

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE**

**28<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Rosemarie Harris  
Leader of Powys County Council

**REPORT TITLE:** Post Improvement and Assurance Board Arrangements

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose**

1.1 Whilst it is recognised that Powys County Council has come a long way on its improvement journey; appendix one provides a revised framework to facilitate the delivery of Transformation and Improvement within the Council, maintaining the recent pace. Crucially the framework provides Members and Welsh Government with appropriate oversight, enabling them to hold Members and Officers to account. The revised framework provides a proposed set of alternative arrangements to replace the current Improvement and Assurance Boards that enables Powys County Council to effectively manage its own improvement journey, and which will provide assurance to Welsh Government.

**2. Background**

2.1 This follows the Sean Harriss report commissioned by Welsh Government in March 2020. The report concluded that “the Council, Improvement Board and Welsh Government should be commended for the progress made over the past two years. There is much still to be done but the Council is in a much stronger position to drive its own improvement; and the continuation of the Improvement and Assurance Board (I&AB) for a further six months in a revised form should provide both an appropriate level of ongoing support while providing the Council with a sufficient period of time to put in place its own alternative arrangements”.

**3. Advice**

3.1 The Minister has approved the framework, see appendix 2. It is therefore proposed that Cabinet endorse that the transitional period to scale down the role of the I&AB and for Powys County Council to implement new arrangements will be complete by the end of September 2020. Conditions for this change include:

1. the determination of and implementation of local governance arrangements
2. evidence of sound underlying performance on children’s services

3. clear evidence of an agreed transformation plan for adult services
4. significant progress on ALN, school organisation and standards in education
5. support for the change from various WG arms, Care Inspectorate Wales and ESTYN.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

4.1 The Council will need to resource Independent External Advisors 1-2 days per month per Service Improvement Board, these costs will be met from existing budgets.

4.2 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) can support the recommendation.

#### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.

5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

#### **6. Comment from local member(s)**

6.1 The paper is organisational/countywide.

#### **7. Integrated Impact Assessment**

7.1 Not required.

#### **8. Recommendation**

It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the post Improvement and Assurance Board arrangements as set out at appendix one.

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## Appendix One

### **Improvement and Transformation Assurance Framework**

#### 1. Purpose

Whilst it is recognised that Powys County Council has come a long way on its improvement journey; this report provides a revised framework to facilitate the delivery of Transformation and Improvement within the Council, maintaining the recent pace. Crucially the framework will provide Members and Welsh Government with appropriate oversight, enabling them to hold Members and Officers to account. The revised framework provides a proposed set of alternative arrangements to replace the current Improvement and Assurance Boards that enables Powys County Council to effectively manage its own improvement journey, and which will provide assurance to Welsh Government.

#### 2. Background

In 2018, Sean Harriss reviewed Powys County Council and sought to answer three strategic questions;

1. Does the Council's Leadership fully understand and accept the problems, issues and challenges they face? Are they aware of the size and scale of the transformation required?
2. Does the Council have a well thought through strategy for delivering the necessary improvements and do the detailed plans appropriately address all the issues and challenges?
3. Does the Council have the necessary political and managerial leadership, expertise and capacity in place to deliver the strategy and detailed plans?

Sean Harriss' report was published in January 2018 and included eleven strategic recommendations and nine specific recommendations for the immediate future.

In March 2020, Sean Harriss returned to examine the following strategic issues:

- The progress made by the Council in addressing the corporate and service issues identified in various inspection reports from 2019. This includes Children's Services, Adults Services, Education and associated Corporate Leadership and Governance
- The specific recommendations made in the report of 2018 and the progress made in implementing these

- The effectiveness of the Improvement and Assurance Board in supporting the delivery of improvements in the Council
- The Leadership capacity in the Council to drive improvement without external support and assurance
- Recommendations for the future arrangements for the Improvement and Assurance Board.

