

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

16TH JUNE 2021

REFERENCE FROM GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 24TH MAY 2021

“ VALE OF GLAMORGAN ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2020 AND
PROGRESS AGAINST EXTERNAL REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS AND
PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT (MD) –

The purpose of the report was to present to Members Audit Wales' report – Annual Audit Summary 2020.

Audit Wales (AW), was the nominated Auditor for the Vale of Glamorgan Council, and in that role undertook financial audit and performance reviews.

The report outlined the work undertaken by AW during 2020.

Councillor Dr. Johnson commented that there were a lot of amber statuses within Appendix B. A high number of Amber statuses related to shared working and partnership arrangements such as the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) and Legacy Leisure. Councillor Dr. Johnson queried how would progress on these be monitored given the context of challenges relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. In response, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that there had been recognition of the difficulties facing the Council as a result of Covid, and both the SRS and Legacy Leisure had been particularly impacted over the past 15 months. He was aware that the Head of the Shared Regulatory Service was in the process of looking at the next year of the SRS business plan, and the proposals for improvement would be a major part of that work. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation added that the Council's Insight Board was once again in operation and would be tracking progress on a monthly basis.

In relation to the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/20, Mr. Veale (Audit Wales) advised that back in October 2020, AW had been able to issue an opinion of the accounts but unable to certify closure as two objections from the public had to be reviewed. AW were able to issue an opinion as the two objections did not materially impact on the accounts. The reviews were now complete, and on 6th May, 2021, AW had notified the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer that the accounts for 2019/20 were closed and certified.

With regard to the two objections, Mr. Veale advised that the first objection related to how Section 106 money had been spent for a particular development. Following its review, AW had concluded that there was no evidence of non-compliance with the Section 106 agreement by the Council. The second objection related to an access scheme and a private driveway. Again, the review had been concluded, with several

recommendations reported to the Council. In relation to this, the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer confirmed that the recommendations were being addressed as part of a report to be presented to Cabinet regarding the tendering process.

Councillor Wilson referred to the role of Scrutiny and he asked whether AW had identified any best practice case studies. He added that this was particularly important as he was aware that Welsh Government were looking into the role of Scrutiny, and he asked whether there were moves to use the public accounts model within local government. Mr. Veale advised that previously AW had undertaken a review into the effectiveness of Scrutiny, the report of which contained reference to good practice and what worked well in other Authorities. Mr. Veale agreed to share any relevant information via email.

The Chairman, Councillor Carroll, raised a comment regarding non-executive Members having greater access to an independent source that could provide independent advice and research relating to Council business, particularly the Scrutiny function. Councillor Wilson added that there used to be separation of the Cabinet and Scrutiny functions between different service areas, but both now came under Democratic Services. He suggested, that as this arrangement was common across Wales, the separation of the Cabinet and Scrutiny functions could be something for AW to consider.

There being no further points or queries, the Committee

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the contents of the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020 (Appendix A to the report) be noted and the report referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with any recommendations / comments of the Governance and Audit Committee.

(2) T H A T the progress made to date in addressing recommendations and improvement proposals made by our external regulators (as in Appendix B to the report) be noted and be referred to Cabinet with any recommendations / comments of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Reasons for decisions

(1) To provide for scrutiny and review of the Auditor General's Annual Audit Summary 2020 (Annual Improvement Report).

(2) To ensure the Council implements its regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals and responds appropriately to the recommendations and proposals for improvement identified through the Audit Wales' programme of local and national Local Government Studies."

Attached as Appendix: Report to Governance and Audit Committee: 24th May, 2021

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| Meeting of: | Governance and Audit Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday, 24 May 2021 |
| Relevant Scrutiny Committee: | All Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet |
| Report Title: | Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020 and progress against External Regulatory Recommendations and Proposals for Improvement. |
| Purpose of Report: | To present the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020 (Appendix A) and the progress to date in addressing existing recommendations and improvement proposals from our external regulators as outlined in Appendix B. |
| Report Owner: | Councillor Neil Moore, Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources |
| Responsible Officer: | Rob Thomas, Managing Director |
| Elected Member and Officer Consultation: | All Members via Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet have received quarterly performance monitoring reports which incorporate progress against key regulatory actions. The Insight Board via its monthly monitored Insight Tracker also provides the Senior Leadership Team with regular updates on progress with regulatory actions. The latest version of the monthly Insight Tracker is included as part of quarterly performance reports to all Scrutiny Committees. |
| Policy Framework: | This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet. |
| <p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report presents the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020 and a half-year review of progress (as at April 2021) against all our existing regulatory proposals. • This year, the Annual Audit Summary (Annual Improvement Report) for the period 2019 to autumn 2020 was issued later than usual by Audit Wales, in February 2020. This approach is consistent with the flexibilities afforded through emergency governance arrangements by the Welsh Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has allowed statutory deadlines to be relaxed in certain areas to enable severely stretched public service resources to be diverted to priority areas at a time of national emergency. • In recognition of the strain on public services, Audit Wales have responded by reshaping their regulatory work programme and working flexibly to reduce its impact on public bodies response to COVID-19. | |

