

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

16th JUNE 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 March 2023 provided an update covering the period January to March 2023. One national reports and 1 local letter 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 March 2023 (Section B) and an updated Register of Regulators Reports (Appendix 1)

Section A

- 1. Assurance & Risk Assessment 2021-2022 Financial Position (April 22)** - The Assurance and Risk Assessment undertaken by Audit Wales, presented to Cabinet on 17th May 2023, provides a point in time assurance on the particular aspects of their work undertaken to date, including reviews of a number of key areas including financial strategy, useable resources and performance against budgets.

This update refers to the council's financial position. Audit Wales' findings demonstrated that:

“The council is financially stable, helped recently by additional Welsh Government funding, but it needs to develop a sustainable plan to address cost pressures and close its medium-term funding gap in an increasingly challenging financial climate”.

Audit Wales makes reference to future budget pressures and economic uncertainty. The council's Medium Term Financial Plan will address these challenges and set out our options for the next financial year.

2. ‘Together we can’ – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance (January 2022)

This report, the final in a series of three, looks at the challenge of poverty across Wales and how government is responding. Audit Wales reports that the scale of the challenge and weaknesses in current work makes it difficult for Welsh and local government to deliver the systemic change required to tackle and alleviate poverty.

As detailed in the last Governance and Audit report the council continues to be committed to developing its approach to poverty and working in partnership with organisations to prioritise support for residents and businesses. 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.

Section B

During the period March 2023 to June, 2 national reports of interest to the Council have been published and 1 local letter has been received.

National Reports:

- 1. Digital Inclusion Wales (March 2023)** – This report provides a high-level overview of issues relevant to digital inclusion in Wales. Digital inclusion is complex, and the report is not intended to be comprehensive. Audit Wales summarises terminology, key data

and interventions in Wales. Audit Wales have also released a document alongside this report that sets out questions for public bodies to ask themselves as they consider their approach to digital inclusion.

Audit Wales' work follows several other reports related to digital inclusion, infrastructure and connectivity in Wales. These include, among others, our 2015 report on the Welsh Government's Superfast Cymru agreement with BT, the 2020 National Infrastructure Commission for Wales report on digital infrastructure strategy, and the 2022 Senedd Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee report on digital connectivity.

The report is being considered by officers and an update on the response to the report will be provided at the next meeting of the Governance & Audit Committee.

- 2. Audit Wales Annual Plan 2023-2024 (April 2023)** – Audit Wales' Annual Plan covers the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and sets out their priorities for the next 12 months, additional information on their longer-term ambitions and key performance indicators for both audit work and the running of the business.

The context for the Plan is set out in Audit Wales' strategy for 2022 – 2027, Assure, Explain, Inspire and sets out the work programmes with a focus on three key areas:

- Strategic, dynamic and high-quality audit programme
- Targeted and impactful approach to communications and influencing
- Culture and operating model that enables Audit Wales to thrive both now and in the future.

Local Letter

- 3. Neath Port Talbot Council – Annual Audit Summary 2022 (March 2023)** - The Annual Audit Summary has been produced to combine the Annual Audit Letter and the Annual Improvement Report that were previously produced as separate documents by Audit Wales in order to provide a single summary of the findings of performance and financial audit work undertaken by Audit Wales as well as planned future audit work.

This summary was presented to Governance and Audit on 17th March 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 March 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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