

Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – Neath Port Talbot Council

Quarterly Update: 30 September 2024

Annual Audit Summary

Description	Timetable	Status
A report summarising completed audit work since the last Annual Audit Summary, which was issued in March 2023.	Published March 2024	Complete. Neath Port Talbot Annual Audit Summary 2023

Financial Audit work

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
Audit of the Council's 2023-24 financial statements	To provide an opinion on the 'truth and fairness' of the Council's financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.	Audit Opinion by 30 November 2024.	Audit work substantially complete.

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>Certification of Grant returns for financial year 2022- 23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit Subsidy • Non-Domestic Rates • Teachers’ Pension Contributions • Social Care Workforce Development Plan 	<p>Certification that nothing has come to our attention to indicate that the return is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not fairly stated • Is not in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions 	<p>In line with the deadlines for each individual grant and return.</p>	<p>Partly complete.</p> <p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit Subsidy <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Domestic Rates • Teachers’ Pension Contributions • Social Care Workforce Development Plan

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>Certification of Grant returns for financial year 2023- 24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit Subsidy • Non-Domestic Rates • Teachers’ Pension Contributions • Social Care Workforce Development Plan 	<p>Certification that nothing has come to our attention to indicate that the return is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not fairly stated • Is not in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions 	<p>In line with the deadlines for each individual grant and return.</p>	<p>Ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Domestic Rates • Teachers’ Pension Contributions <p>Not yet started:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit Subsidy • Social Care Workforce Development Plan

Performance Audit work

2022-23 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>Assurance and Risk Assessment</p>	<p>Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Complete</p>

2022-23 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial position • Use of performance information – with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes • Setting of well-being objectives 	<p>Ongoing monitoring of financial position</p> <p><u>Report issued to the Council January 2023.</u></p> <p><u>Report issued to the Council August 2023</u></p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>
<p>Thematic Review – Unscheduled Care</p>	<p>A cross-sector review focusing on the flow of patients out of hospital. This review will consider how the Council is working with its partners to address the risks associated with the provision of social care to support hospital discharge, as well as prevent hospital admission. The work will also consider what steps are being taken to provide medium to longer-term solutions.</p>	<p>August 2022 – October 2023</p>	<p>Reporting from October 2024 onward.</p>

2022-23 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Thematic review – Digital	A review of councils’ strategic approach to digital, and 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 councils’ resources.	<u>Report issued to Council October 2023</u>	Complete
Scrutiny Review	A review to seek assurance on the effectiveness of the Council’s scrutiny arrangements.	<u>Report issued to Council October 2023</u>	Complete

2023-24 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	Ongoing	Ongoing
Thematic review – commissioning	A review focusing on how councils’ arrangements for commissioning, apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle.	March 2024– March 2025	Fieldwork stage
Thematic review – Financial Sustainability	A review of councils’ financial sustainability including a focus on the actions, plans and arrangements to bridge funding gaps and address financial pressures over the medium term.	<u>Report issued to Council September 2024</u>	Complete National Summary Report indicative publication date: November 2024

2024-25 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	Ongoing	Ongoing
Review of Cyber Security Arrangements	A project to review the Council's cyber security arrangements.	Autumn/Winter 2024	Fieldwork stage
Review of risk management arrangements	A project to review the Council's risk management arrangements.	Jan – May 2025	Scoping

Local government national studies planned/in progress

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Neath Port Talbot Council
<p>Temporary Accommodation</p>	<p>Examining the costs, demand and how services are working together to progress the response to temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Report publication planned for early 2025</p>	<p>Fieldwork underway</p>	<p>Fieldwork interviews being undertaken at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conwy County Council • Pembrokeshire County Council • Cardiff City Council • Newport City Council • Wrexham County Borough Council <p>Surveys will also be issued to Heads of Housing and Section 151 Officers at each principal council.</p>

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Neath Port Talbot Council
Capital Planning in Local Government	Examining whether capital investment in the asset base in local government is able to keep pace with demand	tbc	Scoping	tbc
Financial constraints / discretionary local government services	Examining the potential impacts and councils' decision making processes in the context of the sustainable development principle.	tbc	Not started	tbc

Estyn

We inspected Caerphilly and Ceredigion local government education services (LGES) during the summer term. The reports were published in early September. We identified strong practice in both local authorities.

During the autumn term we will be inspecting Newport LGES. We have also scheduled a standalone inspection of the local authority's youth work a few weeks prior to the LGES inspection. Although these are two separate pieces of work, the findings of the youth inspection will inform the LGES inspection. We piloted this arrangement in the Vale of Glamorgan last spring, and our evaluation of this arrangement indicates that stream-lining the inspection process works well and adds value to our work overall.