- The contents of the Annual Audit Summary 2020 were generally positive and concluded that overall, the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement.
- Whilst no formal recommendations were made by the Auditor General in his Annual Audit Summary 2020 for the Vale of Glamorgan Council, 11 proposals for improvement were made in relation to specific local reviews on the Council's outsourced leisure services (2 PFI), the Reshaping Services Programme (5 PFI) and Waste management arrangements (4 PFI). These have been previously reported to the Audit Committee.
- As well as specific local reviews, each year, Audit Wales also carry out studies across the local government sector to make recommendations for improving value for money. Between 2019 and the autumn of 2020, 6 such reports were published in relation to: 'Front Door' Social Care; Review of Public Services Boards; Implementing the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual violence Act; Rough Sleeping in Wales 'Everyone's Problem; No One's Responsibility'; Better Law Making and Commercialisation in Local Government.
- In line with corporate performance management arrangements, consideration is given by relevant council services to the findings contained within both local and national reports as they are published, and actions have been incorporated within the Council's Insight Tracker throughout the year as appropriate. These actions will be monitored by the Insight Board and reported to Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and the Audit Committee as work to address them progresses. Progress against our regulatory actions will also be monitored by Audit Wales colleagues throughout the year as part of the Annual Regulatory Plan 2021/22.
- Despite the significant challenges of the past year (global COVID-19 pandemic), positive progress has been made in responding to our regulatory improvement areas with 10 of the 38 actions on the tracker completed as at April 2021. 25 actions on the tracker relate to local regulatory proposals of which 5 have been completed and work is progressing in the remaining 20 actions. The completed actions relate to the follow up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children. Of the 13 actions relating to national regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals, 5 have been completed with work progressing on the remaining actions. The completed actions relate to the review of how local government manages homelessness demand and the effectiveness of local planning authorities Wales.
- It is recommended that Members note the contents of Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020 and refer the report to the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with any recommendations/comments of the Audit Committee.
- Members are also being asked to review the progress made to date in addressing recommendations and improvement proposals made by our external regulators and refer the report to Cabinet with any recommendations/ comments of the Audit Committee.

Recommendations

1. That Members note the contents of the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020 (Appendix A) and refer this report to the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with any recommendations/comments of the Audit Committee.
2. That Members review the progress made to date in addressing recommendations and improvement proposals made by our external regulators (as Appendix B) and refer this report to Cabinet with any recommendations/ comments of the Audit Committee.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To provide for scrutiny and review of the Auditor General's Annual Audit Summary 2020 (Annual Improvement Report).
2. To ensure the Council implements its regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals and responds appropriately to the recommendations and proposals for improvement identified through the Audit Wales' programme of local and national Local Government Studies.

1. Background

Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary

- 1.1 The Auditor General for Wales has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009) to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities have a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions'.
- 1.2 The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The report discharges the Auditor General's duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.
- 1.3 The Annual Audit Summary 2020 (Annual Improvement Report) summaries the audit work undertaken during the period 2019 to autumn 2020 and covers all work undertaken by other inspection and regulatory bodies such as Estyn (Her Majesty's inspectorate for schools in Wales) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).

Progress against external regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals

- 1.4** As part of the on-going audit work by the Council's regulators, a series of proposals for improvement / recommendations are made as a result of audit studies (locally and nationally). The Council is required to ensure that these improvement areas are appropriately progressed, and the results reported.
- 1.5** The Insight Board's Action Tracker incorporates all of our regulatory proposals for improvement. The Tracker, which is reviewed monthly, has the most up to date record of our regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals as this is updated all year round to reflect the audit work programme work, including all local and national Local Government Studies to ensure actions are completed, reported and closed down in a timely manner.
- 1.6** This approach ensures progress remains under review enabling us to provide our regulators with an up to date position on all our regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals in line with our statutory duties.
- 1.7** The Audit Committee has a key role in maintaining oversight of the Council's response to issues raised by our external regulators and receive regular progress updates against all regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals via a 6 monthly (half-year) update report which is then supplemented with the annual review of progress via the Council's Annual Report (Improvement Plan Part 2). In addition, updates on individual reviews are also reported throughout the year as work to address key actions are progressed.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary

- 2.1** **Appendix A** contains the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Summary 2020. This year, the Annual Audit summary (Annual Improvement Report) for the period 2019 to autumn 2020 was issued later than usual by Audit Wales, in February 2021. This approach is consistent with the flexibilities afforded through emergency governance arrangements by the Welsh Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has allowed statutory deadlines to be relaxed in certain areas to enable severely stretched public service resources to be diverted to priority areas at a time of national emergency. In recognition of the strain on public services, Audit Wales have responded by reshaping their regulatory work programme and working flexibly to reduce its impact on public bodies response to COVID-19.
- 2.2** The report findings were generally positive and concluded that overall, the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement. Key highlights were:
- 2.3** The Council has a strong financial position, but aspects of its financial planning could be strengthened.
- 2.4** The Council has effective arrangements in place to deliver its Reshaping Services Programme and the programme is effectively managed and has helped deliver savings, but there is now an opportunity to refocus the programme and strengthen workforce planning to support its delivery.

- 2.5 The Council is making significant changes to household recycling collections and is on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but will need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.
- 2.6 In follow-up work on environmental health services to assess the extent to which the Council has addressed its audit recommendations of 2014, the report notes that the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) model is enabling the Council to sustain its delivery of environmental health services within a context of reducing resources and additional responsibilities placed on it by ongoing changes in legislation. However, there is scope for the Council to strengthen its independent oversight and assurance arrangements of the SRS and work with SRS and other providers to explore opportunities for future improvement.
- 2.7 Whilst no formal recommendations were made by the Auditor General in his Annual Audit Summary 2020 for the Vale of Glamorgan Council, 11 proposals for improvement were made in relation to specific local reviews on the Council's outsourced leisure services (2 PFI), the Reshaping Services Programme (5 PFI) and Waste management arrangements (4 PFI).
- 2.8 As well as specific local reviews, each year, Audit Wales also carry out studies across the local government sector to make recommendations for improving value for money. Between 2019 and the autumn of 2020, 6 such reports were published in relation to: 'Front Door' Social Care; Review of Public Services Boards; Implementing the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual violence Act; Rough Sleeping in Wales 'Everyone's Problem; No One's Responsibility'; Better Law Making and Commercialisation in Local Government.
- 2.9 In line with corporate performance management arrangements, consideration is given by relevant council services to the findings contained within both local and national reports as they are published, and actions have been incorporated within the Council's Insight Tracker throughout the year as appropriate. These will be monitored by the Insight Board and reported to Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and the Audit Committee as work to address them progresses. Progress against our regulatory actions will also be monitored by Audit Wales colleagues throughout the year as part of the Annual Regulatory Plan 2021/22.
- 2.10 It is recommended that the Audit Committee considers the appended Annual Audit Summary 2020 and refers this report to the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet along with any comments of this Committee.