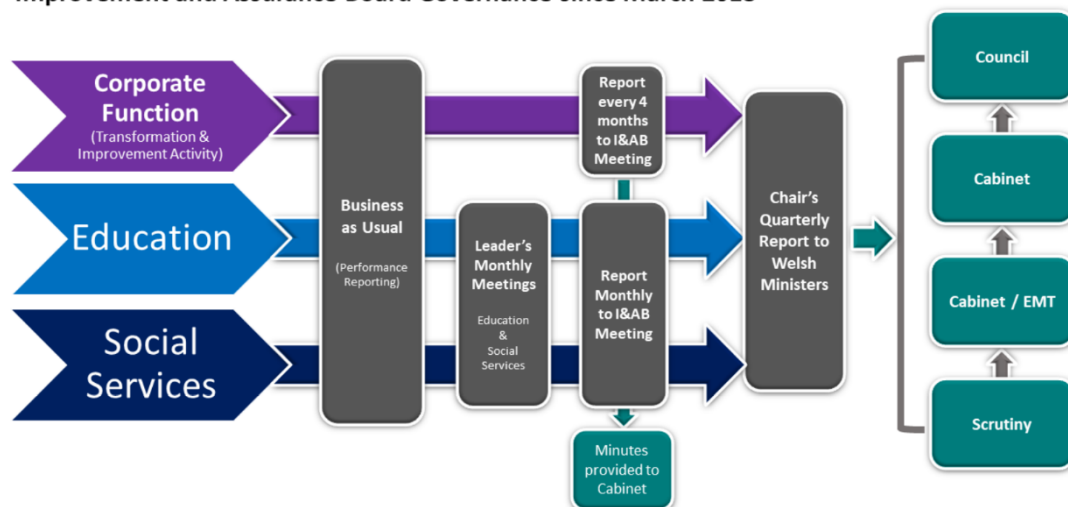
The report concluded that “the Council, Improvement Board and Welsh Government should be commended for the progress made over the past two years. There is much still to be done but the Council is in a much stronger position to drive its own improvement; and the continuation of the Improvement and Assurance Board for a further six months in a revised form should provide both an appropriate level of ongoing support while providing the Council with a sufficient period of time to put in place its own alternative arrangements”.

### 3. Specific recommendations

The March 2020 report set out a number of recommendations:

- The Board should remain in place until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- That given the progress made on Corporate Leadership and capacity that this area no longer needs to be overseen by the Board
- That the Board should meet monthly until June 2020 with a final meeting in September 2020
- In the period of July to September the Chair and Independent Board members should continue to report to Welsh Government based on continued engagement with the Council
- That in order to give final agreement to the ending of the Improvement and Assurance Board that Welsh Government are satisfied with the alternative arrangements put in place by the Council
- Proposals for the alternative arrangements should be submitted by the Council to Welsh Government by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020
- In proposing the alternative arrangements, the Council should have regard to the following:
  - A Council led Improvement Board potentially Chaired by the Chief Executive
  - A continuation of cross party and Scrutiny involvement in the revised arrangements
  - Further strengthening of Scrutiny arrangements and wider Member development
  - Maintenance of external challenge and advice in specific issues e.g. Education and Social Services

## Improvement and Assurance Board Governance since March 2018



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s inevitably had an impact on recent work and re proposed to Welsh Government (WG) that the Council to implement new arrangements will be

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s and ESTYN.

The governance arrangements in operation since March 2018 are illustrated at figure 1.

As well as the standard operating governance of the organisation (Scrutiny, Cabinet, Full Council) the Council saw the addition of an Improvement and Assurance Board across Corporate Functions, Social Services and more recently Education.

