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| Meeting of:  | <b>Governance and Audit Committee</b>  |
| Date of Meeting:   | <b>Monday, 21 July 2025</b>  |
| Relevant Scrutiny Committee:   | Resources Scrutiny Committee   |
| Report Title:  | Q1 Update: Audit Wales Work Programme 2025 - Vale of Glamorgan Council   |
| Purpose of Report:   | To present to Members the Q1 update of Audit Wales's work programme as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2025.                |
| Report Owner:  | Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources   |
| Responsible Officer:   | Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources   |
| Elected Member and Officer Consultation:   | No specific ward member consultation has been undertaken.. The Annual Regulatory Audit Plan and progress updates apply to the whole authority. |
| Policy Framework:  | This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.  |
| Executive Summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix A outlines Q1 progress on Audit Wales's work programme and timetable as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2025.</li> <li>Governance and Audit Committee members are requested to review and note the progress made on the Vale of Glamorgan Audit Work Programme at Q1 and upon consideration, to refer the report to Cabinet for their oversight</li> </ul> |  |

## **Recommendations**

1. That members review and note the content of this report.
2. That, subject to recommendation one, the report be referred to Cabinet for their oversight.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To facilitate monitoring of the audit function.
2. To enable Cabinet's oversight of the audit programme That members review and note the content of this report.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 As the external auditor, the objective of Audit Wales is to carry out an audit which discharges the statutory duties of Auditor General, which include:
  - Audit of Financial Statements
  - Value for Money
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Sustainable Development principle.
- 1.2 The Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2025 details the work planned by Audit Wales to meet the duties outlined above. The outputs of the Audit Plan are reported regularly to the Council to inform its self-assessment and areas for improvement.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 **Appendix A** outlines Q1 progress on Audit Wales's work programme and timetable as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2025.
- 2.2 Governance and Audit Committee members are requested to review and note the progress made on the Vale of Glamorgan Audit Work Programme at Q1 and upon consideration, to refer the report to Cabinet for their oversight.

## **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1 Performance Management is an intrinsic part of corporate governance and integrated business planning which underpins the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and its Well-being Outcomes. Our Corporate Plan has been

structured around the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, through the development of four Well-being Outcomes and eight Well-being Objectives. By aligning our Well-being Outcomes in the Corporate Plan with the Well-being Goals of the Act, this will enable us to better evidence our contribution to the Goals.

- 3.2** External Regulation is an important vehicle for driving continuous improvement across our services. Progressing the improvement areas identified by our regulators not only enables us to demonstrate our commitment to continuous service improvement but also contributes to further strengthening our impact on the national well-being goals through the achievement of our well-being objectives.
- 3.3** Associated action plans in response to regulatory review findings are developed with the five ways of working in mind. The focus is on developing innovative ways of working that better integrate services, whilst enabling us to work more collaboratively with our partners and citizens to involve them in improving service delivery. Our improvement actions will also focus on preventative actions that will enable us to sustain and future proof our services into the longer term.

## **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** The climate change and nature implications in respect of our regulatory recommendations will be considered as part of the development of our response (action plan) where required and will identify mitigating actions required to minimise any adverse consequences.

## **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 5.1** There is an annual audit fee aligned with the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Work Programme.
- 5.2** There are no additional budgetary implications directly arising from this report, although failure to progress the improvement areas outlined in the report could have a negative impact on any future external regulatory assessments of the Council which could in turn put funding opportunities at risk.

### **Employment**

- 5.3** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.4** The statutory duties of the Auditor General are contained within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, the Local Government Act 1999 and the Code of Audit Practice.

### **6. Background Papers**

None

## Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – Vale of Glamorgan Council - 30 June 2025

Below are details of planned and recent work where relevant of Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn. We will provide a further update on progress and future plans at the end of December 2025.

### Annual Audit Summary

| Description   | Timetable   | Status      |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| A report summarising completed audit work since the last Annual Audit Summary, which was issued in May 2025 | Spring 2026 | Not started |

### Financial Audit work

| Description   | Scope  | Timetable                              | Status                        |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Audit of the Council's 2024-25 statement of accounts</b> | We are required to issue a certificate and report on your financial statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness'; and an assessment as to whether the Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement is prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance and is consistent with your financial statements and my knowledge of the Authority. | Audit certification by 31 October 2025 | We are undertaking the audit. |

