

## **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Wednesday, 4 September 2013 at 9.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Brian Blakeley, Stuart Davies, Martyn Holland, Gwyneth Kensler (Vice-Chair) and Jason McLellan (Chair) and Mr P. Whitham (Lay Member).  
Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies attended as an observer.

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Corporate Director: Modernisation and Wellbeing, Head of Legal and Democratic Services (GW), Head of Internal Audit (IB), Head of Customers and Education (JW), Head of Strategic Human Resources (LA), Chief Accountant (RW), Human Resources Service Manager (CR), Corporate Complaints Officer (CO), Audit Manager (BS), Wales Audit Office Representatives (AV and GB) and Committee Administrator (CIW).

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barbara Smith and Julian Thompson-Hill

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

#### **3 URGENT MATTERS**

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

#### **4 MINUTES**

The Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013 were submitted.

***RESOLVED** – that the minutes be received and approved as a true and correct record.*

#### **5 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT**

The report accompanied the Head of Internal Audit's presentation of a self-assessment of the Corporate Governance Committee's knowledge, skills and experience to carry out its role effectively, undertaken as part of the Corporate Governance Committee Members training initiative.

As part of the Council's Corporate Governance Framework, to ensure the effectiveness of the Audit Committee, an annual self-assessment was undertaken by Local Authority Audit Committees to identify any weaknesses, training and development needs. An attempt to carry out the self-assessment by questionnaire had been unsuccessful and it was confirmed that the presentation would cover the key requirements of an effective Audit Committee and identify areas for an improvement Action Plan where necessary.

The HIA felt that questions should be addressed regarding the level of assurance Members felt would be required as a Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, and if assurances being provided and from where and by who.

Members felt that assurances were provided by senior officers responding to questions presented at meetings of the Committee. Evidence of compliance and challenge were provided by Internal and External Audit and other agencies, and the HIA explained that assurances would also be provided through the Governance Framework.

The Chair suggested that the training programme provided for Elected Members following the County Council elections be repeated. The Committee agreed that a general training session be provided for all Elected Members followed by an advanced training session, and that the easy guide induction pack be re-circulated to Members. The Committee Members also suggested that training be provided for new Members appointed to the Corporate Governance Committee.

In reply to a question from Councillor B. Blakeley, the HLDS referred to the Committees' Terms of Reference and provided details the Vice Chair of the Council's membership of the Committee, which he confirmed could be reviewed.

With the aid of a power point presentation the HIA covered the key requirements of an effective Audit Committee and identified areas for improvement in the action plan where necessary.

The presentation highlighted areas pertaining to:-

- Assurance provision.
- Governance Framework.
- Partnerships.
- Internal audit.
- Challenge.
- Risk Management.
- Fraud.
- Financial Management.
- External Audit.
- Committee knowledge, support and effectiveness.

The officers provided the following responses to issues and questions raised by Members of the Committee during the presentation:-

- The HIA expressed his concerns regarding Partnership Governance and confirmed that there were areas for improvement. He outlined the work currently being undertaken to address this issue and made reference to the recent commencement of the Certificate of Corporate Governance training, which he would be participating in. Councillor M.L. Holland referred to the possible risks associated with partnership working, particular reference being made to external groups and bodies in receipt of funding from the Council.
- In reply to a question from Mr P. Whitham, the HIA confirmed that he would be examining the provision of officer training with regard to the new Partnership Framework.
- Members agreed that an annual report, similar to that produced by the Scrutiny Committees, be submitted detailing the work undertaken by the Corporate Governance Committee.
- Mr P. Whitham highlighted the need for more in depth detail in respect of follow up reports, the provision of clarity with regards to essential assurance percentages and the alternative presentation of the Annual Governance Action Plan and Annual Governance Monitoring Statement to meetings of the Committee.
- The HIA referred to the development of a Fraud Assurance Plan which would be presented to the Committee. Members agreed that officers from identified key departments be invited to attend meetings of the Committee.