These are further bolstered with internal meetings lead by the Council's Leader with membership from Group Leaders, Portfolio Holders, Chief Executive Officer, 2 x Corporate Directors, 5 x Head of Service. In parallel with the Improvement and Assurance Board, a Delivery Board meets at least bi-monthly to oversee the delivery of the Vision 2025

Transformation Programme. Further to the recommendations provided in the S that the organisation operates its own governance mechanisms whilst strengthen continued scrutiny involvement in the revised arrangements. Figure 2, provides governance that will ensure the organisation fulfils the recommendations set out Executive Officer has instigated an Improvement Board for the organisation's Ho ensure corporate oversight of the Highways, Transport and Recycling Service as

Figure 1. Improvement and Assurance Board Governance



Figure 2. Proposed Improvement and Transformation Assurance Framework

The Leader will continue to Chair a monthly Group Leader's meeting. Separately, the Leader will Chair a Corporate Improvement Board. The Board will receive an Executive Summary from the Chair of each Service Improvement Board. The Corporate Improvement Board will consist of the Cabinet and Executive Management Team. See Terms of Reference at Appendix one. It should be noted that the Improvement Boards are focused on improving the day to day statutory services to ensure good performance and that the Transformation Delivery Board is focused on medium to long term transformation. The Cabinet will also continue to hold the Senior Leadership Team of the organisation to account through the application of the Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework, holding quarterly performance reviews, providing constructive challenge to Heads of Service.

#### 4.1 Proposed Membership of the Service Improvement Boards

It is proposed that;

- each Board has a nominated Chair; the Cabinet's preference is that this is the respective Portfolio Holder
- for each Board the Membership will include; the Portfolio Holder, one additional Cabinet Member, the respective Corporate Director and one additional (neutral) officer from the Council's Executive Management Team
- each Board has an external and independent expert adviser who is appointed by and reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer
- each Board reports to the Corporate Improvement Board monthly on their progress against agreed plans (these will be the Executive Summaries received from each Service Improvement Board Chair to avoid reporting fatigue)
- Scrutiny develops as an Assurance function, as outlined below.

A full set of Terms of Reference are available at Appendix 2.

#### 4.2 Scrutiny

Scrutiny will perform an assurance role, creating an environment for greater accountability across the organisation. It will seek to:

- drive improvement in public services; Better Services
- support democratic decision making which is accountable, inclusive and robust; Better Decisions, and;
- ensure that the public are engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services.

Scrutiny will use two main methods to achieve this - pre-decision and performance monitoring.

### Pre-decision

Scrutiny will be consulted by the Cabinet on future decision and policies, particularly around the Delivering Vision 2025 Transformation Programme. Looking at decisions before they are made provides an opportunity to influence and improve them. They will think about how the decision has been developed, what the risks are and how they can reduce them. This is also a chance for Scrutiny to look at consultation activity that has been carried out and how it has influenced the final proposals.

The Scrutiny work programme will be populated with key decision milestones for all 9 projects within Vision 2025 Transformation Programme. The added value of Scrutiny will either provide a form of assurance that proposals are sound or provide recommendations for strengthening the overall proposal.

### Performance monitoring

Scrutiny will monitor the performance of Cabinet, committees and council officers. It will look at individual decisions, policy objectives set out in Vision 2025 and its related action plans. Scrutiny will look at how well the council has performed against the corporate plan and its associated performance targets. Finally, Scrutiny will monitor the progress of the Improvement Boards against the improvement objectives (local and national performance). Key to this are the outcomes for service users and ensuring that there is evidence to support this.

Every quarter, each Scrutiny Committee will focus on their respective priority in V2025 e.g. Health and Care, Learning and Skills, Economy, Residents and Community and Making it Happen. The Committee will take their extract of the quarterly performance report, covering both transformation and service performance, and undertake effective scrutiny (a form of assurance) across the organisation's performance, with each Committee providing a written report of their findings back to the Cabinet. This is focus on performance to plan and where this is not being achieved, constructive challenge will be made, with recommendations to bring performance back on track made in the Scrutiny report.

