

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER

MR CHRIS OWEN

14th JANUARY 2025

Matter for Information

Wards Affected – All wards

Report Title - Audit Wales – Digital by design? Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales – August 2024

Purpose of the Report

During 2022/2023 Audit Wales undertook a digital strategy review looking at councils' strategic approaches to digital, undertaking individual reviews at each of the 22 principal councils across Wales.

Audit Wales focused on the extent to which council's 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.

The focus of the review was on councils' 'strategic approaches' to digital. The strategic approach means that there is a clear vision, which is commonly understood within the council. The approach is a whole-organisation one that recognises there are opportunities and implications across services and functions. Lastly, key components of transformation are focused on improving outcomes and value for money.

Following the council's Audit Wales thematic review of the NPT Digital Data and Technology Strategy in 2023, which was the basis for this Digital by Design report, Officers provided an update to Governance and Audit committee on the 26 January 2024.

The key findings contained within the Neath Port Talbot review were as follows:

“We found that the Council’s strategic approach to digital is informed by a good understanding of its digital provision and the Council drew on a range of data from external sources.

The Council’s strategic approach to digital is well aligned with its other key plans and strategies and those of its partners and it has strong arrangements to communicate its strategic digital approach.

The Council has committed resources to support delivery of its digital strategy but does not yet know its long-term cost implications.

The Council is developing comprehensive arrangements to assess and monitor the impact of its digital approach, however the absence of a clear timeframe to deliver its digital strategy will make it difficult for the Council to assess progress and value for money.

The Council reviewed its previous digital strategy, learnt from this and shares its learning.”

The report was generally very positive and contained a single recommendation for consideration as follows:

If the Council continues with the approach of not stating a timeframe to deliver its Digital, Data and Technology strategy, it should put in place arrangements to:

- *clearly articulate its short, medium and long term outcomes and intended benefits;*
- *cost its short, medium and long term ambitions and match them with available resources; and*
- *assess if it is delivering the strategy and its intended outcomes at the intended pace.*

As officers were still in the process of developing the new delivery plan to underpin the new DDaT Strategy which had just been adopted at the point of the Audit, they were not able to include this in their review. It should be noted that one of the key findings confirms that the Council is developing comprehensive arrangements to assess and monitor the impact of its digital approach.

Officers are confident that there are robust programme delivery arrangements established and are meeting all the areas highlighted in the recommendation, providing further assurance to Cabinet as part of the Annual Reporting Cycle for the Digital Data and Technology Strategy on the 24 July 2024.

The Digital by Design report identified some common areas across the 22 councils and sets out 5 considerations detailing where councils can improve, along with what councils can do to improve.

It should be noted that Neath Port Talbot Council is identified in practice examples for 3 of the 5 considerations.

The Neath Port Talbot Digital Data and Technology Strategy will continue to evolve to ensure it is meeting our user needs. Officers will ensure that the findings from the Digital by Design report are considered as part of this ongoing review.

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 Members note the Audit Wales Report - Digital by design? Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales.

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Audit Wales – Digital by design? Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales

Background Papers

[Audit Wales – Digital Strategy Review - Neath Port Talbot \(October 2023\)](#)

Officer Contact

For further information on this report item, please contact:

Chris Owen, Chief Digital Officer

E-mail: c.m.owen@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 – Policy & Executive Support

Email: l.mcandrew@npt.gov.uk