



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

Pembrokeshire County Council

Issued: September 2019

Document reference: 1446A2019-20



This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Timothy Buckle, Alison Lewis, Gareth W. Lewis and Sara Leahy under the direction of Huw Rees.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office Board, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the National Assembly.

The Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Summary report

2018-19 performance audit work

- 1 To decide the range and nature of the work we would undertake during the year, we considered how much we already know from all previous audit and inspection work and from other sources of information including Pembrokeshire County Council's (the Council) own mechanisms for review and evaluation. For 2018-19, we undertook improvement assessment work; an assurance and risk assessment project and work in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations Act at all councils. At some councils, we supplemented this work with local risk-based audits, identified in the Audit Plan for 2018-19.
- 2 The work carried out since the last Annual Improvement Report (AIR), including that of the relevant regulators, is set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement

- 3 Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2019-20.

Recommendations and proposals for improvement

- 4 Given the wide range of services provided by the Council and the challenges it is facing, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
 - make proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, we would expect it to do something about them and we will follow up what happens;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
 - conduct a special inspection, publish a report and make recommendations; and
 - recommend to ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.

- 5 During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations. However, we have made a number of proposals for improvement and these are repeated in this report. We will monitor progress against them and relevant recommendations made in our national reports ([Appendix 3](#)) as part of our improvement assessment work.

Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19

Exhibit 1: audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19

Description of the work carried out since the last AIR, including that of the relevant regulators, where relevant.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
January 2019	<p>Assurance and Risk Assessment Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources; • putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and • acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them. 	<p>Arising from this project we identified the following topics for inclusion in our audit programme at the Council for 2019-20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assurance and risk assessment (ongoing work); • financial sustainability (theme delivered across Wales); • a Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 examination; and • review of the Human Resources (HR) Service. 	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
June 2019	<p>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</p> <p>Examination of the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in 'Promoting physically active lifestyles to improve mental and physical well-being.'</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: The Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing the step in relation to promoting physically active lifestyles but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working. We came to this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council has considered the long-term benefits in setting this step and recognises the need to develop outcome measures; • 'prevention' is fundamental to the strategy which aims to develop and deliver services to improve the physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing of citizens; • the Council has considered how its actions to deliver this step integrate with other Council wellbeing objectives and the objectives of other public bodies, but a more systematic approach is needed; • the Council is collaborating with a range of partners to deliver the step and is exploring new partnership opportunities; and • the Council has involved stakeholders in the design of the strategy but could extend its engagement activities to ensure they are fully inclusive. 	<p>Whilst our examinations did not make any proposals for improvement, we identified areas in which the Council could improve. These are detailed in our full report.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
December 2018	<p>Annual Audit Letter 2017-18 Letter summarising the key messages arising from the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and his reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. The Annual Audit Letter is in Appendix 2 of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting. • I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, but significant financial challenges remain. • My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified any issues that would impact on the accounts or key financial systems. 	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Local risk-based performance audit			
October 2018	<p>Review of Pembrokeshire County Council's Transformation Programme</p> <p>The review looked at how effectively the Council is managing its transformation programme and taking action on the observations from the earlier review of 'Align the Leavers of Change'. The review focused on the Council's approach to its transformation programme and the delivery of the associated savings identified in its medium-term financial planning.</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: The Council has moved forward with its transformation programme, but planned savings targets have not been met and issues remain with clarity, pace and the assessment of outcomes. We came to this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council has changed its approach to transformation and the delivery of financial savings, but needs to be clear about its desired operating model and how that goal will be achieved; • some projects in the transformation programme have made progress, but overall pace remains slow; and • the delivery of savings continues to fall short of planned targets and arrangements for evaluating and reporting on the transformation programme's outcomes are underdeveloped. 	<p>P1 Clarify key elements of the transformation programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreeing the future operating model for the Council (including completion of the service prioritisation exercise); • urgently developing a workforce plan; and • reviewing the organisational capacity and capability required to deliver the transformation programme at greater pace.

