

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

12TH JULY 2024

JOINT REPORT OF

DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY & CORPORATE SERVICES – N DANIEL

&

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE – H JONES

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Audit Wales – Annual Audit Summary 2023

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2023 to Governance and Audit Committee.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Audit Summary attached at Appendix 1, sets out the work completed by Audit Wales since the last Annual Audit Summary was issued March 2023. This Summary will be presented to Council on 6th September 2024.
3. **Summary of work undertaken by Audit Wales:**
 - a. **Audit of Neath Port Talbot's 2022-2023 Accounts** – Every year the Auditor General audits the council's financial statements to make sure that public money is being properly accounted for. On 14th November 2023, the Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on

the Council's financial statements for 2022-2023, following a small number of changes which were made as a result of Audit Wales' work.

- b. **Assurance and Risk Assessment Review** – Audit Wales have reviewed the arrangements put in place by the council to secure value for money in the use of its own resources.

The work included the council's arrangements in relation to the setting of well-being objectives and the use of performance information. Both pieces of work require further work to develop monitoring arrangements and use of service user perspectives to better inform decision making at a senior leader level.

- c. **Digital Strategy** – Audit Wales reported on the strategic approach to digital, and specifically the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle; and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the council's resources. This report and the organisational response form was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 26th January 2024.

- d. **Review of Scrutiny Arrangements** – Audit Wales reported on the effectiveness of the council's scrutiny arrangements. They found that the council is missing opportunities for scrutiny to maximise its impact, influence and effectiveness in holding cabinet to account, shaping council policies and reviewing performance. This report and the organisational response form was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 26th January 2024.

- e. **Springing Forward – Strategic Management of Assets** – The report focused on the council's arrangements for managing its assets, namely office accommodation and buildings from which the Council delivers services to its residents. Audit Wales looked at how the council strategically plans the use of its assets, how it monitors the use of its assets and how it reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements. The report will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee in the autumn.

- f. **Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management – Audit Wales** reported on the council's strategic approach to its workforce and if this was strengthening its ability to transform adapt and maintain the delivery of its services in the short and longer term. This report and the organisational response form was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 21st March 2024.

4. **Other Inspectorates** - Audit Wales also consider the reports of Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Estyn as well as any subsequent actions taken by the Council in response. No reports have been issued relating to Neath Port Talbot Council since the last Annual Audit Summary in March 2023.
5. **On-going Work** - The Annual Audit Summary also sets out ongoing work, which includes:
 - Assurance and risk assessment work:
 - Thematic review – financial sustainability
 - Thematic review – commissioning arrangements
 - Unscheduled care review

Financial Appraisal

6. The programme of local audit and improvement assessment work undertaken by the Audit Wales during the period has been delivered within the budget allocated for audit and inspection work.

Integrated Impact Assessment

7. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impact

8. No implications.

Workforce Impact

9. There are no workforce impacts.

Legal Impact

10. The Auditor General is required to conduct local government value for money studies and assess compliance with the remaining requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Risk Management

11. The findings of Audit Wales are a key input into the council's corporate governance arrangements and the areas identified for improvement work inform the Annual Governance Statement, Self-Assessment and the associated improvement action plans.

Consultation

12. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

13. For Governance and Audit Committee to note the content of the Annual Audit Summary 2023.

Appendices

14. Appendix 1 – Audit Wales – Annual Audit Summary 2023

List of Background Papers

15. None

Officer Contact

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