Progress against external regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals.

- 2.11 **Appendix B**, 'Insight Tracker: April 2021' outlines our progress against existing regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals in response to local and national Local Government Studies and audit work undertaken to date.
- 2.12 Despite the significant challenges of the past year (global COVID-19 pandemic), positive progress has been made in responding to our regulatory improvement areas with 10 of the 38 actions on the tracker completed as at April 2021.
- 2.13 25 actions on the tracker relate to local regulatory proposals of which 5 have been completed and work is progressing in the remaining 20 actions. The

completed actions relate to the follow up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children. Of the 13 actions relating to national regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals, 5 have been completed with work progressing on the remaining actions. The completed actions relate to the review of how local government manages homelessness demand and the effectiveness of local planning authorities Wales.

- 2.14** In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, Members of this Committee will continue to be informed of progress against all regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals via a 6 monthly (half-year) update report (this report) and this will be supplemented with the annual review of progress via the Council's Annual Report (Improvement Plan Part 2) in the autumn of 2021. In addition, updates on individual reviews will continue to be reported to the Committee throughout the year as the work to address them progresses.
- 2.15** Members are being asked to review the progress made to date in addressing the recommendations and improvement proposals made by our external regulators contained in Appendix B and refer the report to Cabinet with any recommendations/ comments of the Audit Committee.

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

- 3.1** The Corporate Plan 2016-20 reflects the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and identifies 4 Well-being Outcomes and 8 Objectives for the Council. These promote improvements in the economic, social and cultural well-being of residents in the Vale of Glamorgan which in turn will contribute to achieving the Well-being goals for Wales. 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** Reviewing and reporting our performance is an important vehicle for showing our progress, not only in terms of impacts across the national well-being goals through achievement of our well-being objectives but also in terms of the changes and improvements made in our approach to integrated planning.
- 3.3** The five ways of working are a key consideration in our Corporate Performance Management Framework ensuring that we continue to focus on working differently and in an inclusive way to challenge why, what and how we respond to our key performance challenges to meet our Well-being Objectives and contribute to the national goals.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Audit and inspection fees for the Council are met from existing budgets.
- 4.2** There are no additional budgetary implications arising from this report, although underperformance in some areas may have a negative impact on external assessments of the Council and could put certain funding opportunities at risk.

Employment

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

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** The Auditor General for Wales has a duty under sections 15, 17, 18, 19 and 24 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to assess and report the outputs from corporate and improvement Assessments of all improvement authorities in Wales.
- 4.5** The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires that the Council secure continuous improvement across the full range of local services for which it is responsible.
- 4.6** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to set Well-being Objectives by April each year that maximise its contribution to achieving the Well-being goals for Wales and report its progress annually.

5. Background Papers

Vale of Glamorgan County Council

Annual audit summary 2020

This is our audit summary for Vale of Glamorgan Council. It shows the work completed since the last Annual Improvement Report, which was issued in August 2019. Our audit summary forms part of the Auditor General for Wales' duties.

More information about these duties can be found on our [website](#).



About the Council

Some of the services the Council provides



Key facts

The Council is made up of 47 councillors who represent the following political parties:

- Labour 14
- Conservative 14
- Independent 2
- Plaid Cymru 4
- Llantwit First Independent 4
- Vale Independents Group 8
- No party affiliation 1

The Council spent £248.6 million on providing services during 2019-20, the tenth lowest spend of the 22 unitary councils in Wales.

As at 31 March 2020 the Council had £83 million of usable financial reserves. This is equivalent to 33% of the Council's annual spend on services, the highest percentage of the 22 unitary councils in Wales.

Key facts

The County has three (4%) out of its 79 areas deemed the most deprived 10% of areas in Wales, this is the joint-seventh lowest of the 22 unitary councils in Wales¹.

The County's population is projected to increase by 9.5% between 2020 and 2040 from 133,864 to 146,527, including a 0.8% increase in the number of children, a 2.9% increase in the number of the working-age population and a 35.2% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over².

The Auditor General's duties

We complete work each year to meet the following duties

- **Audit of Accounts**
Each year the Auditor General audits the Council's financial statements to make sure that public money is being properly accounted for.
- **Value for money**
The Council has to put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and the Auditor General has to be satisfied that it has done this.
- **Continuous improvement**
The Council also has to put in place arrangements to make continuous improvements, including related plans and reports, and the Auditor General has to assess whether the Council is likely to (or has) met these requirements.
- **Sustainable development principle**
Public bodies need to comply with the sustainable development principle when setting and taking steps to meet their well-being objectives. The Auditor General must assess the extent to which they are doing this.

¹ An area in this context is defined as a 'Lower Super Output Area'. Source: Stats Wales

² Source: Stats Wales



Since the Spring of 2020, the ongoing pandemic has affected our audit work. We recognise the huge strain on public services and have reshaped our work programme, and found new ways of working to reduce its impact on public bodies' response to COVID-19, while still meeting our statutory duties.



To meet the Auditor General's duties we complete specific projects, but we also rely on other audit work, and the work of regulators such as Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn (the education inspectorate). We take the findings of our audit work into account when assessing whether the Council has put in place arrangements to secure value for money. Our findings and conclusions are summarised below.

What we found

Audit of Vale of Glamorgan Council's 2019-20 Accounts

Each year we audit the Council's financial statements.

