

Meeting of:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 22 June 2026
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (If yes, why)	N/A
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	Audit Wales: Recruitment & Retention Challenges– the right people at the right time?
Portfolio Holder:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Strategic Leadership Team:	Director of Corporate Resources
Lead Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources

1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 The report presents the findings of Audit Wales’ review of the Council’s recruitment and retention challenges (Appendix A), including its understanding of these challenges, the effectiveness of its response, and the arrangements for evaluating value for money.

1.2 The Council’s response to these findings are included as **Appendix B** to the report and sets out a series of actions that it is proposed are taken forward.

2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2.1	That Governance and Audit Committee consider the findings from Audit Wales’ review of the Council’s response to its recruitment and retention challenges, (Appendix A) and the response to the review findings and Audit Wales’ recommendations (Appendix B).	To provide for scrutiny of the findings of Audit Wales’ review of the Council’s response to its recruitment and retention challenges.
2.2	That, subject to recommendation one, the report be referred to Cabinet for their oversight and endorsement of the proposed Council actions (Appendix B) to address the recommendations.	To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by Audit Wales.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 The review of the Council's recruitment and retention challenges was undertaken to help fulfil the Auditor General's duties under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act). These duties enable the Auditor General to be satisfied (or not) that the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and that the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives. The review will also help inform a national study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act

3.2 This review has been undertaken as part of the Council's Annual Audit Plan for 2025.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

4.1 **Appendix A** sets out the findings of Audit Wales' review of the Council's recruitment and retention challenges, including how well the Council understands these challenges, the actions it is taking in response, and whether it evaluates the value for money of its approaches.

4.2 The review concluded overall that whilst there are strengths in the Council's understanding of and response to recruitment and retention challenges, arrangements for systematically evaluating value for money are underdeveloped. This conclusion was informed by the following review findings:

- The Council has a good understanding of its recruitment and retention challenges and is using a range of workforce management approaches to support a sustainable workforce.
- The Council has taken action to address these challenges and has achieved some success, including implementing a range of recruitment, retention and workforce development approaches.
- However, the Council does not consistently evaluate whether its approaches represent value for money and does not have formal arrangements in place to assess this systematically.

4.3 One recommendation has been made in relation to this review:

- R1: The Council should develop arrangements to assess the value for money of its major approaches to recruitment and retention.

4.4 Without stronger arrangements to assess value for money, the Council cannot fully demonstrate that its workforce interventions are delivering the best use of resources.

4.5 The Council's response to this recommendation is set out in **Appendix B**, including planned actions and timescales.

5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

5.1 This is a review undertaken by Audit Wales as part of the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan. It also forms part of a wider thematic review across all 22 Welsh local authorities, with findings informing a national report showing how local government is responding to their recruitment and retention challenges when combined with financial constraints.

5.2 The audit questions and criteria used in the review were informed by Audit Wales' knowledge and experience and research into the topic and via conversations with national stakeholders.

5.3 Evidence included interviews with senior officers and the relevant Cabinet Member, engagement with services facing acute recruitment challenges, and a review of key documentation.

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

6.1 Subject to consideration by the Committee and Cabinet, the agreed management response will be incorporated into the Strategic Insight Board's Regulatory Tracker and monitored quarterly.

6.2 Progress will continue to be reported to Governance and Audit Committee, with Cabinet providing overall oversight. Progress will also be monitored by Audit Wales as part of the Council's annual audit work programme.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

7.1 The report supports the delivery of Vale 2030 by strengthening the Council's approach to workforce sustainability, which underpins all Well-being Objectives. Addressing recruitment and retention challenges ensures the Council has the capacity and capability to deliver services effectively.

7.2 Responding to the Audit Wales recommendation will further strengthen the Council's focus on value for money and continuous improvement, aligning with the Reshaping programme by ensuring resources are used efficiently and services are designed to be sustainable in the longer term.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

8.1 Performance Management is an intrinsic part of corporate governance and integrated business planning which underpins the delivery of Vale 2030, the Council's Corporate Plan. Vale 2030 details five new Well-being Objectives which provide a framework for the next five years and how the Council will contribute to the national well-being goals. The five ways of working have been embedded in the development of the new Plan and are reflected in the work that will be undertaken to deliver Vale 2030.

