management (IM) & Data Protection Act (DPA) Officer. The Head of ICT reports directly to the Group Director of Corporate Services (GDCS) with the GDCS accountable as the Council's Senior Information Management Risk Officer (SIRO).

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management • Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services
	Governance arrangements are in place with a fortnightly Information Management & Security forum attended by Head of ICT, Information Security Officer, Information Management & Data Protection Act (DPA) Officer and Programme & Support Manager. This forum monitors via Cherwell (ICT Management Information System) and manages operational processes via ICT Call Management Processes, improvement actions and incidents. There is clear alignment from this Group to manage exceptions, risks and escalations to the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) A quarterly Information Management Working Group is well embedded and chaired by the IM & DPA Officer and draws representation from across key services within the Council. These representatives inform and perform the role of service group information management 'champions'. The group receives feeds from the Information Management & Security Forum and the Strategic Information Management Board. The Group has specific terms of reference which includes: • Supporting the delivery of the Information Management improvement actions held within the ICT SDP, • Supporting the co-ordinating of any reported incidents or events, and the dissemination of advice and guidance following lesson's learned. • A quarterly Information Management Board has recently been initiated to provide strategic leadership and oversight, which is chaired by the Council's SIRO. The board is supported by the Head of ICT, Head of Legal, Head of Organisational Development, Head of Internal Audit and the IM & DPA Officer. The Information Management function is externally audited by the WAO. In February 2013, the WAO progress review found that "**progress has been made on all six proposals (2010 review)** for improvement, **strengthening and broadening the Council's arrangements** for the governance and management of its information asset". In 2016, Information Management was subject to a further WAO review that found the Council 'has generally **sound information governance arrangements** and is making **steady progress** to improve its management of information. More specifically the following improvements made during recent months to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements i.e.: ➢ accountabilities of the SIRO realigned to the Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services, ➢ responsibility for Data Protection has been aligned to a single officer (Principal Information Management & Data Protection Officer) so that responsibility for all information management issues is now located in one team, ➢ new Information Management Board established – chaired by the Senior Information Risk Owner. Membership includes Head of ICT, Head of Legal Corporate & Democratic Services, Operational Audit Manager, Head of Organisational Development, Principal IM & DP Officer

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| | ➢ membership and Terms of Reference for the Information Management Working Group has been reviewed to ensure adequate service representation following the retirement of a number of officers. Updated data protection training has been arranged for group members to ensure sufficient knowledge and understanding to undertake the IM 'champion' role.

➢ Information Asset Owner (IAO) roles and responsibilities have been defined. Job descriptions have been updated at Head of Service level, and above, to include IAO responsibilities. IAO training has been provided to all Heads of Service by the National Archive on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

➢ following the success of the Head teacher Data Protection training programme, Link Governor's for Data Protection are in the process of being appointed within each Governing Body. Data Protection training/awareness is in place for Links Governors and will be delivered in conjunction with the Information Commissioners Office.

As per the WAO 2016 report, the Authority 'has generally **sound information governance arrangements in place'**. 'Current **arrangements are appropriate** to ensure that the Council complies with its legislative responsibilities'.

Performance is evidenced through monitoring of Information Management actions contained within the Service Delivery Plan. Progress is reported to the Council's Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.

In the past 12 - 18 months the Information Management function has:
➢ supported the delivery and implementation of joint working arrangements through the development of Information Sharing Protocols (ISP) in keeping with Welsh Government's WASPI framework. These include the Multi agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); Vale, Valley & Cardiff Adoption Collaboration; Provision of housing within RCT; Flying Start programme. The Council now has 14 assured ISPs which provides increased assurance of the management of Information risk as part of sharing with partners.
➢ increased the number of WASPI trained ISP facilitators to support the development of information Sharing Protocols with other organisations.
➢ supported the WASPI exit strategy by forming a Regional WASPI Quality Assurance Group within Cwm Taf with partners including Local Authorities, Police, Fire and Health services.
➢ reviewed existing policies and procedures to ensure on-going compliance with legislation and industry standards and developed new to support changes in working practices e.g. agile working necessitates clear workspace guidance, hot-desking; protecting personal information outside of the normal office environment; secure disposal of information etc.
➢ piloted secure/encrypted email solution that has now been made available for wider use dependent on business need. This is currently being used within Community & Children's Services in the Safeguarding & Support Team |

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> ➤ successfully gained annual 'Public Service Network' accreditation ensuring that the Council continues to comply with security and infrastructure requirements for sharing information with other public bodies,

The Council actively monitors information management and security incidents, with key learning informing future information management priorities, and targeted staff training and awareness.

