



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# Annual Improvement Report

## Wrexham County Borough Council

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# About the Auditor General for Wales

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This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Huw Lloyd Jones and Karen Lees under the direction of Alan Morris, Group Director.

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# Summary report

- 1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken on his behalf by the Wales Audit Office, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report is in three main sections, which cover Wrexham County Borough Council (the Council)'s delivery and evaluation of services in relation to 2011-12, and its planning of improvement for 2012-13.
  - education provision is improving, but more improvement is needed if all schools in Wrexham are to become high-performing;
  - care for vulnerable people is continuing to improve, but performance in some key areas is not as good as it could be;
  - the Council faces significant challenges in meeting housing needs; and,
  - there has been good progress in several priority areas, but the impact of the Council's work is not always clear.
- 2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that corporate arrangements and the Council's performance in a few priority areas have improved significantly, but the Council does not measure and report its performance as well as it could.
- 3 We found that the Council's progress on delivering improvement in its priority areas for 2011-12 ranges from very good in a few areas through to modest in other areas. We reached this conclusion because:
  - the Council has made significant progress in reducing carbon emissions and energy usage, and has successfully addressed challenging issues during the year;
- 4 We also found that the Council's approach to self-evaluation is improving, but this has been undermined this year by continuing issues with the completeness and quality of data. We reached this conclusion because:
  - the Council discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure but it should ensure that it acts more in accordance with Welsh Government guidance;
  - continuing issues with the completeness and quality of data reduced the effectiveness of performance reporting; and
  - self-evaluation in service areas has been variable in quality but the Council is now developing a more consistent approach.

5 Finally, the report sets out our views on how well the Council is planning for, and making arrangements to support improvement. We concluded that the Council has re-energised its improvement planning and is well placed to continue to improve in most respects. We reached this conclusion because:

- Most aspects of the Council's improvement planning for 2012-13 are better than in the past.
- The Council is well placed to continue to improve in most respects:
  - the Council remains well placed to manage the financial challenge through its savings programmes and 'transformation' projects;
  - the Council's arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are likely to support continuous improvement;
  - the Council's arrangements for the governance of its information assets present some risks and have the potential to limit the Council's ability to improve;
  - the Council continues to experience challenges to increasing the use of the Welsh Language within its business; and
  - the Council has made good progress in several areas for improvement identified in previous audit letters and reports.

# Recommendations

- 6 We make no new recommendations in this report.

# Detailed report

## Introduction

- 7 Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), the Auditor General must report each year on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. **Appendix 1** provides more information about the Auditor General's powers and duties under the Measure. With help from Welsh inspectorates, Estyn (for education) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW), we have brought together a picture of what each council or authority in Wales is trying to achieve and how it is going about it. This report also sets out the progress the Council has made since the Auditor General published his last annual improvement report, drawing on the Council's own self-assessment.
- 8 We do not undertake a comprehensive annual review of all Council arrangements or services. The conclusions in this report are based on our cumulative and shared knowledge and the findings of prioritised work undertaken this year.
- 9 Given the wide range of services provided and the challenges facing the Council, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
- recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way;
  - conduct a special inspection and publish the report with detailed recommendations;
  - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made the Council must respond to that recommendation publicly within 30 days; and
  - make proposals for improvement – if we make proposals to the Council, we would expect them to do something about them and we will follow-up what happens.
- 10 We want to find out if this report gives you the information you need and whether it is easy to understand. You can let us know your views by e-mailing us at [info@wao.gov.uk](mailto:info@wao.gov.uk) or writing to us at 24 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ.

## Corporate arrangements and the Council's performance in a few priority areas have improved significantly, but the Council does not measure and report its performance as well as it could

The Council's progress on delivering improvement in its priority areas for 2011-12 ranges from very good in a few areas, through to modest in other areas

The Council has made significant progress in reducing carbon emissions and energy usage, and has successfully addressed challenging issues during the year

- 11 At the end of 2010-11, the Council approved a business case to install solar photo-voltaic (PV) panels on some 3,000 council-owned homes and other buildings as part of its priority to reduce carbon emissions and energy use. During late 2011, the Council responded promptly and decisively to news that the UK Government was considering a 50 per cent reduction in Feed-In-Tariff payments for installations of Solar PV on domestic properties. Although the changes did not ultimately happen to the extent expected, the Council brought forward its planned expenditure, thereby reducing the risks to the scheme's financial viability.
- 12 By accelerating the installation programme, the Council completed 2,500 installations during 2011-12, rather than the 1,500 originally planned. This meant that the benefits arising from the PV panels (reduced carbon emissions, lower energy costs for tenants and long-term income generation for the Council) began earlier and were better than expected. During 2012-13, the Council expects net income from the PV initiative to

exceed £100,000, which it has earmarked to improve the quality of housing stock.

- 13 In addition to the PV scheme (which became the biggest of its kind in the UK), the Council has continued to deliver a range of carbon-reduction projects involving waste, non-domestic buildings, street lighting and the vehicle fleet. Whilst the impact of some recent initiatives is not yet known, the Council has reported a reduction of nearly 12 per cent in carbon emissions from its non-domestic public building stock during 2011-12. Since 2005-06, the baseline year for impact monitoring, the Council has reduced its overall carbon emissions by 20 per cent and estimates that it has saved £5.2 million in increased energy costs. The Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions has been recognised externally. It was recently awarded the Carbon Trust Standard and it won the category for Best Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency initiative at the Association for Public Service Excellence Annual Service Awards 2012.
- 14 The Council reported that it had achieved its Improvement Objective for waste minimisation and recycling. The Council reused, recycled or treated 74.7 per cent of the waste received at its amenity sites, exceeding its target of 62 per cent. The Council also exceeded the statutory target set by the Welsh Government that 40 per cent of waste collected should be recycled, reused or treated. For this indicator the Council achieved 48.6 per cent, slightly missing its own target of 50 per cent. In achieving this, the Council extended its kerbside domestic waste collection services during 2011-12, with the wider introduction of separate weekly food-waste collection.



