



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 11TH JULY 2023

**SUBJECT: REGULATOR RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPROVEMENT
 PROGRESS UPDATE**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
 SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on progress of recommendations that have been made by all regulators since the last Governance and Audit Committee update, and to advise on any new proposals that have been added since that time.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The register was last updated and presented to the Governance and Audit Committee January 2023. Since that time there have been no new proposals added onto the register and no areas for consideration as part of the Well-being of Future Generations examination.

2.2 We have 11 recommendations on the register, and none have been added. There is now 1 considered to be actioned and completed. If agreed by the Governance & Audit Committee, that would leave 10 outstanding.

2.3 We have received 1 report since the last time an update was provided in January 2023, and this is still making its way through the process.

2.4 The above does not include the improvement 'certificates' that come before Governance and Audit committee, as these confirm compliance to our statutory duty so do not make proposals or recommendations. Nor does it include External Financial Audit outputs at this point as the Governance & Audit Committee receive updates on progress against recommendations in the next Audit Wales Audit of Accounts Report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 We recommend 1 recommendation be closed down as completed and encourage members to view the specific proposals attached within Appendix A and judge if they agree that these are now complete. It is recommended that Governance and Audit Committee give their agreement (if appropriate) to close the proposals that are noted

as 'completed' within Appendix A.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure members are aware of progress against the Council's actions for progressing regulator recommendations and proposals and have assurance that progress is being made through an opportunity to monitor and challenge content.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The table below provides a summary of proposals or recommendations and the numbers outstanding from each piece of work. Whilst the numbers give some scope the focus is on the quality of the output as some recommendations can take a long time to complete whilst others are shorter actions, however the important factor is the value of the recommendations, quality of output, and the difference they make. Paragraphs 5.2 to 5.8 and appendix A expand on the pieces of work as noted below.

Name of Report	How many original proposals or recommendation outstanding	How many recommendations completed in this reporting period	How many are left to complete?
Welsh Housing Quality Standard Follow up Review	1	1	0
Financial Sustainability Assessment 2021	2	0	2
Springing Forward Workforce	1	0	1
Springing Forward Asset Management	3	0	3
Homelessness Report	2	0	2
Decarbonisation	2	0	2
Total	11	1	10

5.2 Welsh Housing Quality Standard Follow up Review

We have now completed our Delivery Plan as part of our long term vision and priorities for the future. We have more to do, to develop our investment plan and to promote the Plan but the action to deliver the recommendation are now complete and move into day to day work so we now recommend this proposal come of the register.

5.3 Financial Sustainability Assessment

As noted in the appendix, the 2023/2024 Budget was approved by Council at the end of February 2023. Work is underway to refocus the Transformation Programme to address the proposal of using the programme to develop financial benefits coming from transformation.

5.4 **Springing Forward – Workforce**

The Audit Wales report and response was presented to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 23rd January 2023. Since that time, we have made steady progress which can be seen in appendix A with a roll out date in the Autumn of workforce planning tool kit.

5.5 **Springing Forward – Asset Management**

Two of the three proposals have moved up to 75% complete and details are available in appendix A. The third proposal has just begun, and we are scoping out an asset mapping exercise so we can identify assets that can be considered for sharing.

5.6 **Homelessness**

The recommendations within this work are making steady progress and are on track to be completed by 2023 /2024. This is also now linked to the Corporate Risk Register so mitigating actions and proposals can be aligned.

5.7 **Decarbonisation**

This is a long term piece of work; we have a Decarbonisation Strategy called 'Reduce, Produce, Offset and buy.' As noted in the appendix a report went to Cabinet who approved the 10 recommendations needed to achieve our carbon targets, as a result these actions will now make greater progress across 2023/2024.

Other Regulator work

- 5.8 Although school inspections were suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, settings in a formal follow-up category continued to be monitored. During this period, all schools in receipt of this process were removed from any follow-up category.

Following an initial pilot phase in spring 2022, Estyn formally restarted their school inspections. A number of schools in Caerphilly have been inspected in recent months across secondary and primary settings. Although some the inspections have resulted in positive outcomes, five settings are now in follow-up categories. One secondary is in significant improvement, one primary is in 'special measures,' the pupil referral unit is in 'significant improvement' and two primary schools are in 'Estyn Review.' Recommendations from all Estyn inspections are used to identify appropriate levels of support. Progress against the recommendations, for schools in a follow-up category, are tracked through the Schools Causing Concern process.

- 5.9 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) held their Annual Review Meeting with the Director of Social Services on 19th December 2022, and progress was noted in all Regulatory areas. The written confirmation of this meeting is awaited. There has been a transfer of Link Inspector for the Local Authority and periodic meetings with the two Heads of Service have taken place. No concerns have been raised. Thematic Assurance Checks and inspections for regulated services are continuing. Whole service inspections are due to resume during 2023.

- 5.10 The Assurance and Risk Assessment Letter (Audit year 2021-2022) Final was received beginning of January 2023 and any recommendations will be reported on the next Governance and Audit Forward work programme. This work report covered
- Financial Position
 - Implications of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
 - Self-assessment arrangements
 - Carbon reduction plan

Future Audit Work Programme includes:

- 5.11 The ARA for 2022-23 notes that the Audit Assurance Work for April 2022-August 2023 is likely to focus on :
- Financial position
 - The Capital Programme management (project scoping starting July 23)
 - Use of performance information, with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes (the output is in progress)
 - Setting of well-being objectives
- 5.12 The Waste Strategy Review Report is making its way through the Audit Wales clearance process from draft to a final version.
- 5.13 For clarity, Audit Wales used to issue Proposals and Recommendations. A proposal was a 'suggestion for improvement' and a 'recommendation' meant an Authority had a 'statutory duty' to act. Therefore, Appendix A has a mixture of 'P' for proposals and R for recommendations. However, since the 2009 Local Government Measure, Performance duty was revoked in 2021, there are no longer proposals and all Audit Wales references from now on is referenced as a 'Recommendation'.
- 5.14 **Conclusion**

When monitoring progress against the recommendations, members are advised to consider what value the recommendations and actions to address them are making and what difference the activity makes for our citizens. The view of Audit Wales is that the decision on whether a recommendation is completed is an internal matter for the organisation to decide, (although it is within their remit to make more recommendations if they do not believe it has been addressed). Audit Wales receive this update as part of attendance at Governance and Audit Committee.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is a reasonable assumption that the financial and demand challenges facing the authority will continue. Alongside this, demand levels for key services will continue to increase with changing demographics and increased expectations placed on the local authority.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report does not relate to the development of a policy, strategy, practice or project so no specific Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this report,

however the Sustainable Development principle would be considered as part of any action planning to address proposals.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, although Financial Sustainability is noted as one of the reviews and has proposals attached.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific personnel implications directly resulting from this report although one of the proposals is in relation to workforce development.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultation responses received have been included in the body of this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Local Government and Elections Act
11.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (2015) Act

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Appendices:

Appendix A Action Plan and Response to Regulator Proposals