Our link inspectors are continuing to work with Torfaen as part of our follow-up process for an authority causing significant concern. We will be carrying out a monitoring visit in Torfaen in October to consider their progress against the recommendations from their core inspection.

We will also carry out an enhanced link visit to Denbighshire in October, with the focus being on specific aspects of attendance and additional learning needs. The outcome letter from this visit will be published on our website.

We will be carrying out field work in a sample of local authorities to support two thematic reports. We will be visiting 10 LAs to learn about their approaches to promoting positive behaviour in secondary schools; and another five LAs to evaluate their support for mathematics and numeracy AOLE in their schools.

In early September, we trained a new cohort of peer inspectors who will be deployed on our inspection teams as well as running an update session for our current peer inspectors.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>Thematic reviews</p> <p>Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT)</p>	<p>Working jointly with HIW we completed an assurance check inspection in Rhondda Cynon Taff focusing on Community Learning Disability Teams (CLDT). RCT CLDT Joint inspection</p> <p>A second single agency assurance check inspection in Blaenau Gwent</p> <p>We will continue an annual programme of joint work focusing on CLDT and Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)</p>	<p>2024-25</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>Published April 2024</p> <p>Published</p>
<p>Joint Inspection Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA)</p>	<p>Overview report for Joint Inspections of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) 2019 – 2024 Overview report for Joint Inspections of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) 2019 – 2024 Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (hiw.org.uk).</p> <p>The findings from Bridgend County Borough Council - Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Bridgend 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</p>	<p>September 2024</p> <p>June 2024</p>	<p>Published</p> <p>Published</p>

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
	<p data-bbox="389 640 975 712"><u>Our findings from the Cardiff County Council Cardiff Joint Inspection Report</u></p> <p data-bbox="389 790 943 976"><u>The findings from Denbighshire County Council Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Denbighshire 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</u></p> <p data-bbox="389 1055 975 1205"><u>The findings from Powys County Council - Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Powys 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</u></p>	<p data-bbox="1062 640 1142 712">7 May 2024</p> <p data-bbox="1042 790 1163 819">Feb 2024</p> <p data-bbox="1046 1055 1158 1126">October 2023</p>	<p data-bbox="1238 640 1350 712">Published</p> <p data-bbox="1238 790 1350 862">Published</p> <p data-bbox="1238 1055 1350 1126">Published</p>
<p data-bbox="142 1283 317 1429">Performance review of Local Authorities</p>	<p data-bbox="389 1283 967 1514"><u>We continue to inspect Local Authorities in line with our updated Code of Practice for our local authority inspection activity Care Inspectorate Wales</u> <u>How we inspect local authority services and CAFCASS Cymru</u></p> <p data-bbox="389 1592 906 1664"><u>We are currently reviewing our Code of Practice and will be publishing shortly.</u></p> <p data-bbox="389 1821 967 2007"><u>Inspection of Flintshire County Council children and adult services in February 2024 - Inspection report for Flintshire County Council's adults and children's services published Care Inspectorate Wales</u></p>	<p data-bbox="1046 1592 1158 1664">October 2024</p> <p data-bbox="1058 1821 1147 1892">22 Feb 2024</p>	<p data-bbox="1238 1592 1350 1742">Due to be published</p> <p data-bbox="1238 1821 1350 1892">Published</p>

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
	<p>We published Monmouthshire County Council children's services Inspection report PEI Care Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>We published Pembrokeshire - Improvement check inspection Improvement-check Pembrokeshire-county-council-adult services</p> <p>We published Swansea adult service PEI 240711-swanea-pei-report-en.pdf (careinspectorate.wales)</p>	<p>2 May 2024</p> <p>13 June 2024</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>Published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p>
<p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation – Youth Offending Inspection</p>	<p>We supported the delivery of HMIP's Youth Offending Services Inspection in Denbighshire and Conwy. A joint inspection of youth justice services in Conwy & Denbighshire (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)</p>	<p>8 May 2024</p>	<p>Published</p>

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs published since September 2023

Report title	Publication date and link to report
Active travel (report and data tool)	September 2024
Governance of Fire and Rescue Authorities	September 2024
Affordable housing	September 2024
NHS finances – and data tool update to 31 March 2024	August 2024
Digital by design? - Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales	August 2024
Councils use of performance information: service user perspective and outcomes - A summary of findings from our review at Welsh councils	July 2024
The Welsh Government's support for TVR Automotive Ltd	July 2024
A465 Section 2 – update	June 2024
Community Pharmacy data matching pilot	May 2024
Governance of National Park Authorities	April 2024
Supporting Ukrainians in Wales	March 2024