15 Despite the good progress already made, the Council continues to face significant challenges in order to meet its aim of becoming a low-carbon organisation. It has set ambitious targets of reducing carbon emissions by 50 per cent by 2015-16 and 70 per cent by 2020. With support from external specialists, it has developed a comprehensive Carbon Management Plan, targeting Council activities where the potential impact on carbon reduction is greatest.

**Education provision is improving, but more improvement is needed if all schools in Wrexham are to become high-performing**

**Estyn judged that the Council had made good progress towards addressing the recommendations in the 2011 inspection report and has removed the Council from the follow-up category of Estyn monitoring**

16 In March 2012 Estyn followed up the progress the Council had made in relation to the recommendations in its 2011 inspection report. Estyn found that insufficient progress had been made, and kept the Council in follow-up monitoring. In January 2013, Estyn undertook a further follow-up visit and found that the Council had made good progress; of the six original recommendations, five had been largely addressed and one had been fully addressed. Estyn concluded that further follow-up monitoring was not required, but emphasised the need to maintain the good pace of progress already achieved in order to address all recommendations fully.

17 In their letter summarising this latest visit, Estyn reported that, in 2012, the Council gave, 'good support to some underperforming secondary schools which enabled them to improve the performance of a majority of learners in those schools. However performance across the authority at key stages 3 and 4 is below the average for Wales. Currently one-third of the authority's schools are in the lowest 25 per cent. The authority has improved engagement with the small number of challenging schools that were previously reluctant to work with them. The performance of these schools reflects this work by the authority. It is now engaged with nearly all schools, holding them to account and enabling it to support and challenge more effectively in order to improve performance at key stages 3 and 4.

18 Over the past three years Wrexham has met or exceeded nearly all the expected benchmarks set by the Welsh Government. These take free-school-meal (fsm) levels into account. Attendance in primary and secondary schools is good. Rates have improved since last year. Wrexham schools have a good track-record of not permanently excluding pupils'.

## The progress in delivering the Council priority of improving aspirations, learning and achievement has been mixed

- 19 Despite the good progress noted above, the Council has achieved mixed progress on the areas of education identified within its priority of improving aspirations, learning and achievement. There were improvements during 2011-12 in several areas, including attendance at primary and secondary schools, and the proportion of pupils who leave school with at least one approved qualification. However, other aspects of performance worsened, with more fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools and the proportion of pupils who finished secondary school with a level 2 qualification (five or more good GCSE passes) that includes English or Welsh and mathematics falling for the second successive year.
- 20 The Council has included the need to increase the proportion of pupils attaining a Level 2 qualification that includes English or Welsh and mathematics as an improvement objective in the new Council Plan, and this therefore represents an area of on-going work.

## Care for vulnerable people is continuing to improve, but performance in some key areas is not as good as it could be

### **Support for older people and their carers is continuing to improve**

- 21 The Council continued to develop its support services to carers within Wrexham during 2011-12, and this has been recognised by the CSSIW in their annual letter to the Council. The main message in their letter in relation to adult services was that the Council has continued to make progress in implementing a programme of change, including the provision of reablement and the development of prevention and early intervention services for older people. Considerable progress has been made in establishing new commissioning and contracting arrangements.
- 22 The Council has improved its performance in many of the areas covered by its improvement objective of 'assisting older people to live independently'. More older people in Wrexham say they are able to maintain their independence after help from the Council, and the reablement<sup>1</sup> and telecare<sup>2</sup> services continue to expand. However, the Council has reported in its Annual Performance Report (the Report) that, despite all of this improvement, the proportion of older people who still need care packages after completing the reablement scheme is much higher than the target. The reablement service is therefore not yet reducing the demand for other services as well as the Council had intended.

<sup>1</sup> Reablement services support people to be as independent as possible by providing up to six weeks of therapy and care support

<sup>2</sup> Telecare services use technology to provide remote monitoring and support services to enable people to live more independently in their own home

23 The Council did not report in its annual Report on the second strand of this improvement objective, which was to increase the range of housing options for older people. This omission makes it difficult for the public to assess whether the Council fully met its target, despite the Council concluding that the priority was achieved. The Council still has much to do to achieve its aims of enabling older people to have access to a wider variety of quality accommodation. Despite opening the new extra-care housing development, 'Plas Telford', in October 2011, the Council recognises it has limited suitable accommodation for older people and needs to implement its review of housing accommodation for elderly people.

**The Council has taken steps to improve the services provided to vulnerable children and young people but further improvements are needed in many aspects of these services**

24 The CSSIW's annual letter to the Council reported that children's services had experienced particular challenges during recent years in achieving a quality service in the face of increasing demands. The CSSIW published a report on the assessment and care management of children in need in May 2012. The main findings were:

- The service had experienced increased demand coupled with instability in the workforce during 2010 and 2011. However, the number of agency staff has since fallen as the number of permanent staff has increased, and there are indications that staff morale has improved.

- The Council has directly provided and commissioned additional preventative services to try and reduce demand for social service intervention.
- Statutory partners such as the police generally reported positive working relationships with the Council. There were some good examples of services that had been provided in partnership.
- The Council's performance, as measured by performance indicators, shows improvement in some key areas including the percentage of decisions made within one day of receipt of referral.
- Some performance management and quality assurance arrangements are in place, with information and data collection providing a basis for reviewing, understanding and influencing performance.

25 The Council had identified a number of performance and efficiency issues and had taken steps to address these. Despite this, the inspection found a number of issues that remained to be addressed, including:

- the high rate of re-referrals, and the timeliness and quality of initial and core assessments; and the need for:
  - documented risk assessment and risk management to support decision-making at the referral and assessment stages;
  - improved quality and completeness of recording in case files, and consistent recording in both the paper and electronic files;

- clarity regarding the classification of referrals to the service;
- improved oversight, timely visits to looked-after children and prompt implementation of care plans;
- further development and embedding of the performance management and quality assurance arrangements; and
- further improvements in some aspects of interagency working.

