

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	15 th November 2019
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Service Area	Learning
Committee Date	25 th November 2019

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Corporate Self-Evaluation – Inspection Area 3

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Self-evaluation is a useful process that is rigorous and enables Chief Officers, Heads of Service and officers to be critically reflective about outcomes, service provision and leadership and management.
- 1.2 Following a refocus exercise of documentation to ensure it continued to meet the organisation's needs; the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) approved the re-introduction of the corporate self-evaluation process in May 2019.
- 1.3 Completion of the process is undertaken in 'bite-sized' chunks on a question-by-question basis. This aims to support all officers involved to contribute to the process whilst maintaining their ability to manage multiple other priorities.
- 1.4 This report focuses on the completion of the self-evaluation undertaken by the Learning department in relation to Key Question 3 (Leadership and Management). The response directly relates to the Best Start to Life theme laid down in the Council's Corporate Plan: Focus on the Future. It also meets the requirements of the Estyn Inspection framework – the inspectorate for education within Wales
- 1.5 This report and its appendices highlight the key findings of the self-evaluation activity; outlines areas of good practice along with areas for development; and identifies the priorities for improvement which are incorporated in our Business Improvement Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee Members to provide officers feedback on the content of the report developed through completion of the self-evaluation process.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Self-evaluation is a business process that is rigorous and enables organisations to be critically reflective about outcomes, service provision and leadership and management. In 2013/14, the Council introduced a self-evaluation process which was completed by officers at Head of Service level. The format of the challenge sessions was based on high-level challenge in a session lasting 2-2½ hours; with a number of Heads of Service.
- 3.2 From using lessons learned over previous years, the format of the challenge of self-evaluation was developed (eg.) self-evaluation was undertaken on a service-level basis; with challenge being offered via a Performance Board consisting of the Chief Executive, Directorate Lead; Portfolio Member and the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to which the service reported. The key outcome of the process was to identify areas of good practice; along with priorities for improvement.
- 3.3 In 2019, a refocus exercise was undertaken to ensure the self-evaluation documents continued to meet the organisation's needs (eg.) offered officers completing the forms opportunity to outline the current service position; highlight any good practice; note areas for development and to identify the services' priorities for improvement. The documents were organised in the form of three key questions:
- Outcomes;
 - Provision and Service Delivery; and
 - Leadership and management.

There was no specific order in which the questions needed to be completed, as long as all three questions were completed within the year.

- 3.4 Following consideration of the updated documents by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT); the new format was approved for re-introduction in May 2019.
- 3.5 As part of the process cycle supporting the delivery of the self-evaluation process (see Appendix 1), it was proposed that completed questions should be presented before the sector-specific Scrutiny Committee which normally scrutinises the outputs/outcomes for the relevant service area. This was seen as an opportunity for Committee Members to review and explore facets of the wide range of activities for which Chief Officers were accountable; whilst for services, it was seen as an opportunity for details of their services to be brought before Scrutiny to outline positive practice and achievements along with any challenges faced and areas for development.
- 3.6 Committee Members are asked to review the content of the completed questions and consider performance, areas of good practice, areas for development and, perhaps most importantly, the services' priorities for improvement for the coming year. Scrutineers' feedback will be used when considering how these priorities will be progressed.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 In previous years, the Council had undertaken self-evaluation activities on an annual service-by-service basis. The process required Heads of Service to review project/programme activity and reflect on what had been achieved, as well as identifying what needed to be prioritised next with a view to planning how this should be done.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 Judgement: Adequate and needs improvement - see Appendix 2.

- 5.2 The effectiveness of leaders is **adequate** because although strengths outweigh weaknesses there are important areas that require improvement.

There is a clear focus on strategic priorities for improvement and delivering plans to address these in order to bring about improvements in outcomes. There is a golden thread aligning strategic priorities, business improvement planning and the performance management framework. Partnership working within and beyond the council is well established and leads to more effective services, although the increased use of school leaders to support school to school working is required to help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes through better leadership and teaching and learning practices.