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Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Local risk-based performance audit			
May 2019	<p>Follow-up review of whistleblowing and grievance policies and procedures</p> <p>Review of whether the Council has taken effective action to address the proposals for improvement contained in our March 2018 report, Review of whistleblowing and grievance policies and procedures in Pembrokeshire County Council.</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: The Council's actions to address our proposals for improvement have strengthened its arrangements for dealing with whistleblowing and grievances, but further work is needed to deliver the required outcomes. We reached this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council has clarified the role of line managers in its revised Whistleblowing Policy, which now states that the line manager will meet the concern-raiser with a member of the HR Advisory team; • the Council's 'prescribed persons' have met regularly but the meetings have not delivered the full requirement of the proposal for improvement; • the Council's revised Whistleblowing Policy now includes a timescale for responding to concern-raisers and a mechanism for keeping them informed; • the Council's Whistleblowing Policy states that an e-learning package is available and that all employees are required to complete it, but the majority of employees have not completed the training; • the Council has clarified the role of HR in its revised Grievance Policy; and • the Council has clarified how it will deal with investigations in the revised Grievance Policy. 	<p>P1 The Council must develop the regular meeting of the Council's three 'prescribed persons' to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the requirements of our original proposals for improvement; and • maintain a formal record of the meetings to provide clear actions and reference points for measuring progress. <p>P2 The Council must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that all staff receive whistleblowing training in line with its Whistleblowing Policy; and • establish a robust system so that it can be certain that all staff have received whistleblowing training.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Local risk-based performance audit			
May 2019	<p>Review of Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding</p> <p>Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area.</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: The Council is implementing improved governance and management arrangements that should provide increased assurance that children and adults are safeguarded, although arrangements in some areas need further strengthening. We reached this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the new corporate safeguarding policy helps to clarify the Council’s safeguarding arrangements, but action is needed to improve governance and procedures in some key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – once implemented, the Council’s new corporate safeguarding policy has the potential to strengthen its arrangements for safeguarding, but further clarity on roles and responsibilities for the operation and scrutiny of safeguarding is needed; – whilst the Council has safeguarding as a risk on its corporate risk register, the identification of safeguarding risks within service risk registers is weak; – the Council’s systems for the safe recruitment of staff provide some assurance but could be strengthened by formalising the risk assessment process for the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and having a 	<p>P1 The Council needs to clarify in its Safeguarding Policy the scrutiny arrangements for safeguarding.</p> <p>P2 The Council should clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Member and the Member Champion for Safeguarding in the policy and communicate this.</p> <p>P3 The Council needs to publicise the new corporate safeguarding policy to ensure staff, councillors and wider stakeholders are aware of it and how it should be applied.</p> <p>P4 The Council should ensure that safeguarding risks are appropriately considered as part of the move to directorate-based risk registers.</p> <p>P5 The Council should formally record and retain, on the corporate HR system, the risk assessment undertaken when determining whether a role requires a DBS check (and at what level).</p> <p>P6 The Council should keep all volunteer records on the corporate HR system to ensure that it has a single central recruitment record.</p> <p>P7 The Council should evaluate whether producing a corporate volunteering policy would strengthen its governance arrangements for safeguarding.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
		<p>single central recruitment record for all staff, governors and volunteers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – there are many strengths in the Council’s arrangements for safeguarding training, but the lack of a robust recording system means it cannot be certain all staff have received relevant training; – while safe recruitment practices are considered as part of the Council’s procurement process, contract management of safeguarding arrangements could be strengthened; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council regularly monitors and evaluates safeguarding information but may benefit from developing Council-specific performance measures to strengthen assurance. 	<p>P8 The Council should establish a robust system so that it can be certain that everyone who should have completed safeguarding training has received it.</p> <p>P9 The Council should review procurement practices to ensure that safeguarding matters are fully considered and managed when services are delivered on the Council’s behalf by third parties.</p> <p>P10 The Council should determine whether Council-specific performance measures would assist scrutiny in its role and provide greater assurance on the effectiveness of the Council’s new safeguarding policy.</p>
Improvement planning and reporting			
June 2018	<p>Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit</p> <p>Review of the Council’s published plans for delivering on improvement objectives.</p>	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement planning duties.	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Improvement planning and reporting			
November 2018	Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit Review of the Council's published performance assessment.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None.
Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies			
No reviews by Estyn have taken place during the time period covered in this report.			
December 2018	Care Inspectorate Wales: Inspection of Children's Services at Pembrokeshire County Council		
2018/19	Care Inspectorate Wales: Local authority annual performance review letter 2018/19		

Appendix 1

Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities (defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities) have a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'.

The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. Staff of the Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Auditor General, produce the annual improvement report. The report discharges the Auditor General's duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

The Auditor General may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the authority and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). An important ancillary activity for the Auditor General is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

Appendix 2

Annual Audit Letter

24 Cathedral Road / 24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Cardiff / Caerdydd
CF11 9LJ

Tel / Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Fax / Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Textphone / Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

info@audit.wales / post@archwilio.cymru

www.audit.wales / www.archwilio.cymru

Please contact us in Welsh or English.