For 2019-20:

- The Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements on 8 October 2020.
- Whilst our audit opinion was unqualified, we have included an Emphasis of Matter paragraph as per ISA706 within our Auditor's Report. This is in relation to material valuation uncertainty regarding the Council's Property, Plant & Equipment and Pension Fund assets as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Council's Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report were prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance. They were consistent with the financial statements prepared by the Council and with our knowledge of the Council.
- The draft statements presented for audit on 30 June were of good quality.
- A number of changes were made to the Council's financial statements arising from our audit work, which were reported to the Audit Committee in our Audit of Financial Statements Report in September 2020.
- In addition to the Auditor General's responsibilities for auditing the Council's financial statements, he also has responsibility for the certification of a number of grant claims and returns. Our work to date has not identified any significant issues.
- The Auditor General has not yet issued the certificate confirming that the audit of accounts for 2019-20 has been completed. This is due to us completing our review into a number of issues raised by local government electors. We are, however, satisfied that these matters do not have a material effect on the financial statements.
- Key facts and figures from the 2019-20 financial statements can be accessed [here](#).

Well-being of Future Generations Examination – Outsourced Leisure Services

The examination that we undertook in 2019-20 considered the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to deliver leisure services. We concluded that the Council is receiving an income from its leisure contract with Legacy Leisure, but needs to assure itself that the contract is providing value for money, and strengthen its application of the sustainable development principle when it extends the contract. The report can be viewed [here](#).

Continuous Improvement

The Auditor General certified that the Council has met its legal duties for improvement planning and reporting, and believes that it is likely to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 during 2020-21.

Financial Sustainability (May 2020)

During 2019-20 we examined the financial sustainability of each council in Wales. We concluded that the Council has a strong financial position, but aspects of its financial planning could be strengthened. The report can be viewed [here](#).

National Fraud Initiative

In October 2020, the Auditor General published his report on the findings of the latest National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data-matching exercise in Wales. The exercise helped public bodies in Wales, including the 22 unitary authorities, identify fraud and overpayments amounting to £8 million. The report can be accessed on our website [here](#). NFI continues to be developed and in the forthcoming NFI exercise (NFI 2020-2022) local authorities will have access to matches designed to help identify potential fraudulent applications for COVID-19 business support grants.

Reshaping Services (August 2020)

During 2019-20 we considered whether the Council had effective arrangements in place to deliver its Reshaping Services Programme. We concluded that the programme is effectively managed and has helped deliver savings, but there is now an opportunity to refocus the programme and strengthen workforce planning to support its delivery. The report can be viewed [here](#).

Waste Management (December 2019)

The work we did in 2019-20 looked at whether the Council had robust plans in place to reduce waste and achieve the national recycling/re-use targets. We concluded that the Council is making significant changes to household recycling collections and is on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but will need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population. The report can be viewed [here](#).

Delivering with Less – Environmental Health Services follow-up review (September 2019)

In 2019 we followed up our 2014 work on environmental health services to assess whether there have been any budget or staff changes within the service and the extent to which the Council has addressed the recommendations in our 2014 report. We found that the shared regulatory services (SRS) model is enabling the Council to sustain its delivery of environmental health services in a context of reducing resources and additional responsibilities placed on it by ongoing changes in legislation. There is scope for the Council to strengthen its independent oversight and assurance arrangements of the SRS and work with SRS and other providers to explore opportunities for future improvement. The report can be viewed [here](#).

Other Inspectorates

We also took into account the reports of Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Estyn as well as any subsequent actions taken by the Council in response. CIW issued a [Local Authority Performance Review](#) in August 2020. In October 2020 CIW undertook a performance meeting with the Director and Heads of Service, the purpose of which was to review and discuss plans for recovery and renewal in the local authority.

Estyn did not undertake an inspection of Local Government Education Services in Vale of Glamorgan during 2019-20.

Local Government Studies

As well as local work at each council, each year we also carry out studies across the local government sector to make recommendations for improving value for money. Since the last annual improvement report we have published the following reports:

The ‘Front Door’ to Social Care (September 2019)

We considered the effectiveness of the new ‘front door’ to social care, looking specifically at services for adults. We found that whilst councils are preventing social-care demand, information, advice and assistance are not consistently effective. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Review of Public Services Boards (October 2019)

We inspected how Public Services Boards are operating; looking at their membership, terms of reference, frequency and focus of meetings, alignment with other partnerships, resources and scrutiny arrangements. We concluded that Public Services Boards are unlikely to realise their potential unless they are given freedom to work more flexibly and think and act differently. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (November 2019)

We examined how the new duties and responsibilities of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act are being rolled out and delivered. We found that victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence are often let down by an inconsistent, complex and fragmented system. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Rough Sleeping in Wales – Everyone’s Problem; No One’s Responsibility (July 2020)

We looked at how well public services are responding to the issue of rough sleeping. Overall, we found that responding to COVID-19 is an opportunity for public bodies to start addressing long standing weaknesses in partnership working which has stopped them from tackling rough sleeping in the past. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Better Law Making (September 2020)

This report draws on five reports published between 2019 and today looking at how local authorities are responding to the challenge of implementing new legislation. Implementation is a complex task which needs to be fully thought through by the Welsh Government and the Senedd whenever they bring forward and make any new legislation. The paper highlights the difficulties faced by local authorities and their public sector partners in implementing their new responsibilities. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Commercialisation in Local Government (October 2020)

Councils have conducted commercial activity for a long time, and many councils are exploring additional commercial opportunities to mitigate against the financial pressures they face. Our report is specifically targeted at helping elected members and senior officers to examine and judge the potential impact on their organisations when considering whether to undertake commercialisation. It will also help councils to demonstrate how well they are discharging their value for money responsibilities. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Planned work for 2020-21

We also looked at the key challenges and opportunities facing the Council. These risks could have an effect on the Council’s ability to meet its legal obligations in relation to the sustainable development principle, the use of its resources and continuous improvement.

The most significant risk and issue facing councils and the wider public sector during 2020-21 is the COVID-19 pandemic. We have shaped our work to provide assurance and challenge in a way which helps to support the Council through this period. Our work for 2020-21 includes:

- Recovery planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COVID-learning project – helping to identify and share learning from the way in which public bodies have responded to the pandemic
- Assurance and risk assessment
- A review of the Council’s financial sustainability
- Third sector partnership working review

The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the Senedd.

The Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Senedd Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

Audit Wales is the non-statutory collective name for the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office, which are separate legal entities with their own legal functions, as described above. Audit Wales is not a legal entity.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Local Regulatory Actions

| Reference | Report | Responsible Officer | Regulatory Recommendation | Update | Status | Target Date | Date of Last Update |
|-----------|--|---------------------|--|--|--------|-------------|---------------------|
| LR11 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland | The Council should subject any future changes to environmental health services to a more rigorous analysis of costs, benefits and impacts. We found some evidence of cost/benefit/impact analysis being performed to enable decision-making around savings and changes to services. Whilst some consideration was given to the impact of staffing restructuring over the period between 2018-2021, members and officers acknowledged that the real impact of this will be largely unknown until £498k of savings begin to take effect. | This proposal for improvement comments upon the delivery of SRS savings across the three Councils only and not budget reductions from the other services within Cardiff. Future SRS changes/savings will undergo rigorous analysis across the three Councils. That process will begin again in May 2020, as the SRS sets out its next three year financial programme covering 2021 to 2024. Proposals will be considered by the SRS Management Board, Elected Members, through the review mechanisms at each Council, the Trade Unions and SRS officers. Changes to the other Environmental Health services delivered by the Council will also be assessed through the established Council mechanisms and that process will pay heed to the requirements of this proposal. Both processes will also take into account the recommendation presented in Proposal 8. | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR12 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland | The Council should investigate further possibilities for commercialisation and income generation for environmental health services in order to provide additional financial capacity if funding reduces in the future. | The coronavirus outbreak has caused many of the businesses in the area to close or reduce significantly their activities. New income generating opportunities have therefore been few, but existing Primary Authority relationships have been maintained with SRS offering detailed advice on covid safe practices at offices, shops, etc. | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR13 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland | When considering how environmental health services may need to change in the future, the Council should ensure that the distinction between statutory and non-statutory services is clearly documented and understood by decision makers. This will help to ensure that statutory responsibilities and powers are weighed and prioritised appropriately alongside discretionary services. | Understanding the distinction between statutory and non-statutory services will provide elected members with some insight into which service are legally mandated. However, to date, the SRS business plans are geared toward outcomes; achieving those outcomes involves using all the tools available. This includes statutes that bestow powers upon the Council, but not duties. When the Joint Working Arrangement was created, it defined services in terms of ensuring public health, helping customers to access information and knowledge and securing a safe, healthy, fair, environment. From the outset, the Councils agreed that this required the use of both statutory and non-statutory legislation to achieve service and corporate goals. Going forward the SRS will incorporate into the Business Plans an indication of the "status" of the services being delivered and a rationale for the prioritisation of those activities. Additionally, when the actions identified in Proposal 1 above are undertaken, officers will ensure that decision makers are apprised of the nature of the service being delivered | Amber | Apr-21 | Mar-20 |
| LR15 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland | The Council should work with SRS to undertake a review of business continuity and succession planning arrangements in relation to the SRS to mitigate the risk of overreliance on key individuals, such as the Head of SRS and operational managers. | In 2020, SRS will examine trends in service delivery and service demand since inception in 2015. It will also look forward to the likely delivery mechanisms for the next three years, in line with the budget proposals. An examination of the robustness of the operating model and succession planning arrangements will form part of that review. Due to the pandemic, the above work previously scheduled for 2020 has now begun through the employing authority's succession planning protocols. | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR18 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland | P8 - The Council should more clearly link any future decisions on changes to service levels to an assessment of impact on relevant stakeholders, including service users and residents. Whether consultation is necessary, and the most appropriate means of consulting should be decided on a case-by-case basis. However, where changes are likely to impact service users, businesses and local residents, they should be aware of and consulted on these decisions. | The consultation process on the SRS Business Plan will commence again this month. The plan is likely to address the means by which the SRS recovers "lost ground" as a consequence of the coronavirus outbreak. Any discussions on changes which may impact service users are more likely to be considered through the budget review process of August 2021. | Red | May-21 | Apr-21 |

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| LR19 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland | The Council needs to build on initiatives such as the Noise app, to ensure that future funding reductions can be mitigated by innovation and transformation in service delivery and that environmental health services are able to benefit from new technologies. | The ICT review scheduled for 2020/21 has been delayed, but will address the use of new technology to improve service delivery. | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR14 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland (Lead Officer) Jeff Rees (Scrutiny function elements) | P4 - The Council should introduce greater challenge of the level and quality of environmental health services provided by third parties, including the SRS under the Joint Working Agreement. | Please see comments set out in LR16. | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR16 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland (Lead Officer) Jeff Rees (Scrutiny function elements) | P6 - The Council should strengthen accountability and elected member oversight of its environmental health services, for example through more regular scrutiny of services provided by third parties, including SRS. | The Head of Shared Regulatory Services will continue to work closely with the Head of Democratic Services to build on our existing mechanisms to further strengthen scrutiny and accountability of environmental health services and those provided by third parties. Discussion with the Performance Team and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny regarding re-establishing Performance Panels. Ensuring that the SRS Business Plan and Work programme is reported annually to the relevant scrutiny committees. | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR17 | Delivering with Less - Environmental Health Services | Dave Holland (Lead Officer) Jeff Rees (Scrutiny function elements) | P7 - The Council should consider introducing more structured and targeted development and training opportunities for relevant members, which may be beneficial in the event of changes in personnel and in areas experiencing changes in legislation, e.g. air pollution/ food safety/infectious diseases. | From the Scrutiny function perspective this will be driven by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services working closely with the Head of Democratic Services and the Organisation Development and Training Manager to identify and put in place a programme of briefing sessions/e-learning opportunities in relation to up coming legislative and policy developments that would benefit members. These briefing sessions/workshops be incorporate as part of the Member Development Programme as and when these requirements are identified | Amber | Apr-21 | Apr-21 |
| LR10 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P7 – The Council should strengthen its evaluation of the impact and outcomes of its scrutiny activity to learn from this in order to shape the future work of the scrutiny function. | PI information has been collected and will be reported in the forthcoming Scrutiny Annual Report. New performance reporting arrangements have been shared with Scrutiny Committees and new decision tracking and work programme templates. Progress update reports on the Action Plan have been monitored by Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group on a regular basis and a further update report on progress to date is to be presented CPR Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in April 2021. | Amber | Apr-20 | Apr-21 |
| LR4 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P1 – Councillors should further consider the skills training that Scrutiny Members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges and develop an appropriate training programme. | A report is to be considered by SLT prior to a report being submitted to the Democratic Services Committee (the analysis of the Feb 20 questionnaire was delayed due to COVID 19) . The results have however been presented to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Group. The training needs identified have been included in the draft proposed Member Induction Programme (Post Local Government elections 2022) which will be considered by SLT and the Democratic Services Committee. | Amber | Apr-20 | Apr-21 |
| LR5 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P2 – The Council’s Scrutiny Committees should ensure that where appropriate Cabinet Members rather than Council officers are held to account for the efficient exercise and effective functions in accordance with statutory guidance. | Agreement has been reached with the Leader and Deputy Leader to initiate biannual meetings between Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs to consider forward work programmes .Cabinet Members are being encouraged to attend to present on Cabinet decisions at scrutiny committees. Cabinet Members continue to be held to account at Scrutiny meetings with regard to the decisions they make and attend meetings. The above has been included in the Cabinet and Scrutiny Roles and Responsibilities revised document following a review which is to be considered by Corporate Performance and Resources and Cabinet in April 21. | Amber | Apr-20 | Apr-21 |
| LR6 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P3 – The Council review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to current and future challenges. | Progress on the Action plan has been reported to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Group on regular basis. A comprehensive progress update report is to be presented to Corporate Performance and Resources and Cabinet in April 21 | Amber | Apr-20 | Dec-20 |