This is to provide assurance to the effective management and security of Council held information.

During 2015/16, any incidents/events that were reported were subsequently investigated by the Information Management Team. The majority of incidents related to communication errors e.g. information being sent to an incorrect address/recipient. As a result of investigations, service areas have amended policies, procedures and processes to include additional checks such as verifying client details. In addition, general advice has been issued via Information Management Bulletins covering areas such as correct use of mailing lists and how to recall emails sent in error.

The Council self reports incidents that are deemed a 'serious breach' to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). To date no 'serious breaches' have been reported to the ICO, with the outcome of the ICO's investigation concluding 'no further action'.

Potential Areas for Improvement 2016

1. **Progress the register of fees and charges as part of the budget setting arrangements for 2017/18.**
2. **Update the HR Strategy so that it brings together the range of organisational development and people management practices to help address the workforce challenges faced by the Council and its services over the next few years.**
3. **Establish the extent to which PDR and other management capacity building schemes in place are contributing to organisational effectiveness/improvements in service delivery with a particular focus on leadership and accountability.**
4. **Continue to improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management.**
5. **Complete the evaluation of the Agile Working pilot to establish the impact on organisational effectiveness, service delivery, ICT and office accommodation**
6. **Continue the focus on staff engagement.**
7. **Seek new opportunities share accommodation with partners with a view to improving services to residents and continue to monitor the effectiveness of shared facilities e.g. between schools and leisure facilities and evaluate the outcomes following project completion.**
8. **Evaluate the changed approach to Service Asset Management Planning SAMPs in particular the links between corporate and service asset management planning.**
9. **Introduce and implement a new Digital Strategy and supporting Information and Data Management Plan from April 2017.**

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver it planned improvements in performance and outcomes?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Improve the productivity of staff through effective staff absence management • Address shortcomings in the ICT Infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of Council services
10. **Implement ICT infrastructure improvements to deliver business efficiencies, service transformation and improvements.**	

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5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?**	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities

Response to Key Priority 2015

There has been significant progress made to strengthen the partnership arrangements to support the new Public Services Board with a Strategic Partnership Review being undertaken across Cwm Taf. Partnerships have been rationalised and clearer governance arrangements have been implemented. This has increased communication, understanding and sharing of cross-cutting actions across partnerships in the region. At a strategic level, the review was instrumental in the agreement to establish a single Public Services Board across the Cwm Taf region and a new Strategic Partnership Board to drive the changes to public service delivery demanded by the Well-being of Future Generations Act; Social Services and Well-being Act, Environment Act and other legislation. Work is continuing and will extend the Strategic Partnership Review into wider collaborative and partnership arrangements that currently exist. The Public Services Board has agreed to a joint scrutiny function being developed for scrutinising its work; opportunities for joint commissioning to be explored and a partnership support unit to be developed.

| 5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?** | **Partnership arrangements can vary from a coming together to solve a joint problem to a multi-agency arrangement to deliver services differently, involving financial resources and legislative requirements. The Council and its partner organisations tend to take a proportionate approach to the governance around collaboration. Therefore, in some cases, it is not clear whether the Council's collaboration and partnership arrangements are working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes, in others e.g. the Public Services Board, the Safeguarding Boards and the Social Services and Well-being Partnership, there are clearer arrangements and outcomes in place.**

 The Council is engaged in a wide range of collaborative arrangements and agreements, which vary from high profile regional arrangements, such as the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and Central South Consortium, to small projects based on networks and relationships. On occasion, small projects can lead to much larger opportunities for collaboration and it is then important that the right decision-makers are involved and appropriate governance is put in place.

 Most collaborative arrangements have a Terms of Reference, stating why the partners have come together and what they intend to deliver. In some cases, the need to collaborate is a legislative or funding requirement e.g. the Cwm Taf Area Planning Board; Cwm Taf Safeguarding Boards. In other cases, partners collaborate to deliver a specific project e.g. the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; and in some instances, the partnership is the way of working e.g. the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service. However, in other cases, partners come together simply from a willingness to achieve something, work together and share information, with the aim of avoiding duplication, maximising opportunities and creating efficiencies. These smaller scale projects are part of the day-to-day work of an increasing number of officers in the Council and, therefore, it is difficult to have awareness of a multitude of arrangements.