Cysylltwch â ni'n Gymraeg neu'n Saesneg.

Ian Westley – Chief Executive
Councillor David Simpson – Leader
Pembrokeshire County Council
County Hall
Haverfordwest
SA61 1TP

Reference: 930A2018-19

Date issued: 13 December 2018

Dear Ian and Councillor Simpson

Annual Audit Letter – Pembrokeshire County Council 2017-18

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

Pembrokeshire County Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources

It is Pembrokeshire County Council's (the Council's) responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards. On 30 July 2018, I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts. The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members of the Council in my Audit of Financial Statements report on 26 July 2018.

I am satisfied that the Council has arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources, but the Council continues to face significant financial challenges

My consideration of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts, as well as placing reliance on the work completed under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Auditor General has highlighted areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made in his [Annual Improvement Report](#) published in September 2018.

Austerity funding remains the most significant challenge facing all local government bodies in Wales and these financial pressures are likely to continue for the medium term. The recent provisional local government funding settlement for 2019-20 will see Pembrokeshire County Council's settlement decrease by 0.4%.

The Council's transformation programme is critical in helping it respond to funding pressures and increasing demand for services. Our review of the Council's transformation programme shows that, while the Council has moved forward with the programme, planned savings targets have not been met and issues remain with clarity, pace and the assessment of outcomes. The Council has changed its approach to transformation and the delivery of financial savings but needs to be clearer about its desired operating model and how that goal will be achieved. While some projects in the transformation programme have made progress, the overall pace remains slow and the delivery of savings continues to fall short of planned targets. Arrangements for evaluating and reporting on the transformation programme's outcomes are also underdeveloped. Our transformation programme review report can be accessed [here](#).

In terms of the financial position, in 2017-18, the Council operated within its budget for the year reporting a net spend of £204.8 million on the provision of services. This was despite an under achievement of £2.9 million against a 2017-18 savings and efficiency target of £8.4 million.

As at 31 March 2018, the Council held general fund and earmarked reserves of £43.1 million. General fund balances have been maintained at £7 million over the last three years, with earmarked reserves reducing from £69.6 million in 2015-16 to £36.1 million in 2017-18 in line with planned expenditure.

For 2018-19, the Council projects that it will report a deficit on the provision of services of £2.2 million and has identified the following key pressure points:

- Education services;
- Social care adults;
- Social care children; and
- Planning and development services.

The Council projects it will achieve savings and efficiencies of £10.4 million against its 2018-19 target of £11.6 million and Directors and Heads of Service have been tasked with making up the shortfall from other areas.

The Council's medium term financial plan, which runs to 2021-22, identifies a revenue shortfall of £52.7 million over the period. The plan indicates that the general fund reserves will be maintained at the current level over the course of the plan to 2021-22 but this is predicated on proposed levels of council tax increases and similar savings and efficiency targets to the current year.

Going forward, the Council needs to ensure that it:

- moves forward with pace to achieve its ambitions and help deliver the Council's medium term financial strategy within an environment of effective governance and scrutiny;
- carefully monitors the achievement of its savings and efficiency targets which will be key to the delivery of the medium term financial plan; and
- carefully monitors its useable reserves position to ensure the financial resilience is maintained.

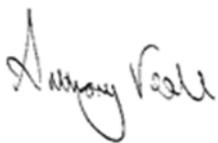
I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 30 July 2018

My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2017-18 accounts or key financial systems

A more detailed report on my grant certification work will follow in 2019 once this year's programme of certification work is complete.

The financial audit fee for 2017-18 is currently expected to be marginally below the estimated fee set out in the Annual Audit Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Veale', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Anthony Veale – Engagement Director
For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