26 In some key areas, the Council was unable to demonstrate improved outcomes for children and young people referred to the service.

27 The Council believes it has made good progress in improving the children's and young people's services during 2012, and this relates to one of the Council's Improvement Objectives of safeguarding our children. In early 2013 CSSIW undertook a follow-up site visit to look at aspects of the service. We will report on this and the progress the Council has made in our next report.

### Support for people who require housing benefit is improving

28 The Council's arrangements for administering housing benefit are helping the Council to improve an important aspect of the service it provides to vulnerable people. The processes the Council has put in place should ensure that timely and accurate payments are made to the right people. During 2011-12, there was improvement in key performance indicators; for example, accuracy levels increased from 85 per cent to 95 per cent, and there is reasonably good access for citizens to the benefit service. The percentage of overpayments identified and recovered have improved. More claims are processed within 14 days than in the previous year, and the percentage of claims outstanding for more than 50 days is better than the Welsh average. However, processing times for both new claims and changes of circumstances at Wrexham are longer than the Welsh average.

## The Council faces significant challenges in meeting housing needs

**The Council has not met its objectives for increasing the number of new affordable homes during 2009-2013, although it is likely to achieve its less ambitious targets for the next four years**

- 29 In 2009, the Council adopted a council priority of increasing the provision of affordable housing. It identified a need to provide an average of 147 new affordable homes each year to 2021. The Council has not yet been able to achieve this target.
- 30 For 2011-12, the Council delivered 91 affordable homes compared with a target of 140. Though below target, this represents an improvement from the 83 homes provided in 2010-11 and 41 homes in 2009-10.
- 31 The Council has reviewed its affordable housing strategy and the new Council Plan for 2012 to 2016 has set an outcome indicator of delivering 390 affordable homes over the five years of the plan. This target equates to an average of 78 homes a year compared to the previous target of 147 homes. It is likely that this less ambitious target will be achieved by 2016. The Council is forecasting that only about 30 affordable homes will be provided in 2012-13. However, the emphasis since 2010 has been on the identification of Council-owned sites for possible development. The Council has now secured outline planning permission on 21 sites, of which 13 may be developed by 2016. The largest development is the replacement of Hightown flats, which will be completed during 2013 and will provide over 140 new affordable homes.

## Much work remains to improve the quality of council housing and to respond effectively to increasing levels of homelessness

- 32 The Council also faces challenges with the quality of its housing stock and in responding to homelessness in the borough. Much of the Council's own housing stock does not meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and Wrexham is likely to be one of only three councils in Wales that will not meet WHQS for all its homes by the end of the decade. During 2010, the Council undertook a Financial Options Appraisal which confirmed that it would need an investment of at least £195 million to meet the WHQS.
- 33 The Council has developed priorities and targets for delivering its Capital Programme of Works based on surveys of tenants. This is enabling the Council to focus its limited resources on addressing some of the concerns that tenants rate as most important. In consultation with a Ministerial Task Force and the Welsh Government, the Council has submitted a business plan to reach the WHQS by 2020. This plan sets out the volume of improvement work to be undertaken each year. However, the plan assumes a borrowing requirement of £131.5 million over a seven year period. This will not be possible until after the Welsh Government has reached agreement with the UK Government on the reform of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy. This reform, which has already been implemented in England, may allow additional rental income to be raised to allow further investment in the housing stock.

However, the UK Government may impose a borrowing cap on the Council which could extend the timetable for achieving WHQS.

34 In Wales, the number of households accepted as homeless fell from a peak in 2004-05 through to the end of 2009. Since then, there has been a gradual increase, although the numbers fell during the first half of 2012-13. In Wrexham, there has been a similar trend, and the number of households accepted as homeless in 2011-12 rose to over 400, compared with the previous peak of about 350 in 2004-05. The Wrexham Homeless Service has witnessed a four-fold increase in the number of people seeking assistance since 2008-09 and the service had a net overspend of £150,000 in 2011-12. The Council made changes to the way in which it manages its homelessness service in 2012.

35 The average time homeless households spent in temporary accommodation in Wrexham was shorter than in most councils in Wales. Despite this, Wrexham has not been as successful in taking action to prevent homelessness. Wrexham only achieved the prevention of homelessness in 23 per cent of cases (a decline from 35 per cent in 2010-11), which was the second poorest performance in Wales.

**There has been good progress in several priority areas, but the impact of the Council's work is not always clear**

36 The Council is making efforts to reduce antisocial behaviour and substance misuse. Levels of antisocial behaviour have fallen and views from the People's Voice (the Council's public consultation panel) survey indicate that the perception of crime is improving. The main measures that the Council uses to assess its progress therefore show significant improvement and the Council has concluded that it made excellent progress during 2011-12.

37 However, the annual Report misses opportunities to draw on a wider evidence base to support the Council's conclusion. There are no references, for example, to data about housing complaints, which can be a cause of perceptions of fear of crime, or to data about enforcement activity, which might provide information about how successful the Council is in tackling environmental crime such as criminal damage, noise nuisance, littering and dog fouling.