Following further discussion, it was:-

**RESOLVED** – *that the Corporate Governance Committee:-*

- (a) receives and notes the contents of the draft Corporate Governance Framework Action Plan.*
  - (b) requests that a general training session be provided for all Elected Members, followed by an advanced session for Members of the Corporate Governance Committee.*
  - (c) agrees that a copy of the easy guide induction pack be circulated to Members.  
requests a report detailing the work of the Committee be submitted annually,  
and*
  - (d) the Fraud Assurance Plan be presented to Committee with officers from identified key departments being invited to attend.*
- (IB, GW and RW to Action)**

## **6 BUDGET UPDATE**

A report by the Head of Finance and Assets, which provided an update of the latest position with regard to the process of setting the Council's budget for 2014/15, had been circulated previously.

The majority of the Council's funding, approximately 78%, came from Welsh Government via the Revenue Support Grant and redistribution of NNDR. In 2013/14, the final settlement for Denbighshire was £150.821m. The remainder of the funding was provided through Council Tax, £40.7m budgeted in 2013/14. The

impact of movement on the settlement had a much more significant impact than movement on levels of Council Tax.

The CA provided an introduction and focused on the report, circulated with the papers for the meeting, which would be presented to Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2013. A report had been presented in June, 2013 outlining the latest assumptions with regard to the Council's potential revenue budget settlement and possible financial consequences. Until the Draft Local Government Settlement was published in October, the position would be unclear although all indications were that the settlement would be poor, with the WLGA having recommended that Councils assume a reduction of -4% in 2014/15. The CA explained that there were still too many uncertainties to give a precise figure but if the reduction to the Council's revenue settlement was at the level of -4% and the impact of the census change was implemented in one year, then a planning assumption of a reduction of between £8-9m would not be an unreasonable possibility. The Council would also incur inflationary pressures in areas such as pay, pensions, energy and service demand.

In response to the likely poor settlement, progress was being made with all services to identify saving proposals for the coming three year period. New saving proposals, with three services still to be reviewed, would be considered in September with the relevant Lead Members prior to presentation to elected Members at a workshop in October.

The Service Challenge process for 2012/13 and 2013/14 had identified potential savings of £1.716m for 2014/15. The proposals had been considered in detail at the Service Challenge meetings and had been confirmed at recent meetings with Heads of Service. The saving proposals had been included in Appendix 1 and had been described as Phase 1 of the process of achieving a potentially significant target for 2014/15.

The report to Council identified savings of £1.7m with £782k proposed by services and £963k of corporate led efficiencies, with £663k of the corporate efficiencies being delivered by services. Saving proposals for 2014/15 had been considered at service challenge meetings in 2011 and 2012 and been included as part of the three-year targets identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan. Formal agreement of the previously identified saving proposals would allow political and corporate effort to be focussed on the challenging task of setting the rest of the budget for 2014/15.

The corporate savings highlighted as Modernising the Council form part of a target to achieve approximately £3.0m of savings over the coming 3 years as projects are developed to deliver efficiency and to create capacity in services. A number of efficiency projects are in development, including investment in Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRMS) and Central Invoice Registration and other projects to widen the use of technology to allow savings to be delivered through reduced need to travel, greater flexibility and more efficient administration. Ultimately the modernisation saving targets will be delivered by services.

The summary of efficiency programme phase 1 2014/15 Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the impact of the savings proposals had been included as Appendix 2.

Concerns were expressed regarding the impact of non council tax payers in respect of the outcome of the census data produced, particular reference being made to transient, persons residing in caravans or holiday homes. The CA outlined the reasons for the variance in the census figures and confirmed that the Society of Welsh Treasurers were in discussion with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), who were seeking mitigation in respect of the impact of the figures, and highlighted the possible need to revise the settlement figures. The CA agreed that details of the negotiations with the WLGA could be provided and he responded to a concern raised by Mr P. Whitham regarding the potential risks involved. He explained that there was a standard entry on the Finance Risk Register regarding the setting of a balanced budget, and agreed to provide Mr Whitham with further information in respect of this matter. The HLDS provided details of the entry on the Corporate Risk Register, and the HIA confirmed that Internal Audit would be examining the actions being taken and reporting on their progression.

Councillor G.M. Kensler suggested that it would be important to examine closely the ambitions of the Council prior to setting of the council tax precept, and to ensure the maximisation of external funding and the utilisation of any available grants.

The view was expressed by Councillor M.LI. Davies that further detail should be provided in respect of the loss of income resulting from the closure of various Council facilities. The CA agreed to provide a response to Councillor B. Blakeley regarding the loss of income resulting from the car park in Quay Street being closed.

