



Summary of Auditor General's Annual Improvement Report

Bridgend County Borough Council

The Auditor General for Wales set out some important messages on how Bridgend County Borough Council is planning to improve its services in his 2009/10 annual improvement report. The report is the first of its kind, following new legislation in April 2010, which requires councils to make arrangements to improve their services and the way that they work. This first year has been a period of adjustment, and this report is a starting point for the Auditor General to make much fuller assessments of how councils are performing in future years.

The reports main message is that the Council is **improving in a number of areas**. It has particular strengths in the way political and managerial leaders have worked together to tackle some longstanding issues, the way it plans its services, the way it works with other organisations and the way it manages its money. While progress is being made there are still areas that need further development if future improvement is to be secured; including developing a robust approach to business planning and refining future arrangements for performance management and workforce planning.

In the face of impending spending cuts the Council will need to make tough and timely decisions on the use of resources. A history of prudent financial management allied to the improvements already made means that while the challenges are not to be underestimated the Council is now better placed to meet them and secure future improvement.

The Council published its improvement objectives in its Corporate Plan in August 2010 and is clear about what it aims to achieve and, for the most part, how it will measure its success. It involves local people well in planning services and reports accurately on how it is doing.

The Council has traditionally provided an extensive residential care service for older people but has recognised the need to change its approach and has developed a range of services to promote independent living including redeveloping one of its residential sites to provide an extra sheltered housing scheme. This and other initiatives have improved performance.

The Council has a history of good collaboration with the health sector, working with and through the Local Service Board, it should develop these partnerships to provide a wider range of services and help reduce cost.



The Council has worked in partnership with others to help create job opportunities, develop skills and ensure investment in sustainable long-term solutions. There is more to do. Although the percentage of working-age adults with no qualifications in the Borough has gradually fallen since 2001, it is still above the Welsh average. The percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) reduced in 2009 but at a slower rate than the Welsh average and the figure for Bridgend is now amongst the worst in Wales and needs to improve.

The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently confirmed that the Council's financial statements gave a true and fair view of the financial transactions and that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure value for money.

Note

The Wales Audit Office is independent of government and is responsible for the annual audit of some £20 billion of annual public expenditure. Its mission is to promote improvement, so that people in Wales benefit from accountable, well-managed public services that offer the best possible value for money. It is also committed to identifying and spreading good practice across the Welsh public sector.

Huw Vaughan Thomas took up post as Auditor General for Wales on 1 October 2010. More information on the role of the Auditor General and on the new Annual Improvement Assessment in local government can be found on our website www.wao.gov.uk.

The full report is available on the Council's website at www.bridgend.gov.uk and the Wales Audit Office website at www.wao.gov.uk.