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| LR7 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P4 – The Council should explore different and more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activities. | Progress on the Action plan has been reported to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Group on regular basis. A comprehensive progress update report is to be presented to Corporate Performance and Resources and Cabinet in April 21 | Amber | Apr-20 | Apr-21 |
| LR8 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P5 – The Council should consider how its scrutiny activity can focus on those areas where it would have most value. | Progress on the Action plan has been reported to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Group on regular basis. A comprehensive progress update report is to be presented to Corporate Performance and Resources and Cabinet in April 21. The report report includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reference to online Forms the public can complete for items to be considered at Committees -Scrutiny newsletter to encourage public participation and provide information on forthcoming meetings -Scrutiny webpages update to encourage public engagement in Scrutiny -Amendments to Cabinet and Scrutiny Roles and Responsibilities protocol to include Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair biannual meetings with Cabinet Members to develop work programmes. | Amber | Apr-20 | Apr-21 |
| LR9 | Wales Audit Office - Overview and Scrutiny Fit for Future | Jeff Rees | P6 – The Council should be more innovative in how it engages the public in scrutiny activities. | An ideas paper was considered and endorsed at Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs group and referenced in the comprehensive progress update report is to be presented to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in April 21. | Amber | 01/04/2020 and ongoing | Apr-21 |
| LR2 | Welsh Housing Quality Standard review including Council housing tenants | Andrew Treweek | P1 – The Council should evaluate how effective the process is for tenants to report housing repairs via the Customer Contact Centre (Call One Vale) | Following the pre-market assessment, the specification is now being developed to procure an integrated housing management system which has increased functionality and ease of access for tenants providing a range of services they can access through an electronic portal including repair requests and appointment booking for one. | Amber | Apr-19 | Mar-21 |
| LR1 | Delivering with Less - Leisure Services | Emma Reed | Improve strategic planning in leisure services by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting an agreed Council vision for leisure services; | Complete - Action needs to be removed as new Welsh Audit Report now issued. | Green | Apr-18 | Mar-21 |
| LR25 | Review of Outsourced Leisure Services | David Knevett | The Council should strengthen its application of the sustainable development principle through services delivered by Legacy Leisure by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing a new partnership post between the Leisure department and Public Health Wales | Post was advertised but no suitable candidate applied. Post has now been re-advertised. | Amber | Mar-21 | Mar-21 |
| LR26 | Review of Outsourced Leisure Services | David Knevett | The Council should strengthen its application of the sustainable development principle through services delivered by Legacy Leisure by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing proposals for engaging further with users and obtaining their views on the service during 2021/2022 as part of a refocusing on customer needs and expectations | On hold whilst centres remain closed due to Covid-19 | Amber | Jul-21 | Mar-21 |
| LR27 | Review of Outsourced Leisure Services | David Knevett | The Council should strengthen its application of the sustainable development principle through services delivered by Legacy Leisure by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using part of the new funding provided by Welsh Government/ Sport Wales under the recovery programme to undertake further research into the provision of services and pilot new activities with the aim of increasing physical activity levels. | On hold whilst centres remain closed due to Covid-19 | Amber | Apr-21 | Mar-21 |

