

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Regeneration & Sustainable Development Cabinet Board

11 March 2022

Report of the Head of Property & Regeneration - S Brennan

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Audit Wales National Study – Regenerating Town Centres in Wales

Purpose of Report

1. To receive an action plan setting out the Councils response to the recommendations identified by Audit Wales following their national study - Regenerating Town Centres in Wales.

Executive Summary

2. The Audit Wales study - Regenerating Town Centres in Wales was published in September 2021. A copy of the study is attached at Appendix 1 which sets out the main findings from the Auditor General's review of how local authorities are managing and regenerating their town centres. The report concluded that town centres are at the heart of Welsh life and can be vibrant and sustainable places, but addressing the many challenges they face requires brave decisions and ambitious leadership. The report contained a number of recommendations for both the Welsh Government and local authorities to consider. The following two recommendations were for local authorities:

R4 - The Welsh Government has provided all 22 local authorities with training on how best to use existing enforcement, financial assistance and debt recovery powers, but they are not being consistently nor effectively utilised to support regeneration. We recommend that local authorities take appropriate action, using these existing powers and resources available to achieve the best possible outcome for town centres by:

- using alternative methods of enforcement before using Compulsory Purchase Orders as a last resort;
- integrating enforcement strategies with wider departmental strategies across housing, environmental health, planning and regeneration teams to make more effective use of existing skills and resources; and
- ensuring there is capacity and the right expertise to use the full range of powers, working in collaboration with other councils to achieve good outcomes.

R6 - Town centres are changing, and local authorities need to be receptive to these changes and plan to manage these shifts. We recommend that local authorities use our regeneration tool to self-assess their current approaches to identify where they need to improve their work on town-centre regeneration

The Action Plan contained at Appendix 2 sets out the Council's response to the above recommendations.

Financial Appraisal

3. The programme of audit and improvement assessment work undertaken by Audit Wales has been delivered within the budget allocated for audit and inspection work.

Integrated Impact Assessment

4. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment on this report.

Valleys Communities Impact

5. There will be a positive outcome for the improvement of our town centres, including those in our valleys communities.

Workforce Impact

6. There are no workforce impacts.

Legal Impact

7. No impact.

Risk Management

8. Audit Wales findings are a key input into the Council's corporate governance arrangements and the areas identified for improvement work inform the Annual Governance Statement and the associated improvement action plan.

Consultation

9. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

10. For Cabinet to note the actions contained within Appendix 2.

Appendices

11. Appendix 1 – Audit Wales – National Study - Regenerating Town Centres in Wales (Sept 2021)
12. Appendix 2 – Action Plan

List of Background Papers

13. None

Officer Contact

Andrew Collins, Regeneration & Economic Development Manager

a.collins@npt.gov.uk