

Project Brief – Digital Strategy Review – Neath Port Talbot Council

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

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Project brief

Background

- 1 Digital is key to delivering a wide range of council services in a more economic, efficient and effective way. It follows that it is also an important means of councils delivering their wellbeing objectives and carrying out sustainable development.
- 2 Digital strategies also have a significant impact on how people access services, whether through improved access to services or the potential for 'digital exclusion' where services are 'digitised' but as a consequence some members of the public may be unable to access them.
- 3 This work also builds on our previous 'springing forward' review that looked at the topics of assets and workforce that we undertook during 2021-22. We are undertaking this audit at each of the 22 principal councils in Wales.

Legal basis

- 4 We are carrying out this audit under the duties contained within:
 - section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) to help enable the Auditor General to be satisfied (or not) that the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and;
 - section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to help enable the Auditor General to assess the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives.

Audit objectives

- 5 Our objectives for this audit are to:
 - provide assurance that the councils' digital strategies will help to deliver well-being objectives in a way that secures value for money in the use of resources;
 - provide assurance that councils are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principal in the design of their digital strategies;
 - explain how councils are using/planning to use digital technology to meet people's needs and deliver better outcomes; and
 - inspire and empower councils and other public sector bodies by identifying and sharing examples of notable practice/approaches where relevant

Audit questions

- 6 **Appendix 1** contains the audit questions and audit criteria.

Audit scope

- 7 The audit will cover the Council’s strategic approach to digital, and specifically the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle; and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the council’s resources.

Audit criteria

- 8 The proposed audit will use the audit criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, which also shows how the criteria relate to the audit questions. This has been informed by our cumulative knowledge as well as the question hierarchy and positive indicators we have developed to support our Sustainable Development Principle examinations.

Audit methods

- 9 The audit will be informed by interviews with senior officers and cabinet members responsible for the development of the council’s digital strategy, as well as a sample of cabinet members and senior officers with responsible for key portfolios/service areas impacted by the digital strategy. We will also review the documents set out in **Exhibit 2** below.

Output

- 10 The audit will produce the following output(s):
- Local report for each principal council
 - National summary report
- 11 We also intend that our findings will help inform a Good Practice Exchange Event on the topic of digital in the autumn of 2023.

Timetable

- 12 **Exhibit 1** shows the high-level timetable of the main audit stages.

Exhibit 1: audit timetable

Stage	Date
Issue project brief	03/07/2023
Issue draft local report	22/09/2023
Issue final local report	20/10/2023
Publish national summary report	31/10/2023

Audit Wales contacts

13 **Exhibit 2** sets out the Audit Wales team that will be working on this audit.

Exhibit 2: Audit Wales contacts

Name	Contact details
Gary Emery – Audit Director	Gary.Emery@audit.wales
Tim Buckle – Auditor Manager	Timothy.Buckle@audit.wales
Allison Rees – Senior Auditor	Allison.Rees@audit.wales
Debra Allen – Executive Assistant	Debra.Allen@audit.wales

Fieldwork schedule

14 We will conduct our fieldwork in line with the organisation’s stated language preference. We will make every reasonable effort to accommodate language preferences of individuals during the audit, if we receive these at the point of setting up fieldwork.

Document request

15 We will undertake a review of the documents listed below. The list is not exhaustive and we may request additional documents during the course of the project. Where documents in the list below are publicly available please direct us to their online location. Where we already have copies of the documents, we will confirm this at the project set up meeting. Also, we would be grateful if you could provide us with any additional documents that you feel may be relevant to this work.

Exhibit 3: initial document request

Document title
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital strategy or equivalent• Evidence base used to inform the digital strategy• Evidence of extent and methods of involvement activity in developing the digital strategy including any evidence of stakeholder mapping• Evidence of how the digital strategy is communicated within the council and to partners• Implementation plans for the digital strategy• Service plans that relate to key elements of the digital strategy• Savings plans that relate to the digital strategy• Key corporate plans and strategies – including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– asset management plan,– workforce plan– well-being statement– carbon reduction plan– learning and development plans– medium term financial plan• Public Services Board Well-being Plan• The Council's Annual Self-Assessment Report• Monitoring reports or equivalent in relation to the digital strategy• Budget monitoring reports including service area budget reports that relate to key elements of the digital strategy• Reports setting out the details of any partnerships relevant to the delivery of the digital strategy and/or reports of any reviews of these partnerships

Interviews

- 16 **Exhibit 4** sets out the initial list of people we would like to interview during our work. We will confirm specific details of who we would like to interview during the project set-up meeting for and contact you again to arrange mutually convenient dates and times when we begin the evidence gathering stage.

