

Report To: Denbighshire County Council

Date of Meeting: 8 September, 2015

Lead Member/Officer: Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Performance / Alan Smith, Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation

Report Author: Nicola Kneale, Strategic Planning & Performance Officer

Title: WAO's Annual Improvement Report on DCC

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1. What is the report about?  
To summarise the key findings from the WAO's Annual Improvement Report (Appendix 3) regarding Denbighshire's planning and reporting arrangements in order to meet statutory continuous improvement duties, and to agree a Council-endorsed response to the Report.
2. What is the reason for making this report?  
To inform Council of the WAO's Conclusion and Improvement Proposals, and to secure Council endorsement of a response to the Report.
3. What are the Recommendations?  
Council to note the Conclusions, Improvement Proposals, and Key Findings from the WAO's report, and approve responses to the Improvement Proposals (as expected by the WAO).  
The whole Council response has been co-ordinated by the Strategic Planning & Performance Team, which has asked services to state their position in relation to each recommendation, and also taken this report to Corporate Governance. All responses have been included (attached) in order to present this report to Council.
4. Report details
  - 4.1 The overall conclusion is that:  
"The Council continued to make progress in delivering improvements in all of its priority objectives and its track record in delivering its financial objectives mean it is well placed to secure continuous improvement in 2015-16."
  - 4.2 No formal recommendations have been made, only two Improvement Proposals. The WAO expects the Council to do something about them and will follow up what happens. The Improvement Proposals are:
    - a. Ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear for the achievement of the new affordable housing objective. Denbighshire County Council's response to this Improvement Proposal is in Appendix 1 of this report;
    - b. Review its working practices against the recommendations in the Auditor General's 2014-15 Local Government National Reports, and implement improvements as necessary. Denbighshire County Council's response to this Improvement Proposal is also in Appendix 1 of this report.

Local Government National Reports cover areas such as Scrutiny, young people classed as NEET, and Environmental Health Services. Denbighshire County Council's response to these national recommendations can be seen in Appendix 2 of this report.

- 4.3 A list of key conclusions from various auditing bodies (e.g. WAO, CSSIW) are listed from p8 of the attached report, and cover the areas of Performance, Use of Resources, Governance, Improvement Planning & Reporting Audits, and Audit of Accounts. Some key messages include:
  - a. Performance standards, risk management, performance evaluations, and financial arrangements are of a good, robust standard.
  - b. Progress has been made in terms of the HR service, Welsh Language, and commitment of DHP. Improvements in monitoring DHP (underway since April 2015) will help to clarify their impact.
  - c. It is hoped that new arrangements in place will support the Council's ambitions in terms of the economy.
  - d. Challenges exist in the form of a planned merger of the Children & Family service and the Education service, and underperformance in the provision of affordable housing.
5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?  
Many of these recommendations contribute directly to Corporate Priorities (e.g. Affordable Housing), and effective planning and evaluation arrangements are essential elements that underpin good performance.
6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?  
There are no costs associated with the recommendations of this report.
7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report  
This report does not refer to policy or project development, so there are no Equality issues. However, any plans that are developed in response to this report should be subject to an EqIA.
8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?  
This report presents the findings of the WAO report, so no consultation has been necessary. However, a formal Council response will be provided, for which we are seeking approval today.
9. Chief Finance Officer Statement  
Not required.
10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?  
There are no risks associated with implementing the recommendations of this report.
11. Power to make the Decision

11.1 Performance management and monitoring is a key element of the Wales Programme for Improvement, which is underpinned by the statutory requirements of the Local Government Act 1999 and the Local Government "Wales" Measure 2009.