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| LR20 | Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children | Amanda Phillips | <p>P1 - Strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarify the safeguarding roles and responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Leisure and the Member Champion for Safeguarding; - Set out the role of scrutiny in the Council's safeguarding arrangements; - Provide information on topics that have safeguarding implications such as modern day slavery, trafficking, child sexual exploitation, counter terrorism and the risk of radicalisation, the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and self-harm. | Key appointments within Corporate Leadership are disseminated to staff and linked to their safeguarding responsibilities within their role and there is regular review and updating of the CSG webpage. Corporate and Directorate safeguarding roles are known and understood through dissemination of information to all employees and volunteers and updated as required. Also, there is regular review and update of the SCH web pages. Information on corporate leadership and safeguarding roles is shared on the Safeguarding Hub within StaffNet and in Bi Annual Safeguarding Newsletter. Safeguarding Hub includes membership of Corporate Safeguarding Group and areas of responsibility. Bi-Annual cabinet report on activity of the Corporate Safeguarding Group references membership/changes to membership of the CS Group. The Cabinet/Lead member takes responsibility for ensuring scrutiny & assurance of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements and the CSG Policy reflects the role of scrutiny in scrutinising safeguarding. Dissemination of key topics to staff via newsletter; training; national safeguarding week. | Complete and now forms part of CSG work practice | | Apr-21 |
| LR21 | Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children | Amanda Phillips | <p>P2 - The Council should strengthen its contractual provisions in relation to the safeguarding training requirements of third parties to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specifying that safeguarding training is mandatory where applicable; and - amending its main agency candidate checks form so that it does not just specify that safeguarding training is mandatory only for Social Care Night Workers. | Safeguarding training strategy communicated and disseminated corporately and to volunteers, contractors including content required and frequency of safeguarding training. Compliance analysed and reported half eayerly and annually to cabinet and scrutiny committees. Also standing agenda item for consideration at CSG. | Complete and now forms part of CSG work practice | | Apr-21 |
| LR22 | Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children | Amanda Phillips | <p>P3 - The Council should improve its approach to safeguarding training in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take steps to ensure that the mandatory completion of Violence Against Women and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 training is accelerated; - Clarify when mandatory safeguarding training needs to be refreshed; - Accelerate the rate of compliance with the completion of its mandatory safeguarding training; - Consider ways in which it could extend its safeguarding training offer, for example to taxi drivers and to those working in the night time economy | The training programme has been reviewed and compliance to expectations monitored. As a consequence, changes have been made to the programme to ensure that all staff receive training appropriate to their roles. Reviewed compliance of all Directorates with respect to completion of the Safeguarding e-module. Safeguarding e-module for onboarding process for new employees in place as is the refresher element for existing staff. Arrangements in place for those who cannot access the e-module with a number of approaches to learning to engage this cohort of employees. Compliance with VAWDASV training phase 1 reported to CSH and Phase two is ongoing. Training matrix considers legislative organisational changes which informs corporate mandatory training programme. Extending the safeguarding training offer by supporting safeguarding level 1 training for those seeking licences. | Complete and now forms part of CSG work practice | | Apr-21 |
| LR23 | Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children | Amanda Phillips | <p>P4 - The Council should consider producing further performance measures (for example in respect of safeguarding training compliance) to enhance the annual safeguarding report and aid transparency</p> | Developed a set of data that is reviewed via CSG and directorate lead officers identified with responsibility for submitting this data. Data is analysed and reported quarterly and annually and informs member updates to scrutiny and cabinet. | Complete and now forms part of CSG work practice | | Apr-21 |
| LR24 | Follow-up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children | Amanda Phillips | <p>P5 - The Council should develop a central system for recording and monitoring volunteer information, including any training records and Disclosure and Barring Service checks for volunteers.</p> | This work is ongoing with the data informing compliance monitoring and reflected in reporting. | Complete and now forms part of CSG work practice | | Apr-21 |

National Regulatory Actions

| Reference | Report | Responsible Officer | Regulatory Recommendation | Update | Status | Target Date | Date of Last Update |
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| NR3 | How Local Government Manages Demand – Homelessness | Mike Ingram | That local authorities make better use of their website to help manage demand by: 1. Testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out in Appendix 5; 2. Increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information; making better use of online applications; and Linking more effectively to information from specialist providers' and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice. | 1. A new bespoke bilingual homelessness advice module has been created through the Northgate IT system used in the Housing Service. The information is also available in Welsh and went 'live' in July 20. Completed 2. Website updated – Completed 3. Homes4U applications now available on line (in addition to paper applications for those that require them). Completed | Complete | Jul-20 | Sep-20 |
| NR4 | Local Government Services to Rural Communities | Phil Chappell | R1 - Socio economic change, poor infrastructure and shifts in provision of key services and facilities has resulted in the residualisation of communities in rural Wales. We recommend that Welsh Government support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by: - refreshing rural grant programmes to create sustainable financial structures, with multi-year allocations; and - helping people and businesses make the most of digital connectivity through targeted and more effective business and adult education support programmes. | Rural socio economic programmes have been extended until 2021 (Creative Rural Communities) but these only form a small part of the services provided to rural communities and should be seen as laboratories for new ideas relating to the provision of basic service and business support. The Vale of Glamorgan Rural Local Development Strategy was refreshed in May 2020 to include areas that may need support as a result of covid. Town Centres, etc. Lobbying continues to take place with UK and Welsh Governments around the lack of socio economic support in the pots CAP measures. Focus is almost all environmental. | Amber | Jun-21 | Oct-20 |
| NR1 | Annual Improvement Report (National report recommendations for 2016/17) | Tom Bowring | To get the best from funding decisions, local authorities and third sector bodies need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place to support their work with the third sector. To assist local authorities and third sector bodies in developing their working practices, we recommend that local authority and third sector officers use it to: - self-evaluate current third sector engagement, management, performance and practice; - identify where improvements in joint working is required; and - jointly draft and implement an action plan to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation. | A follow up audit is being scoped with Audit Wales and GVS to develop the next steps in relation to this work, in light of the Vale Heroes learning. | Amber | Mar-18 | Oct-20 |
| NR2 | Annual Improvement Report (National report recommendations for 2016/17) | Tom Bowring | Poor performance management arrangements are weakening accountability and limiting effective scrutiny of third sector activity and performance. To strengthen oversight of the third sector, we recommend that elected members scrutinise the review checklist completed by officers, and regularly challenge performance by officers and the local authority in addressing gaps and weaknesses. | A follow up audit is being scoped with Audit Wales and GVS to develop the next steps in relation to this work, in light of the Vale Heroes learning. | Amber | Mar-18 | Oct-20 |
| NR5 | Local Government Services to Rural Communities | Tom Bowring | R2- The role of Public Service Boards is evolving but there are opportunities to articulate a clearer and more ambitious shared vision for rural Wales. We recommend that PSB public services partners respond more effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities by: - assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their different rural communities using the Welsh Governments Rural Proofing Tool and identify and agree the local and strategic actions needed to support community sustainability; and - ensuring the Local Well-Being Plan sets out a more optimistic and ambitious vision for 'place' with joint Page 24 of 36 - Vale of Glamorgan Council Date of report Title of review Recommendation priorities co-produced by partners and with citizens to address agreed challenges. | Any work with the PSB on this has been delayed due to Covid-19. Possibility to include work on this in the 2021/22 work programme. | Amber | Jun-21 | Oct-20 |

