

Cheshire East Council (CEC)
Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C)

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Dear councillor and officer colleagues

***Best4Business* programme: Independent facilitation and assurance of ‘Future Lessons’ scrutiny review**

I am writing on behalf of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to set out my opinion in relation to a scrutiny review that was recently undertaken following closure of the *Best4Business* (*B4B*) programme. I do so in the capacity of a specialist in governance and scrutiny who was engaged to independently support, facilitate and assure the process in question.

CfGS welcomed the decision taken by CEC and CW&C to jointly review the *B4B* programme, which was ambitious and challenging – both in terms of its scale and complexity. Whilst the programme ultimately achieved the overall objective of introducing a replacement Finance and Human Resource IT system, it did so over a significantly longer period, and at substantially higher cost, than originally envisaged. As a result, those involved will have been exposed to valuable learning about what went well, and what could have been done better. It is important, therefore, that these lessons are captured, shared and used to inform approaches to delivering other major programmes in the future. The joint review set out to achieve this and I was therefore pleased to be engaged in the process for CfGS.

My independent role in the ‘Future Lessons’ scrutiny review was twofold:

1. To ensure that the methodology employed was comprehensive, rigorous, focused on achieving positive impact, and characterised by openness and honesty; and
2. To provide assurance that the report of the review accurately reflects the findings that emerged from the process and any associated actions that were agreed.

The review methodology

I am satisfied that the methodology employed was comprehensive, rigorous, and focused on achieving positive impact, as well as being characterised by openness and honesty.

In support of fulfilling my independent role, I was afforded unfettered access to information associated with all aspects of the *B4B* programme. I was also able to help shape the review methodology and constructively challenge aspects of the process and associated information.

Throughout my involvement in the review, I consistently witnessed a genuine commitment from officers and members to ensure that necessary lessons were learnt from the process. Members were provided with a range of pertinent information about the various stages of the programme and offered the opportunity, as 'critical friends', to explore and challenge it in a facilitated workshop environment.

Outputs from the workshop were focused on translating lessons learned from the *B4B* programme into practical actions for improving major programme delivery in the future. A commitment also emerged to share the learning in question across the broader local government sector, with support from the Local Government Association.

Integrity of the reporting process

Having examined the report of the scrutiny review, I am satisfied that its content accurately reflects the findings that emerged from the process and any associated actions that were agreed.

Yours sincerely



Andy Fry OBE
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