

Governance & Audit Committee 17th December 2021

Audit Wales: Review of Planning Services – Carmarthenshire County Council		
Recommendations / key decisions required: 1. To note the progress made by Carmarthenshire County Council in response to the Audit Wales recommendations		
Reasons: Audit Wales undertook the review of Carmarthenshire County Council's planning services following their Assurance and Risk work had identified the service as a potential risk. It was agreed that Governance & Audit would be updated on progress quarterly.		
Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: N/A		
Exec. Board Decision Required: N/A		
Council Decision Required: N/A		
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr. Mair Stephens, Deputy Leader & Cllr Philip Hughes (Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning Enforcement)		
Directorate: Environment Name of Head of Service: Noelwyn Daniel Report Authors: Noelwyn Daniel	Designations: Interim Head of Planning	Tel No.: 01267 226270 E Mail Address: NDaniel@sirgar.gov.uk

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17TH DECEMBER 2021

Audit Wales: Review of Planning Services – Carmarthenshire County Council

The Audit Wales review sought to answer the question: Is the planning service meeting its own objectives, and supporting the Council in the delivery of its overall objectives?

Overall, Audit Wales found that: Significant and long-standing performance issues in the planning service need to be urgently addressed to help support delivery of the Council's ambitions. They came to this conclusion because:

- the Council's current arrangements for determining major planning applications need strengthening to help it achieve its regeneration ambitions;
- long-standing, significant performance issues in development management and planning enforcement are undermining effective service delivery; and
- the Council needs to urgently review its performance and service improvement arrangements for its planning service to better serve its customers.

The report included 17 key recommendations for the Council to address, these are included in the Audit Wales report and action plan.

This report provides updates up until the end of November 2021 in response to the Audit Wales recommendations and the agreed actions and seeks to provide assurance to the Governance & Audit Committee that significant progress has been made over the last seven months.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

1. Carmarthenshire response update on agreed action plan

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Noelwyn Daniel, Interim Head of Planning

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO

Legal

Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation and the Planning Protocol are being proposed that will assist with improving performance of the Planning Division. These will be discussed at CRWG on January 5th 2022

Finance

There are financial implications with actions taken to address the recommendations of the Audit Wales report. These are being managed within current budget and at the last budget monitoring the Division was projecting an underspend of £194k. There were financial implications identified relating to the undetermined planning application that were outside of the allocated 8-week time.

ICT

Work is being undertaken to identify improvements that can be made to the Planning Services main ICT back-office system, Arcus Global. This work will be prioritised and taken forward by staff within the ICT & Corporate Policy Division.

Risk Management

Risk has been identified from not addressing the Recommendations within the Audit Wales report and the Corporate Risk Register has been updated to articulate these Risks. Financial risk was also identified if the situation regarding the undetermined applications was not addressed urgently.

Staffing

There have been staffing implications relating to the implementation of the actions to address the Audit Wales recommendation. Staff have been appointed into funded vacant posts but recruiting staff is a challenge across the whole planning sector. Staff well-being is vitally important to the authority and everything is being done to support staff as we address these recommendations.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Noelwyn Daniel, Interim Head of Planning

1. Scrutiny Committee: Not Applicable

2. Local Member(s): Not Applicable

3. Community / Town Council: Not Applicable

4. Relevant Partners: Not Applicable

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations: Not Applicable

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

There are none