| Description  | Scope  | Timetable   | Status  |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Audit of the Council's 2024-25 grant claims and returns</b>                             | <p>We are required to review and certify four of the Council's annual returns and subsidy claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non-domestic rates return;</li> <li>• teachers' pension return;</li> <li>• social care workforce development claim; and</li> <li>• housing benefits subsidy claim.</li> </ul> | Various   | We expect to commence the audits of the teachers-pension return and the non-domestic rates return in August |
| <b>Audit of the 2024-25 Joint Committee accounts hosted by the Council</b>                 | <p>We are required to audit the financial statements of the two Joint Committee bodies hosted by the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Shared Regulatory Service; and</li> <li>• the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative.</li> </ul>  | Later this year. Precise timings are be determined with officers. | Yet to commence.  |
| <b>The independent examination of the Council's 2024-25 Welsh Church Act Fund accounts</b> | <p>Our Independent Examination involves the performance of a limited set of procedures, as set out in Charity Commission directions, requiring less detailed work than under a full audit.</p>   | Later this year. Precise timings are be determined with officers. | Yet to commence.  |

## Performance Audit work

| <b>2023-24<br/>Performance<br/>Audit work</b> | <b>Scope</b>   | <b>Timetable</b>          | <b>Status</b>                                 |
|---|--|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Thematic review –<br/>commissioning</b>    | A review focusing on how councils' arrangements for commissioning, apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle. | March 2024–<br>March 2025 | Final report issued 2 May 2025 and published. |

| <b>2024-25<br/>Performance<br/>Audit work</b>          | <b>Scope</b>   | <b>Timetable</b>           | <b>Status</b>                   |
|--|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Assurance and Risk Assessment</b>                   | Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle. | Ongoing throughout 2024-25 | Complete.                       |
| <b>Local review – review of complaints</b>             | A review of the Council's complaints arrangements.   | April/May 2025             | Drafting report                 |
| <b>Local review - Setting of Well-being objectives</b> | A review to assess the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives as part of its development of its new corporate plan.   | April 2024–<br>March 2025  | Final report issued 29 May 2025 |

| <b>2025-26<br/>Performance<br/>Audit work</b>                 | <b>Scope</b>  | <b>Timetable</b>            | <b>Status</b>         |
|---|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Thematic review – recruitment and retention challenges</b> | A review focusing on how councils' arrangements for addressing recruitment and retention challenges apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle. | Fieldwork<br>September 2025 | Project brief issued. |
| <b>Local review – scrutiny arrangements</b>                   | A review of the Council's arrangements to support effective scrutiny.   | March to June 2026          | Scoping               |
| <b>Local review – Disabled Facility Grants</b>                | A review of the Council's arrangements to manage and oversee delivery of Disabled Facility Grants.  | Jan-April 2026              | Scoping               |

## Local government national studies planned/in progress

| <b>Study</b>                   | <b>Scope</b>   | <b>Timetable</b>                         | <b>Status</b>       | <b>Fieldwork planned at Vale of Glamorgan Council</b>   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---------------------|---|
| <b>Temporary Accommodation</b> | Examining the costs, demand and how services are working together to progress the response to temporary accommodation. | Report publication planned for July 2025 | Fieldwork complete. | Interviews were undertaken at the following councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conwy</li> <li>• Pembrokeshire</li> <li>• Cardiff</li> <li>• Newport</li> <li>• Wrexham</li> </ul> |



| Study   | Scope   | Timetable                              | Status              | Fieldwork planned at Vale of Glamorgan Council  |
|---|---|--|---------------------|---|
| <b>Capital Planning in Local Government</b>           | Examining whether capital investment in the asset base in local government is able to keep pace with demand   | Publication planned for September 2025 | Fieldwork complete. | Interviews were undertaken at the following councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anglesey</li> <li>• Neath Port Talbot</li> <li>• Powys</li> <li>• Rhondda Cynon Taf</li> <li>• Swansea</li> <li>• Torfaen</li> </ul> |
| <b>Children's Services</b>                            | Scoping underway with a likely focus on councils' plans for implementing the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025; the costs of, and demand for, services; and how councils and their partners are working to improve the value for money of services. | Fieldwork to begin summer 2025         | Scoping             | Tbc   |
| <b>Local government funding arrangements</b>          | To be confirmed   | Fieldwork to begin autumn 2025         | Scoping underway    | Tbc   |
| <b>Commissioning arrangements in local government</b> | Scoping underway for local government study following completion of thematic review at each of the 22 councils (see above)  | Fieldwork to begin summer/ autumn 2025 | Scoping             | tbc   |

| Study                                       | Scope  | Timetable | Status          | Fieldwork planned at Vale of Glamorgan Council |
|---|--|-----------|-----------------|--|
| <b>Corporate Joint Committees Follow Up</b> | Scope to be confirmed. To follow up on previous Local Government Study | tbc       | Not yet started | tbc  |

## Estyn

During the autumn term we inspected Newport LGES. We also carried out an inspection of the local authority's youth work. We identified strong practice in the provision in Newport, especially in areas relating to supporting school finances, many aspects of school improvement and ALN as well as their work in developing Welsh medium education. We highlighted the impact of strong leadership at the director level and her impact on the quality and delivery of the key functions relating to her role.