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| NR6 | Local Government Services to Rural Communities | Tom Bowring | R3- To help sustain rural communities, public services need to think differently in the future. We recommend councils provide a more effective response to the challenges faced by rural communities by: - ensuring service commissioners have cost data and qualitative information on the full range of service options available; and - using citizens' views on the availability, affordability, accessibility, adequacy and acceptability of council services to shape the delivery and integration of services. | work on this has been delayed due to Covid-19. Possibility to include work on this in the 2021/22 Insight work programme, with a dedicated workshop. | Amber | Jun-21 | Oct-20 |
| NR7 | Local Government Services to Rural Communities | Tom Bowring | R4- To help sustain rural communities, public services need to act differently in the future. We recommend councils do more to develop community resilience and self-help by: - working with relevant bodies such as the Wales Cooperative Centre to support social enterprise and more collaborative business models; - providing tailored community outreach for those who face multiple barriers to accessing public services and work; - enhancing and recognising the role of town and community councils by capitalising on their local knowledge and supporting them to do more; -encouraging a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by establishing pan-public service community hubs, networks of expertise, and clusters of advice and prevention services; - enabling local action by supporting community asset transfer identifying which assets are suitable to transfer, and having the right systems in place to make things happen; and - improving community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering. | work on this has been delayed due to Covid-19. Possibility to include work on this in the 2021/22 Insight work programme, with a dedicated workshop. | Amber | Jun-21 | Oct-20 |
| NR8 | Local Government Services to Rural Communities | Tom Bowring | R1 - Local authorities need to do more to make CATs (Community Asset Transfers) simpler and more appealing, help build the capacity of community and town councils, give them more guidance in raising finance, and look to support other community development models such as social enterprises that support social value and citizen involvement. In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs. | work on this has been delayed due to Covid-19. Possibility to include work on this in the 2021/22 Insight work programme, with a dedicated workshop. | Amber | Jun-21 | Oct-20 |
| NR9 | Local Government Services to Rural Communities | Tom Bowring | R2 - Local authorities have significant scope to provide better and more visible help and support before, during, and after the community asset transfer process. We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities: - identify community assets transfer's role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services; - work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs; - identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer; - ensure their CAT policy adequately covers aftercare, long term support, post transfer support, signposting access to finance, and sharing the learning about works well; and - support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering. | work on this has been delayed due to Covid-19. Possibility to include work on this in the 2021/22 Insight work programme, with a dedicated workshop. | Amber | Jun-21 | Oct-20 |

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| NR14 | The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales | Victoria Robinson/ Marcus Goldsworthy | R1 - To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend local planning authorities: - test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose. - Use 'Place Plans' as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making. - improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings. | The LPA has been working with T&CC to develop a revised Charter to improve engagement. Annual POSW survey invites feedback from T&CC representatives. Engagement and involvement practices on LDP prep will be revisited at Plan Review. The Council intends to provide training workshop to T&CC on Place Plans. The Council will consider adopting any Place Plans that accord with the LDP and relevant guidance as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It would not be appropriate to rotate meetings to alternative venues as this would impede the Councils ability to webcast meetings and could lead to public viewing and attendance issues. The Council already hold meetings at 4pm which is considered to be an appropriate time, web cast meetings and allow public speaking. | Complete but ongoing | 2020-21 | NA |
| NR15 | The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales | Victoria Robinson/ Marcus Goldsworthy | R2 - Local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities: - Review their building control fee regimes to ensure levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding - improve capacity by working regionally to integrate services to address specialism gaps, develop joint supplementary planning guidance and develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities. | The Councils Building Control fees are kept under review to ensure that the service is as close to self-funding as possible and this has gone on for many years. The Council already work regionally to improve capacity / resilience e.g. South Wales Minerals Service (Carmarthenshire), South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) work together on key projects, including plans for shared South Wales Viability Model, shared procurement of LDP database, Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for Cardiff Capital Region. | complete but ongoing | 2020-21 | NA |
| NR16 | The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales | Victoria Robinson/ Marcus Goldsworthy | "R4 - that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by: - reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority. - revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned. - enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings. " | The Councils scheme of delegation already means over 90 % of applications are determined under delegated powers and Committee agendas are focused on key major applications or locally contentious schemes called in by Members. The Council has a generally low rate of overturns of officer recommendations to planning committee (0-5%) and reports are structure clearly and presented clearly at Committee. The Chair of Planning Committee ensures the code of conduct is followed and is supported by Legal Services, Democratic Services and Chief Planning Officers. | Complete | Complete | NA |
| NR17 | The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales | Victoria Robinson/ Marcus Goldsworthy | "R5 - The report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. We recommend the local planning authorities: - Set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving well-being. - provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate well-being training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities. - set appropriate measures for their admission of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on well-being. - annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities impact on well-being." | The LPA's vision is set out in the LDP and demonstrates how it contributes to improving well-being. Officers undertake regular planning committee training and plan to undertake further well-being training in 2020-21. The Council has clear performance indicators which are set out in the Regeneration and Planning Service Plan and the Development Management Team Plan. The LPA publishes its Annual Performance Report regarding Development Management performance and Annual Monitoring Report for the LDP, each October demonstrating its performance against key indicators including those relating to well-being. | Ongoing annually | Annually (October) | NA |