- 38 The Council reported that it had achieved its Improvement Objective of people eating more healthily and being more active. The Report includes a number of indicators for physical activity, the majority of which improved in 2011-12. The Council reported, for example, that the number of young people under the age of 16 who are engaged in physical activities had increased by 22 per cent. The Council is continuing to provide healthy school meals, although the uptake in secondary schools fell slightly in 2011-12. Members took the difficult decision to adopt Supplementary Planning Guidance to restrict new hot food takeaways in close proximity to schools. Wrexham is the first Council in Wales to do this. However, despite these encouraging achievements, and the many activities the Council is involved in, the Council remains unable to demonstrate the positive impact this is having on the health and wellbeing of the people of Wrexham.
- 39 The Council has assessed its delivery of its 'Transformation' objective as being achieved. This Objective was previously known as the Organisational Development Improvement Objective, and focuses on improving the Council's efficiency. The Report lists a wide range of internal reviews the Council has undertaken. However, it is not possible for the reader to see what has been achieved, or the impact this has made on the Council's efficiency. This omission underplays the Council's progress in this area; the Council has made significant efficiency savings through working more effectively, whilst minimising the number of redundancies. Further detail is provided in paragraphs 71-72.
- 40 In our previous two Annual Improvement Reports, we reported that the Council is unable to know whether it is increasing the opportunities for children to learn through the medium of Welsh because it has not set itself measureable targets. This remained the case in 2011-12. The targets the Council had set still do not show the extent to which parents who want a Welsh-medium education for their children can access the service. The Council assessed itself as achieving this improvement objective, despite this lack of outcome data. This Improvement Objective also included the aim of promoting the Welsh culture. For 2011-12, the Council reported on no targets for improvement in this area.
- 41 As noted above, the Council has found it difficult to demonstrate the impact of its work in relation to several of its Improvement Objectives. In many cases, this is due to the lack of outcome-focused measures in its Improvement Plan for the period 2009-2012. For some priorities, the Council has tried to develop new outcome indicators during the life of the Plan, but this has not occurred in all areas. In the next section of this report, we look at how well the Council has evaluated and reported its performance for the year 2011-12.

## The Council's approach to self-evaluation is improving, but this has been undermined this year by continuing issues with the completeness and quality of data

### The Council discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure but it should ensure that it acts more in accordance with Welsh Government guidance

- 42 Councils are required under the Measure to evaluate their performance in the previous financial year, compare this against the performance of other councils, and report the information. We review how well councils complied with this aspect of the Measure, and the associated guidance.
- 43 Our review of the Council's 2011-12 assessment of its performance, 'Focused on our Performance 2011 to 2012' (the Report) concluded that the Council had discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure but there were aspects in which it could improve its compliance with Welsh Government guidance. In particular, we found that the Report made too little use of comparative data, and it lacked reference to the progress the Council had made in addressing statutory recommendations for improvement. The detail underpinning this is explained further in this section, together with the Council's current work to address the shortcomings we have identified.

### The 2011-12 Performance Report meets the requirements of the Measure

- 44 The Council's Report provides a comprehensive and generally well-balanced analysis of activities and achievements over the year. The Report was published on time, and is available in a variety of formats for the public. There is also an engaging short summary document aimed specifically at the public. The Report includes an explanation of how its contents contribute to the Council's statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and account for it.
- 45 The Report is clearly laid out and generally well written. The main body prominently describes the Council's progress for each Improvement Objective. The narrative is fair and, in many areas, key aspects of underperformance against local targets are identified. This is an improvement on previous years, when underperformance in key priorities was not always as clearly acknowledged in Council documents.
- 46 It is encouraging to see that, for some Improvement Objectives such as that of supporting older people to live independently, the Council has sought to gain the user's perspective of the benefits of the service it has delivered.



**There is too little use of comparative data and the Report lacks reference to the progress the Council has made in addressing statutory recommendations for improvement**

- 47 As is common in most councils, there are areas where Wrexham Council can further improve the quality of its Report. Some, though not all, of these areas reflect weaknesses in the Improvement Plan for 2011-12. The Council has recognised the need to improve its key business plans and reports, and is beginning to make progress in delivering this.
- 48 The Council's Report acknowledges that its approach to benchmarking has been underdeveloped and the Council intends to strengthen this in the coming year. Improving benchmarking, and including such information where appropriate, will help the Council and readers of its future Reports to understand whether progress against the Improvement Objectives has been good, poor, or indifferent in comparison to progress made by other councils that report comparable information.
- 49 Wherever possible, comparison of its performance against high-performing organisations in both the public and private sectors, and understanding the reasons behind that high performance, will help the Council to tackle areas of under-performance and meet its objective of delivering high quality across all service areas.

- 50 The Report does not explain the actions the Council has taken in response to the two statutory recommendations issued by the Wales Audit Office in 2011. As a result, the report does not fully comply with Welsh Government guidance.

**Continuing issues with the completeness and quality of data reduced the effectiveness of performance reporting**

- 51 Despite the encouraging aspects of the Annual Performance Report, several important factors undermine the quality of performance reports at the Council. One of the main issues is the poor quality of some data. When we audited a sample of 10 performance indicators in 2012, we found too many errors including:
- the systems the Council had put in place were not sufficiently robust to produce the National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) and local performance indicators;
  - four of the six NSIs we audited were amended, although none were qualified; and
  - the use of incorrect definitions, as well as incorrect calculations.
- 52 While we audited only a small sample of performance indicators, the fact that so many required amendment undermines confidence in the Council's data quality and its arrangements for producing data. Some of the errors resulted in an overstatement of performance, while others led to an understatement. There is no indication, therefore, that the Council was trying to

manipulate the data in order to show its performance in a better light, and the Council's Report includes the amended results. However, the issues we found indicate that the systems and controls the Council had in place to collate and calculate performance information were not as effective as they should have been. The Council has recognised that this remains an issue and has responded positively in order to try to ensure the accurate calculation of performance indicators in future.

53 Another on-going issue for the Council has been the development of a rounded basket of measures that indicates whether each of its Improvement Objectives has been achieved at the end of the three-year plan. This is not easy to achieve, and Wrexham Council is not alone in finding it difficult to develop measures for the outcomes it wants to achieve. In its 2011-12 Improvement Plan, for example, the Council lacked a rounded basket of outcome measures for the following Improvement Objectives:

- access to services, and listening to and engaging the public in influencing services;
- promoting equality of opportunity for children and young people to become bilingual, and to promote the Welsh culture; and
- the internally-focused transformation programme.

