

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

22nd OCTOBER 2024

Report of the Director of Strategy & Corporate Services

Noelwyn Daniel

Matter for Information

Wards Affected – All wards

Register of Regulators Reports & Recommendations.

Purpose of the Report

To provide the Governance & Audit Committee with an updated Register of Regulators Reports and Recommendations.

Background

This report presents a summary of the reports issued by external review bodies since July 2024 and an updated Register of Regulators Reports (Appendix 1).

National Reports

1. Council's use of performance information: service user perspective

The all Wales review undertaken by Audit Wales looked at whether the performance information provided to senior leaders helps them to understand the perspective of service users and the outcomes of the Council's activities so that they can manage their performance effectively. By senior leaders, we mean senior officers and senior members. This review was undertaken across at all 22 councils.

This report provides an overview of the work, findings and implications for councils and Welsh Government.

The local report for Neath Port Talbot and recommendations were presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 12th July 2024 along with the council's response.

2. Digital by design? Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales

Audit Wales undertook a digital strategy review during 2022/2023 which looked at council's strategic approaches to digital, undertaking individual reviews at each of the 22 councils across Wales. The focus was on the extent to which digital strategies had been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle; and would help to secure value for money in the use of councils' resources.

This report provides an overview of the work and what councils can do improve. Neath Port Talbot Council has been referenced within the report as an example of good practice in relation to the council's integrated digital strategy, investment made in digital capacity and capability and understanding of the current digital position.

The local report for Neath Port Talbot and the recommendation was presented to Governance and Audit Committee in October 2023.

3. Affordable Housing

The report considers spending and performance against Welsh Government's social homes target and the underpinning governance and management arrangements.

The Welsh Government has set a target of building 20,000 new low carbon social homes by March 2026. The target builds on a previous commitment to deliver 20,000 affordable homes in the previous Senedd term. The Welsh Government exceeded that target, but a different definition makes the current target more challenging.

There are 7 recommendations contained within the report for Welsh Government. This report has been circulated to officers responsible for housing.

4. Active Travel

The report focuses on national level arrangements led and/or managed by on the Welsh Government's and Transport to Wales' approach to Active Travel. Audit Wales has not examined interventions by individual local authorities, although they recognise their important front-line role and reflect certain evidence about issues at a local level.

Consideration has been taken to understand whether the Welsh Government is well placed to lead a step change in active travel rates, as part of its wider approach to modal shift. Findings demonstrated that despite increased spending through its Active Travel Fund and a new, wide-ranging, delivery plan, the Welsh Government remains a long way from achieving the step change in active travel intended through the Act.

There are 7 recommendations contained within the report for Welsh Government. This report has been circulated to both Director of Social Services, Health and Housing and Head of Housing and Communities,

Local Reports

1. Neath Port Talbot Council – Financial Sustainability

During the early part of this financial year Audit Wales reviewed the council's strategic approach to support its financial sustainability, our understanding of the current financial position, and arrangements for reporting and oversight of financial sustainability. Audit Wales note that this audit was limited to a consideration of the arrangements that the council has put in place to support its financial sustainability, and was not a review of the council's wider financial management, or of the individual financial decisions that the council has made or intends to make.

Overall, Audit Wales found that the council has arrangements in place to support its financial sustainability in the short term but lacks a documented longer-term financial strategy to support more transformative change and inform Members' future spending decisions.

As the council does not have a financial strategy to support its financial sustainability over the longer-term the following recommendation was made:

R1 - The council should develop and publish a clear and robust financial strategy showing how it intends to close the identified budget gap over the medium and longer-term. This would help support Members' and other stakeholders understanding in relation to the decisions that will be required to ensure the future financial sustainability of the council.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts in respect of this item.

Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement for an integrated impact assessment in respect of this item.

Valleys Communities Impacts

There are no impacts in respect of this item.

Workforce impacts

There are no workforce impacts in respect of this item.

Legal Impacts

There are no legal impacts in respect of this item.

Risk Management

There are no risk management issues in respect of this item.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- The Governance & Audit Committee note the reports issued by the Council's external review bodies since July 2024 and the updated Register of Regulators Reports and Recommendations.

Appendix

- Appendix 1 – Register of Regulators Reports

Background Papers

None

Officer Contact

For further information on this report item, please contact:

Noelwyn Daniel, Director of Strategy & Corporate Services

Email: n.daniel@npt.gov.uk

Mrs Caryn Furlow-Harris, Strategic Manager – Policy & Executive Support

E-mail: c.furlow@npt.gov.uk

Mrs Louise McAndrew, Corporate Strategic Planning & Governance Officer

E-mail: l.mcandrew@npt.gov.uk