

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

17th MARCH 2023

JOINT REPORT OF CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER – H JONES HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – S REES

Matter for Information

Wards Affected – All wards

Register of Regulators Reports & Recommendations.

Purpose of the Report

To provide the Governance & Audit Committee with an updated Register of Regulators Reports and Recommendations.

Background

The report presented to this Committee in January 2023 provided an update covering the period November 2021 to December 2022. There were 5 national reports and 1 local letter that were noted for feedback at this meeting, this feedback is included in Section A below.

This report also presents a summary of reports issued by external review bodies since January 2023 (Section B) and an updated Register of Regulators Reports (Appendix 1)

Section A

1. **Direct Payments for Adult Social Care (April 22)** - This report looked at how local authorities provide Direct Payment services to adults, examining their impact and value for money. The recommendations have been accepted and an action plan was reported to Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet Board on 26th January 2023.

2. **Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's): More than a Tick Box Exercise (Sept 2022)** – This report focussed on the overall approach to public bodies undertaking of EIAs, primarily on understanding public bodies' approaches, with a view to finding good or interesting practice and identifying any common areas for improvement. The report also looks at the way in which public bodies are conducting specific parts of the processes and offer insight about the overall approach to assessing the impacts of policies and practices and the underpinning mind-set and culture.

The Council is working to further improve its approach to the undertaking of Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA's. Several training sessions have been held, with 164 officers and 46 members attending to further develop their understanding of IIAs.

3. **National Fraud Initiative 2020-2021 (Oct 2022)** – This report looks at the outcomes and results of National Fraud Initiatives, recorded since the last report in October 2020. The report also details the processes followed to identify potential fraud and future developments around data-matching and the review of data sets for 2022/2023.

The three recommendations have been taken into consideration. Internal Audit have a dedicated fraud officer who has taken advantage of the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) training materials and checklists. As part of the role they will be reviewing NFI matches with processes and progress being brought to future committees as required.

4. **“Time for Change” – Poverty in Wales (Oct 2022)** – This report looks at the challenge of poverty in Wales and how government is responding. The overall conclusion by Audit Wales is that the scale of the challenge and weaknesses in current work make it difficult for Welsh and local government to deliver the systemic change required to tackle and alleviate poverty.

The Council is committed to developing its approach to poverty and working in partnership with organisations to prioritise support for residents and businesses. A Cost of Living/Poverty Prevention Workshop is being held on 16th March to reflect on the work undertaken to date and to set out our next steps to ensure we are offering the most appropriate support for our communities.

In addition, further resources have been secured via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) for 2 posts which will lead on the development of a Poverty Strategy for Neath Port Talbot and progress our work on identifying those hardest hit by the cost of living crisis.

5. **A Missed Opportunity' – Social Enterprises (Dec 2022)** – This report looks at how local authorities are working to grow and make the most of Social Enterprises ensuring social value and social capital stay in communities and help people who are struggling. This is also the second report of three reviews on the challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty in Wales.

At the above Cost of Living / Poverty Prevention Workshop, Audit Wales will be providing an overview of the findings of this report.

6. **Assurance and Risk Assessment Progress – Carbon Reduction (Oct 22)** – This letter provides a progress update on the Council's arrangements for carbon reduction. As a response to the letter an action plan was presented to Environment Regeneration and Streetscene Services Cabinet Board, 20th January 2023.

Prior to the piece of work undertaken by Audit Wales the council commissioned a net zero bridging report to identify and analyse the gaps between the council's Dare Strategy and Welsh Government's net zero 2030 requirements. The bridging report was completed in December 2022.

To address the recommendation issued by Audit Wales the Council has been in discussions with the Carbon Trust to formulate a commission for producing a net zero carbon 2030 action plan for the Council's operational service delivery emissions. This will be a fully costed implementation action plan, enabling the Council to reach its net zero ambition.

Section B

During the period January to March 2023, 1 national report of interest to the Council has been published and 1 local letter has been received.

National Reports:

1. **‘Together we can’ – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance (January 2022)** – This report is the final report in a series of three reviews looking at how local authorities are working to alleviate and tackle poverty. This specific review focuses on understanding how local authorities are creating the conditions needed to transform ways of working and empowering communities to thrive as independently as possible.

Appendix 1 of the report sets out the approach undertaken by Audit Wales and methods and includes more information on community resilience. The overall conclusion is that local authorities face a challenging and uncertain financial future but find it difficult to empower people and communities to be more self-reliant and less dependent on services

At the above Cost of Living / Poverty Prevention Workshop, Audit Wales will be providing an overview of the findings of this report.

Local Letter

2. **Assurance and Risk Assessment 2021-2022 – Financial Position Update (January 2023)** – This letter provides a progress update on the Council’s financial position for 2021-22.

The letter has been considered by officers and will be taken to Cabinet on 17th May 2023.

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:

- The Governance & Audit Committee note the reports issued by the Council's external review bodies since January 2023 and the updated Register of Regulators Reports and Recommendations.

Appendix

- Appendix 1 – Register of Regulators Reports & Recommendations.

Background Papers

None

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