

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

26th JANUARY 2024

Report of the Director of Strategy & Corporate Services

Noelwyn Daniel

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

This report presents a summary of the reports issued by external review bodies since October 2023 and an updated Register of Regulators Reports (Appendix 1).

National Reports

1. Audit Wales Interim Report (October 2023)

The report documents Audit Wales' progress during the first six months of 2023-2024 and delivery of planned programmes of work. It also updates on key performance indicators set out in the Audit Wales Annual Plan for 2023-2024.

This report was for information.

2. Audit Wales Equality Report (October 2023)

This report reflects progress made on delivering Audit Wales' equality objectives during 2022-2023. The objectives set out in the Audit Wales Joint Strategic Equality Plan for 2022 to 2026 aim to

build on progress to ensure diversity, inclusion and equality considerations are built into everything they do.

Exhibit 1 of the report provides more detail of steps taken and progress made towards meeting individual objectives.

This report was for information.

Local Reports

- 3. Neath Port Talbot Council – Digital Strategy Review (October 2023)** – This report looks at the extent to which the council’s strategic approach to digital 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 Wales highlighted the well-aligned strategic approach to digital within the council, with other key plans and strategies, and those of partners, with strong arrangements to communicate the strategic digital approach.

The report addresses the developing, comprehensive arrangements to assess and monitor the impact of the digital approach, however the absence of a clear timeframe to deliver the digital strategy will make it difficult for the council to assess progress and value.

Recommendations:

- **Monitoring benefits:** If the Council continues with the approach of not stating a timeframe to deliver its Digital, Data and Technology strategy, it should put in place arrangements to: – clearly articulate its short, medium and long term outcomes and intended benefits; – cost its short, medium and long term ambitions and match them with available resources; and – assess if it is delivering the strategy and its intended outcomes at the intended pace.

This report was presented to Cabinet on 28th November 2023.

- 4. Neath Port Talbot Council – Review of Scrutiny (November 2023)**

This report focusses on the current effectiveness of Neath Port Talbot Council’s scrutiny meetings, which includes the introduction of online/hybrid meetings. Audit Wales have reflected on a piece of work undertaken in 2018 with the council and have taken into account local government elections which took place in May 2022 and the Covid pandemic to inform this review.

In the main this review of scrutiny looked at 'how effective are scrutiny arrangements at the council?' Their overall opinion was that the council is missing opportunities for scrutiny to maximise its impact, influence and effectiveness in holding cabinet to account, shaping council policies and reviewing performance.

As a result of the review there are 5 recommendations included with the report.

Recommendations:

R1. Current model and role of scrutiny:

The Council should review its current model for scrutiny to ensure scrutiny can fulfil its broader range of roles and responsibilities. Any revised model should ensure there are opportunities for scrutiny to engage in its wider roles, including for example, in relation to:

- Policy development
- Performance monitoring
- Holding cabinet members to account throughout the decision-making process
- Following up outcomes of previous recommendations or decisions Public engagement

R2. Public Engagement - The council's scrutiny model should be more citizen focused by strengthening its arrangements for public involvement and engagement in scrutiny. This should include ensuring greater transparency and timeliness about which items will be on the scrutiny committee agendas; and using existing engagement and consultation work to inform its scrutiny work including consideration of scrutiny topics, as part of its scrutiny reviews, in holding cabinet members and decisions to account, and in its performance monitoring roles.

R3. Planning and work programme - To enable the scrutiny model to be more citizen focused, the Council should review its arrangements for the way in which scrutiny is planned to ensure scrutiny can independently plan and strategically prioritise its own work programme.

R4. Support - The Council should review the type of scrutiny support it requires across all areas of the organisation including service areas, to enable scrutiny to perform its wider role and ensure that any resourcing implications arising from any changes to the scrutiny model are understood and planned for.

R5. Evaluation - The Council should strengthen its arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of scrutiny.

This report forms part of the council's review of Scrutiny which will be presented to Council on 20th March 2024 and Governance and Audit Committee later in the year.

5. Neath Port Talbot Council – Springing Forward – Strategic Management of Assets (December 2023) – The report is a review of the council's arrangements for managing its assets with a focus on office accommodation and buildings from which services to its residents are delivered from. Audit Wales looked at how the council strategically plans the use of its assets, monitors the use of its assets and reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements.

The review sought to answer the question: 'Is the council's strategic approach to its assets strengthening its ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of its services in the short and longer-term?' The conclusion reflected that there isn't a current vision and plan for managing assets, nor a timely and comprehensive monitoring arrangements.

There are 3 recommendations included with the report.

R1. Strategic asset management vision and strategy

- In developing its new Corporate Asset Management Strategy, the Council should put the Sustainable Development Principle at the heart of its considerations. In particular setting out its long-term vision and the outcomes it wants to achieve over the short, medium and longer term.

R2. Strategic asset management planning and delivery

- Once the Council has agreed its new Corporate Asset Management Strategy it should develop the supporting arrangements to ensure that it has sufficient corporate oversight and a consistent approach to the delivery of its asset objectives across the organisation.

R3. Strategic asset management governance and monitoring

- To ensure that the Council is able to understand the progress its asset management strategy and arrangements are making and how those are helping to deliver and achieve its Well-being Objectives, it will need to assure itself that its current

governance arrangements are sufficient to effectively monitor its progress.

This report, along with a completed Organisational Response Form will be presented to Cabinet during February and Governance and Audit Committee on 21st March 2024.

6. Neath Port Talbot Council – Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management 2021-2022 (December 2023) –

The report examines the overall arrangements and approach in relation to its strategic management of its workforce. Asking the question ‘Is the council’s strategic approach strengthening its ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of its services in the short and longer term?’

Work took place on this review between February 2022 and October with three main aims, to gain assurance that councils are putting in place arrangements in relation to its workforce to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services, to explain the actions that councils are taking both individually and collectively to strengthen their arrangements; and lastly to inspire councils and other organisations to further strengthen their arrangements through capturing and sharing notable practice examples and learning and making appropriate recommendations.

Overall, Audit Wales found that the council has a clear vision for its workforce, strengthened by its work with partners and have identified two recommendations as part of this work.

R1. Workforce planning and delivery:

- To ensure there are progression pathways for staff and there is resilience around its business-critical roles, the Council should ensure all services have succession plans and have identified their business-critical roles.

R2 Workforce governance and monitoring:

- To have a better understanding of the impact of its workforce strategy the Council should develop measures that focus on outcomes and impacts in addition to inputs.
- The Council should build on its benchmarking with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and consider where there may be opportunities to benchmark its measures and metrics with

its peers to ensure it can identify areas of good practice and potential areas for improvement.

- To enable the Council to have a clearer understanding of the progress it is making towards meeting its workforce ambitions the Council should assure itself that the Organisational Delivery Board is providing effective oversight and driving integration across related programmes of work

This report, along with a completed Organisational Response Form, will be presented to Cabinet on 14th February and to Governance and Audit Committee on 21st March 2024.

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 October 2023 and the updated Register of Regulators Reports and Recommendations.

Appendix

- Appendix 1 – Register of Regulators Reports

Background Papers

None

Officer Contact

For further information on this report item, please contact:

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