



# Corporate Modernisation Programme

## **Conwy County Borough Council**

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# Status of report

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Melanie Watson (KPMG LLP) delivered this work on behalf of the Wales Audit Office.

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# Summary report

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## Summary

1. The Wales Audit Office carried out a corporate assessment at the Council in 2013 as part of its Wales-wide programme. The resulting report set out a number of proposals for improvement.
2. One of the proposals for improvement related to the Council's arrangements for supporting service modernisation and transformational change in order to achieve the significant financial savings required in the years ahead. The report noted that the Council had begun to bring together its plans for achieving further efficiencies but it faced a significant challenge to deliver transformational projects in the required timescale.
3. The Council has a Corporate Modernisation Unit that helps deliver significant elements of the Council's transformational programme. It is overseen by the Corporate Modernisation Board which was established following the 2013 Corporate Assessment.
4. This review sought to answer the following question:
  - **Are the Council's arrangements for achieving corporate modernisation effective?**
5. Our approach involved reviewing relevant documentation and speaking to relevant Council officers and members.
6. Our review found **the Council's arrangements for achieving corporate modernisation are developing well**. We reached this conclusion because:
  - the Corporate Modernisation Programme is supporting the development of a coordinated approach to modernising the Council; and
  - the delivery of the Corporate Modernisation Programme, though currently on track, is in its early stages and benefits are yet to be realised.

# Detailed report

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## The Council's arrangements for achieving corporate modernisation are developing well

### The Corporate Modernisation Programme is supporting the development of a coordinated approach to modernising the Council

7. The Council has established a Corporate Modernisation Programme (CMP) to coordinate the changes it is planning to make in modernising the way it works. The main objectives of the Modernisation Programme are:
  - to implement *Workwise*, Conwy's version of agile working across the Council; and
  - to implement the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy that will facilitate the development of new office accommodation in Colwyn Bay.
8. The modernisation programme is driven by the need for the Council to modernise the way it works, to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and rationalise assets, whilst maintaining frontline services. The programme will enable staff to work more flexibly and be supported by modern technology.
9. The CMP governance structure is robust. A programme board is in place to oversee progress. Activities are aligned to six workstreams, namely Assets; HR; ICT; Customers; Business Processes; and Communications & Change. A programme officers group is in place to allow leads to share progress and coordinate activity and a Quality Assurance Group has been established to provide challenge on programme outputs. A Programme Definition Document sets out programme objectives and describes how they link to corporate priorities. It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of officers and members involved with the Programme, and the routes for decisions. For example, a report is presented initially by the workstream lead to the programme officers group. It is then reviewed by the quality assurance group prior to being seen by the Programme Board. If the report needs a democratic decision it will then be referred to the appropriate decision-making body i.e. Cabinet or Council.
10. The CMP has identified the resources it needs to operate effectively and has plans in place to meet any current shortfalls. The Programme Board is attended by the Council's strategic directors and the chief executive as well as the Leader, two cabinet members and the chair of the Principal Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Each workstream is overseen by a workstream lead and support officer, and the Programme has a full time programme manager in place. The Council recognises that as the programme progresses it will need additional ICT and HR support. It is planning to recruit additional staff to fill gaps, funded through a bid for an 'Invest to save' loan from Welsh Government, or from savings in the capital programme if this bid is unsuccessful. The Senior Change Manager for the programme is due to retire shortly, and a successor will be appointed once recruitment to an outstanding head of service post is complete. Though the inclusion of a scrutiny member on the Programme Board is beneficial in keeping members informed, the Council should be mindful that such an arrangement may pose a potential conflict of interest when scrutinising Programme decisions.

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- 11.** Project management components are in place to effectively manage the programme. A programme plan is in place that divides activities into a number of tranches. For example, tranche 1, which was due to end on 30 September, included the tasks of drafting the Workwise Business Case, collating responses from a staff survey on agile working, drafting a Workwise Framework, and starting the de-cluttering of offices to free up space to enable hot-desking. Each workstream also has its own project plan. The Corporate Modernisation Manager is currently amalgamating these workstream plans into one overall programme plan. Progress against milestones is reported monthly to the Programme Officers Group via highlight reports, and bi-monthly to the Programme Board.
  - 12.** The Council has structured the CMP to ensure that it works closely with the two existing transformation programmes already underway – social services modernisation and the ERF restructure of the Environment, Roads and Facilities (ERF) service. The three programme boards share common representatives such as the Head of HR, and HR business partners attached to each programme meet regularly as a group to share experience and ensure consistency. Staff members from social services and the ERF team also sit on CMP workstreams and the programme officers group to facilitate learning.
  - 13.** The CMP is learning lessons from existing transformation programmes to ensure approaches to Workwise are effective. The Social Services Transformation Programme has been in place for over 18 months and is being used as a pilot for the Workwise agile working approach, with several staff starting to work from hot-desks. Learning from this pilot has been used to inform the development of the Workwise Business Case and the Workwise Framework for roll-out across the wider Council. Communication and consultation with staff in social services have been particularly positive. These lessons are now being applied to the wider Workwise roll-out and are informing the content of staff training.
  - 14.** Staff are well informed about the progress of the CMP. Officers involved directly in the CMP are informed about the work of other workstreams through the monthly Programme Officers Group. In addition, a representative from the Communication and Change Workstream sits on each of the other workstreams to ensure key messages and issues are captured. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) ensures that regular updates on progress are cascaded to staff in a variety of ways such as via the intranet, at Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings and team briefings.

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**The delivery of the Corporate Modernisation Programme, though currently on track, is in its early stages and benefits are yet to be realised**

- 15.** The CMP Workwise initiative is currently on track. The first tranche of activity related to Workwise delivery was due to be completed by 30 September 2014. By that time, the Workwise Business Case was developed for presentation to the programme board in early October. The business case included an assessment of the strategic, workforce, economic and management cases for change, set out various options for change and included the draft Workwise Framework guidance, a benefits realisation plan, a risk log and a key responsibilities list.
- 16.** The office accommodation aspects of the modernisation programme are also on track. At the time of our review the Council was reviewing a number of tender submissions from contractors to provide the new office accommodation in Colwyn Bay together with the development of the Civic Centre. This followed a successful developers' day in the summer. The project is on track to select a successful bidder in March 2015 following a competitive dialogue process over the winter (subject to acceptable and affordable tenders being received). The packaging together of both the new office and the Civic Centre into one contract increases the potential impact to the Council should the contract run into difficulties, but this is recognised and is being monitored.
- 17.** The CMP is in an early stage of development so is, as yet, unable to demonstrate any tangible benefits. Benefits realisation plans have been drafted as part of the business cases for Workwise and office accommodation change. The benefits realisation plan for Workwise includes 28 specific benefits grouped under five themes such as 'improved service delivery' and 'environment and sustainability'. The Council intends that each benefit in the plan will set out how the benefit will be measured and will include a baseline and target measure. A timescale of when the benefit can be expected is also included. However, almost two thirds of the benefits stated currently lack baseline and/or target measures. The Council recognises this gap and has established a task group to review available information to ensure measures that are selected are relevant and robust. The Wales Audit Office will monitor progress in introducing robust measures as the Programme proceeds.

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