



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Audit Committee Update – Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

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Audit committee update

About this document

- 1 This document provides the Audit Committee of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (the Council) with an update on current and planned Wales Audit Office work. It covers financial and performance audit work together with information on the Auditor General's programme of local government related studies.

Audit plan

- 2 The dates we presented our audit plans for 2017 and 2018 are set out in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: audit plan.

Area of work	Status
Audit Plan 2017	Issued to Council April 2017 Presented to Audit Committee 28 June 2017
Audit Plan 2018	Presented to Audit Committee 5 April 2018

Financial audit update

- 3 Our financial audit work included in our 2017 audit plan is complete. Exhibit 2 provides members of the Audit Committee with a brief overview of progress against the planned financial audit key outputs and milestones set out in our 2018 audit plan.

Exhibit 2: financial audit update

Planned output	Scope	Status
Financial Statements 2017-18	Audit of the Council's 2017-18 financial statements.	Opinion issued 30 July 2018.
Whole of Government Accounts 2017-18	Audit of the Councils 2017-18 whole of government accounts	Audit not required – below threshold. Return submitted September 2018.
Margam Crematorium Joint Committee Annual Return 2017-18	Audit of the Committees 2017-18 Annual Return	Opinion issued 30 July 2018
Welsh Church Act Trust Fund 2017-18	Independent examination of the Trust Fund 2017-18 financial statements	Opinion issued 12 October 2018
Certification of Grants 2017-18	Certification of grants and returns 2017-18	Work on the Councils 2017-18 grant claims is in progress. Completion planned for December 2018
Annual Audit Letter	Letter summarising our 2017-18 audit work.	Issued December 2018.

Performance audit update

- 4 Exhibit 3 summarises the progress of the performance audit work set out in the 2017 audit plan which is still in progress and provides a brief overview of progress against the planned performance outputs and milestones set out in our 2018 audit plan.

Exhibit 3: performance audit update

Topic	Scope	Status	Timescale
Performance audit work - 2017 audit plan			
Service User Perspective Review	This project will test the service-user interface at all authorities. The review will evaluate what it feels like (as a member of the public) to deal with council services, involving a selection of services and scenarios. In Neath Port Talbot CBC we will be looking at the Council's Digital Strategy and specifically at the Council's approach to 'channel shift' (moving services online)	Phase one: Fieldwork on the Council's approach to channel-shifting services on-line (complete). Phase two: Service user survey currently running on-line.	Survey open November 2018-January 2019 (timeline may be extended depending on number of responses received). Reporting by end March 2019
Performance audit work - 2018 audit plan			
Improvement audit and assessment work including improvement planning and reporting audit	Audit of discharge of duty to publish an improvement plan, and to publish an assessment of performance.	Complete – certificates issued.	Improvement Plan Certificate issued May 2018. Assessment of Performance Certificate issued November 2018.

Topic	Scope	Status	Timescale
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.	Work planned to be undertaken throughout the audit year to inform the 2019-2020 audit programme.	No written output. Outcomes and plans for next year's audit plan to be discussed with Corporate Directors Group January 2019
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations	Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to meet one or more of its wellbeing objectives. The 'step' that is being reviewed is 'We will work with partners to ensure that we target support to those children at risk of adverse childhood experience in the first 1,000 days of their lives'.	Work underway. First fieldwork workshop held with the Council November 2018. Second workshop to take place January/February 2019 (date to be confirmed).	Output will be a presentation to Council officers. Work will be completed by March 2019.
Thematic Review - Environmental Health	Review of the arrangements the Council has put in place to deliver environmental health services, building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.	Dates to be agreed with the Council.	By March 2019.
Thematic Review - Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements	Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements, building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area.	Dates to be agreed with the Council. Fieldwork expected to be undertaken March 2019.	By May 2019.

Topic	Scope	Status	Timescale
Thematic Review - Leisure Services	Review of the arrangements the Council has put in place to deliver leisure services building on the 'study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.	Dates to be agreed with the Council.	By March 2019.
Annual improvement Report	Annual report summarising the audit work undertaken in the last year, which also includes a summary of the key findings from reports issued by 'relevant regulators'.	Work planned to be undertaken April 2018 – May 2019.	By August 2019.

WAO local government improvement studies

- 5 The Wales Audit Office also undertakes a programme of local government studies funded from the Welsh Consolidated Fund, which lead to national reports rather than local reports. Exhibit 4 summarises the present position on the programme of studies currently underway.