Councillor S.A. Davies referred to the extension of the AONB and he expressed the view that its membership should include the two Llangollen Ward Members.

In reply to a question from the Chair, the CA provided details of the generation of budget savings and efficiencies with regard to the medium and long term plans in respect of collaboration and partnerships projects. He confirmed that at present there were no major partnership initiatives planned with regard to budget reductions.

***RESOLVED*** – that the Corporate Governance Committee notes the latest position and proposed next steps, and the saving proposals being taken to County Council for formal approval.

## **7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW/UPDATE 2012/13**

A copy of a report by the Head of Finance and Assets had been circulated previously.

The Annual Treasury Management (TM) Report 2012/13, Appendix 1, outlined the Council's investment and borrowing activity during 2012/13. It provided details of the economic climate at that time and indicated how the Council complied with its

Prudential Indicators. The TM Update Report, Appendix 2, detailed the Council's TM activities during 2013/14.

The Chief Accountant explained that TM included the management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash flow with approximately £0.5bn passing through the Council's bank accounts annually. The Council's outstanding borrowing was £133.26m, with an average annual interest rate charge of 5.77%. At any point during the year the Council would have between £20-£35m to invest which on average currently earned 0.80%.

The governance of TM was scrutinised by the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) who received an update on TM activities twice a year and reviewed the Annual TM Report for 2012/13. The TM team provided reports and training to the CGC in accordance with the timetable included in the report. The CGC had been required to have a certain level of understanding of the TM process which was achieved through regular updates and training sessions. The role of the CGC included understanding the Prudential Indicators, the impact of borrowing on the revenue position, wider drivers impacting on the Council's TM activities and ensuring that the Council acted in a prudent manner in relation to its TM activities.

The purpose of the Annual TM Report, Appendix 1, was to:-

- present details of capital financing, borrowing, debt rescheduling and investment transactions in 2012/13.
- report on the risk implications of treasury decisions and transactions.
- confirm compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators.

The TM update report, Appendix 2, provided details of the following:-

- External economic environment.
- Risks.
- Activity.
- Controls.
- Future Activity.

The Chief Accountant referred to the four main drivers of growth and explained that consumer confidence had initiated some of the growth in recent times. He informed Members that good investment and borrowing decisions would allow for additional resources to be directed to other Council services, and confirmed that the Council had consulted with its treasury advisers, Arlingclose Ltd. The monitoring and controlling of risks to the Council had been outlined in the report. However, it would be impossible to eliminate risks completely. The Council's TM strategy and procedures were audited annually and the latest internal audit review had been positive with no significant issues having been raised.

Reference was made to the discontinuation of the Housing Subsidy System in Wales. A buyout of the Subsidy System had been negotiated with the Treasury by Welsh Government, and the impact for Denbighshire would be a capital sum of £40m which would be borrowed on as specific date. The Chief Account explained that the buyout figure would represent a better deal than the Subsidy System.

In response to a question from Councillor G.M. Kensler, the Chief Accountant summarised the effect of rent appears on Housing Revenue Accounts and outlined the steps being introduced to address the issue.

**RESOLVED** – *that the Corporate Governance Committee notes:-*

- (a) *the performance of the Council's Treasury Management function during 2012/13 and its compliance with the required Prudential Indicators as reported in the Annual Treasury Management Report 2012/13, and*
- (b) *the Treasury Management update report.*

## **8 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT**

A copy of a report by the Head of Customers and Education (HCE), which provides an overview of complaints, compliments and feedback received by Denbighshire during the period 01.04.12 to 31.03.13, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The HCE introduced the report and confirmed that members of the public would be encouraged to submit complaints. She explained that the number of complaints received should not be perceived as negative as this was a means of obtaining useful information which could be utilised to improve the standard of service provision. Councillor M.L. Holland expressed his support for the policy and highlighted its virtues in providing an opportunity and method of analysing complaints received.

The report provided an overview of the volumes and types of feedback received during 2012/13, information regarding the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales' annual report and accompanying letter, and details of future policy development which would impact on 'Your Voice'. Members were informed that the policy had been promoted and published as 'Your Voice'.