 The Cwm Taf Strategic Partnership Review undertaken during 2015/16 began to establish a 'manual' of partnership working relating to strategic |

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5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?**	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities
	partnerships, public protection/safeguarding, community safety and mental health partnership meetings. The 'manual' is currently being put together by South Wales Police, with collaboration from partners, to include Terms of Reference and reflect the statutory functions undertaken by the partnerships. It is not clear if all partners are committed to all forms of collaboration within which the Council is engaged, as this covers a broad spectrum. A recent good example of joint working include a working group established to undertake the Well-being Assessment and Population Assessments as required under the Well-being of Future Generations and Social Services and Wellbeing Acts. There is a project plan in place for statutory and non-statutory partners to produce the two assessments by March 2017 and two Welsh Government grant funding streams associated with the work. Further information about the progress of the assessments, including draft briefing documents, containing data and engagement feedback, is available on the collaborative, partnership-funded website – the [Cwm Taf Engagement Hub](#). Another example is the Intermediate Care Fund, which has again been awarded during 2016/17 to the region. This has been a successful collaboration over the last three years and has included the employment of four Community Co-ordinators. These officers are tasked with connecting older people with community-based services in their local areas, to avoid issues of social isolation. The Co-ordinators have been successful in the outcomes they have achieved for individual older people. They are currently based at the Single Point of Access in Adult Services, assisting Social Services staff with signposting older people away from statutory services into community-based, low-level activities. However, partnerships that exist more for sharing information and collaborating on specific projects do not always achieve full commitment from all organisations, often due to constraints around organisational governance, capacity and available funding.
	Since the principles for partnerships for Rhondda Cynon Taf were agreed in 2011, new legislation, different ways of working and funding requirements have meant that new partnerships have emerged, with working groups also being set up to carry out tasks. Partnerships are also increasingly on a regional footprint, i.e. across Cwm Taf, South East Wales and wider, which can make lines of accountability less clear. Therefore, the partnership landscape is complex, which means that governance arrangements are not always clear and robust. The growth of partnership arrangements and the associated meetings required has meant that, in some cases, junior officers are required to attend meetings on behalf of their organisations. Very often, these officers do not have the mandate to make appropriate contributions to the meeting or make decisions. There is also an increasing focus in legislation on involving interest groups and community members in decision-making processes as co-production and co-delivery. This is not yet well-established, but under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, citizen voice and involvement are strong themes. We need to better identify and understand the risk and opportunities that this

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5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?**	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities
	could present To respond to the issues around governance, capability and decision-making, the Cwm Taf Strategic Partnership Review is currently being undertaken with the following drivers: • *"The need to maximise capability and capacity, delivering services in an efficient and effective way that represent value for money – both operational and support functions.* • *The findings of the Casey review and circumstances surrounding Rotherham i.e. the need for clear robust governance leading to improved scrutiny and accountability.* • *The provisions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act/The Social Services and Wellbeing Act.* • *The opportunity presented by the need for a Public Service Board structure and also existing effective Regional Collaboration Board structure in Cwm Taf which is more mature than in other areas.* • *The drive for collaboration.* • *Sustainability of all partners to service complex, bureaucratic and multiple arrangements.* • *Previous reviews undertaken by both Local Authorities in 2010 – 2012.* • *Impact on partners having to service two different sets of governance.* • *The requirement for improved and streamlined performance reporting regime.* • *Improved service delivery for our local communities."* Between January and June 2016, the review moved at pace. Partnerships relating to community safety, public protection/safeguarding and mental health have been rationalised, where possible, and clearer governance arrangements have been implemented. This has increased communication, understanding and sharing of cross-cutting actions across partnerships in the region. At a strategic level, the review was instrumental in the agreement to establish one Public Services Board across the Cwm Taf region and a new Strategic Partnership Board to drive the changes to public service delivery demanded by the Well-being of Future Generations Act; Social Services and Well-being Act, Environment Act and other legislation. Although the revised strategic partnership arrangements are structurally different, the strong partnership relationships at the Public Services Board level owing to previous long standing arrangements of the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board and Joint Local Service Board continue. The Public Service Board has good attendance from all Chief Executives/Chairs/Leaders in the region. At a lower level, the Strategic Partnership Board is a new forum, made up of the Group Directors and senior managers of organisations in the region. Both forums contain the right 'decision-makers' to create change across the public and voluntary sectors.