Exhibit 4: local government improvement studies programme of work

Topic	Scope	Status	Timescale
2017-18 Local Government Improvement Studies – 2017 audit plan			
How local government uses data	This review will identify how well local authorities are currently performing in collecting, analysing and using data to support decision making and the use of resources.	Data tool questionnaires were distributed to all councils in October 2017. Currently drafting report.	National report due to be published in the 3rd/4 th quarter of 2018.
Integrated care fund	The review will examine if the Integrated Care Fund is being used effectively to deliver sustainable services that achieve better outcomes for service users. Interviews will be undertaken with a selection of officers on each of the Regional Partnership Boards and Welsh Government officials.	Local outputs being presented at regional partnership board level.	National report due to be published early 2019.

Topic	Scope	Status	Timescale
2018-19 Local Government Improvement Studies – 2018 audit plan			
First point of contact assessments under the Social Services and Well-being Act	The study will review the first point of contact and assessments for adult social care.	Fieldwork planned to be undertaken in five local authorities. Neath Port Talbot CBC is not a fieldwork site in this study.	National report due to be published in the 3 rd /4 th quarter of 2019.
Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	Our review will focus on determining whether local authorities and their partners are effectively working together to prevent gender-based violence and domestic abuse and protecting all of the people involved.	Fieldwork planned to be undertaken in six local authorities. Neath Port Talbot CBC is not a fieldwork site in this study.	National report due to be published in 3 rd /4 th quarter of 2019.
Planning Service: Improving the Wellbeing of Wales	Our review will provide independent assurance that planning authorities are supporting sustainable development and delivering for the future long-term wellbeing of their communities and for Wales.	Fieldwork planned to be undertaken in five local authorities. Neath Port Talbot CBC is not a fieldwork site in this study.	National report due to be published in the 3 rd /4 th quarter of 2019.

WAO national studies

- 6 The Audit Committee may also be interested in the WAO national studies programme that are related to local government. Exhibit 5 provides information on our recently published national studies that have relevance to local authority organisations.

Exhibit 5: local authority related national studies

Topic	Findings	Status
Managing the impact of Brexit on the Rural Development Programme in Wales	<p>This report focuses on 'Rural Development funding' under the Welsh Government's Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme (RDP)</p> <p>This report considers whether the Welsh Government is effectively managing the risks and opportunities for the Rural Development Programme posed by Brexit.</p>	<p>Published 22 November 2018</p> <p>https://audit.wales/publication/managing-impact-brexit-rural-development-programme-wales</p>
Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling	<p>This review looked at municipal recycling, focussing on performance against the recycling targets.</p> <p>We found that more collaboration has helped make recycling methods more consistent and encouraged participation, although waste management service costs show surprising variation. Weight-based statutory targets have driven a much improved recycling rate over time but could better reflect wider sustainability considerations.</p>	<p>Published 15 November 2018</p> <p>http://www.audit.wales/publication/waste-management-wales-municipal-recycling</p>
Local Government services to rural communities	<p>This review examined the changing face of rural Wales and looked at the demographic challenges in providing council services to dispersed communities.</p> <p>We found that councils are not yet finding sustainable ways to help rural communities overcome the challenges they face. We have called on local authorities in Wales to</p>	<p>Published 13 November 2018</p> <p>http://www.audit.wales/publication/local-government-services-rural-communities</p>

Topic	Findings	Status
	think and act differently to sustain services in rural communities.	
Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer	<p>This document complements the Auditor General’s report on Local Government Services to Rural Communities. It highlights and summarises the study findings specifically relating to Community Asset Transfers (CATs).</p> <p>This document is a learning resource for local authorities to help them improve their approach to CATs in rural areas, which also have relevance for authorities in urban areas.</p>	<p>Published 13 November 2018</p> <p>https://audit.wales/publication/provision-local-government-services-rural-communities-community-asset-transfer</p>
National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2016-18	<p>This report summarises the findings of the biennial National Fraud Initiative in Wales for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018.</p> <p>The latest National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise has been one of the most successful to date – uncovering £5.4 million of fraud and overpayments across public services in Wales, compared with £4.4 million the last time. The Auditor General’s report, reveals that more than £35 million of fraud and overpayments have been found in Wales since the scheme began in 1996.</p>	<p>Published 22 October 2018</p> <p>http://www.audit.wales/publication/national-fraud-initiative-wales</p>
Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity	<p>This report focuses on arrangements for procuring capacity for waste treatment.</p> <p>We found that the Welsh Government procurement programme to help councils set up food and residual waste contracts has been well-managed, but several councils have opted out of the Programme, generally at a higher cost for residual waste treatment, and some are still reliant on landfill.</p>	<p>Published 11 October 2018</p> <p>https://audit.wales/publication/procuring-residual-and-food-waste-treatment-capacity</p>

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