Headlines for 2012/13 had been detailed in Appendix 1 to the report:-

- The number of feedback recorded increased compared with 2011/12:
  - complaints by 12% from 587 to 660
  - compliments by 88% from 436 to 820
  - suggestions had remained static at 16
- The number of complaints successfully dealt with at stage 1 increased to 94.2%, up 2.6% from last year.
- Complaints dealt with within timescale continued to improve achieving 91%, although the corporate target 95% had not been achieved.
- 51% of all complaints had been upheld or upheld in part, up 13% from last year.

Members noted that 38 complaints had been made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This number was higher than the Welsh Local Authority average of 25, and details had been included in Appendix 2.

Three Section 21 reports had been issued. These reports were issued when a public body agreed to implement any recommendations made by the Ombudsman. Confirmation had been provided that he had been satisfied that no public interest had been involved. Summaries of the reports had been included as Appendix 3.

There had been fewer complaints of Members breaching the code of conduct. 4 had been received in 2012/13 compared with 9 received in 2011/12.

An outline of the proposed changes to 'Your Voice' had been included in Appendix 4. Reference was made to the 'Your Voice' revision which incorporated complaints, compliments and the feedback policy.

Details of the consultation process had been incorporated in the report and included:-

- Monthly reporting to the Senior Leadership Team.
- Quarterly reporting to Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- Annual reporting to Corporate Governance Committee.
- Consultation with Legal Services and service complaint officers regarding the changes to 'Your Voice'.

In reply to questions from the Chair and Councillor S.A. Davies, the HEC provided details of Member inclusion and involvement in the complaints process, and she outlined the coordinated approach adopted for dealing with possible vexatious complaints, which involved the nomination of a specific officer to deal with the specific issue.

In response to questions from Mr P. Whitham, it was explained that reports were submitted on a monthly basis to SLT, Scrutiny Committees and could be published on the Council's website. Complaints relating to schools, particular reference to school admissions, were monitored by the schools and it was agreed that information on trends relating to previous years could be provided for Members of the Committee and included in future reports.

**RESOLVED** – that:-

- (a) the Corporate Governance Committee receives and notes the changes leading to the revised complaints, compliments and feedback policy - 'Your Voice', and*
  - (b) information on trends relating to previous years be provided for Members of the Committee and included in future reports.*
- (JW to Action)**



A copy of a report by the Corporate Director: Modernisation and Wellbeing (CDMW) (circulated previously) on the proposal for the adoption of a Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the establishment of a joint member/officer Corporate Safeguarding Panel (CSP).

The CDMW explained that the key responsibility to be discharged, across a complex multi-functional organisation had never been separately resourced. Successive authoritative reports over the last 10 years, which included Waterhouse, Laming, Pembrokeshire had made it abundantly clear that challenges to the resilience of safeguarding arrangements in fact arise in many different places, such that safeguarding has to be “Everybody’s Business”.

Denbighshire’s proactive approach to ensuring compliance with its safeguarding responsibilities had been outlined in the report. It was explained that despite a range of approaches Denbighshire could not be confident that robust safeguarding practice had been embedded across all the Council’s functions. Details of the development of approaches adopted to maintain a corporate profile and overview for safeguarding issues had been provided in detail.

A draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines, based heavily on that recently adopted in Gwynedd following an Estyn Inspection and as the result of requirements set out by the Inspectorate, had been circulated with the report. The proposal submitted would provide a logical development to the work previously undertaken with the Corporate Accountabilities Framework and on the Corporate Safeguarding Action Plan. The aim of the policy and guidelines would be to establish a structured means for ensuring that safeguarding was an issue taken on by every service in the Council as well as all elected Members.

Key aspects of the policy and guidelines were that:-

- both children and adults were covered.
- it had been based around safeguarding, not just protection.
- it included the notion of Designated Managers within every service for dealing with safeguarding matters (who receive appropriate training).
- designated managers would come together with senior officers and Lead Members to form a CSP which would be accountable to Cabinet. The CPS would be expected to produce an Annual Report for reporting internally and also to the LSCB.
- every service would be expected to have safeguarding policies and procedures covering their particular area of the business.
- the responsibilities of Elected Members would be covered.
- core dataset would be included for reporting purposes. This would include some of the usual PIs and key HR data (CRB checks, reference compliance, plus a percentage of Councillors attending safeguarding training). There would be some overlap with Corporate Plan reporting and the dataset would need to evolve to ensure it added value to current reporting.