The overall strategic direction of the service over the medium to long-term, the strategic approach to raising standards in schools and to digital learning are important areas for improvement.

- 5.3 People management is **adequate** because although there are strong features which outweigh weaknesses, there are some important aspects requiring improvement.

The performance management framework is well established and performance and wellbeing are well managed with low incidences of sickness absence. There is an over reliance on key officers and single points of dependency and this needs to be better understood in order to optimise existing resources and ensure any planned service restructure delivers more capacity in priority areas.

- 5.4 Resources management is **good** because staffing, accommodation and financial resources, both revenue and capital, are managed and deployed effectively to support learning and improvement. The authority makes good use of the funding it receives and spending decisions continue to relate well to strategic priorities for improvement, and for the benefit of schools and their learners.

Partnership activity delivers good value for money because it contributes to improved provision outcomes for learners in aspects which the authority and its schools alone could not provide.

- 5.5 The service currently sets appropriate priorities based on a robust self-evaluation process that is well embedded within the department and through governance frameworks such as Scrutiny Committee. However there are important areas that require improvement in order for priority setting and improvement planning to ultimately lead to improved outcomes in schools and therefore the service is currently **adequate** in this area.

The revised corporate approach to self-evaluation currently being implemented will help to ensure that the authority continues to develop a good and improving understanding of strengths, weakness and priorities for improvement and this will ultimately support the service to ensure it is setting the right priorities, some of which will inform corporate priorities, and that the challenge of delivering against these priorities successfully is viewed as a shared endeavour.

- 5.6 The service engagement with stakeholders to address issues identified and the response to feedback received is currently **good**. The service engages regularly with stakeholders such as schools, pupils, governors, young people and partner organisations and feedback is sought on service delivery, quality and priorities for improvement that impacts those service users and stakeholders directly.

An area of improvement is to formalise the process where feedback is used to help shape service priorities and service planning so that this can be evidenced and to share this information with stakeholders so they are aware of the influence their feedback and engagement has had.

- 5.7 Safeguarding is **good** because there are many strong features and whilst there are areas for development there are no significant areas that require improvement. The local authority meets safeguarding regulations and ensures that all school staff remain in compliance with training requirements. The detailed Estyn Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection has been completed and no significant areas for development were identified, although areas for development have been noted across each of the 10 SER questions included in the framework.

A copy of the SER has been provided as Appendix 3 to this report.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 The aim is for Leadership and Management to be at least Good.
- 6.2 This will be achieved by addressing the priorities for improvement identified in the SER but particularly those that will support leadership, people management and priority setting to improve from **adequate** to **good**.
- 6.3 These priorities for improvement to address overall Leadership progress from adequate to good have been detailed below.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

Priorities for Improvement to progress from **adequate** to **good**

- 7.1 Review and refresh the core learning strategy Raising Standards ensuring aligned to relevant national, regional and local strategies, involving relevant stakeholders and communicating clearly to all staff.
- 7.2 Increase the involvement of school leaders in school to school working in order to share best practice in teaching, learning and leadership and help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes.
- 7.3 Review the strategic approach to Learning Department services and agree restructure to ensure delivery on priorities over the medium to long-term in a cohesive, collaborative and sustainable way. Timely and clear communication of this strategy to staff and other stakeholders is required.
- 7.4 Increase structured learning and training opportunities for all staff across Education services particularly those at middle management level and above to support strategic development and succession planning.
- 7.5 Secure appropriate staffing resources to enable the delivery of a Capita One Development Plan which will help to ensure data is used more effectively across the Learning department to inform service priorities for improvement.
- 7.6 Estyn recommendations from 2012 and the Post Inspection Action Plan successfully delivered in 2016 should be reviewed to evaluate the local authority's current position against these areas and identify any priorities for improvement that emerge to inform Council and service priorities.