We carried out a monitoring visit of Torfaen LGES as part of our follow-up process for an authority causing significant concern. The visit evaluated their progress against the recommendations from the core inspection. We found that Torfaen LGES had made sufficient process in addressing key elements of the recommendations and was removed from follow-up. The key factor in securing the improvement has been the increase in leadership capacity at Chief executive and Director level which has had a substantial impact on securing important progress in relation to expectations, processes and delivery.

We carried out an enhanced link inspector visit to Denbighshire in October, which focused on specific aspects of attendance and additional learning needs.

During the spring term we carried out an inspection of Powys LGES and youth work. We judged that Powys LGES requires significant improvement and will therefore require monitoring by Estyn. The Youth Service at Powys is generally strong.

We undertook an enhanced link inspector visit to Bridgend which focused on their Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and their work on improving attendance. We also contributed to CIW's joint inspection of child protection arrangements in Pembrokeshire and their follow-up work on a Rapid Review of safeguarding.

## Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

|  | Scope  | Timetable                  | Status               |
|--|--|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>CIW planned work 2025-26 Thematic reviews - Regional Adoption Collaborative (RAC) Inspections</b> | CIW will complete 5 inspections covering all of Wales. Inspections will be conducted across the five regional adoption collaborative we will draw on the themes nationally into a national report. | April 2025 – December 2025 | Inspections underway |
| <b>Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT) Community Mental Health Inspections</b>                 | In 2025-6 We will continue an annual programme of joint work focusing on CLDT and Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)  | July 2025 – February 2026  | Inspections pending  |

|   | Scope   | Timetable     | Status            |
|---|---|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements</b> | Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements: Pembrokeshire   | March 2025    | Not yet published |
| <b>Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (Dols)</b>                   | Annual Monitoring Report for Health and Social Care 2023-24 - <a href="#">National review of the use of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) in Wales 2023-24   Care Inspectorate Wales</a> | February 2025 | Published         |
| <b>Annual Report</b>  | <a href="#">Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2023-2024</a>   | November 2024 | Published         |
| <b>Mental health support for children and young people</b>        | <a href="#">Joint Review: How are healthcare, education, and children's services supporting the mental health needs of children and young people in Wales?</a>                                  | November 2024 | Published         |
| <b>Quarter 4 Inspections</b>                                      | <a href="#">Improvement Check: Denbighshire County Council children's services</a>  | February 2025 | Published         |
|   | <a href="#">Performance Evaluation Inspection: Newport City Council adult services</a>  | February 2025 | Published         |
|   | Cardiff Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)   | March 2025    | Not yet published |

|   | Scope   | Timetable     | Status             |
|---|---|---------------|--------------------|
| Quarter 1 2025-2026 inspections                           | <a href="#">Local Authority Improvement Check: Monmouthshire County Council</a>   | March 2025    | Published          |
|   | Improvement Check: Ceredigion County Council adult services   | May 2025      | Not yet published  |
|   | Improvement Check – Bridgend County Council children services   | June 2025     | Inspection pending |
| Performance review of Local Authorities and Cafcass Cymru | <a href="#">How we inspect local authority services and CAFCASS Cymru</a><br><br>We continue to inspect Local Authorities in line with our updated Code of Practice for our local authority inspection activity   Care Inspectorate Wales<br><a href="#">We have revised our Code of Practice</a> | November 2024 | Published          |
| Quarter 3 Inspections                                     | <a href="#">Local authority improvement check: Isle of Anglesey County Council adult services</a>   | August 2024   | Published          |
|   | <a href="#">Newtown Community Mental Health Team</a>  | October 2024  | Published          |
|   | <a href="#">Local authority assurance check: Neath Port Talbot adult services</a>   | November 2024 | Published          |
|   | <a href="#">Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI): Carmarthenshire County Council's children's services</a>   | December 2024 | Published          |

|  | Scope   | Timetable     | Status    |
|--|---|---------------|-----------|
|  | <a href="#">Local authority assurance check letter: Caerphilly adult services   Care Inspectorate Wales</a>       | November 2024 | Published |
|  | <a href="#">Local authority improvement check letter: Cyngor Gwynedd adult services   Care Inspectorate Wales</a> | October 2024  | Published |