54 The Council has started to develop balanced scorecards to monitor performance and the delivery of its Improvement Priorities for 2012-13. The balanced scorecards have the potential to improve the Council's outcome information, enabling the Council to be more explicit about the benefits of its achievements for the citizens of Wrexham.

55 This lack of appropriate outcome measures also applies to the Council's involvement in a wide range of partnerships and collaborative initiatives. The Council's Report does not describe clearly the benefits and costs from participating, and the contribution collaboration makes to the Council's Improvement Objectives. Without a clear understanding of the additional value gained or anticipated from such collaboration, the Council and its citizens cannot be confident it is making the best use of its scarce resources.

**Self-evaluation in service areas has been variable in quality but the Council is now developing a more consistent approach**

**The Council has improved its self-awareness and its evaluation of its education services**

56 In March 2012, Estyn returned and undertook the follow-up monitoring visit to assess the progress the Council had made in relation to the recommendations made in the 2010 inspection report. The findings were:

'The local authority produced a detailed and specific action plan following the inspection and has monitored its implementation. It has also produced a report of the progress made against this action plan. However, the team judged that this report does not evaluate progress accurately. It is too positive when there is not enough evidence to support its judgments. In a report to members dated December 2011 officers stated that two recommendations had been met in full. This is not the case. As a result of this shortcoming, the authority is not sufficiently aware of the further progress it needs to make.'

- 57 As the Council's self-evaluation was judged to be inaccurate, Estyn decided the Council should remain in the Estyn monitoring category. In January 2013, Estyn made a second monitoring visit, again to review the progress the Council had made with the previous recommendations. This review found a much-improved picture of both performance in addressing the recommendations, but also in terms of a more realistic self-evaluation by the Council. The Estyn findings relating to the self-evaluation were that :

'The local authority has a useful action plan in which it sets out how it aims to meet the recommendations made in the inspection and monitoring visit. It has improved its monitoring of progress towards these objectives and has improved the rigour and accuracy of its evaluation'.

### The Council's self-assessment of the performance of social services lacks detail

- 58 The Council did not include full-year performance information for the Improvement Objective 'safeguarding our children' in its Report. Instead, a web link takes the reader to a report on performance during the third quarter of 2011-12, which provides details of performance up to the end of December 2011. This lack of a year-end assessment prevents the reader from seeing the achievements the Council has made in this area. Despite the lack of quantitative information in the Report, the Council reported the data in its Director of Social Services Annual Report.

- 59 For this Improvement Objective, the Council's Report states that, 'Despite the improvement that has been made in the timeliness of assessments, this needs to continue to improve and, as such, this improvement priority, whilst moving in the right direction and making excellent progress in all areas, must be regarded as being slightly off track'. While this statement acknowledges one area for improvement, the Council's assessment is much more positive than the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (the CSSIW) assessment reported in their annual letter to the Council at the end of October 2012. The CSSIW letter concluded that, 'there has been improved performance in some areas, however many key performance indicators suggest progress has been limited, and that the council's performance is well below that of other councils in some areas.'

60 In referring to the Council's self-evaluation, the CSSIW said that the Director's Annual Report, 'places the achievements of the Council and the priority areas for development within a clear local and national context. Reference is made to particular areas where the Director acknowledges the services face challenges in achieving its objectives. The emphasis is on the direction of future service development rather than detailed reference to last year's report. Although in most cases progress has been made, some of the priorities identified for development during 2011-12 have not been completed during the year, and clear timescales for the achievement of plans are not always provided in the service development plan accompanying the report.'

61 This highlights the need for the Council to report more fully on progress and performance, and link this to clear plans for improvement. This information needs to be included in future annual social services self-evaluations and the relevant section in the Council's overarching Annual Performance Report.

### The Council is now beginning to develop a broader and more consistent approach to self-evaluation

62 The Council acknowledges that it has more to do to improve the quality and consistency of its self-evaluation across the various departments. The new administration is actively looking at a variety of mechanisms to evaluate its performance. The Council has, for example, recently undergone a Welsh Local Government Association peer review of its approach to equality and diversity, and a reassessment for Investors in People, following which the Council achieved the bronze standard. The Council has also achieved the bronze health award following a Health and Safety assessment in December 2012.

63 As well as seeking external views on the Council's arrangements, officers are working with Members to review the effectiveness of the new governance arrangements that have been introduced, including scrutiny and the new style of performance reporting. Officers and Members are striving to improve the usefulness of the performance reports, with revisions each quarter to the style and content. This new approach is underpinned by more streamlined data collection arrangements, coupled with a focused officer and Member process for reviewing the performance information.

64 Plans are in place for Members to review the service improvement targets for the forthcoming year, 2013-14. The Council is intending to move to a three-tiered approach which clearly defines the amount of improvement that is required.

## The Council has re-energised its improvement planning and is well placed to continue to improve in most respects

### The Council's improvement planning for 2012-13 is better than in the past

- 65 In the spring of 2012, the new Chief Executive and interim Leader worked closely with senior officers and Members to prepare the new five-year Council Improvement Plan, and this was agreed by the outgoing Council. Following the local government elections in May 2012, the Council appointed a new Executive Board and a new Leader. The Board remains committed to the Council Plan, and the Plan was formally adopted at the first Council meeting after the elections. All the Members and officers that we have spoken to throughout this year have been enthusiastic about the new Plan.
- 66 We reviewed this Plan to assess whether it complied with the Measure and associated Guidance, and we found that the Council has discharged its improvement planning duties under the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance.
- 67 The Plan was developed to be publicly-focused, and it is supplemented with a short and attractive summary version which the Council is actively promoting. In the Plan, the Council describes the high-level outcomes it wants to achieve in 15 Improvement Objectives. The breadth of these is objectives ambitious, especially as many require partnership working. The targets set for improving educational standards are also ambitious, but many other targets reflect only limited challenge.

