

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET EXECUTIVE  
06<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

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

**REPORT TITLE:** PCC Improvement Board Arrangements

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose**

This report sets out to advise Cabinet of the Improvement Arrangements recommended for 2021/22 financial year.

**2. Background**

The Improvement and Assurance Board stood down in Autumn 2020 when the organisation instigated its own alternative improvement arrangements. This was in the form of Service Improvements Boards (SIB's) for Social Services, Education, HTR and Housing. In addition to the SIB's the Leader of the Council led a monthly Corporate Improvement Board (CIB). The Independent Advisors previously commissioned by Welsh Government (WG) continued to provide expert advice and constructive challenge to Social Services and Education. The Council also commissioned their own advisor for Housing and the HTR position remains vacant.

Whilst the SIB's have not met monthly, improvement has continued to be monitored throughout the pandemic and quarterly performance reviews, in line with the Council's Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework (PMQAF). The alternative improvement arrangements have been reviewed by the Head of Transformation and Communications and the findings form the basis of this report with recommendations for Cabinet's consideration.

**3. Advice**

The organisation completely values the Independent Advisors contributions. However, also recognises the improvement in the organisation's business as usual governance and the need to move to a position of self-sufficiency around its performance. It is proposed that revised arrangements are put in place for 2021/22.

**Social Services**

Within the PMQAF framework, each service should hold a quarterly performance review meeting with their Corporate Director and Portfolio

Holder. There are also twice monthly Social Services Board meetings where the business is discussed and agreed with Portfolio Holders and the Director. The current SIB's were in addition to these meetings and a transitional arrangement from the formal Improvement and Assurance Board. It is now felt that the organisation is ready to take the next step of transitioning from the SIB's to the quarterly review meetings and would therefore like to invite the Independent Advisor to two meetings per quarter (one Adult Social Care and one Children's Services).

Furthermore, it is recognised that to strengthen the work of the Health and Care Scrutiny the Independent Advisor could work with Scrutiny (a total of 4 workshops). The aim of this would be to help Scrutiny develop their line of questioning which in turn should strengthen the organisation's assurance mechanisms.

### **Education**

Education is due an Improvement Conference in November 2021 and at the time of writing WG still fund 3 days per month Independent Advisor. There is pace around the transformation programme and the Secondary School Strategy has been welcomed but oversight of its delivery is essential. It is proposed that the SIB for Education continues until the findings of the Estyn Improvement Conference at which time arrangements will be reviewed. It is advised that the Independent Advisor utilises the 3 days per month with attendance at:

- Monthly Service Improvement Board
- Multi-Agency Board Termly
- Transformation Programme Board monthly
- Quarterly performance review meeting
- Monday weekly work-stream lead meetings (ad hoc)
- Oversee Secondary School Improvement Strategy – highlight report to Transformation Programme bi-monthly
- Improvement Conference in November 2021

It is proposed that the Education Service Improvement Board membership is amended to:

#### Political

Leader, Portfolio Holder, Chair of Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee (observer)

#### External

Independent Advisor

#### Corporate Professional

Chief Executive Officer, Head of Transformation and Communications, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer

#### Service users

1 Secondary Head, 1 Primary Head and 1 Special School/PRU Head

## Professionals from within the Service

Strategic Lead, Interim Chief Education Officer, and any other officers at the discretion of the Interim Chief Education Officer.

### **Housing**

The Housing Improvement is still in its infancy and through discussions with the Head of Service and Independent Advisor it is proposed that the SIB continues to meet monthly and that the Independent Advisor is also extended an invite to the quarterly performance review meetings. In recent discussions, the Portfolio Holder also supported this approach.

### **HTR**

There is a need to align the values and practices within HTR to ensure continuous improvement and a recognition for Corporate Oversight in this large service area. The service has plans in place for improvement but would benefit from the support of Cabinet/EMT to aid alignment of resource, problem solving and overall delivery. It is therefore proposed that the SIB for HTR remains in place.

### **Corporate Improvement Board**

Through discussions with the Leader (Chair of the CIB) it is proposed that the CIB stands down as a separate Board but that the Cabinet/EMT has a standing agenda item of 'Corporate Improvement Overview'. This overview will consist of quarterly performance reporting of the Corporate Improvement Plan, Risk, Workforce/Corporate Dashboard, Finance, Scrutiny Assurances in respect of performance, and any other items at appropriate times e.g. executive summary from the Housing and HTR SIB.

### **Scrutiny**

Whilst improvements have been made it is recognised that there is still much to do to ensure that we fully embed the original requirements set out in the organisation's report to the Minister during 2020. To reiterate:

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.

### **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.

It is proposed that the Head of Transformation and Communications works closely with the Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer) and Head of Democratic Services to strengthen Scrutiny and Member Development whilst also exploring commissioning the services of external expertise in this area.

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

- 4.1 There are no additional resource implications.
- 4.2 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report.

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

- 5.1 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) comments will be reported at the meeting.

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

- 6.1 N/A

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

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required as this paper is an internal governance paper.

#### **8. Recommendation**

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the following:

1. Stand down the SIB for Social Services
2. Implement the new arrangements for Education SIB as set out in section 3 of this report.
2. Continue to operate the Housing SIB.
3. Continue to operate the HTR SIB.
4. Stand down the Corporate Improvement Board and instead add a standing agenda item to Cabinet/EMT 'Corporate Improvement Overview'. Hold a final standalone Corporate Improvement Board 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 with the new arrangements taking place from September 2021.
5. Develop an annual scrutiny work programme with the co-ordinating committee for 2021/22.

6. Agree to commission external expertise to support the development of Scrutiny.
7. Cabinet to receive quarterly feedback reports from Scrutiny on the Council's performance of its Corporate Improvement Plan 2025.

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