Undertaking this approach will reduce the risk of Scrutiny duplicating the work of the Improvement Boards. It is also recognised that Scrutiny do have discretion to identify areas that they want to scrutinise and the role of the working groups in undertaking "deep dive" reviews of key risks / issues.

It should be noted that whilst Scrutiny will hold an assurance function, they are not the sole mechanism for assurance. Responsibility also lies with Corporate Director's performance managing Heads of Service through effective application of the Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework. These constructive challenge/assurance functions will run in parallel and focus on both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

#### 4.3 Member Development

The recently created Member Development Strategy broadly outlines the skills and knowledge required by Councillors to perform their roles and provides an indication of how they might carry them out effectively. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but to provide a prompt for new and existing members to identify areas where they need support.

This support can be in the form of information, training, facilitated workshops, coaching and mentoring, or opportunities to learn from observation. The strategy is designed to be flexible so that members can work with officers and colleagues to decide the most useful method. However, it is recognised that Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committee members should receive formal mentoring to assist them in fulfilling their 'assurance' role in the revised Improvement and Transformation Framework and that the Council should commission this mentoring capacity.

#### 4.4 Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework (PMQAF)

The Council now operates within a robust performance management and quality assurance framework which is essential for ensuring collective systems and methods are used throughout the council for managing performance. It also helps the organisation work as one 'joined up' community, where everybody is clear about how they are helping to achieve the council's vision.

The framework also ensures that staff clearly understand their responsibilities regarding performance management and quality assurance, on which the council's governance arrangements will hold them to account. The full PMQAF is available at appendix 3. Please note that the quarterly reporting cycle is in addition to the Corporate Improvement Board and Service Improvement Boards set out in Figure 2 above.

### 5. Conclusion

Powys County Council has made significant improvement since the inception of the Improvement and Assurance Boards. It now feels timely to revise the framework in which the organisation is operating to facilitate the delivery of Transformation and



Improvement within the Council at pace. Crucially the framework will provide Members with appropriate oversight, enabling them to hold officers to account.

Figure 2 provides appropriate governance, in addition to the Council's Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework, whilst also streamlining the number of meetings taking place, therefore providing capacity for Services to deliver the improvements needed. Accountability is clear in the proposed governance from full Council to Corporate Director/Senior Responsible Officer, including clarity of accountability at Portfolio Holder level.

The strengthening and utilisation of Scrutiny as set out in section 4.2 will seek to drive improvement in public services; Better Services, support democratic decision-making which is accountable, inclusive and robust; Better Decisions, and ensure that the public are engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services. This will be further underpinned with effective Member Development and Mentoring for Scrutiny Chairs and Members.

The revised framework provides a proposed set of arrangements that Powys County Council can effectively manage its own improvement journey and will be presented to Welsh Government for endorsement.

## 6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council adopts these new arrangements upon receipt of acceptance from Welsh Government.

## Appendix One - Terms of Reference Corporate Improvement Board

### Corporate Improvement Board Terms of Reference

#### Purpose/Role

To provide leadership as a lever for improvement, with focus on the Council's improvement plans (Social Services, Education, Housing and Highways, Transport and Recycling).

The role of the Corporate Improvement Board is to engage in strategic dialogue, to progress issues and opportunities regarding collective impact.

#### Objectives

As a collective group, the Corporate Improvement Board will be strategic in delivering the following objectives to:

- ensure a one council view, providing an opportunity for understanding ensuring that 'the right things get done'
- work together to unblock constraints and understand political sensitivities
- provide robust review and input into the direction of the improvement ensuring that it is well aligned with the organisation direction and will significantly contribute to sustainable reform
- seek connections and takes a cross system portfolio view
- be the point for strategic dialogue and debate on emergent trends and implications
- support the organisation to make continuous improvement part of good business practice
- ensure the application of the Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework.