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5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?**	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities
	Work is continuing to produce a partnership risk register which once complete will enable SLT to have appropriate oversight of all partnerships in which the Council is currently involved, which will include the PSB. It is intended that where the Council is the lead body in a partnership, that partnership will be required to apply the Council's Risk Management Tool kit. There is now a need to extend the Strategic Partnership Review into wider collaborative and partnership arrangements that currently exist in Cwm Taf and also to rationalise other arrangements, where possible. For instance, the Public Services Board has agreed to a joint scrutiny function being developed for scrutinising its work; opportunities for joint commissioning to be explored and a partnership support unit to be developed. The Council's scrutiny function continues to carry out scrutiny on partnership and collaboration arrangements, where it has made specific decisions i.e. if Cabinet approves a proposal to collaborate, the relevant scrutiny committee will also challenge and comment. In terms of the wider partnership, a new model of partnership scrutiny being implemented in line with the recommendations of the Strategic Partnership Review and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. This should be in place by the end of the calendar year, in order to scrutinise the Public Services Board. A report outlining these arrangements was approved by Council on the 28th September 2016. It is remains unclear whether all collaborative arrangements and partnerships have the capacity to deliver. Currently, implementing legislation, austerity measures within the public and voluntary sectors and providing the innovation and flexibility required for partnership working is proving challenging. On the 11 October 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Tackling Poverty made a statement in Plenary session, that signalled the start of a broad programme of engagement with stakeholders on the Welsh Government's proposed new approach to building resilient communities. The statement indicated that he was also minded to phase out the Communities First (CF) Programme while establishing a new approach to meet the challenges of the future. Although there is no clarity currently on future arrangements for building resilient communities, this has created uncertainty for many third sector and community based organisations. The newly established Strategic Partnership Board involves some partners who have not previously been involved in partnership working before, which has involved developing people's skills and capability. As such, the Chair of the PSB is seeking to develop their understanding and perspectives on service delivery and tackling priorities in a different way with regards to the five ways of working in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We have also been successful in obtaining two regional grants from Welsh Government to support the completion of the wellbeing and population assessments. These grants are funding 1.6 FTE who are adding capacity and capability to the partnership and are tasked with undertaking the assessments. The grants are also contributing towards training and raising awareness of both the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Social

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5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?**	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities

	Services and Wellbeing Act, for staff within each of the partnership organisations.
	Resources within some partnerships are generally well managed, targeted at priority areas and agreed by the relevant Partnership Board and linked to strategic priorities e.g. Delivering Transformation grant, Intermediate Care Fund, Supporting People Grant and the Social Care Workforce Development Partnership Grant and resources associated with other partnerships e.g. Safeguarding. Many of the grants attached to strategic partnerships and collaboration involve the Council as the grant recipient, meaning that we are well-sighted on the expenditure and governance arrangements surrounding the resource. In order to share resources and achieve efficiencies, the Council works in partnership with other Councils - mostly Merthyr County Borough Council. Examples of these projects include e.g. Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub. The Youth Offending Service and Safeguarding Boards, which have well developed and long standing partnerships in place and also, the more recent Workforce Development (Social Care) Group arising from the work to implement the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.
	Depending on the partnership's business, there are some performance management frameworks in place. Many of the Council's Service Delivery Plans now include reference to collaboration also the performance measures contained within these Plans are utilised by the partnership. For example the Area Planning Board received regular information on performance of local substance misuse services versus the grant amount. In instances where partnership arrangements involve funding, there is more likely to be performance management systems in place. However, in most cases, there is not an appropriate way of measuring the performance of the partnership as it is a forum for sharing information, collaborating on projects and setting up initiatives that improve the outcomes of people living in the area and so it they are less able to evidence their effectiveness. For more strategic partnerships, the Strategic Partnership Review has taken forward the recommendation of the previous Corporate Assessment in RCT CBC to *"Strengthen the partnership performance management arrangements so that they better inform challenge and scrutiny."* There is work underway to find a solution that meets the needs of the Cwm Taf Public Service Board organisations in providing insight, opportunities for collaboration and service information in one place. In some cases, there is a clear performance management framework associated with the partnership's business e.g. the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board have performance measures in place to regularly review their response to issues. In the case of the Social Services and Well-being Act, there is a comprehensive action plan in place which is robustly monitored by the partner organisations and reported to the Executive Group. The assessments under the Well-being of Future Generations and Social Services and Well-being Acts which will be published by March 2017, will assist the Public Services Board, Social Services & Well-being Partnership Board and services within the Council to establish an evidence base for intervention