Report title	Publication date and link to report
From firefighting to future-proofing – the challenge for Welsh public services	February 2024
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board – board effectiveness follow up	February 2024
Local Government Financial Sustainability Data tool update uses data from the draft 2022-23 accounts	January 2024
Planning for sustainable development – Brownfield regeneration	January 2024
Corporate Joint Committees – commentary on their progress	November 2023
Governance arrangements relating to an employment dispute at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales	November 2023
Failures in financial management and governance and losses incurred – Harlech Community Council	November 2023
Putting out the false alarms: Fire and Rescue Authorities' responses to Unwanted Fire Signals	October 2023
Covering teachers' absence – follow-up (letter to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee)	October 2023

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs (work in progress / planned)^{1, 2}

Title	Indicative publication date
National Fraud Initiative – bi-ennial report	October 2024
Cancer services	November 2024
Local Government Financial Sustainability Data tool update uses data from the draft 2023-24 accounts	November 2024
Findings from GP registration data matching pilot	November / December 2024
Unscheduled care (national messages – patient flow in hospital and delayed discharge)	November / December 2024
Financial management and governance in town and community councils	November / December 2024
NHS workforce planning (national messages)	November / December 2024

¹ We will continue to keep our plans under constant review, taking account of the evolving external environment, our audit priorities, the context of our own resourcing and the capacity of audited bodies to engage with us. Follow up work could also lead to other outputs, as may other local audit work where we consider there is merit in a national summary output of some kind.

² Our [Annual Plan 2024-25](#) also lists work in progress, some of which has since been published, or work planned to start during 2024-25. [Our work programme for 2023-2026](#) –also provides some additional detail about certain topics and will continue to inform our work programme planning for 2025-26.

Title	Indicative publication date
Addressing biodiversity decline (pan-public sector and at Natural Resources Wales)	Pan-public sector review – November / December 2024 NRW to be confirmed (scoping)
Welsh Government capital and infrastructure investment	December 2024 / January 2025
Challenges for the cultural sector	By end of 2024 (for most local reporting – any national messaging in early 2025)
New Velindre Cancer Centre	Early 2025
Further and higher education funding and oversight – Commission for Tertiary Education and Research	By March 2025 (for initial phase of work on setting of well-being objectives)
Findings from sustainable development examinations (statutory report under the WFG Act)	By early May 2025
The senior public service	Scoping underway, delivery planned early summer
Rebalancing care and support	To be confirmed (scoping)
Tackling NHS waiting lists (local audit work at health boards)	To be confirmed (local work at each Health Board started in May 2024)

Title	Indicative publication date
Access to education for children with Additional Learning Needs	To be confirmed (scoping)
Support for business	To be confirmed (starting in 2024-25)
Support for bus and rail services	To be confirmed (starting in 2024-25)
Progress with investment in school and college buildings through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme	To be confirmed (starting in 2024-25)
NHS bodies' approaches to digital transformation (local audit work)	To be confirmed (local audit work rolling out from October 2024)
NHS bodies' cost savings arrangements	To be confirmed (local audit reporting nearing completion)

Good Practice Exchange events and resources

Title	Link to resource
<p>Audit Committees: Effective practices and a positive impact</p> <p>Good governance arrangements are a critical part of how public service organisations function effectively and deliver value for money services for the citizens and communities of Wales. Audit Committees are one of the foundation stones that support good governance. With significant current and future pressures on public sector finances, there is an increasing need for effective practices and a positive impact. Audit Committees play a vital role in this. This event provides an opportunity to share experiences, learn, and network with peers across the public sector in Wales.</p>	<p>9th October 2024, 10:30 – 15:30 Conwy Business Centre</p> <p>The resources from our event in Cardiff on 22 May are available here.</p>
<p>GPX Blog: 100 Stories Project</p>	<p>https://www.audit.wales/blog/gpx/2024/7/11/good-practice-exchange-100-stories-project</p>
<p>GPX Blog: A multiagency approach to falls</p>	<p>https://www.audit.wales/blog/gpx/2024/8/19/good-practice-exchange-multi-agency-approach-falls</p>
<p>GPX Blog: The councillors and care research project</p>	<p>https://www.audit.wales/blog/gpx/2024/9/11/good-practice-exchange-councillors-and-care-research-project</p>