8.2 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.

8.3 The areas of improvement identified by our external regulators and the associated action plan produced by officers has been developed with the five ways of working in mind. The focus of these 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. These improvement actions also focus on preventative actions that will enable us to sustain and future proof our services into the longer term.

Resources

9.0 Finance

9.1 There is an annual audit fee aligned with the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Work Programme.

9.2 There are no additional budgetary implications arising directly 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.

10.0 Workforce

10.1 There are no additional workforce implications arising directly from this report, which focuses on the Council's response to existing recruitment and retention challenges.

11.0 Legal and Equalities

11.1 Does an Equalities Impact Assessment need to be completed? If not, why?

11.2 This report forms part of the Council's Annual Audit Plan. An equalities impact assessment is not applicable. Any proposed changes arising from the findings of the review will have equalities impact assessments undertaken in line with council guidance.

11.3 There are no implications directly arising from this report, although failure to respond to our regulatory recommendations could have a negative impact on any future external regulatory assessments and could result in a special inspection by the Auditor General for Wales if deemed that the Council is not meeting the performance requirements.

12.0 **Key Contacts**

12.1 **Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?**

Lead Officer: Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources TBowring@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk 01446 709247	Democratic Services Officer: Gareth Davies, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk 01446 709249
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Appendix

Appendix A – Audit Wales Recruitment and Retention review April 2026

Appendix B – Audit Wales Recruitment and Retention Management Response Action Plan

Background Documents

[Annual Audit Plan 2025](#)

Recruitment and retention challenges – the right people at the right time?

Vale of Glamorgan County Council

April 2026

We have prepared and published this report for presentation under the following duties:

- section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) to help enable the Auditor General to be satisfied (or not) that the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources; and
- section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to help enable the Auditor General to assess the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives.

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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 We looked at the recruitment and retention challenges that the Vale of Glamorgan Council (the Council) is facing. Including how well the Council understands its challenges, what it is doing in response, and how it reviews the value for money of its approaches.

Why this is important

- 2 Having the right workforce in place is essential for a Council to deliver the services its communities need and to meet its legal duties. To do this the Council needs to employ the right number of employees, with the right skills, at the right time.
- 3 The majority of the Council's day-to-day spending is used to pay for its workforce.
- 4 However, it is facing a number of challenges to recruit and retain people to deliver its services.

What we have found

- 5 We found that the Council understands the challenges it faces and has adopted several approaches, with some successes. But it does not always evaluate whether its different approaches represent value for money.

What we recommend

- 6 We made one recommendation about the Council assessing the value for money of its approaches to its recruitment and retention challenges.

Our findings

Understanding the challenges

The Council has a good understanding of its recruitment and retention challenges, and is successfully using workforce management approaches to ensure a sustainable workforce

- 7 The Council understands its current recruitment and retention challenges. Senior officers understand which roles are more difficult to fill and why. The reasons include:
 - limited awareness of the variety of career options available in local government;
 - poor perception of local government generally as a place to work; and
 - pay scales that are not competitive with the private sector or other parts of the public sector.
- 8 The information the Council collects about its workforce also allows it to understand its recruitment and retention challenges. This includes a performance dashboard with information such as vacancy and turnover rates, which is reported to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) monthly. HR Business Partners also discuss succession planning at monthly Directorate Management Team meetings.
- 9 Being able to access and analyse the right information means that the Council is less likely to miss opportunities to prevent recruitment and retention problems from occurring or getting worse. It also means that the Council is less likely to design short-term solutions that do not represent value for money. By understanding which posts are hard to fill and why, the Council also reduces the risk that it targets its resources in the wrong place.