- 68 There is some scope for the Council to further improve the quality of the Plan by explaining more clearly why the Improvement Objectives were chosen. It is not always clear, for example, whether the Improvement Objectives reflect weak past performance, or the need for cashable efficiency savings. The Improvement Objectives could also be described more precisely in terms of the anticipated outcomes. At present the measures associated with each priority outcome do not, in some cases, reflect the breadth of the ambitions described.

### The Council is well placed to continue to improve in most respects

- 69 In our Letter in October 2012, we reported on the Council's likelihood to secure continuous improvement through its work in delivering this year's Plan. The Auditor General concluded that, based on, and limited to, work carried out to date by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, he believed that the Council was likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement during the 2012-13 financial year.
- 70 To help us reach this conclusion we considered the arrangements the Council had in place to help it deliver its Plan. These include financial management, the use of technology and the management of information. We had previously identified in August 2010 that some of these arrangements were not fully supporting the Council to deliver its planned improvement, including democratic processes, people

management and business management. The Council has made good progress on many of these areas.

**The Council remains well placed to manage the financial challenge through savings programmes and ‘transformation’ projects**

- 71 The Council is continuing to update its medium-term financial plans. Departmental service reviews resulted in cashable savings of £5.4 million in 2011-12 and the Council has also achieved the £3.5 million savings planned for 2012-13. The Council is more closely integrating its transformation work with its day-to-day business and plans to embed further change through the introduction of Strategic Assessments, which are reviews that will look across the whole organisation, and not just within an individual service area. From an early stage, Members were actively involved in setting the budget for 2013-14.
- 72 The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently gave his opinion on the Council's accounts and, based on this, the Appointed Auditor's view is that the Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources . [Appendix 3](#) gives more detail. The Council has continued to tightly manage its finances, and our report on their accounts in 2011-12 is one of our most positive to date. Members are routinely involved in developing the budget, and establishing the forthcoming priorities, which is good practice.

**The Council's arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are likely to support continuous improvement**

- 73 During 2011-12, we reviewed the way in which all councils in Wales were using technology to support their improvement programmes. In Wrexham, we found that the Council has established a sound technology infrastructure, and is starting to use technology to transform services and achieve efficiencies. However, it could improve strategic planning and decision-making arrangements, and use performance information to demonstrate achievements and savings arising from the use of technology.
- 74 The Council has focused on developing technology-based customer access channels, which are performing well, and is starting to exploit the potential of other aspects of technology to enable back-office service transformation. However, the Council needs to improve its approaches to identifying the return on investment in its technology projects.

**The Council's arrangements for the governance of its information assets present some risks and have the potential to limit the Council's ability to improve**

- 75 In 2011-12, we also reviewed the way in which councils use and manage information. In Wrexham, we found that the Council's governance of information is not strong enough. The Council lacks a corporate information strategy, and ownership, accountability, and responsibilities for information are unassigned.
- 76 The Council has sound technical information security. However, it lacks knowledge about its information assets, and the fragmented approach to information management means it cannot fully understand those areas that represent the highest risk or opportunity. The Council cannot therefore focus its efforts on the areas that need the most improvement.

**The Council continues to experience challenges to increasing the use of the Welsh Language within its business**

- 77 The role of the Welsh Language Commissioner was created by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. Over time, new powers to impose standards on organisations will come into force through legislation. Until that time, the Commissioner will continue to review Welsh language schemes by virtue of powers inherited under the Welsh Language Act 1993. The Commissioner works with all councils in Wales to inspect and advise

on the implementation of language schemes. It is the responsibility of councils to provide services to the public in Welsh in accordance with the commitments in their language schemes. Every council is committed to providing an annual monitoring report to the Commissioner outlining its performance in implementing the language scheme. The Commissioner analyses every monitoring report; provides a formal response and collects further information as required.

- 78 The Welsh Language Commissioner has concluded that, in Wrexham, the Council's departmental action plans identify barriers for complying with the Language Scheme and include targets for improvement. However, the Council has failed to achieve its target of increasing the number of staff able to speak Welsh and it acknowledges the need to take improvement measures. As opportunities to plan the workforce through recruitment are limited at present, the Council will need to invest further in Welsh language training and it will need to be planned effectively. The number of staff who attended language awareness training during 2012 was low, but the Council has committed to providing an e-learning module in 2013.
- 79 The Council has taken steps to monitor Welsh language requirements in contracts and a system is in place for assessing the impact of policies on the Welsh language. However, it is not clear what system is in place for the general scrutiny of the Welsh Language Scheme.

80 The main priorities for the Council in 2013 will be to implement proactive measures to improve the Welsh language skills of the workforce and to consider ways of increasing the use of Welsh language services.

**The Council has made good progress in several areas for improvement identified in previous audit letters and reports**

81 We have previously made a number of recommendations and proposals for improvement and also noted some areas where we would undertake further work. Progress on these matters is summarised below and described in more detail in [Appendix 5](#):

- During 2011-12, the Council reviewed and revised its scrutiny and decision-making arrangements, and has made a good start in implementing the changes. Senior members and officers are clearly committed to seeing through the changes, with Members now presenting all reports to committees, and, where possible, answering questions without the help of officers. Because of this, Members are now more actively involved in the preparation of reports, and are increasing their knowledge and understanding of the Council's priority areas. The Executive Board has halved the number of its meetings and has refocused its agendas. Scrutiny committees also now have shorter agendas, with a focus on scrutinising one or two key issues in more detail.

- While it is too early to see the full benefit of the changes to the democratic arrangements, the signs are positive. This change has been a significant undertaking, and required a culture change within the Council. Despite the challenges, the Council handled this process effectively. The transition has been smooth, and, on the whole, well received by Members and senior officers.

- The Council has largely addressed the proposals for improvement relating to its Improvement Plan.

- The Council has now started to allocate resources more explicitly to its Improvement Priorities as part of its medium-term financial planning and budget setting for 2013-14. The medium-term financial plan is now integrated in the Council's overall policy development framework.

