

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

21st MARCH 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 January 2024 and an updated Register of Regulators Reports (Appendix 1).

National Reports

1. Sustainable development – Making the best use of brownfield land and empty buildings (January 2024)

The Brownfields site report examines how Welsh councils are supporting and encouraging repurposing and regeneration of vacant properties and brownfield sites into homes or for other uses.

Focusing on the barriers facing councils and their partners, whilst also highlight opportunities to learn from elsewhere. Audit Wales looked to answer the question:

‘Are local authorities doing all they can to support and encourage vacant, non-domestic properties and vacant brownfield sites being repurposed into homes or for other uses?’

Audit Wales concluded that, despite notable amounts of brownfield developments being delivered by councils, regeneration could be increased significantly with a more systematic, interventionist, and collaborative approach. By drawing on successful approaches elsewhere and more focused planning, councils could be better equipped to overcome significant barriers.

We would ask the Committee to note the following statement on page 30 of the report

'We intended to also include Neath Port Talbot, however it did not wish to take part'

At the time of Audit Wales undertaking the fieldwork council officers were not in a position to add additional work to their already exceptional workload. Alongside the business as usual activity, which had been operating above pre-pandemic levels, officers were also preparing the submission bid for Celtic Freeport, considering the discharge of planning conditions regarding the Wildfox development, ongoing liaison with the developers of the Global Centre for Rail Excellence. Officers were also preparing the submission of three Levelling Up bids, drawing down the Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for NPT and the ongoing preparatory work to implement both of these funding programmes.

2 recommendations for Welsh Government / 3 recommendations for local authorities:

Councils

- R1 To enable stakeholders to assess potential sites councils should create a systematic process to find and publicise suitable sites for regeneration:
- this should draw on data already held by councils, as well as external data sources to develop a composite and more complete picture of sites; and
 - where known, key barriers should be named to help efforts to overcome them.
- R2 To help ensure that regeneration activity and the shaping of the environment is informed by the needs of communities Councils should increase opportunities for community-based

involvement in regeneration, both in plan-making and actual development.

R3 To provide focus and impetus to developing brownfield sites Councils should review their current regeneration approaches and where appropriate set clearer, more ambitious regeneration policies and targets. Together these should:

- set out the approach and expectations of the council;
- set out how their approach will be resourced; and
- set out how the approach aligns with national policy goals and regional planning priorities

Welsh Government

R4 To help enable stakeholders to assess potential sites the Welsh Government should:

- work with councils to ensure that listings of identified sites for regeneration are reported by council area; and
- produce a national listing informed by the local listings and through working in conjunction with other public sector bodies.

R5 To help inform scrutiny of performance both locally and nationally the Welsh Government should create a national framework for monitoring and assessing levels of brownfield sites being developed compared to levels of sites available and levels of greenfield development.

The report has been circulated to relevant officers for feedback.

2. From Firefighting to Future-proofing – the Challenge for Welsh Public Services (February 2024)

The report provides an overview of the financial outlook for public services and how public services need to respond to challenges to improve value for money and support good governance and financial management consistent with the sustainable development principle.

Audit Wales set out, as a result of their work, the complexity of the public service landscape and the challenges being faced around workforce capacity, digital transformation and planning for the long term.

The report was for information and has been circulated to the relevant officers.

Local Reports

3. Neath Port Talbot Council – Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes (November 2023)

The aim of the Audit Wales examination was to determine:

‘Does the Council’s performance data enable senior leaders to understand the service user perspective and the outcomes of its activities to effectively manage its performance?’

The findings of the examination highlighted that performance information provided by officers, to senior leaders, to enable them to understand service user perspective of the outcomes of the council’s activities is limited, and proposed the following three recommendations.

Information on the perspective of the service user

R1 The council should ensure that the information provided to its senior leaders enable them to understand the service user perspective on a broader range of services and policies. The council should ensure this information is drawn from the diversity of service users.

Outcomes information

R2 The council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes

Quality and accuracy of data

R3 The council needs to assure itself that it has robust arrangements to check the quality and accuracy of the information it provides to senior leaders relating to service user perspective and outcomes.

The report, along with a completed Organisational Response Form, will be presented to Cabinet on 17th March 2024 and Governance and Audit Committee later in the year.

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 2024 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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