## Audit Wales national reports and other outputs published in the last year

| Report title  | Publication date and link to report |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| NHS cost savings arrangements (article with <a href="#">Board Member checklist</a> )              | <a href="#">June 2025</a>           |
| The Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy  | <a href="#">May 2025</a>            |
| No time to lose:<br>Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act          | <a href="#">April 2025</a>          |
| Financial Management and Governance – Lessons from Audit for Community and Town Councils in Wales | <a href="#">March 2025</a>          |
| The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty  | <a href="#">March 2025</a>          |
| Addressing workforce challenges in NHS Wales  | <a href="#">February 2025</a>       |
| Cancer services in Wales  | <a href="#">January 2025</a>        |
| Local Government Financial Sustainability   | <a href="#">December 2024</a>       |

| Report title   | Publication date and link to report |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Local Government Financial Sustainability Data tool update now includes data from the draft 2023-24 accounts                             | <a href="#">December 2024</a>       |
| National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2022-23   | <a href="#">October 2024</a>        |
| Active travel ( <a href="#">report</a> and <a href="#">data tool</a> )   | <a href="#">September 2024</a>      |
| Governance of Fire and Rescue Authorities  | <a href="#">September 2024</a>      |
| Affordable housing   | <a href="#">September 2024</a>      |
| NHS finances – and data tool update to 31 March 2024   | <a href="#">August 2024</a>         |
| Digital by design? - Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales   | <a href="#">August 2024</a>         |
| Councils use of performance information: service user perspective and outcomes - A summary of findings from our review at Welsh councils | <a href="#">July 2024</a>           |
| The Welsh Government's support for TVR Automotive Ltd  | <a href="#">July 2024</a>           |

## Audit Wales national reports and other outputs (work in progress / planned)<sup>1, 2</sup>

| Title  | Indicative publication date  |
|--|--|
| Designating Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Natural Resources Wales                                 | Summer 2025  |
| Challenges for the cultural sector (financial sustainability focus)  | Summer 2025 (local audit work at Welsh Government arm's length bodies largely complete but reports will be published to website following audit committees: already available for the <a href="#">National Library</a> , <a href="#">Sport Wales</a> , and the <a href="#">Arts Council of Wales</a> ) |
| Findings from GP registration data matching pilot  | Summer 2025  |
| Further and higher education funding and oversight – Medr / Commission for Tertiary Education and Research | Summer 2025 (for initial phase of work on setting of well-being objectives – further work to follow)   |
| Urgent and emergency care (national messages)  | Autumn 2025  |
| New Velindre Cancer Centre   | Autumn 2025  |
| The senior public service  | To be confirmed (scoping)  |
| Rebalancing care and support   | Autumn 2025  |

<sup>1</sup> We will continue to keep our plans under constant review, taking account of the evolving external environment, our audit priorities, the context of our own resourcing and the capacity of audited bodies to engage with us. Follow up work could also lead to other outputs, as may other investigative audit work and local audit work where we consider there is merit in a national summary output of some kind.

<sup>2</sup> Our [Annual Plan 2025-26](#) also provides an updated list of work in progress and lists plans for new work to start during 2025-26 which will be added to this paper in due course. Where national/thematic work has progressed through the planning stage, a brief summary about its focus and planned timetable is also now available on our [website work programme pages](#).



| Title   | Indicative publication date                                   |
|---|---|
| Tackling NHS waiting lists (summary of local audit work at health boards)   | Autumn 2025 (local work to be completed by end of July 2025)  |
| Access to education for children with Additional Learning Needs   | Winter 2025   |
| Welsh Government support for business   | Spring 2026   |
| Support for bus and rail services   | To be confirmed (scoping)                                     |
| Progress with investment in school and college buildings through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme | Winter 2025   |
| Picture of public services – reflections on public finance, governance, and service delivery challenges             | To be confirmed (scoping)                                     |
| NHS bodies' approaches to digital transformation (local audit work)   | To be confirmed (local audit work rolling out from July 2025) |

## Good Practice Exchange events and resources

| Title   | Link to resource   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>No time to lose: Prioritising Prevention</b></p> <p>The focus will be on exploring the latest thinking on prevention and looking how public bodies can make the shift from firefighting to futureproofing. Delegates will be able to share, learn and network with colleagues from across Wales.</p>  | <p><b><u>15 July – 09:30 – 13:00 – Cardiff City Stadium</u></b><br/> <b><u>17 July – 09:30 – 13:00 – Conwy Business Centre</u></b></p> <p>Follow the links to book a place or email <a href="mailto:good.practice@audit.wales">good.practice@audit.wales</a></p> |
| <p>We are in the process of finalising dates for our forthcoming events which will include the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling fraud and error</li> <li>• The complex public service landscape</li> <li>• The workforce of the future</li> <li>• Upping the bandwidth on digital transformation</li> <li>• Putting value for money to the test</li> </ul> | <p>We will share booking details shortly.</p>  |