The appendices provide further detail relating to:-

- basic information about signs of abuse and referral pathways, which would link to child and adult protection procedures.
- a useful section on Code of Conduct and Safe Working practices.
- a section setting out the training support to be provided initially, which would need to be developed over a period of time.
- cross referencing with our Safe Recruitment (Human Resources) Policies.
- guidelines for Councillors on safe contact.
- dealing with allegations of professional abuse, including links with child and adult protection procedures.

It was felt that the package would provide a credible approach to making a reality of safeguarding as a corporate concern, and would foster consistency of approach and accountability and be tailored to the issues facing particular services. The main cost implications, which would be threefold, had been outlined in the report. Confirmation was provided that the adoption of the Policy and Panel arrangements could have positive implications, especially for older people and disabled people, and no negative implications had been identified.

The Committee were informed that although guidelines were currently sparse, HR were undertaking work to produce a policy on social media use. The CDMW confirmed that the remit of the further work in this area would be incorporated in the remit of the CSP. The HLDS informed the Committee that the WLGA had produced a guidance document on Elected Members use of social media which could be of assistance.

In response to the following concern raised by Mr P. Whitham:-

- the CDMW agreed that Appendix 7 be amended to include reference to Cabinet to receiving an Annual Report from the CSP.
- the need to review the Policy and Guidelines on a regular basis, and the inclusion of a fixed review period within the Terms of Reference.
- there being no direction in the Terms of Reference to the CSP monitoring the progression of technology.

The CDMW explained that the issues raised could be addressed and that the role of the CSP included the identification of any potential gaps in the Policy.

Councillor M.L. Holland expressed the view that attendance at Safeguarding training sessions should be mandatory. However, Councillor S.A. Davies felt the decision to attend such training sessions should remain with the respective Member.

During the ensuing discussion, Members agreed that the Safeguarding Policy and Panel be reviewed after 3 years.

**RESOLVED** – *that the Corporate Governance Committee agrees:-*

- (a) *the adoption of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.*
- (b) *the establishment of a Corporate Safeguarding Panel with terms of reference as included in the report, subject to the suggested amendments, and*

(c) *the Safeguarding Policy and Panel be reviewed after 3 years.*  
**(SE to Action)**

## **10 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN**

A copy of a report by the Head of Internal Audit Services(HIAS) on the Council's Corporate Governance Framework (CGF), which provided details of a new action plan resulting from the review of the Council's Governance Framework and the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2012/13, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The CGC monitored the Corporate Governance Framework Action (CGF) plan on a regular basis as part of the Council's overall governance arrangements to make sure that the Council implemented the necessary improvements effectively. The Council's CGF included an annual assessment of the Council's governance arrangements and an Annual Governance Statement highlighting any significant governance weaknesses. The Framework highlighted further areas that, while not being significant weaknesses, required improvement.

The Council's Governance Group managed the CGF process and development of the Annual Governance Statement on an on-going basis during the financial year. Membership of the Group consisted of:-

- Chair of Corporate Governance Committee
- Vice-chair of Corporate Governance Committee
- Head of Legal & Democratic Services
- Head of Business Planning & Performance
- Head of Finance & Assets
- Head of Internal Audit

The Group had developed the draft Action Plan included as Appendix 1. The outline Action Plan currently had several responsibilities, timescales and progress updates which had not yet been completed and these would be added prior to the next update report and maintained on a regular basis.

The HIA provided a detailed summary of Appendix 1 and referred to Significant Governance Issues from the Annual Governance Statement 2012/13. Particular reference was made to the Strategic HR needs to implement improvements following an adverse Internal Audit report, the need to improve our information governance, management of information assets and the way employees and elected members were trained in Data Protection and Freedom of Information requirements.

In reply to a issues raised by Mr P. Whitham, the HIA agreed that Members of the Committee be furnished with the introduction dates relating to the following:-

- the re-launch of the partnership framework.
- date of the anti-fraud and corruption policy.
- update of the Financial Regulations.
- updating of the Whistleblowing policy.