cc Jon Haswell, Director of Finance

Appendix 3

National report recommendations 2018-19

Exhibit 2: national report recommendations 2018-19

Summary of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the Wales Audit Office, since publication of the last AIR.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
October 2018	<u>Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity</u>	<p>R1 The projections for the three residual waste projects in the Programme assume that, across the 14 councils involved, the overall amount of residual waste will increase through the lifetime of the contracts. If these projections are accurate then something significant would have to occur beyond 2040 to reach zero waste across these council areas by 2050. If the projections are not accurate then there is the risk that councils will pay for capacity they do not need. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in reviewing the Towards Zero Waste strategy, considers how its ambition of there being no residual waste by 2050 aligns with current projections for residual waste treatment; and• works with councils to consider the impact of changes in projections on the likely cost of residual waste projects and any mitigating action needed to manage these costs.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
October 2018	<u>Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity</u>	<p>R2 The Welsh Government's programme support to date has mainly focused on project development and procurement. Now that most of the projects are operational, the focus has shifted to contract management. We recommend that the Welsh Government continue its oversight of projects during the operational phase by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building on its existing model of providing experienced individuals to assist with project development and procurement and making sure input is available to assist with contract management if required; • setting out its expectations of councils regarding contract management; • ensuring partnerships revisit their waste projections and associated risks periodically, for example to reflect updated population projections or economic forecasts; and • obtaining from partnerships basic management information on gate fees paid, amount of waste sent to facilities and quality of contractor service.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Local Government Services to Rural Communities</u>	<p>R1 Socio economic change, poor infrastructure and shifts in provision of key services and facilities have resulted in the residualisation of communities in rural Wales. We recommend that Welsh Government support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refreshing rural grant programmes to create sustainable financial structures, with multi-year allocations; and • helping people and businesses make the most of digital connectivity through targeted and more effective business and adult education support programmes. <p>R2 The role of Public Service Boards is evolving but there are opportunities to articulate a clearer and more ambitious shared vision for rural Wales (see paragraphs 2.2 to 2.9 and 2.28 to 2.31). We recommend that PSB public service partners respond more effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their different rural communities using the Welsh Government’s Rural Proofing Tool and identify and agree the local and strategic actions needed to support community sustainability; and • ensuring the Local Well-Being Plan sets out a more optimistic and ambitious vision for ‘place’ with joint priorities co-produced by partners and with citizens to address agreed challenges.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Local Government Services to Rural Communities</u>	<p>R3 To help sustain rural communities, public services need to think differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). We recommend councils provide a more effective response to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring service commissioners have cost data and qualitative information on the full range of service options available; and • using citizens' views on the availability, affordability, accessibility, adequacy and acceptability of council services to shape the delivery and integration of services.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Local Government Services to Rural Communities</u>	<p>R4 To help sustain rural communities, public services need to act differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). We recommend councils do more to develop community resilience and self-help by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with relevant bodies such as the Wales Co-operative Centre to support social enterprise and more collaborative business models; • providing tailored community outreach for those who face multiple barriers to accessing public services and work; • enhancing and recognising the role of town and community councils by capitalising on their local knowledge and supporting them to do more; • encouraging a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by establishing pan-public service community hubs, networks of expertise, and clusters of advice and prevention services; • enabling local action by supporting community asset transfer identifying which assets are suitable to transfer, and having the right systems in place to make things happen; and • improving community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling</u>	<p>R1 Benchmarking work has found that the cost of certain waste management services shows surprising variation (paragraphs 1.31-1.39). The Welsh Government should work with councils to understand better the basis of the variation in spending on waste management services that are fundamentally the same and ensure that waste management costs are accounted for in a consistent way.</p> <p>R2 The Welsh Government believes that, if applied optimally, its Collections Blueprint offers the most cost-effective overall means of collecting recyclable resources but is planning further analysis (paragraphs 1.40-1.51). When undertaking its further analysis to understand better the reasons for differences in councils' reported costs, and the impact on costs where councils have adopted the Collections Blueprint, we recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explores how the cost of collecting dry recyclables may affect the overall cost of providing kerbside waste management services to households; and • compares the actual costs with the costs modelled previously as part of the Welsh Government-commissioned review of the Collections Blueprint for councils that now operate the Collections Blueprint.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling</u>	<p>R3 The Welsh Government has undertaken to consider alternatives to the current weight-based recycling targets which can better demonstrate the delivery of its ecological footprint and carbon reduction goals (paragraphs 2.38-2.45). We recommend that the Welsh Government replace or complement the current target to recycle, compost and reuse wastes with performance measures to refocus recycling on the waste resources that have the largest impact on carbon reduction, and/or are scarce. We recognise that the Welsh Government may need to consider the affordability of data collection for any alternative means of measurement.</p> <p>R4 In refreshing Towards Zero Waste, the Welsh Government needs to show that wider sustainability benefits sought through municipal recycling offer value and cannot be more readily attained in other ways and at lower cost including, but not necessarily limited to, other waste management interventions (paragraphs 2.52-2.53). The Welsh Government should demonstrate in the revised waste strategy that not only is it possible to recycle a greater proportion of municipal waste, but how doing so maximises its contribution to achieving its sustainable development objectives.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer</u>	<p>R1 Local authorities need to do more to make CATs (Community Asset Transfers) simpler and more appealing, help build the capacity of community and town councils, give them more guidance in raising finance, and look to support other community development models such as social enterprises that support social value and citizen involvement. In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs.</p> <p>R2 Local authorities have significant scope to provide better and more visible help and support before, during, and after the community asset transfer process. We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify community assets transfer’s role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services; • work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs; • identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer; • ensure their CAT policy adequately covers aftercare, long term support, post transfer support, signposting access to finance, and sharing the learning about what works well; and • support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
