

Board and Scrutiny



Jacky Tonge
Chief Executive

Councillor Michael Jones
Chairman of the Board of the Council



The past 12 months has been a historic time for Powys County Council as it adopted new political and departmental structures.

During the year, the number of service directorates was reduced with fundamental changes in the way that services are provided. Support for Members is now provided through the new Scrutiny and Democratic Services Directorate and the Chief Executive's Unit, which includes Performance Management and ICT and will lead on the implementation of electronic government and ensure that the Council has systems to improve performance in line with Best Value.

The reason for this reduction in the number of directorates was to build on initiatives which departments had undertaken to work across traditional service boundaries. Service users wanted effective and integrated services and the new structure has been designed to support this. The period has also seen the Council appoint its first ever Board as part of historic changes to the Authority's decision making process.

The new 15-strong Board replaced the traditional service committee structure, which the County Council had operated since it was created as a unitary Authority in 1996. Members of the Board were voted into office during a special meeting of the full County Council with Councillor Michael Jones of Old Radnor elected the first ever Chairman of the Board. The Vice-Chairman is Councillor Gwilym Vaughan.

Councillor David Jones
Chair
Principal Scrutiny Committee



Subsequently each Board Member has been given a portfolio of areas of the Council's work. The Board Members will then take a particular interest in developing and supporting these roles, above and beyond their Membership of the Board.

The Authority's first Principal Scrutiny Committee was also elected during the same meeting, and this Committee is chaired by Councillor David Jones, of Guilsfield.

As well as the Board and the Scrutiny Committee, the other Committees under the new structure are:

Shire Committees (The Shire committees take a lead in developing the County Council's Community Plan).

- Shire Planning Committees
 - Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Committee
 - Community Services Committee.
 - Economic and Community Regeneration Committee
 - Highways and Local Services Committee.
 - Corporate Support Services Committee
- (These committees have the duty to review and develop policy. These policies, adopted by full County Council, will guide the way the Board makes its decisions.)
- Licensing Committee
 - Rights of Way Committee
 - Personnel Committee
 - Standards Committee (this committee advises on probit and the new Code of Conduct for Members and has lay members on it, drawn from the community).

Whole Authority Analysis

Like all local Authorities in Wales, Powys County Council has undertaken a Whole Authority Analysis as part of the National Assembly's Wales Improvement Programme. This analysis focuses on the strategic and operational management of both corporate and service functions, through the examination and identification of current performance and our capacity to improve. The methodology adopted by the Authority in carrying out this analysis was a combination of two models. The first, a model which was developed by the Audit Commission in Wales was used to assess our Corporate arrangements, the second was based on a risk assessment of our services. We are confident that this combination of approaches has ensured a robust and complete evaluation of the Authority's health, in terms of managing and delivering services.

The key areas for the Authority in terms of improvement fall within the following themes, with key results from the Directorate Service Assessments detailed throughout the document.

Area for improvement	Outcome
<p>Communications — Internal and External</p> <p>Develop an effective communications strategy for internal and external communication channels.</p>	<p>Improve understanding of stakeholder priorities and expectations and ensure consistent application across the Authority.</p> <p>Improve access to services.</p>
<p>Strategic Decision Making</p> <p>Develop a Corporate Plan which provides strategic vision and guidance and enhances inter-departmental co-operation.</p> <p>Develop decision-making in the democratic process.</p> <p>Develop Risk Management processes.</p> <p>Promote effective partnership working</p>	<p>Identified Corporate vision and strategic objectives supported by SMART Targets.</p> <p>Improved strategic decision making process</p> <p>Improved understanding of risks in service delivery.</p> <p>Improved capacity for service provision across partners</p>
<p>Human Resource</p> <p>Develop Human Resource Planning</p>	<p>Improved recruitment and retention and reduced staff absence (NAWpi 1.10) and ill health retirements (NAWpi 1.12)</p>
<p>Performance Management</p> <p>Develop Performance Management techniques.</p> <p>Enhance the capacity for the Identification, collection, verification and monitoring of performance information.</p> <p>Develop Corporate prioritisation of resource allocation.</p> <p>Develop Strategic Asset Management arrangements</p>	<p>Facilitate continuous improvement in service delivery</p> <p>Improved strategic decision making process</p> <p>Facilitate continuous improvement in service delivery.</p> <p>Improved strategic decision making process and funding of improvement initiatives.</p> <p>Improved Access to Services and utilization of building assets</p>
<p>Procurement and Project Management</p> <p>Raise awareness of Procurement practices across the Authority.</p> <p>Develop Project Management across the Authority to improve management of change implementation.</p>	<p>Facilitate continuous improvement in service delivery.</p> <p>Facilitate continuous improvement in service delivery.</p>
<p>Best Value Reviews to be undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning Environment (2004 — 05) • Early Years Education • Adult Education • Housing Tenancy & Housing Estate Management • Housing Allocations, Transfers & Voids • Care Management <p>Cross-cutting Reviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals on Wheels (Social Services). 	

The Audit Commission in Wales in April confirmed that the Council's findings were broadly reflective of the risk assessment undertaken by the Council's Regulators.