- Business processes are continuing to be streamlined, and officers are trying to prepare reports that can serve a variety of audiences, thus reducing production time. Work is planned to review target setting with Members in the near future. As this work is on-going, it is too early to determine how this is better supporting effective management and scrutiny. Nevertheless, the Council is keen to improve in this area, and we will continue to monitor the progress.

- Workforce planning continues to develop across many departments, although further work is needed for the Council to have a comprehensive understanding of its workforce requirements.



82 As in most organisations, there are some aspects of the Council's arrangements that require further attention. There has been limited progress on three proposals for improvement we made in 2011 and 2012. These relate to:

- public engagement and using consultation and feedback from service users to help to improve services;
- meeting local housing needs, including providing support to those who present as homeless; and
- addressing weakness in target setting, data quality and performance management.

83 The Council remains committed to listening to the public and acting upon their feedback. To this end, a full time manager has been appointed to project manage the new strategic assessment on 'understanding and responding'. This project aims to deliver the Council's new Improvement Objective that it should have 'engaged and satisfied customers'. The Council is confident that the outcomes of this work will address the first proposal listed above. We have referred to the Council's work in addressing the other two proposals earlier in this report in paragraphs 29-35 and 51-55 respectively.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities are defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities and are under a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'.

This report has been produced by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Measure. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether, as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17, he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

The annual improvement assessment is the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The improvement assessment is informed by a forward-looking assessment of an authority's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. It also includes a retrospective assessment of whether an authority has achieved its planned improvements in order to inform a view as to the authority's track record of improvement. This report also summarises the Auditor General's conclusions on the authority's self-assessment of its performance.

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the relevant authorities and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). This published Annual Improvement Report summarises audit and assessment reports including any special inspections (under section 24).

An important ancillary activity for the Wales Audit Office is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

## Appendix 2

### Useful information about Wrexham and Wrexham County Borough Council

#### The Council

The Council spends approximately £281 million per year (2012-13 budget), including Welsh Government specific grants. This equates to about £2,078 per resident. In the same year, the Council planned to spend £45.4 million on capital items.

The average band D council tax in 2011-12 for Wrexham was £1,135 per year. This has increased by 2.7 per cent to £1,166 per year for 2012-13. 72.6 per cent of Wrexham's housing is in council tax bands A to D.

The Council is made up of 52 elected members who represent the community and make decisions about priorities and use of resources. The political make-up of the Council is as follows:

- 23 Labour
- 10 Democratic Independents
- 10 Wrexham Independents
- 5 Conservatives
- 4 Welsh Liberal Democrats

The Council's Executive Board is composed of 10 members with a balanced representation of the parties. The Council's Leader is Councillor Neil Rogers

The Council's Chief Executive is Dr Helen Paterson. She is supported by three Strategic and Performance Directors, Clare Field, Philip Walton, and Lee Robinson.

#### Other information

The Assembly Members (AM) for Wrexham are:

- Lesley Griffiths, Wrexham, Labour Party
- Ken Skates, Clwyd South, Labour Party
- Mark Isherwood, Regional AM, Welsh Conservative Party
- Antoinette Sandbach, Regional AM, Welsh Conservative Party
- Llyr Huws Gruffydd, Regional AM, Plaid Cymru
- Aled Roberts, Regional AM, Welsh Liberal Democrats

The Members of Parliament for Wrexham are:

- Ian Lucas, Wrexham, Labour Party
- Susan Elan Jones, Clwyd South, Labour Party

For more information see the Council's own website at [www.wrexham.gov.uk](http://www.wrexham.gov.uk) or contact the Council at Wrexham County Borough Council, The Guildhall, Wrexham, LL11 1AY. Telephone Number: 01978 292000

## Appendix 3

### Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter

The auditor appointed by the Auditor General issued the following auditor's report on 29 November 2012.

#### The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources

It is the Council's responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the Statement of Accounts;
- review the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a Certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the Statement of Accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This Code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards.

On 26 September 2012 I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Statement of Accounts stating that, in my opinion they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts.

The key matters arising from the audit were reported to members of the Audit Committee in my Audit of Financial Statements report on the 27 September 2012. My report concluded that the Statements of Accounts were prepared to a high standard. I also identified a number of additional matters to help the Council further strengthen its systems of internal control. These will be reported in my detailed report to officers shortly.

My consideration of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the Statement of Accounts as well as placing reliance on the work completed as part of the Improvement Assessment under the Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009). Overall, I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place. The Auditor General may highlight areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made when he publishes his Annual Improvement Report.

I issued a Certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts was completed on 28 September 2012.

The financial audit fee for 2011-12 is currently expected to be in line with the agreed fees set out in the Annual Audit Outline.

Yours sincerely

Derwyn Owen  
Engagement Lead

For and on behalf of the Appointed Auditor  
29 November 2012

Local electors and others have a right to look at the Council's accounts. When the Council has finalised its accounts for the previous financial year, usually around June or July, it must advertise that they are available for people to look at. You can get copies of the accounts from the Council; you can also inspect all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers and receipts relating to them for 20 working days after they are made available. You can ask the auditor questions about the accounts for the year that they are auditing. For example, you can simply tell the auditor if you think that something is wrong with the accounts or about waste and inefficiency in the way the Council runs its services. For more information see the Wales Audit Office leaflet, *Council accounts: your rights*, on our website at [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk) or by writing to us at the address on the back of this report.

## Appendix 4

# Wrexham Council's improvement objectives and self-assessment

### The Council's improvement objectives

The Council is required by the Welsh Government to make plans to improve its functions and the services it provides. Each year it must publish these plans along with specific 'improvement objectives' that set out the key things that the Council intends to do to improve. The Council must do this as soon as possible after 1 April each year.