Priorities for Improvement to sustain **Good** provision in existing areas

- 7.7 Complete the formula funding review and implement recommendations in a timely manner to ensure the formula is fair and equitable, needs based/efficient, transparent, and as simple as possible.
- 7.8 Carbon management projects in schools need to be taken forward in collaboration with Property Services to reduce the Carbon Footprint in schools and improve energy efficiency and sustainability.
- 7.9 Continue to develop and embed stakeholders' involvement in contributing towards the local authority's self-evaluation processes and identification of priority areas for improvement.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The corporate self-evaluation process is based around the services/activities delivered and should reflect the contribution made in relation to the four wellbeing objectives set down by the Council in focus in the Corporate Wellbeing Plan.

8.2 This report specifically links to the Best Start to Life objective within the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan: **Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.**

8.3 Through completion of other self-evaluation responses; we will also be able to demonstrate our team's contribution to support progress against the following objectives:

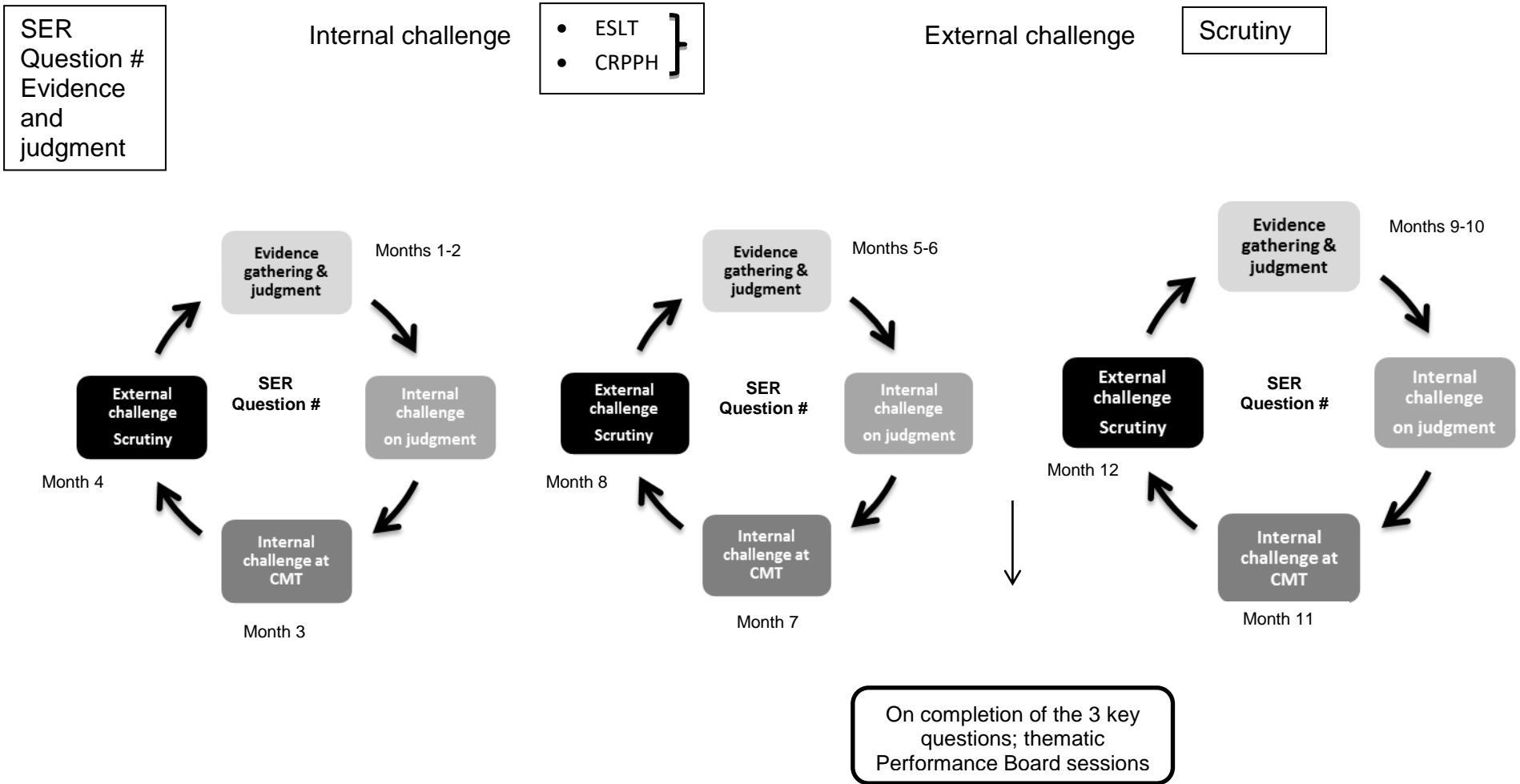
- People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health; and
- People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure that establishes Merthyr Tydfil as an attractive destination.

