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Mr S Phillips,
Chief Executive,
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Port Talbot.
SA13 1PJ

Reference	637A2013
Date	26 November 2013
Pages	1 of 2

Dear Steve

Improvement Assessment

In my letter of 2 September 2013 I gave my opinion on whether the Council had discharged its statutory duties in respect of improvement planning.

I am also required, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) to give an opinion on whether Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has discharged its duties in respect of improvement reporting and met the requirements of the Measure.

In my opinion, and based on audit work undertaken to date the Council has discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure although there is potential to strengthen its arrangements further

I have reached this conclusion because the Council has discharged its duties having:

- approved and published its Annual Report 2012-13 (the Report) by the statutory deadline of 31 October 2013; and also published a summary report in response to our feedback;
- maintained a balanced picture of performance drawing attention to both the less favourable and improving performance;
- compared its performance against performance indicator data from 2010-11 to 2012-13; made comparison with the Welsh average by referring to the quartile position in Wales; and provided an indication of direction of travel in improvement and highlighted areas of concern;
- responded to our commentary in last year's letter by broadening the evidence used to support its assessment of performance, using case studies to reflect the experiences of service users using customer satisfaction data and making reference to financial information in terms of levels of spending and investment; and
- explained the rationale for collaboration, including examples of collaborative activity that support delivery of improvement priorities.

However, I have identified areas where there is potential to strengthen arrangements further by:

- consistently explaining whether or not collaboration has achieved intended outcomes; and
- making it clear in the Report how the Council raises awareness of citizens and communities about the availability of the Report.

Further proposals for improvement/recommendations

No new proposals for improvement are being suggested in this letter. We will continue to monitor and report on the progress made by the Council in implementing the proposals set out in my previous reports and letters.

I will undertake more detailed work on the arrangements that support the Council's performance management and reporting over the following months and report this, as well as summarising all of my work and that of relevant regulators during 2013-14, in an Annual Improvement Report for the Council that I will issue by the end of March 2014.

Yours sincerely,



HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS

Auditor General for Wales

cc: Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Local Government and Government Business

Steve Barry, Manager

Samantha Spruce, Performance Audit Lead