- 10 The Council also understands its use of workforce management approaches such as recruitment freezes, market supplements, fixed-term contracts and agency staff, to help ensure a sustainable workforce. Whilst the Council does not have written policies on the use of agency staff or fixed-term contracts, officers are clear on why and how to use these approaches. This has included use of fixed-term contracts for student placements to deliver specific projects in the planning department. The Council is also looking at ways to reduce its agency spend, such as developing its own agency or bank of staff in social services.
- 11 Senior leaders also have oversight of proposed recruitment activity. Whilst the Council does not have a 'recruitment freeze' in place, its SLT considers every vacancy and the case for filling it before recruitment can progress. This gives senior leaders an overview of the Council's recruitment whilst helping the Council respond to its financial position.
- 12 The Council also has a clear process to manage the use of market supplements. It has used them in areas where salaries are lower than other employers. Before a market supplement can be approved and introduced, officers must complete a business case, and the supplement must be reviewed at least every two years.
- 13 By understanding the impact of different workforce management approaches, the Council reduces the risk of negative impacts on its culture and morale.

Addressing the challenges

The Council has taken action to address recruitment and retention challenges, with some success

- 14 The Council has used a range of approaches to address recruitment and retention challenges. These include:
 - grow your own approaches to recruitment, such as apprenticeships, student placements and graduate trainee positions;
 - the use of market supplements in difficult to recruit areas;
 - offering a range of staff wellbeing and reward offers;
 - prioritising leadership and management development to grow its future leaders; and
 - flexible recruitment process in areas that require the Council to act quickly, for example in social services.
- 15 Having a range of approaches to recruitment is likely to increase the Council's ability to attract candidates and retain a motivated workforce.
- 16 The Council has also made various changes to streamline its recruitment and onboarding processes, such as:
 - asking for CVs rather than a detailed application form for some roles;
 - proactively contacting candidates for social services roles early in the process by telephone to help improve recruitment success rates; and
 - creating a microsite for social services recruitment.

- 17 The Council has also taken a range of steps to ensure that its recruitment and retention activity allows them to attract talent from the full diversity of the community. This includes consulting regularly with groups representing people who share protected equalities characteristics, to ensure that the Council's approach to recruitment and retention is inclusive. As part of this, draft job adverts are shared to give them an opportunity to identify any barriers to recruitment, so the Council can address them before adverts are finalised.
- 18 The Council's draft people strategy also includes a section on diversity and inclusion. The Council has diversity indicators and measures performance against these. The Council also provides anti-racism training and other equalities training to staff. By having arrangements in place that seek to ensure recruitment from the full diversity of the community, the Council mitigates the risk that it decreases its talent pool and does not deliver its wider equality objectives.
- 19 The Council has worked proactively to develop a positive culture in the organisation and develop its employer brand. The Council has focused its learning and development activity on leadership and management development. It considers this to be an important part of maintaining and developing its culture. The Council also provides a range of wellbeing and reward offers, such as a cycle to work scheme, hybrid working, gym membership discounts, and range of discounts in local businesses.
- 20 By taking steps to promote and develop a positive culture in the organisation, the Council reduces the risk that it has a demotivated workforce and high turnover of staff.

- 21 The Council also engages with its workforce on recruitment and retention challenges, and acts on feedback. For example, the Council engaged with various staff networks when developing its people strategy. It also used staff feedback to inform its employee reward programme. The Council also offered wellbeing surveys to staff during the COVID pandemic and more recently undertook a staff survey in 2025. The Council also offers exit interviews to staff who are leaving the organisation, although the number of interviews completed varies across directorates. By involving employees, the Council increases opportunities to find new ideas and solutions to tackle recruitment and retention challenges.
- 22 Senior leaders have good oversight of the Council's recruitment and retention activity and challenges. For example:
- every vacancy must be approved by SLT in consultation with the Leader of the Council, before being advertised;
 - senior leaders are involved in developing the Council's new people strategy;
 - the Council's risk register and directorate business plans include recruitment and retention challenges;
 - SLT receive a HR dashboard quarterly which includes staff vacancy and turnover rates;
 - strategic workforce planning updates are reported to SLT monthly; and
 - the Resources Scrutiny Committee receive sickness absence figures twice a year.
- 23 By ensuring senior leaders have oversight of recruitment and retention challenges, the Council reduces the risk that they are not identified and addressed.