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5. **Are the Authority's collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?**	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 • Strengthen the partnership arrangements in order that the new Public Services Board tackles the key operational issues that prevail between partners and which improve key services to the local communities

	and measuring progress.
	It remains unclear whether all of the collaborative arrangements in which the Council is engaged are delivering improved outcomes. In many cases, people have come together to work in partnership on a difficult issue, which is solved through a joint approach. However, this happens on a micro scale and is seldom measured in any performance management system. Some partnerships are brought together to focus on one improved outcome, such as tackling obesity or smoking cessation. In these cases, the programmes commissioned by the partners are having a positive impact. See Director of Public Health, Cwm Taf, Annual Report on Childhood Obesity (2015) demonstrating some positive examples of programmes that are having an impact on obesity levels. http://www.cwmtafuhb.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/274088 and Smoking cessation programme for maternal smoking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnxnR0szzOA In general, a principle of partnership working is efficiency and effective working and the Council is required under the Well-being of Future Generations Act to demonstrate integration and collaboration with others. This has led to financial benefits in some cases, such as joint appointments across the Health Board and Local Authority, joint management arrangements - such as the Youth Offending Service and Cwm Taf Safeguarding Business Unit, and saving money over the longer term through innovative projects, such as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Potential Areas for Improvement 2016
1. **Ensure new governance and scrutiny arrangements are focused on delivering improved outcomes.**
2. **Continue to challenge and review collaborative arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose and have the capacity to deliver.**
3. **Strengthen the performance management arrangements so that they better inform challenge and scrutiny and identify approved performance and outcomes.**
4. **Contribute to the completion of the 'manual' of partnership working relating to strategic partnership meetings.**
5. **Complete Wellbeing and Population assessments in respect of Well-being of Future Generations and Social Services and Wellbeing Plans.**
6. **Implement new model of partnership scrutiny as set out in the report to Council in September 2016.**

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6. Is the Authority effectively managing its improvement programme?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Refresh the Council's performance management framework and in particular ensure all staff have an annual individual staff performance management/development review;

Response to Key Priority 2015

A Performance Improvement Framework has replaced the Performance Management Framework and was agreed by Cabinet on 15 December2016. The Framework sets out the performance arrangements in place and sets the scene for the changes that will emerge from the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Framework also makes the link between organisational and individual performance. A new Performance Review process directly linked to Delivery Plan Priorities is being piloted with GR 15 officers and above. This pilot started with Senior Leadership Team and is being rolled out to GR 15 officers in the coming months. Once this pilot is evaluated, the PDR process will be implemented for all staff in the Council.

Following its recent review in respect of the Council's arrangements for managing improvement, in May 2016, the WAO indicated that the Council is "*strengthening improvement but needs to continue to develop its approach to assessing the delivery of outcomes for citizens*". The detailed findings can be found within the report which was presented to Cabinet in June 2016, and Audit Committee in September.

The WAO report was generally positive and contained only two proposals for improvement, i.e.
* "*The Council considers and more clearly demonstrates links between available resources, service planning and performance targets;*
* *The Council continues to review and support the effectiveness of scrutiny in supporting its improvement agenda.*"

These proposals are being addressed as part of the Council's on going work to strengthen leadership, direction and associated performance management arrangements. This work has been further supported by the changes in the governance and scrutiny arrangements, together with the changes to the Scheme of Delegation described earlier.

We are continuing to increase and expanding the opportunities to engage with residents and in doing so improve the quality and quantity of the feedback we receive. This in turn is providing richer feedback in respect of the impact of our work. This was reflected in the priorities arising from the findings from last years Corporate Assessment i.e. 'To regularly seek feedback from customers, residents and staff of the Council services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services'. This is described in more detail in section 3 above.

Since the last Corporate Assessment, the Council has put in place its' Corporate Plan – The Way Ahead, which sets the Strategic Direction for the Council as well as clear priorities to which all services can align. In March 2016, this strategic direction was in evidence when the Council agreed to invest £11.3M from reserves and projected under spend at Q3, to help to improve services in line with the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan.