Following further discussion, it was:-

**RESOLVED** – that:-

- (a) *the Corporate Governance Committee receives and notes the contents of the draft Corporate Governance Framework Action Plan.*
- (b) *agrees that an additional column be included indicating timescales relating to previous years, and*
- (c) *requests that Members of the Committee be furnished with the introduction dates relating to the following:-*

- *the re-launch of the Partnership Framework.*
- *date of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.*
- *update of the Financial Regulations.*
- *updating of the Whistleblowing Policy.*

**(IB to Action)**

## **11 STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

A copy of a report by the Head of Internal Audit Services (circulated previously) outlined the progress within Strategic Human Resources on the Action Plan included in the Internal Audit report from October, 2012.

The CGC had monitored progress on the implementation of the improvement actions identified by Strategic HR as a result of the Internal Audit review. Internal Audit had reviewed various areas of Strategic HR during 2012/13, issuing its report in October, 2012. The action plan within the report raised 11 issues, for which Strategic HR identified 45 actions with various timescales for implementation. Internal Audit followed up the action plan in February, 2013 and found that, while some progress had been made, the level of progress was “disappointingly slow” and a further progress report had been requested.

Strategic HR reported significant progress. However, the HIA had suggested that, while specific actions identified in the action plan had been completed, the effectiveness of these actions in addressing the issues in the Internal Audit report could not yet be gauged. The two services had met to discuss the outstanding issues and agreed to work closer together to provide assurance to the CGC that improvements were being made and issues addressed effectively.

It was explained that Strategic HR were going through a significant period of change and improvement and that the actions discussed in the report would form part of a larger improvement action plan, which was being project managed through the Council’s project management methodology process on Verto.

A table indicating the latest position for all 45 actions identified by Strategic HR to address the Internal Audit report action plan had been included in Appendix 1. The table detailed:-

- the issues to be addressed

- the actions identified to address the issues
- Strategic HR's update on latest progress
- comments - including an opinion on whether the actions are addressing the issue

The HIA confirmed that overall Strategic HR had made significant progress in addressing the issues raised by Internal Audit. Although virtually all of the actions had now been implemented, in some cases it would take time to assess whether these had been fully effective and some success depended on compliance within other services. To provide additional assurance Internal Audit would undertake a further review of the Strategic HR improvement project during April, 2014, which would include an assessment of the effectiveness of some of the longer term actions identified in Appendix 1. In particular, the review would examine the following areas:-

- whether employee data accuracy had improved;
- the successful implementation of new processes and procedures as part of the Systems Thinking process reviews;
- compliance with HR policies and procedures within services;
- accuracy of data sent to Payroll by HR;
- the effectiveness of the Civica Helpdesk in improving customer service;
- successful implementation of the new recruitment framework;
- development of succession plans for key posts in services.

Councillor M.L. Holland highlighted the importance of ensuring that data returned was accurate and received within the specified timescales, and he felt the introduction of automation could assist in omitting errors and improve the level of service provided. The officers provided details of the checks and procedures adopted, with the utilisation of TRENT and the inclusion of managers reports, to mitigate such problems.

In response to concerns raised by Mr P. Whitham regarding compliance with timescales regarding the provision of data from services, the officers explained that any regular non compliance would be exposed and challenged by the Service Challenge process. The HLDS explained that, as part of Service Challenge process, a report would be produced on how individual services were performing in respect of various HR issues.

The HIA confirmed that a review would be undertaken in April, 2014 with a progress report being submitted to the Corporate Governance Committee in May, 2014.

**RESOLVED** – that:-

- (a) the Corporate Governance Committee receives the report and acknowledges the progress made, and
  - (b) agrees that a further progress report be submitted in May, 2014.
- (IB to Action)**

A copy of a report by the Head of Internal Audit had been circulated previously.

The HIA introduced the report on the latest progress of the Internal Audit service in terms of its service delivery, assurance provision, reviews completed, performance and effectiveness in driving improvement.

The information provided had been to the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2013 and the CGC would receive the final outturn position in the next Internal Audit Annual Report.

The report provided an update in respect of:-

- delivery of the Assurance Plan for 2013/14
- recent Internal Audit reports issued
- management's response to issues raised
- Internal Audit's performance

A breakdown of work during 2013/14, compared to the Internal Audit Strategy, had been included in Appendix 1. It detailed assurance scores and the number of issues raised for the completed reviews, definitions used to form the audit assurance and the ratings used to assess the risk-levels for issues raised.

