

EXTRAORDINARY AUDIT COMMITTEE 21/1/16

Present: Councillor John Pughe Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Tom Ellis, Aled Ll. Evans, Sian Gwenllian, John B. Hughes, Charles Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, W. Tudor Owen, Angela Russell, Gethin Glyn Williams and John Wyn Williams.

Lay Member: Mr John Pollard

Also in Attendance: Dewi Morgan (Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk), Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Hawis Jones (Strategic Planning and Performance Manager – for Item 4 on the agenda), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery – for Item 5 on the agenda) and Bethan Adams (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Anwen J. Davies, Trevor Edwards and E. Selwyn Griffiths.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Discussion on this report was postponed at the previous meeting of the Committee on 1 December 2015 due to the volume of information in order to allow members to give due attention to the report.

The Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk set out the context, and noted that a more thorough procedure had been set in order to allow the Committee to satisfy itself that the actions to respond to the improvement proposals contained in external auditors' reports had been implemented.

It was noted that a report in terms of external audits was submitted to the Committee every six months. It was explained that the intention under the new procedure was to consider every proposal/recommendation individually and when the Committee was satisfied that a proposal/recommendation had been completed or that it was no longer relevant it could be removed from the list.

In response to members' concerns in terms of seeking actual assurance that the actions in response to improvement proposals had been implemented, the Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk noted that the work of the Heads of Department and officers must be relied upon but if the Committee was of the opinion that there was a need for further explanation a Cabinet Member or officers could be called before them.

The Chief Executive noted that the role of the Committee, as the body responsible for governance, was to keep track of the actions and to decide whether it was satisfied that they had been completed or with the progress to date and not to redo the work of the Scrutiny Committees.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Manager guided the members through the appendix which noted the audits undertaken by external auditors during the last three years together with their proposals for improvement, the action plans to respond to the proposals by the auditors as well as progress to date. Specific attention was given to the recommendations where it was noted that they had been completed.

During the discussion the following main points were noted:

- That some observations were very lengthy and therefore more concise information was requested in future with reference to a project in the Council's strategic plan when relevant e.g. Estyn Inspection;
- Consideration should be given to including the links to the reports in the table;
- **Page 15 1.2.1 4i. Ensure that services promote independence for older people.** - need confirmation that this work was only completed in relation to telecare;
- **Page 20 1.2.2 ii. Strategic planning with BCUHB in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).** - need confirmation that monitoring of the therapeutic service for children/young people placed outside the authority's area was undertaken;
- That there was a need for clarity in terms of leader/responsibility where it was not noted;
- **Page 20 1.2.2 iii. Awareness and use of advocacy services** - that further information should be received as the observations did not confirm that the quality of the care plans was consistent;
- **Page 23 1.2.2 iia. Opportunities to take advantage of health care and accommodation for looked-after children (Accommodation)** - that confirmation should be received in terms of the intentions of the Children and Supporting Families Department in relation to responding to the lack of range of placements available for those with complex needs;
- **Page 26 1.2.2 i. Raise awareness of the implications and requirements of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and improve the governance arrangements for the operation of the procedures** - that confirmation should be received as to why DoLS applications had increased from 7 in 2013-14 to 365 in 2014-15;
- **Page 59 2.2 Gwynedd Older People Domiciliary Care Review by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate (CSSIW)** - it was noted as 'In progress (continuous)', it would be more sensible to note that it had been completed on a specific date and noting that it was continuous work. It was noted that a request was made for confirmation of the situation;
- **Page 60 and 61 2.3 National Review of the Use of DoLS in Wales 2014 - Gwynedd Local Authority and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board - CSSIW** - the progress column noted that specific steps in the action plan had been realised but not the entire recommendation. One progress should be noted, namely 'In progress';
- **Page 65 2.5 C3 Ensure that the process of transferring activities for promoting benefits from the Council to the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) does not have a negative effect on the process of engaging with citizens** - In response to an observation by a member regarding the annual contract with CAB expiring on 31 March 2016, the Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk noted that there would be a new annual contract for the year 2016-17.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Manager noted that the national reports of external auditors would be included when a list would be submitted to the Committee in six months' time together with the ones specific to Gwynedd. The Chief Executive added that when national reports were considered, the Committee should satisfy itself in terms of the reasons for not taking action in accordance with some recommendations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To remove the completed recommendations from the list with the exception of the ones for which further explanation/information is requested, namely:
- **Page 15 1.2.1 4i. Ensure that services promote independence for older people;**
 - **Page 20 1.2.2 ii. Strategic planning with BCUHB in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS);**

- Page 20 1.2.2 iii. Awareness and use of advocacy services;
 - Page 23 1.2.2 iia. Opportunities to take advantage of health care and accommodation for looked-after children (Accommodation).
- (ii) To ask for further explanation/information in terms of the following recommendations where they are noted as 'In progress':
- Page 26 1.2.2 i. Raise awareness of the implications and requirements of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and improve the governance arrangements for the operation of the procedures;
 - Page 59 2.2 Gwynedd Older People Domiciliary Care Review by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate (CSSIW).
- (iii) To approve this procedure as the future procedure for the Committee to satisfy itself regarding the Council's actions to respond to external auditors' reports, including national reports.

3. THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery submitted the report and noted that, following a discussion on the matter at the Committee on 1 December 2015, the final version of the report of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) had been received which had been included as Appendix 1.

He guided the members through Appendix 2 which noted the recommendations with some considerations for the Committee to consider when creating an action plan to respond to the recommendations and drew attention to the fact that the Committee was asked to elect members to a Sub-group which would also include members of the Scrutiny Forum and the Deputy Leader. It was explained that the Sub-group would create recommendations for consideration before the Council commenced its new year in May 2016.

During the discussion the following main points were noted:

- That scrutiny in its current form was ineffective;
- That, since changing to the Cabinet system, some members were unwilling to take part in scrutiny and the need to deal with this;
- That one weakness in the current procedure was that too many items were being considered because of the inadequacy of challenging why a matter was being considered and consequently the standard of scrutiny deteriorated;
- That it was difficult to keep up the momentum with scrutiny investigations;
- That there was a need for assurances regarding the purpose of scrutiny;
- That scrutiny could add value to the process if the scrutiny procedure was remodelled;
- That member training was extremely important;
- That consideration should be given to establishing a procedure whereby a Scrutiny Committee could select membership from amongst all Council members (with the exception of Cabinet Members) in terms of their expertise to take part in a scrutiny investigation;
- The recommendations were welcomed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To approve the draft action points;
- (ii) To elect the Chair, Vice-chair and Councillor John Wyn Williams on the Sub-group.

The meeting commenced at 2:00pm and concluded at 3.45pm.

CHAIRMAN