In June 2016 the WAO published its Annual Improvement Report, (AIR) which was also presented to Cabinet in June, and thereafter to Council in July. The main finding within the report was :

"With a strong corporate focus upon the effective use of its resources, supported by strengthened service planning and governance arrangements, the Council is well placed

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6. Is the Authority effectively managing its improvement programme?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Refresh the Council's performance management framework and in particular ensure all staff have an annual individual staff performance management/development review;

to overcome some significant future challenges. In particular

- **Performance**

The Council is strengthening its arrangements for managing improvement and has achieved improvement in its schools and children's services, but it has significant challenges to overcome in preparation for the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act

- **Use of resources**

The Council maintains a strong corporate focus upon the effective use of its resources but recognises that there is scope to clarify planning and reporting arrangements to provide assurance that its improvement priorities inform decisions regarding resource allocation

- **Governance**

The Council continues to strengthen its governance arrangements and is making progress in addressing proposals for improvement, but further work is needed in order for it to evaluate the impact of service change'

We are continuing to drive improvements and strengthen our processes but in the in the meantime it is encouraging pleasing to note that the positive steps we have already taken in the last 18 months have been recognised by the WAO.

The Council's approach to improvement planning continues to meet the requirements of the LG Measure as evidenced by the WAO in its compliance certificates published alongside our Corporate Performance Report, 2016

The Council continues to publish information in respect of performance in its priority areas within the Quarterly Performance Reports. The format of the quarterly performance report was refreshed and simplified in the first Finance and Performance Report of 2016/17. The aim is to aid improved monitoring by Cabinet and Scrutiny by relevant Scrutiny Committees, we will continue to seek feedback to ensure that this is the case.

There continues to be a need to focus on those services where performance is of concern. The strengthened Scrutiny arrangements and the focus on outcomes is also serving to better demonstrate the impact of work. This was evidenced in the Scrutiny Annual Report, see also section 3 above, and has also demonstrated improved outcomes for residents with a growing evidence base, including case studies within the Corporate Performance Report.

The Council maintains a strong corporate focus upon the effective use of its resources and is clarifying planning and reporting arrangements to provide assurance that its improvement priorities inform decisions regarding resource allocation.

The Performance Management processes introduced in 2015 are becoming more embedded and in 2016 have been further developed and strengthened. Key to these processes is Delivery Plans. The Delivery Plans contribute directly to the Corporate Plan, inform the plans to deliver the Council priorities and also from September 2016,

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6. Is the Authority effectively managing its improvement programme?	**Key Priority** Cabinet - 21st January, 2016 Agenda Item 2 Refresh the Council's performance management framework and in particular ensure all staff have an annual individual staff performance management/development review;

inform the Individual Performance Review pilot for GR15 officers and above. The Delivery Plans for 2017/18 will be informed by Service Self Evaluations completed by Managers and challenged by the Chief Executive and Cabinet Member. The SSE format is largely unchanged. However, as a result of experience from 2015 and feedback from service managers, the content has been better aligned to Corporate/cross cutting requirements to minimise other areas of potential overlap and duplication. Associated data assurance and target setting is continuing but PM Team involvement has reduced in line with a reduction in team capacity.

In 2016 performance information has become more transparent within the Council and challenge and support has been strengthened at all levels of the Council. 2016/17 Delivery Plans were published on the Council's Intranet site at the end of April 2016. Anecdotal evidence following their publication is that Service Managers welcomed the opportunity to understand more about other services, particularly for support services. This greater understanding was further reinforced by a programme of presentations to Senior Leadership Team by all Services. These presentations and the greater availability of information about priorities, plans and progress help services particularly support services, to shape their work programmes at an early stage, so that they are better informed/equipped to support front line delivery. The 2017/18 Delivery Plans will also be made available on the Intranet. Summary extracts of 2015 SSEs were published on RCT Source for elected Members to access following an enquiry by Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in March 2016. There are plans to make all completed SSEs available in the Intranet in 2016.

The organisational performance planning arrangements have been set out in a new Performance Improvement Framework. This framework, currently in draft sets out how individual and organisational performance aligns and reflects the Performance arrangements in place.

The Council's robust arrangements for financial planning, management and governance is continuing and is being further strengthened by a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/17 -2019/20, which was agreed by Cabinet in September 2016 This MTFP sets out, the financial context within which the Council is operating and projects the financial challenge facing the Council over the next three years, linking financial resources to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

All these steps together with the continuing and strengthening clear and present focus on performance and improvement is providing the solid platform for embedding a performance management and improvement culture.

