

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

(MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT
& MICROSOFT TEAMS)

Members Present: **12 July 2024**

Chairperson: Councillor J.Jenkins

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Owen

Councillors: S.Grimshaw, O.S.Davies, R.Mizen,
W.Carpenter, A.J.Richards, C.Clement-Williams
and J.Henton

Officers In Attendance: H.Jones, R.Livingstone, C.Furlow-Harris,
L.McAndrew, K.Usher and N.Jones

Representing Audit Wales: M.Gibson, M.Phoenix, A.Lewis and C.Bates

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2024/25**

RESOLVED:

- That Lay Member, Joanna Jenkins, be appointed Chairperson of the Committee for the 2024/25 Civic Year
- That Lay Member, Mark Owen, be appointed Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the 2024/25 Civic Year

2. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT/S**

The Chairperson welcomed all to the meeting.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 21st of March, 2024, were approved as a true and accurate account.

4. **AUDIT WALES - USE OF PERFORMANCE INFORMATION:
SERVICE USER PERSPECTIVE AND OUTCOMES - NEATH PORT
TALBOT COUNCIL**

Officers from Audit Wales provided an overview to the circulated report.

Audit Wales Officers informed the committee that the audit was undertaken in 22 Councils in Wales as well as Neath Port Talbot, also they intend to publish a national summary of the work in the late summer.

A draft was shared with council officers and the report was published in January, 2024.

Audit Wales Officers mentioned the performance information that is provided in the quarterly reports is not reflected in the report and feel that it is a missed opportunity to give senior leaders information which would help them understand the views of service users. Officers recommended that the council should ensure that the information that is provided to senior leaders enable them to understand the service user perspective on a broader range services and policies, the council should ensure this information is drawn from the diversity of service users.

Audit Wales Officers highlighted that performance information that the council provides to senior leaders focuses on activities and outputs, as opposed to evaluating their impact. In the Corporate Plan Annual Report (2021-2022) the council provides some case studies examples to illustrate the outcomes that is achieved under each of the three wellbeing objectives. The council quarterly performance reports describe activities and outputs, as opposed to as assessment for progress against the outcomes that the council is seeking to achieve. Officers recommended that the Council should strengthen the information it provides to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.

Audit Wales Officers highlighted that the council has limited arrangements to ensure the information it provides to the senior leaders on the service users perspective and outcomes is accurate. Officers recommended that the council needs to assure itself that it has robust arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of the information it provides to senior leaders, relating to the service user perspective and outcomes.

NPT Officers explained to the committee that they acknowledge that there is work for them to do to bring together the information corporately and ensure that information is reported to senior leaders. Officers stated the response was submitted towards the end of last year. Officers highlighted that in the papers, there is an organisational response form which the recommendations have been responded to. Officers also added that the Corporate Plan will be going to Cabinet the end of July for approval and Council for adoption. Officers also stated that the new model of scrutiny is now embedded.

Members asked when there will be another update. Officers stated they will give an update at the next meeting. Members asked in relation to the data quality, has management considered the impact of models and spreadsheet application in the reporting process. Officers mentioned they had a corporate performance system which they no longer have but are looking at a system that will help them in the future. An update will be brought to the next meeting, also a digital services officer has been appointed and taken the lead on data. An invite will be sent to the new officer to attend a future committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5. **AUDIT WALES - ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2023**

Officers from Audit Wales provided an overview to the circulated report.

Officers updated the Committee that the summary will be presented to Council on the 6th September, 2024.

Officers mentioned that the Corporate Performance Management Framework update will be brought back to the next meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. **AUDIT WALES - PROGRAMME & TIMETABLE - QUARTER 4 UPDATE TO 31ST MARCH 2024**

Officers from Audit Wales provided an overview to the circulated report.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

7. **AUDIT WALES - 2024 AUDIT PLAN NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL**

Officers from Audit Wales provided an overview to the circulated report.

Officers explained that in relation to performance, they have a standard piece of work that they do every year in every council which is called Our Assurance in Risk Assessment Work. Each year, Officers meet with the Councils Corporate Management Team (January/February), discuss the assurances with risk and find out what areas they can be supported, Officers take the Councils views and put all the information into an Audit Plan. Officers explained there will be a review on Cyber Security arrangements and there is a meeting scheduled for September 2024.

Officers informed the committee they have a Thematic (Service User Information) on the Performance Audit Work Programme, they are two pieces of work ongoing, one in relation to financial sustainability and the other on commissioning. Officers updated the committee that The Work Force Pressures in local government will be deferred to the 2025/26 work programme as opposed to the 24/25 programme. Members asked if they could have a list of the audits that had been undertaken in relation to cyber security. Officers will get the information to the committee.

Decision: That the report be noted.

8. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023-2024**

Officers provided an overview to the circulated report.

Officers updated members that this report will be going to Cabinet 24th July, 2024.

Decision: That the report be noted.

9. **REGISTER OF REGULATORS REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Officers provided an overview to the circulated report.

Officers and members agreed that a report would be brought back to the next meeting.

Decision: That the report be noted.

10. **GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

Officers provided an overview to the circulated report.

Officers gave apologies in relation to the formatting of the covering report and will be corrected the next time it comes to committee.

Decision: That the report be noted.

11. **2023/24 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

Officers provided an overview to the circulated report.

Officers updated the committee that there will be a new Head of Internal Audit appointed from September 2024.

Decision: That the report be noted.

12. **CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24**

Officers provided an overview to the circulated report.

Decision: That the report be noted.

13. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

In relation to Social Services, members asked for information on Performance Indicators to service users.

Officers mentioned they can attend Social Services Scrutiny Committee to get this information but will also check if this information can go to Governance and Audit Committee.

Members asked is there any work being undertaken in relation to poverty outcomes.

Officers mentioned that they do have a poverty prevention working group, Officers suggested that members have a look at minutes/reports from that group. Officers will ask the chair of the group to speak to members with more information.

Members asked if they could bring an update to the next Committee in relation to Risk Registers.

Officers mentioned Corporate Directors Group are having a workshop the end of August, Officers will bring an update to the next meeting with the outcomes.

Decision: That the forward work programme 2024/ 2025 be noted.

CHAIRPERSON