The Council published its improvement objectives for 2012-16 in its Council Plan which can be found on the Council website at [www.wrexham.gov.uk](http://www.wrexham.gov.uk). They are:

2009-2012 Improvement Objectives	2012-2016 Improvement Objectives
Three council priorities of:	People want to live, work, learn, visit and invest here
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>helping to increase the number of affordable homes that are available in the county borough;</li> </ul>	Businesses can locate and grow here
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>helping people to get a better education and the skills they need for employment; and</li> </ul>	People can prosper as individuals in their communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reducing the amount of energy used and lowering carbon emissions.</li> </ul>	All children and young people have positive aspirations, learn and achieve their potential
The Council also has a set of 'improvement priorities'. These relate to areas from existing strategies and plans where the Council wants major improvements to take place. There are eight 'improvement priorities' which we have summarised as:	Children and young people are safeguarded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>helping older people to live independently;</li> </ul>	People feel, and are, safe and secure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>helping people to eat a more healthy diet and be more active;</li> </ul>	All people are enabled to make healthy choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>making it easier for people to use its services, and also asking the public how their services could be improved;</li> </ul>	All vulnerable older people are safe, and have optimal health, independence and well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promoting equal opportunities for children and young people to become bilingual in Welsh and English, and the Council promoting the Welsh culture;</li> </ul>	Welsh language and culture is promoted and supported

2009-2012 Improvement Objectives	2012-2016 Improvement Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reducing antisocial behaviour and substance misuse, and helping to improve the perceptions of crime;</li> </ul>	Homes that meet people's needs and aspirations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reducing the amount of waste by increasing the rate of recycling;</li> </ul>	An environmentally responsible place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivering the Transformation Programme; and</li> </ul>	Communities with sustainable, attractive settlements, neighbourhoods, buildings and spaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improving the safeguarding of children (added for the year 2010/11).</li> </ul>	Well connected communities
	Engaged and satisfied customers
	Creating the Conditions for Success

### The Council's self-assessment of performance

The Council's self-assessment of its performance during 2011-12 can be found in its annual Focused on our Performance report. This can be found on the Council's website at [www.wrexham.gov.uk](http://www.wrexham.gov.uk).



## Appendix 5

### Previous recommendations or proposals for improvement made to the Council

Over the course of our work since 2010, we have made recommendations or proposals for improvement. These have previously been reported to the Council and are set out below for information. The Council has made progress in addressing many of these, and this is included below. We will continue to monitor and report on the progress made by the Council in implementing the remaining proposals or recommendations under our future programme of work.

Preliminary corporate assessment 2010		
<b>P1</b>	Further develop appropriate outcome measures for objectives.	Some progress has been made, and this has been replaced by a subsequent proposal for improvement.
<b>P2</b>	Ensure Executive Board member and scrutiny roles support effective decision making and enable scrutiny to focus on priority issues.	Good progress has been made. This is now complete.
<b>P3</b>	Develop corporate workforce planning.	While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.
<b>P4</b>	Improve the medium-term financial strategy so that resources are increasingly linked to priorities.	Progress has been made. This is now complete.
<b>P5</b>	Continue to improve business processes by streamlining arrangements to ensure they support effective management, monitoring and scrutiny.	While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.
Annual Improvement Report 2011		
<b>P1</b>	Ensure that the focus of the Council's priorities is not so narrow that it has limited impact on the wider issues it is seeking to address.	While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.
<b>P2</b>	Develop a consistent approach to target setting in areas where improvement is required so it is recognised that targets are intended to drive improvement and may not be achieved.	Progress has been made, although this remains on-going work for the Council in 2013.
<b>P3</b>	Demonstrate how consultation and feedback from users and residents is used to improve services.	While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.

Corporate assessment update letter 2011	
<b>R1</b> The Council should outline arrangements to review scrutiny and decision making and to streamline business process which increase the pace of change in addressing these issues.	Good progress has been made on the review of scrutiny and decision making, but the streamlining of business processes remains ongoing work for the Council.
<b>R2</b> The Council should set out how it will integrate the processes for developing future improvement objectives and allocating resources to them as part of its medium-term planning and budget setting process.	Good progress has been made. This is now complete.
<b>P1</b> Complete the development of outcome measures for its improvement priorities, and use performance reporting to highlight progress on achieving outcomes.	While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.
<b>P2</b> Improve the effectiveness of public engagement, and develop a more coherent approach across the Council.	While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.
Annual Improvement Report 2012	
<b>P1</b> Pursue recent work to develop the Council Plan 2012-16 and address issues of the ambition, governance and performance management of the Council.	There has been good progress on developing the Council plan and improving governance arrangements. Performance management remains an area for further work, and is captured in other proposals for improvement so this is now closed.
<b>P2</b> Increase the pace of change in meeting the Human Resources (HR) strategy and developing and workforce planning.	Good progress has been made, although further work is required to ensure workforce planning is fully functional across the Council. This proposal is now closed, as the need to improve workforce planning is covered by previous proposal.

## Annual Improvement Report 2012

<p><b>P3</b> Establish and embed in Council arrangements robust methods to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assess if the public finds it easy to access council services, and take action to improve accessibility to services where needed;</li> <li>• engage with the public, and use this information to develop future plans and council services; and</li> <li>• provide prompt feedback to the public, and where appropriate specific groups of customers, on the results of public consultations and the actions taken as a result by the Council.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress has been made. We will review this work in 2013, and report on this during 2013.</p>
<p><b>P4</b> Review its strategy to meet local housing need through affordable housing, improving the quality of its housing stock and providing support to those who present as homeless.</p>	<p>While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.</p>
<p><b>P5</b> Address weakness in target setting, data quality and performance management, and enable the Council to undertake and publish robust assessments of its performance.</p>	<p>While some progress has been made, this remains an on-going area for improvement, and the proposal remains in place.</p>
<p><b>Letter 1 2013:</b></p>	
<p>No new proposals or recommendations for improvement.</p>	
<p><b>Letter 2 2013:</b></p>	
<p><b>R1</b> Implement proposals to improve the quality control of data collection, analysis and reporting, and ensure that an adequate control assurance framework supports this.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains current.</p>

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