The Council is continuing to engage its communities in taking a proactive approach to the future management of its assets, but there is scope to strengthen performance reporting arrangements to better support oversight and decision making in relation to asset management.

Strategic Risk are clearly identified, monitored and managed. However whilst there has been some improvement in the approach to operational risk management, it is not sufficient nor is it at the pace expected and remains an area for improvement.

The Council's Risk Management Strategy and accompanying Toolkit provides appropriate guidance in respect of risk management. The strategic risk register sets out those

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risks to the achievement of the Council's priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These risks are monitored and reported within the quarterly performance reports. The monitoring of these strategic risks by Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees enables elected Members to have the assurance that work to mitigate the risks in the delivery of the Council's Priorities throughout the year in continuing as planned and appropriate decisions are being made.

However, last year's Corporate Assessment identified that more needed to be done to improve operational risk arrangements and ensure that service risks are subject to routine assessment and follow up. A review of the arrangement in respect of the extent to which the Council's Operational Risk Management arrangements, as set out in the Council's Risk Strategy, are being applied was included in the 2016/17 Audit Plan. The 2016/17 Service Delivery Plans continued to require operational risks and mitigating actions to be identified as part of the planning process. These Delivery Plans were examined as part of the Audit review.

The report is currently nearing completion and initial findings indicate:
- There is an inconsistent approach and application in respect of the Council's Operational Risk Management arrangements.
- The required operational risk management arrangements are not being applied in Delivery Planning arrangements.
- The extent to which operational risks are identified in Delivery Plans for 2016/17 varies significantly, as does the 'quality of the risk'. The format and method behind some of the operational risks included within Delivery Plans suggests managers have not read through the risk management toolkit.

Once complete the findings will be reported to Audit Committee. Completion of this work may be too late to inform early work in the 2017/18 Delivery Plans. However, once all Plans have been drafted the risk can be subject to specific challenge.

The 2016 Service Self Evaluation process has again sought to establish the extent to which Managers think they identify and manage risk. The findings from which will also help to inform how any support and challenge can be focused.

The Risk Management Strategy has been identified as integral to the Council's performance arrangements within the current draft Performance Improvement Framework. However, the Council's Operational Risk Management arrangements are not being consistently applied in all cases. This means that not every operational risk is being clearly identified, mitigated and/or monitored. It is clear there is scope to further support and strengthen the application of risk arrangements, by providing more focused support and working directly with Managers during the 2018/19 Delivery Planning process. This direct and timely support to Managers will help ensure a more consistent approach to meeting the requirements of the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

The processes for responding to Regulatory reports have been strengthened. The reports are distributed more widely through SLT, they are reported to Cabinet for information and also to Overview and Scrutiny prior to being referred to a relevant subject Scrutiny Committee if deemed appropriate for further monitoring/Scrutiny. All WAO reports are now also presented to Audit Committee to provide assurance in respect of the Corporate Governance Arrangements.

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Potential Areas for Improvement 2016

1. Continue to embed the performance management arrangements through the implementation of the PIF.
2. Continue to strengthen the arrangements to report, scrutinise and respond to recommendations contained in Regulatory reports in respect of the Council and implement improvements where appropriate.
3. Continue to improve governance arrangements through robust challenge and scrutiny of performance at all levels of the Council
4. Improve alignment between service and financial planning and performance and ensure arrangements are fit for purpose.
5. Continue to review the risks contained within the Council's Strategic Risk Register.
6. Improve the operational and strategic risk management arrangements in place.

Service Self Evaluations 2016

1. Adult Services
2. Children's Services
3. Transformation SS & WB
4. Environmental Health, Trading Standards a& Community Safety
5. Communities & Prosperity
6. Leisure, Parks & Bereavement
7. Housing Services
8. Accountancy Support & Performance Management Service
9. Operational Finance
10. Customer Care
11. Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
12. Corporate Design and Maintenance
13. Corporate Asset Management and Business Services
14. Fleet Management and Vehicle Maintenance
15. Highway Maintenance and Management
16. Transportation
17. Streetcare & Waste Services
18. Corporate Procurement Unit
19. Human Resources
20. Legal & Democratic Services
21. Arts Service
22. Heritage Service
23. Marketing, PR and Consultation & Engagement
24. Tourism and Events
25. Regeneration and Planning
26. Adult Education
27. Education
28. Libraries
29. Welsh Language Services
30. Internal Audit