December 2018	<u>The maturity of local government in use of data</u>	<p>R1 Part 1 of the report highlights the importance of creating a strong data culture and clear leadership to make better use of data. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a clear vision that treats data as a key resource; • establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data; • undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests; and • create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services. <p>R2 Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that authorities comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data with partners to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. Whilst these two things are not mutually exclusive, uncertainty on data protection responsibilities is resulting in some officers not sharing data, even where there is agreement to provide partners with information. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and • review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
December 2018	<u>The maturity of local government in use of data</u>	<p>R3 In Part 3 of our report, we conclude that adequate resources and sufficient capacity are ongoing challenges. However, without upskilling staff to make better use of data, authorities are missing opportunities to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify staff who have a role in analysing and managing data to remove duplication and free up resources to build and develop capacity in data usage; and • invest and support the development of staff data analytical, mining and segmentation skills. <p>R4 Part 4 of our report highlights that authorities have more to do to create a data-driven decision-making culture and to unlock the potential of the data they hold. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set data reporting standards to ensure minimum data standards underpin decision making; and • make more open data available.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
March 2019	<u>Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste</u>	<p>R1 Increasing the focus on waste prevention to reflect the overall aims of Towards Zero Waste</p> <p>Available data on the amount of waste produced suggests mixed progress to deliver the Welsh Government's waste prevention targets. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) revisits the relative priority it gives to recycling and waste prevention as part of its review of Towards Zero Waste; b) sets out clearly the expectations on different organisations and sectors for waste prevention; and c) revisits its overall waste prevention targets and the approach it has taken to monitor them in light of progress to date, examples from other countries and in the context of current projections about waste arising through to 2050. <p>R2 Improving data on commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste</p> <p>The Welsh Government is a partner in initial work to assess the feasibility of developing a new digital solution to track all waste. If this preferred option does not succeed, we recommend that the Welsh Government works with Natural Resources Wales to explore the costs and benefits of other options to improve non-municipal waste data in Wales, including additional powers to require waste data from businesses.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
March 2019	<u>Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste</u>	<p>R3 Enhancing producer responsibility and using more legal, financial and fiscal levers</p> <p>The Welsh Government has opportunities to influence waste prevention through legislation and financial incentives. It can also influence changes at the UK level where fiscal matters are not devolved. We recommend that the Welsh Government consider whether provisions to extend producer responsibility and the use of financial powers such as grant conditions, fiscal measures and customer charges and incentives, are needed to promote and to prioritise waste prevention.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
June 2019	<u>The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales</u>	<p>R1 Part 1 of the report sets out the complexities of the planning system showing how challenging it is for local planning authorities to effectively engage with and involve stakeholders in choices and decisions. To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local planning authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose; – use ‘Place Plans’ as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making; and – improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings. • Welsh Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – review the Development Management Procedure Order 2012 and update the engagement and involvement standards for local planning authorities.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
June 2019	<p><u>The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales</u></p>	<p>R2 Part 2 of the report highlights that local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review their building control fee regimes to ensure the levels set better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding; and • improve capacity by working regionally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – integrate services to address specialism gaps; – develop joint supplementary planning guidance; and – develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities. <p>R3 Part 2 of the report highlights that the cost of development control services is not reflected in the charges set for these services and progress in developing regional responses to strengthen resilience has been slow. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews development control fees to ensure the levels set better reflect the actual cost of providing these services; and • consider how to use the powers in the Planning (Wales) Act to support and improve local planning authority capacity and resilience.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
June 2019	<u>The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales</u>	<p>R4 Part 3 of the report summarises the effectiveness and impact of local planning authorities decision making and how well they are performing against national measures. We recommend that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority; • revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned; and • enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings. <p>R5 Part 4 of the report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. We recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving wellbeing; • provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate wellbeing training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities; • set appropriate measures for their administration of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on wellbeing; and • annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities' impact on wellbeing.

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: post@archwilio.cymru

Gwefan: www.archwilio.cymru