Exhibit 4: interviewees

Title
Senior officer responsible for the development of digital strategy Chris Owen, Chief Digital Officer
Sample of two senior officers with responsibility for key services impacted by the digital strategy Diane Mulligan, Chief Accountant - Financial Services

Title

Ian Finnemore / Nita Sparkes, Social Services Officer - Social Care Case Management Transformation

Cabinet member with the portfolio covering digital strategy and with a portfolio covering a key service impacted by the strategy
Cllr Simon Knoyle, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice

Cabinet member with a portfolio covering a key service impacted by the strategy
Cllr Sian Harris, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services

Appendix 1

Audit questions and criteria

Main audit question: **In developing its digital strategy has the Council acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle and put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources?**

L2 questions	L3 questions	Criteria
1. Is the Council's digital strategy informed by a good understanding of current and future trends?	1.1 Is there is a thorough understanding of the 'as is' (i.e. current demand/ issues to be addressed) and the reasons why/ underlying causes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council has drawn on a broad range of information from internal and external sources to develop a thorough understanding of the 'as is' and how it is likely to change. This includes information (including data) relating to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– service sustainability/ resilience and resourcing challenges,– the needs of citizens and communities.– the underlying causes of current demand/issues to be addressed.– analysis of future trends and how they might impact. E.g. social, economic/political, environmental, cultural or technological. They might include known trends e.g. ageing population, depleting natural resources and particularly

	<p>1.2 Is there a thorough understanding of the long-term factors that will impact and the challenges and opportunities that may result (e.g. risks and opportunities)?</p>	<p>technological advances They might also include those with a higher level of uncertainty e.g. jobs and skills needed in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis of the ‘as is’ and how it is likely to change is well informed by involvement activity, as appropriate, that reflects recognised good practice (e.g. National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales advice and guidance). • The Council uses its evidence base effectively to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify actions in its strategic approach to digital that are likely to be most effective and why, including how they could address the root causes of problems. – Inform decisions around its use of digital technology that seek to balance the need to meet short- and longer-term objectives.
<p>2. Does the Council have a clear vision of what it wants to achieve through the use of digital technology?</p>	<p>2.1 Is the council planning over an appropriate timescale?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has considered what long term means in planning its approach to digital – i.e. how far ahead it can/should plan and why (at least 10 years with consideration of longer-term trends as appropriate) • The Council has considered how actions can deliver the best impact over that timeframe in terms of outcomes and most effective use of resources. This could include consideration of appropriate intervention points linked to the Commissioner’s definition of prevention. (click on the following link for details: Taking account of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the budget process – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) • The Council has set out measures for its digital strategy that reflect short and long-term impacts and value for money, with milestones that reflect progress as appropriate • The Council has set out how its digital strategy will be resourced over the longer term as far as is practical (See also criteria relating to integration)

	<p>2.2 Has the Council thought about the wider impacts its digital strategy could have, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how it could contribute to each of the seven national well-being goals? • how delivery will impact on the other things it is trying to achieve (i.e. its well-being objectives and wider priorities)? • how delivery will impact on other what other public bodies are trying to achieve (i.e. their well-being objectives)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has considered how its digital strategy can make a contribution across the well-being goals. • Staff developing the digital strategy understand what colleagues and partners do and how their work relates, and have sought to integrate their work with that of their colleagues from across the Council and with partner organisations • Integration is evident in the alignment of the digital strategy with other key corporate strategies and service plans. For example medium term financial plan, workforce plan, asset management strategies, well-being statement and carbon reduction plans. • The digital strategy is aligned with other strategic intents such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – customer experience, – management of demand/ reductions in demand failure and prevention – design and implementation of new service delivery models. • The council’s digital strategy aligns with the plans/strategies of local and national partners including the Welsh Government’s Digital Strategy for Wales Digital strategy GOV.WALES and well-being plans.
	<p>2.3 Is there a wide and common understanding of what the council is trying to achieve?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and senior officers responsible for implementing the digital strategy have a common and clear understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve and the intended impact on service delivery • The Council’s digital strategy is clearly communicated to staff and partners who may help deliver it
<p>3. Is the council working effectively with the right people and partners to design and deliver its digital strategy</p>	<p>3.1 Has the Council identified who it needs to involve?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a good understanding of who will be directly and indirectly affected by its digital strategy and who it needs to involve. • The Council has effectively involved the full diversity of views in developing its digital strategy, including from non-traditional sources and from those it may have previously failed to reach.