Details of the colours utilised for assurance ratings had been provided, together with, a list reports issued since July, 2013. Executive summary reports and action plans had been appended to the report for further information and included:-

- Carbon Reduction Commitment.
- Financial Systems Assurance Testing 2012/13.
- New Work Connections Exit Strategy.
- Fostering Service.
- Housing Services (Rents & Welfare Reform).
- Countryside Operations.
- Demarcation between the roles and responsibilities of Education Planning and Resources and Accountancy Services.

Management's response to issues raised by Internal Audit included:-

Most of the Internal Audit reports identified risks and control weaknesses and these had been rated as critical, major or moderate risk. Management had agreed actions to address the risks, including responsibilities and timescales. All instances where management failed to respond to follow up work, or where they exceed the agreed implementation date by more than three months, would be reported and the Committee would decide if further action was required. There were currently no issues to raise with the Committee and details pertaining to Internal Audit Performance had been included in the report for information.

The HIA referred to Appendix 2, which included reports, summary of reports, Audit Opinions and Action Plans, previously requested as a change to the current reporting method.

In response to a question from Mr P. Whitham, the HIA agreed to provide details on a spread sheet pertaining to Internal Audit Performance, Essential Assurance – all percentage targets.

**RESOLVED** – that Corporate Governance Committee:-

(a) notes Internal Audit's progress and performance to date in 2012/13.  
receives the recent Internal Audit reports issued, and

(b) details be provided pertaining to the Internal Audit Performance, Essential Assurance – all percentage targets.

**(IB to Action)**

### **13 YSGOL CLAWDD OFFA INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

A copy of a report by the Head of Internal Audit Services (circulated previously) detailed the recent Internal Audit report on Ysgol Clawdd Offa, Prestatyn.

The CGC had requested a full Internal Audit report be presented to its September meeting as the Internal Audit Opinion indicated a Low Assurance and the Action Plan included 21 issues which were manageable at the school.

It was explained by the HIA that an escalation meeting had been held at the school and a follow up review had been requested to assist with the monitoring of progress. The HIA and Members of the Committee did express concern regarding the lack of interaction and engagement by members of the Group at the meeting. He confirmed that a copy of the follow up report would be circulated to Members of the Committee when completed, and a further report submitted to the Corporate Governance Committee in December, 2013.

**RESOLVED** – that:-

(a) the Corporate Governance Committee receives and notes the contents of the report and Action Plan, and

(b) an update report be submitted to the Corporate Governance Committee in December, 2013.

**(IB to Action)**

### **14 CORPORATE EQUALITY MEETING FEEDBACK**

The Committee received a verbal report from Councillor M.L. Holland in respect of the Corporate Equality meeting.

Councillor M.L. Holland explained the importance of ensuring equality throughout the Council with regard to all aspects of the functions undertaken, and all Departments would be requested to complete Impact Equality Assessments (IEA) where applicable. The HLDS responded to concerns raised by Councillor S.A. Davies and highlighted the relevance and purpose of an EIA. He explained that templates for reports to Council and Cabinet had been amended to include an EIA, or an explanation for there being no need for one, in instances where a decision was required.

Councillor Holland referred to issues considered at the Corporate Equality meeting which included remote training for Elected Members and staff, which included iPads and Skype, and the provision of traveller and gypsy sites within the County.

**RESOLVED** – *that the Committee receives and notes the report.*

## **15 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Corporate Governance Committee's Forward Work Programme (FWP) (previously circulated) was presented for consideration.

The HLDS explained that the issue of the requirement for the attendance of Lead Members at Committee meetings had been raised at the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group. The Corporate Governance Committee agreed that the FWP could identify the need for the attendance of a Lead Member at a meeting depending on the nature of the report being presented.

Members considered the FWP for November, 2013 and agreed that Councillor J. Thompson-Hill be invited to attend the meeting for the Budget Update item.

The Committee confirmed the Forward Work Programme subject to the following:-

- An update report on the Internal Audit Report on Ysgol Clawdd Offa, Prestatyn and the Corporate Risk Register Report be presented to the December, 2013 meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee.

**RESOLVED** – *that, subject to the above, the Committee approves the Forward Work Programme.*  
**(IB & GW to Action)**

Meeting ended at 13.10 p.m.