## Responsibilities

The Corporate Improvement Board has general responsibilities for:

- providing insight on matters of pertinence to the strategic direction of the improvement
- act as champions/advocates for change and provide collegial support
- to ensure corporate oversight of the improvement and overall performance outcomes
- to receive a written Executive Summary from each Service Improvement Board Chair. The report is to be (no more than 2 pages) of the achievements, risks and issues contained within, (including mitigating actions and timescales for completion).
- to feedback any concerns that the Board may have back to the Service Improvement Boards via the Chair of Board(s).

## Governance/Meetings/Membership

The Corporate Improvement Board will be chaired by the Leader of the Council and will meet monthly. The Board Membership and responsibilities:

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Responsible for:</b>
Leader	The strategic agenda and work programme holding Portfolio Holders to account
Portfolio Holder	The Strategic Leadership to the Portfolio and a monthly executive summary update to the Board
Cabinet Members	Providing constructive challenge to drive forward performance improvement
Chief Executive Officer	Holding the Executive Management Team to account and ensure correct direction of travel
Corporate Director responsible for Performance Managing the HOS	Performance Managing HOS <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fulfil statutory responsibilities

Corporate Director	Provide constructive challenge and corporate support
Monitoring Officer	Legalities
Section 151 Officer	Financial matters

The Board will receive monthly updates from each Service Improvement Board for information but focus predominantly on one service per meeting to allow a 'deeper dive'.  
 Secretariat will be provided by the Leader's PA.

## Appendix Two - Terms of Reference Service Improvement Board(s)

*Note: these Terms of Reference should be edited to reflect the specific service.*

### Purpose/Role

To provide Council led improvement, with a focus on the Council's improvement plans for (Social Services, Education, Housing and Highways, Transport and Recycling).

The role of the Board is to assist the organisation in driving forward the required change and improvement needed within the service with effective Corporate support.

### Objectives

The Board will be strategic in delivering the following objectives to:

- enable focus and corporate support ensuring that 'the right things get done'
- work together to unblock constraints and understand any sensitivities
- provide robust review and input into the direction of the improvement ensuring that it is well aligned with the organisation direction and will significantly contribute to sustainable reform
- support the organisation to make continuous improvement part of good business practice
- apply the organisation's Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework.

### Responsibilities

The Service Improvement Board has general responsibilities for:

- Providing support and challenge to the service promoting high standards and achievement.

- Ensuring there is a well-documented plan of action with clear milestones and targets for improvement that has been endorsed from the outset by Corporate Improvement Board
- Overseeing, monitoring and supporting the progress made by the Service in addressing the recommendations contained within regulatory inspection reports.
- Advising the Chief Executive Officer, Corporate Director and Portfolio Holder monthly on progress and make, if necessary, recommendations for further support or modification to the existing support arrangements.
- Acting on all recommendations that the Corporate Improvement Board/Scrutiny make ensuring that the organisation continuously close the loop.
- Delegating to the Chair, the requirement to provide a written Executive Summary (no more than 2 pages) of the achievements, risks and issues contained within, (including mitigating actions and timescales for completion) for submission monthly to the Corporate Improvement Board
- Driving positive performance outcomes.

#### Governance/Meetings/Membership

The Service Improvement Board will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder and will meet monthly. The Board Membership and responsibilities:

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Responsible for:</b>
Portfolio Holder	Provide Strategic Leadership to the Portfolio and hold officers to account
Cabinet Member	Provide constructive challenge
Chief Executive Officer	Hold all to account and ensure correct direction of travel
Corporate Director responsible for Performance Managing the	Performance Managing HOS <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fulfil statutory responsibilities

HOS	
Corporate Director	Provide constructive challenge and corporate support
Monitoring Officer	Legalities
Section 151 Officer	Financial matters
External Independent Expert	Independent advice and challenge

Secretariat will be provided by a PA to the Senior Leadership Team.

## Appendix Three – Powys County Council's Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework



PMQAF English Sept  
2019.pdf



## **Appendix 2**

See attached letter from Julie James AS/MS