	<p>3.2 Is the council effectively involving the full diversity of people affected by its digital strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has provided genuine opportunities for people to influence design and delivery of its digital strategy from an early stage, including representatives of groups who share protected characteristics. • The Council has used the results of involvement to shape the design and delivery of its digital strategy
	<p>3.3 Is the Council collaborating effectively with the right partners?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is collaborating to ensure it delivers better outcomes and value for money through its digital strategy and has put appropriate arrangements in place to support this, for example for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sharing or pooling expertise and resources – sharing information – ensuring effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability including consideration of value for money
<p>4. Has the council resourced delivery of its digital strategy so it can deliver long-term/ preventative benefits?</p>	<p>4.1 Does the Council understand long-term resource implications?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has assessed the costs and benefits of using digital technology to invest in long-term, preventative approaches and the cost (both financial and in terms of outcomes) of not doing so. • The Council has thought about the resources it will need to deliver its digital strategy over the medium and longer term (whole life costs) and how it could manage risks/ meet those costs including for example planned ‘invest to save’ initiatives and managed reductions in technical debt. • The Council has calculated and set out any savings it intends to make through implementing its digital strategy
	<p>4.2 Does the Council allocate resources to deliver better outcomes over the long-term?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action (inc. preventative action) that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and/or use of resources over the longer term is promoted and supported, even: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs. – where the benefits are likely to be accrued by or attributed to another organisation.

<p>5. Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress?</p>	<p>5.1 Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress towards, short, medium- and longer-term objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council monitors the costs and benefits of delivering its digital strategy from a value for money perspective • The Council is measuring the wider contribution the digital strategy is making across its own/ partnership objectives • Progress is measured against short, medium and long-term objectives
<p>6. Is the Council learning lessons from how it works?</p>	<p>6.1 Does the Council review the effectiveness of its digital strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of its digital strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effectiveness of its collaborative activity - effectiveness of its involvement activity, including the impact of the strategy on service users including those who are digitally excluded - the impact of the strategy on those who share protected characteristics - the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the digital strategy overall in helping the council to achieve its strategic objectives. • The Council has reviewed lessons learned from its response to the pandemic and is applying this learning to its digital strategy
	<p>6.2 Does the Council share lessons learned from its approach to its digital strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council shares and applies any lessons learned from the development and delivery of its digital strategy widely across the organisation, and with partners where relevant

Appendix 2

Fair processing notice

Date issued: May 2023

Auditor General for Wales – Privacy Notice

This privacy notice tells you about how the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) and staff of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) process personal information collected in connection with our work.

Who we are and what we do

The AGW's work includes examining how public bodies manage and spend public money, and the WAO provides the staff and resources to enable him to carry out his work. "Audit Wales" is a trademark of the WAO and is the umbrella identity of the AGW and the WAO.

The purposes of the processing

We will use personal data when exercising our powers and duties, which chiefly concern the audit of public bodies and activities to support such work.

Data Protection Officer (DPO)

Our DPO can be contacted by telephone on 029 2032 0500 or by email at infoofficer@audit.wales.

The relevant laws

We process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Our lawful bases for processing are the powers and duties set out in the Public

Audit (Wales) Acts 2004 and 2013, the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and various legislation establishing particular public bodies, such as the Care Standards Act 2000. Further details are available in our publication, [A guide to Welsh public audit legislation](#), which is available on our website.

Depending on the particular power or function, these statutory bases fall with Article 6(c) and (e) of the UK GDPR—processing necessary for compliance with a legal obligation, for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority. Where we process special category data, the additional legal basis for processing this will ordinarily be Article 9(2)(g) of the UK GDPR (together with paragraph 6 Schedule 1 Data Protection Act 2018) relating to the exercise of a statutory function for reasons of substantial public interest.

How we obtain your personal data

The personal data that we collect and process as part of our work may be obtained from you directly (e.g., if we contact you to ask you specific questions or for further information in connection with our work), or from relevant bodies, including those that we are auditing, through the exercise of the Auditor General's access rights.

Who will see the data?

The AGW and relevant WAO staff, such as the study team, will have access to the information you provide. Your data may be shared internally within Audit Wales for the purposes described in this notice.

Our published report may include some of your information, but we will contact you before any publication of information that identifies you—see also “your rights” below.

We may share information with:

- a) Senior management at the audited body(ies) as far as this is necessary for exercising our powers and duties;
- b) Certain other public bodies/public service review bodies such as the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Care Inspectorate Wales (Welsh Ministers), Health Inspectorate Wales (Welsh Ministers), Estyn and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, where the law permits or requires this, such as under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

How long we keep the data

We will generally keep your data for 6 years, though this may increase to 25 years if it supports a published report—we will contact you before any publication of information that identifies you—see also “your rights” below. After 25 years, the records are either transferred to the UK National Archive or securely destroyed. In practice, very little personal information is retained beyond 6 years.

Our rights

The AGW has rights to information, explanation, and assistance under paragraph 17 of schedule 8 Government of Wales Act 2006, section 52 Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, section 26 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and section 98 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Further information can be found in our [Access Rights leaflet](#) available on our website. It may be a criminal offence, punishable by a fine, for a person to fail to provide information that falls within the AGW's access rights, but such an offence does not apply to surveys of the general public, which are not conducted using the statutory access rights above.

Your rights

You have rights to ask for a copy of the current personal information held about you and to object to data processing that causes unwarranted and substantial damage and distress.

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You may also contact the Information Commissioner's Office to obtain further information about data protection law, or to complain about how your personal data is being handled at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, or by email at casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone 01625 545745.



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