

**Report To:** Full Council

**Date of Meeting:** 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016

**Lead Member / Officer:** Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Performance

**Report Author:** Alan Smith, Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation

**Title:** 2015-16 Annual Improvement Report

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**1. What is the report about?**

The report concerns the annual assessment of the Council's prospects for improvement, undertaken by the Wales Audit Office.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide information to Members on the Council's Annual Improvement Report (AIR). See Appendix 1.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That Council note the contents of the attached report and the proposals for improvement within it.

**4. Report details.**

Under the Local Government Measure, the Wales Audit Office annually reviews the Council's progress towards meeting its objectives and its prospects for continuing to improve in the year ahead.

For the year 2015-16, the WAO has concluded overall that: *The Council, with sound financial management and scrutiny arrangements, continues to make progress in delivering improvements in most of its priority areas.*

In particular:

- Denbighshire has addressed the shortcomings identified last year in the provision of affordable housing, developing a Housing Strategy and a comprehensive supporting action plan.
- The Council's Social Services are largely performing well;
- The arrangements for managing performance and for delivering savings are robust and effective;

- Relationships between Members and Officers continue to be constructive;
- The Council is actively exploring new types of service delivery, including with commercial partners.

If the WAO have significant concerns about the progress made by the Council or the direction it is taking, it will make formal recommendations for change. Again, Denbighshire's report does not have any formal recommendations this year, reflecting the WAO's positive view of the Council's progress. However, the report does highlight some areas of concern, where it considers further work is required. These are listed below.

- *The arrangements around the safeguarding of vulnerable adults are not yet considered satisfactory by CSSIW. The regulator also reports a concern about the way the quality of Domiciliary Care is monitored. We have taken a number of steps to meet these concerns, including:*
  - Safe guarding training provided for lead managers;
  - Admin. support for the POVA process increased;
  - A revised SPoA (Single Point of Access) process has improved the screening of referrals;
  - A new post of Safe Guarding Team Manager has been created;
  - The national threshold for accepting referrals has been adopted.
  - CSS is currently reviewing its arrangements for providing Domiciliary Care and may consider employing additional monitoring officers.
- *Attendance at Scrutiny meetings has declined, as has the attendance of Scrutiny Members at Service Challenge meetings. This may jeopardise the ability of the Council to manage its performance effectively. The Council has taken steps to try to improve the situation:*
  - The issue has been raised with Group Leaders and at Full Council;
  - The Committee timetable has been reviewed to ensure there are clashes;
  - We have relocated some Scrutiny meetings to different areas when local issues are being discussed.

These actions appear to be starting to have an effect and attendance has improved slightly over the last 3 months.
- *The Report considers that the Council should create a more formal approach to the use of alternative delivery models, so that value for money can be clearly identified. It also proposes that the Council should strengthen its approach to income generation to improve consistency.*
  - In response, the Council has already developed a number of successful alternative delivery models. As there may be growth in the number and range of proposals in future, a corporate approach to assessing and implementing alternative models is being prepared. It will incorporate a number of staged approval points to ensure proposals are properly

tested and that costs and service impacts are fully understood. A draft will be available by the end of May.

- Although service fees and charges have been considered as part of previous budget rounds, the revised process for 2017/18 includes much more analysis of service income streams – including the individual charges, total raised, review period, etc. This service data will inform a corporate register of all fees and charges.

The Council's approach to the WAO's publication of specific local and national reports is that the appropriate HoS should develop an action plan in response that can be considered by Members at a Scrutiny Committee. Two of the three reports listed in Appendix 3 have been to Scrutiny already and the third – 'Delivering More with Less: Leisure Services' is due to go to Communities Scrutiny on the 12<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

No decision is required, but the WAO's review of the Council's progress is an important part of understanding our progress towards delivering our Corporate Priorities.

#### **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

There are no financial implications.

#### **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.**

Not applicable.

#### **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

Officers have reviewed the report for accuracy prior to publication. The AIR was considered by Corporate Governance Committee in April 2016.

#### **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

This positive report provides assurance that financial management arrangements are sound and no formal recommendations have been made and processes are in place to ensure that concerns raised are raised and considered appropriately by the council.

#### **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

There would be risk to the Council if the proposals for improvement made by the WAO were not acted on.

#### **11. Power to make the Decision**

No decision is required.