



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# Audit Committee Update – Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Audit year: 2019

Date issued: June 2019

Document reference: APS062019

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to the Wales Audit Office at [info.officer@audit.wales](mailto:info.officer@audit.wales).

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

# Contents

## Progress update

About this document	4
Audit plan	4
Financial audit update	5
Performance audit update	6
WAO local government improvement studies	9
WAO national studies	11

# 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 2018 and 2019 are set out in Exhibit 1.

### Exhibit 1: audit plan.

Area of work	Status
Audit Plan 2018	Presented to Audit Committee April 2018
Audit Plan 2019	Presented to Audit Committee March 2019

## Financial audit update

- 3 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 2019 audit plan.

### Exhibit 2: financial audit update

Planned output	Scope	Status
<b>Financial Statements 2018-19</b>	Audit of the Council's 2018-19 financial statements.	Work on the Councils 2018-19 financial statements is in progress. Opinion planned to be issued July 2019.
<b>Margam Crematorium Joint Committee Annual Return 2018-19</b>	Audit of the Committees 2018-19 Annual Return	Opinion planned to be issued July 2019
<b>Welsh Church Act Trust Fund 2018-19</b>	Independent examination of the Trust Fund 2018-19 financial statements	Opinion planned to be issued October 2019
<b>Certification of Grants 2018-19</b>	Certification of grants and returns 2018-19	Planned for December 2019
<b>Annual Audit Letter</b>	Letter summarising our 2018-19 audit work.	Planned for December 2019

## Performance audit update

- 4 Exhibit 3 summarises the progress of the performance audit work set out in the 2017 and 2018 audit plans which is still in progress and provides a brief overview of progress against the planned performance outputs and milestones set out in our 2019 audit plan.

### Exhibit 3: performance audit update

Topic	Scope	Status	Timescale
<b>Performance audit work - 2017 audit plan</b>			
<b>Service User Perspective Review</b>	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 looked at the Council's Digital Strategy and specifically at the Council's approach to 'channel shift' (moving services online)	Draft report issued.	Issued May 2019
<b>Performance audit work - 2018 audit plan</b>			
<b>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</b>	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'.	Fieldwork complete. Draft report issued March 2019.	Waiting for Council response to the draft report. Officers to respond in June 2019

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>Thematic Review - Environmental Health</b>	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.	Fieldwork complete. Feedback presentation to Council officers June 2019	Key findings to be included in Annual Improvement Report
<b>Thematic Review - Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements</b>	Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements, building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area.	Fieldwork complete.	Draft report due July 2019
<b>Thematic Review - Leisure Services</b>	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.	Fieldwork complete. Feedback presentation to Council officers June 2019	Key findings to be included in Annual Improvement Report
<b>Annual improvement Report</b>	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 – June 2019.	By August 2019.
<b>Performance audit work - 2019 audit plan</b>			
<b>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</b>	Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.	Not started	Reporting - October 2019

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>Assurance and Risk Assessment</b>	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.	Not started	Feedback - January 2020
<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	A project common to all local councils that will assess financial sustainability in light of current and anticipated future challenges.	Not started	To be confirmed
<b>Local Performance Audit Project</b>	Review of the Council's performance management system.	Not started	Reporting – March 2020
<b>Improvement audit and assessment work including improvement planning and reporting audit</b>	Audit of discharge of duty to publish an improvement plan, and to publish an assessment of performance.	Improvement Plan audit – complete.  Assessment of Performance Audit – not started	Improvement Plan Certificate issued. Reported to Cabinet June 2019  Assessment of Performance Certificate to be issued November 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
<b>2017-18 Local Government Improvement Studies – 2017 audit plan</b>			
<b>Integrated care fund</b>	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 presented at regional partnership board level.	National report due to be published 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2019.
<b>2018-19 Local Government Improvement Studies – 2018 audit plan</b>			
<b>First point of contact assessments under the Social Services and Well-being Act</b>	The study will review the first point of contact and assessments for adult social care.	Report being drafted. Neath Port Talbot CBC was not a fieldwork site in this study.	National report due to be published in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019.
<b>Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence</b>	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 complete, drawing conclusions.  Neath Port Talbot CBC was not a fieldwork site in this study.	National report due to be published in 3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>2019-20 Local Government Improvement Studies</b>			
<b>Review of Public Service Boards and the effectiveness of partnership working</b>	This review will provide assurance and insight on how well PSBs are delivering the expectations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and by working together in tackling complex hard to shift problems.	Project set up and fieldwork underway in three local authorities. Neath Port Talbot CBC is not a fieldwork site in this study.	To be confirmed
<b>The impact of austerity on LA discretionary services</b>	This review will provide independent assurance that councils approaches to discretionary services are sustainable and that changes in provision or cessation of activity do not adversely impact future generations or those with protected characteristics.	Planning	To be confirmed
<b>Commercialisation in local authorities</b>	This review will focus on producing good practice case studies and support materials to help authorities develop their approaches to commercialisation. It will also comment on long-term approaches to financial sustainability and how commercial activity supports organisations to deliver their wider wellbeing objectives and corporate priorities.	Planning	To be confirmed

## 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
<b>Counter-Fraud Arrangements in the Welsh Public Sector</b>	<p>Fraud is prevalent across all sectors including the public sector. Every pound stolen from the public sector means that there is less to spend on key services such as health, education and social services.</p> <p>At a time of austerity, it is more important than ever for all public bodies in Wales to seek to minimise the risk of losses through fraud</p>	<p>Published 11 June 2019</p> <p><a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/counter-fraud-arrangements-welsh-public-sector">http://www.audit.wales/publication/counter-fraud-arrangements-welsh-public-sector</a></p>
<b>The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales</b>	<p>This report considers the progress of local planning authorities in delivering their new responsibilities and the extent to which they are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle contained within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>The report also considers how efficient and effective the 'local planning system' is, focussing on their performance, income and expenditure to determine how resilient services are. The report also looks at decision making and stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>Published 6 June 2019</p> <p><a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/effectiveness-local-planning-authorities-wales">http://www.audit.wales/publication/effectiveness-local-planning-authorities-wales</a></p>

Topic	Findings	Status
<b>Reflecting on Year One - How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?</b>	<p>The report found that public bodies are able to give examples of how they have used the Act to make the changes needed for them to effectively apply the sustainable development principle. Public bodies now need to set out how they will continue developing their approach to the Act so that they can deliver on the ambition and maximise the opportunities it affords.</p>	<p>Published 10 May 2019  <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/reflecting-year-one">http://www.audit.wales/publication/reflecting-year-one</a></p>
<b>Waste Management in Wales – Preventing Waste</b>	<p>This report considers the level of priority that the Welsh Government has given to waste prevention and progress towards waste prevention targets</p> <p>It also considers whether the Welsh Government is keeping track with its waste prevention targets and the quality of data available to the Welsh Government with which to measure progress.</p>	<p>Published 21 March 2019  <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/preventing-waste">http://www.audit.wales/publication/preventing-waste</a></p>



Wales Audit Office  
24 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone.: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: [info@audit.wales](mailto:info@audit.wales)

Website: [www.audit.wales](http://www.audit.wales)

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru  
24 Heol y Gadeirlan  
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: [post@archwilio.cymru](mailto:post@archwilio.cymru)

Gwefan: [www.archwilio.cymru](http://www.archwilio.cymru)

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.  
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.