

Audit Wales National Report: [Regenerating Town Centres in Wales](#)

September 2021

#	Report Recommendation /Proposal for Improvement	Council action planned in response to the recommendations/proposals for improvement issued by the	Target date for completion of Actions	Responsible Officer	PIMS Ref No
R1	Non-domestic rates have not been reviewed in recent years, and the levels charged do not reflect the current rents being achieved in many town centres. <u>We recommend that the Welsh Government</u> review Nondomestic Rates to ensure the system better reflects town centre conditions when the payments holiday ends in March 2022.	This recommendation is for Welsh Government	Non applicable	Non applicable	Non applicable
R2	Many town-centre businesses are impacted adversely by charging for car parking, access to public transport and poor transport infrastructure. <u>We recommend that the Welsh Government</u> work with local authorities to review transport challenges facing town centres and agree how best to address these	This recommendation is for Welsh Government	Non applicable	Non applicable	Non applicable
R3	The Welsh Government has directly provided and levered in just under £900 million through 13 funding schemes to help regenerate town centres. However, some aspects of the Welsh Government's management of the funding are considered problematic. To ensure local authorities are able to maximise the impact of funding and tackle the more difficult and longstanding problems that would help	This recommendation is for Welsh Government	Non applicable	Non applicable	Non applicable

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	<p>transform their town centres, <u>we recommend that the Welsh Government:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consolidate funding to reduce bureaucracy by streamlining processes and grant conditions and keeping requests for information and supporting materials to a minimum • consolidate funding to reduce bureaucracy by streamlining processes and grant conditions and keeping requests for information and supporting materials to a minimum; • move away from annual bidding cycles to multi-year allocations; and • rebalance investment from capital to revenue to help local authorities address staff capacity and skills shortages. 				
R4	<p>The Welsh Government has provided all 22 local authorities with training on how best to use existing enforcement, financial assistance and debt recovery powers, but they are not being consistently nor effectively utilised to support regeneration. <u>We recommend that local authorities</u> take appropriate action, using these existing powers and resources available to achieve the best possible outcome for town centres by:</p>	<p>Carmarthenshire have completed the training provided and subsequently developed an Empty Property Action Plan for enforcement within town centres linked to the Transforming Towns agenda. Carmarthenshire have an Enforcement Group in place, made up of officers from Regeneration, Property, Housing, Building Control, Legal, Council Tax, Business Rates, Planning and Public Health. Going forward, the group will aim to use their resource and intervention to action relevant requirements in relation to empty properties within the County. The Empty Property Action Plan and supporting detail is in the process of gaining political sign off before a final version can be provided to Welsh Government for consideration. Following</p>	Ongoing	Jason Jones/ Jonathan Morgan	

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		which Carmarthenshire will gain access to the loan funding made available by the Empty Property Management Fund to utilise necessary enforcement powers where appropriate.			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using alternative methods of enforcement before using Compulsory Purchase Orders as a last resort; 	As an Authority we will look to use a range of alternative enforcement methods using the loan funding prior to resorting to Compulsory Purchase Orders as a tool of last resort where appropriate	Ongoing	Jason Jones/ Jonathan Morgan	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrating enforcement strategies with wider departmental strategies across housing, environmental health, planning and regeneration teams to make more effective use of existing skills and resources; and 	The multi-disciplinary Enforcement Group team that includes Regeneration, Property, Housing, Building Control, Legal, Council Tax, Business Rates, Planning and Public Health represents many departments in the authority and representatives will bring their skills and resources to deliver the Empty Property Action Plan, and will integrate all respective strategies accordingly.	Ongoing	Jason Jones/ Jonathan Morgan	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring there is capacity and the right expertise to use the full range of powers, working in collaboration with other councils to achieve good outcomes. 	Capacity and expertise in this field will be drawn from a range of departments within the authority through the Carmarthenshire Enforcement Group. Collaboration with other councils will be carried out as and when necessary.	Ongoing	Jason Jones/ Jonathan Morgan	
R5	The Welsh Government's 'Town Centres First' approach looks to put the health of town centres at the heart of the decisions taken by the Welsh Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities. This requires a high degree of integration between cross-cutting policy frameworks and decision making to promote town centres above much else. <u>We recommend that the Welsh Government</u> set out how it	This recommendation is for Welsh Government	Non applicable	Non applicable	Non applicable

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	plans to deliver this in practice, its expectations of partners and the practical steps it will take to make this ambition a reality.				
R6	Town centres are changing, and local authorities need to be receptive to these changes and plan to manage these shifts. <u>We recommend that local authorities</u> use our regeneration tool to self-assess their current approaches to identify where they need to improve their work on town-centre regeneration (the tool is here).	Regeneration have led in the preparation of town centre recovery plans for Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli, which are currently in draft form, and are due to go out for final consultation in the next few months. In addition, Regeneration have been leading on developing the “Ten Towns” plans. All these plans have acknowledged the changes occurring in town centres that have been accelerated by the pandemic, Brexit and other market forces. Moving forward we will make use of the regeneration tool to support our work where necessary.	Plans to be endorsed Q3 2021/22	Jason Jones	15142 15146