



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 15 FEBRUARY 2024

**SUBJECT: REGULATOR RECOMMENDATION TRACKER 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 November 2023. Since that time there have been 2 new reports received and 4 new proposals added onto the register.
- 2.2 We have 14 recommendations on the register, with 4 new ones added. There are 2 that are now considered to be actioned and completed. If agreed by the Governance & Audit Committee, that would leave 12 outstanding.
- 2.3 We have received 2 new reports since the last time an update was provided, The Waste Management Strategy and the setting of the Council's Well-being Objectives.
- 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 propose 2 recommendations be closed down as completed and encourage members to view the specific recommendations 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) via a vote 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 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?
Financial Sustainability Assessment 2021	2	0	2
Springing Forward Workforce	1	0	1
Springing Forward Asset Management	3	0	3
Homelessness Report	2	2	0
Decarbonisation	2	0	2
Waste Services Review - New	2	0 New	2
Setting of Well-being Objectives – New	2	0 New	2
Total	14	2	12

5.2 Financial Sustainability Assessment

One of the recommendations “The Council should develop and implement a more comprehensive MTFP” has been a long standing recommendation in its development due to changing financial climate, however this recommendation has almost come to the end of its improvement process and is part of business as usual. When the prioritised transformation projects informs the update of the Medium Term Financial Plan in spring 2024 we will look to close this recommendation. Appendix A explains the position as of January 2024.

5.3 Springing Forward – Workforce

Springing Forward – Workforce. This has 1 proposal outstanding though it has moved to a greater percentage of being completed. The pilots have been completed

and the system will be rolled out after training. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be finished by the summer of 2024.

5.4 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 begun and is part of the development of a long term strategy. We have delayed developing a long term strategy to accommodate the recent change in funding requirements and what that means for the council. The New Asset Strategy will identify required resources financial and people and has had to be adapted to accommodate the current funding environment.

We will engage with our partners through the Public Service Board moving forward and work with them on key projects. We have changed the timescale of completion to Autumn 24 as that fits in with the timeline for the community hubs work which will be the most relevant work as part of partnership working at this time.

5.5 Homelessness

Work to deliver improved partnership arrangements continues and is part of other workstreams undertaken under our Common Allocation Policy Review and our Temporary accommodation workstream. Welsh Government (WG) have produced a White Paper on Ending Homelessness and the additional statutory responsibilities this is likely to place on the service and staff structure and how we deliver prevention models will be kept under review and consideration for 24/25. All this work has now become business as usual as part of how we evolve the homelessness service to react to the changing pressures we face across the service as the cost of living crisis and the macro-economic situation changes and impacts on our communities. The Rapid Rehousing strategy and the forthcoming WG White Paper on ending Homelessness is part of our day to day work as we progress actions from the audit report over the next 5 years and the new policy is embedded. Homelessness is still on the Corporate Risk Register so will continue to be monitored

5.6 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 are now making greater progress across 2023/2024. Setting up metrics to measure the progress of the strategy has now been actioned.

5.7 Waste Services

The new Waste Strategy is progressing through various committees and was reported to a Joint Scrutiny 15th January 2024 to update all members on the draft strategy. The actions as suggested by Audit Wales have been addressed as the strategy was approved to go out to consultation. At the time of updating the register the recommendations have been completed but we will wait till the next Governance and Audit committee reporting to recommend closure to give a fuller update.

5.8 Setting of the Well-being Objectives

Audit Wales conducted an examination of how we set our Well-being Objectives (2023-2028) within the Sustainable Development Duty. Audit Wales took a partnership approach and followed our progress, attending workshops and so forth as part of the development of the new Plan. The Report was presented to Cabinet

17th January. The overall judgement was *“The Council has applied the sustainable development principle throughout the process of setting its new well-being objectives but there is scope to strengthen monitoring arrangements”*

There are two recommendations for improvement which are on the register.

R1. Each Well-being Objective has a published section that states how the objectives will be resourced, and this will be part of ongoing review.

R2. Performance Reporting has been a standard part for all Well-being Objective reporting over many years, however due to the integrated nature of the new Well-being Objectives (they do not follow a straight line of responsibility) we are developing a refreshed performance reporting method.

Other Regulator work

- 5.9 Following an initial pilot phase in spring 2022, Estyn formally restarted their school inspections. Thirty-one schools and one pupil referral unit in Caerphilly have been inspected in over the last two years across secondary and primary settings. Although many of the inspections have resulted in positive outcomes, five settings are now in follow-up categories. One secondary and one primary are 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.
- 5.10 There are no specific recommendations from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) for Social Services. CIW held their Annual Review Meeting with the Director of Social Services on 29th September 2023, and progress was noted in all Regulatory areas. 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 have been resumed during 2023.

Future Audit Work Programme includes:

- 5.11 The Assurance Risk Audit, known as the ARA update, as at Quarter 3 in the 2023 programme.
- Financial position - ongoing
 - Use of performance information, with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes. A draft report has been received and it is going through factual checking and the moderation process.
 - Digital Review – A draft report received and is now going through factual checking and moderation process.
 - Counter Fraud – currently in the ‘field work’ stage (getting knowledge).
- 5.12 For clarity, Audit Wales issue Recommendations for improvement for each individual outputs. Each Report completes a management response as to whether the council accepts those recommendations and how they will address them.

5.13 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