

Action Plan – Regenerating Town Centres (Sept 21)

Ref	Recommendations	Council action planned in response to the recommendations issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of action	Monitoring arrangements	Responsible officer
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R4	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Officers from the Regeneration and Environmental Health Departments have met several times on site and virtually with Welsh Government officers and in particular, their specialist consultant on this matter, Andrew Lavender.</p> <p>We are currently considering various options and strategies, and have identified areas of focus for this work, including Neath Road, Briton Ferry. Although in an early stage, officers are currently compiling information around ownership via the Land Registry, and will then be looking to engage in a positive and constructive manner with the various owners.</p> <p>We will be supplementing this work by encouraging</p>	Ongoing	<p>Officers will duly monitor progress on a periodic basis in order to assess effectiveness and outcomes, and report back to Council.</p>	<p>Andrew Collins and Celvin Davies</p>
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		<p>owners of properties to utilise Council grants such as the Commercial Property Grant and Welsh Government Place Making grants in order to improve the physical appearance, and use of their properties. We are also currently directly engaging with property owners with a view to acquiring their properties in certain circumstances, with the use of Welsh Government funding, in order that the street-scene can be improved.</p>			
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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	This tool will assist us going forward in planning the Regeneration of our town centres. It will also complement the work that has been undertaken to date such as the Council's Economic Recovery Plan and forthcoming Regeneration Strategy. We will utilise this tool when considering our Levelling Up Funding applications and the forthcoming Shared Prosperity Fund. We will also be directing our consultants, The Urbanists, towards this tool in undertaking their ongoing commissioned strategic assessment of our secondary and tertiary town centres.	As above	As above	As above