- 24 The Council has also sought to work with others to address recruitment and retention challenges. This includes working with universities as part of its planning graduate trainee and student placement posts. It has also worked with other councils in areas such as internal audit, procurement and environmental health to share staff resources. Within its Shared Regulatory Services partnership, the Council has created new apprenticeships in areas it was finding it difficult to recruit for, such as Environmental Health Officers. By looking for opportunities to share resources, expertise and good practice, the Council increases the likelihood that its approaches provide good value for money.
- 25 The Council is taking steps to increase its use of technology to help address recruitment and retention challenges. This includes using an online platform to advertise a recent senior leadership role, which gave it a wider reach at no additional cost. It has also automated the process whereby SLT approves new vacancies. By making effective use of technology the Council can make the most of opportunities to reduce costs and improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of its recruitment processes.

Reviewing value for money

The Council does not always evaluate the value for money of its approaches to recruitment and retention

- 26 The Council has not formally evaluated whether its different approaches provide value for money. However, it understands that some initiatives are less costly than alternatives. These include developing a bank of social services staff to use instead of agency staff and using an online platform to advertise posts instead of a recruitment agency. However, by not having clear arrangements in place to always monitor and review value for money, the Council is unable to assess if its approaches provide value for money in a timely way.
- 27 The Council learns from its approaches to recruitment and retention and makes improvements as a result. For example, the Council has developed an app to speed up its vacancy approval process, has improved the speed of recruitment processes in social services, and has developed HR dashboards to improve oversight. The Council has also shared its approaches to developing its HR dashboard, and its social services graduate scheme more widely with other councils.
- 28 By implementing improvements and sharing lessons learned, the Council increases opportunities to improve its approaches and improve value for money.

Recommendations

- R1** The Council should develop arrangements to assess the value for money of its major approaches to recruitment and retention (**paragraph 26**).

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

We looked at the challenges the Council faces in recruiting and retaining staff. This included how well the Council understands the challenges, the steps it is taking to respond to these challenges, and how it reviews the value for money of its approaches.

We did not look at the wider topic of workforce planning.

Audit questions and criteria

Questions

We set out to answer the following questions:

- Does the Council understand its recruitment and retention challenges?
- Is the Council taking action to address its recruitment and retention challenges?
- Does the Council review the value for money of its approaches to address recruitment and retention challenges?

Criteria

We have assessed the Council's arrangements by answering the above audit questions. To help us do that, we have created a set of audit criteria which explains 'what good looks like'. We have used the audit criteria to help us analyse the evidence we collected from our review of documentary evidence and the interviews we conducted.

Our audit criteria were informed by a combination of our knowledge and experience and research into this topic. They were also informed by our conversations with national stakeholders.

Methods

We interviewed senior officers and the cabinet member responsible for developing and delivering the Council's strategic approach to meeting its recruitment and retention challenges.

We also interviewed senior officers from three Council services that have faced acute recruitment and retention challenges.

We also reviewed a range of documents relevant to the audit questions we were seeking to answer.

2 About us

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Management response form

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Audited body	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Audit name	Recruitment and Retention Challenges
Issue date	01/05/2026

Ref	Recommendation	Commentary on planned actions	Completion date for planned actions	Responsible officer (title)	Audit Wales only
R1	The Council should develop arrangements to assess the value for money of its major approaches to recruitment and retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish a structured approach to evaluating the value for money of our recruitment and retention initiatives, which will be clearly articulated in our HR dashboards.	October 2026	Head of HR and OD	We are satisfied the Council has properly considered our audit findings and recommendation. The response is sufficiently specific to give
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">This will include developing clear metrics to assess outcomes such as attraction, workforce stability, and	October 2026	Head of HR and OD	

Ref	Recommendation	Commentary on planned actions	Completion date for planned actions	Responsible officer (title)	Audit Wales only
		<p>cost-effectiveness, alongside regular review of workforce data and benchmarking against comparable organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews will be conducted through our People Board and feedback to SLT as part of our forward work programme. • Insights gained will inform continuous improvement, ensuring our approaches are evidence-based, sustainable, and aligned to our strategic priority of building a resilient, high-performing 	<p>First Report October 2026, follow up then March 2027</p> <p>March 2027</p>	<p>Head of HR and OD</p> <p>Head of HR and OD</p>	<p>assurance the Council will act on the recommendation . Timescales are acceptable and responsibilities have been allocated appropriately.</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Commentary on planned actions	Completion date for planned actions	Responsible officer (title)	Audit Wales only
		workforce to meet current and future service needs.			