SUE WALKER
CHIEF OFFICER, LEARNING

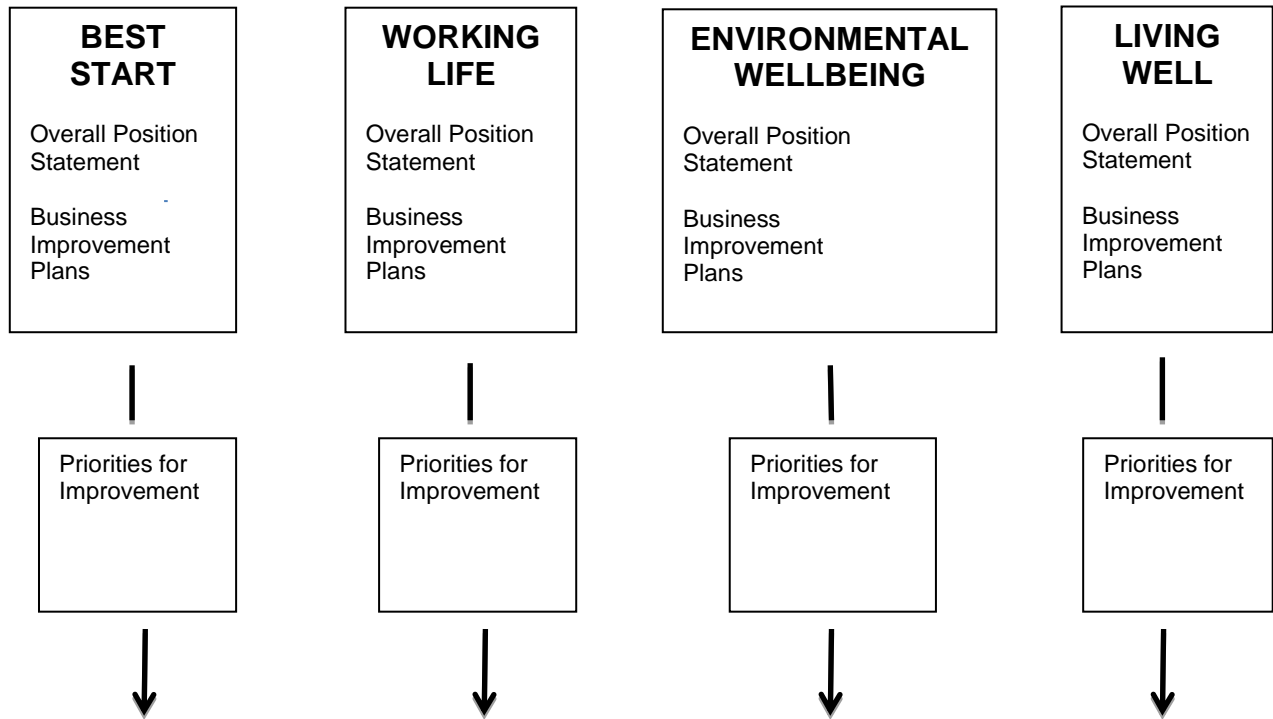
COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Self-Evaluation Process Cycle: 4 months x 3



Performance Board



Analysis of commonalities → Report to CMT to identify support needed to drive improvement

