

Governance & Audit Committee

21 October 2022

Follow up review: Planning Services – Carmarthenshire County Council		
Recommendations / key decisions required: To note the follow up review undertaken by Audit Wales on the progress made by Carmarthenshire County Council in response to Audit Wales' July 2021 report, Review of Planning services.		
Reasons: Audit Wales have finalised their 12 month review on the progress made by Carmarthenshire County Council in response to their recommendation report on Planning services in Carmarthenshire (July 2021).		
Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: N/A		
Cabinet Decision Required: N/A Council Decision Required: N/A		
CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr. Ann Davies		
Directorate: Environment Name of Head of Service: Rhodri Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability. Report Authors: Rhodri Griffiths	Designations: Head of Place and Sustainability	Tel No: 07815 470094 E Mail Address: rdgriffiths@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

**Executive Summary
Governance & Audit Committee
21 October 2022**

**Audit Wales: Follow up review of Planning Services – Carmarthenshire
County Council**

In July 2022, Audit Wales published the report Review of Planning Services. The report's overall findings were 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'.

The report included 17 recommendations for the Council to address. The intervention board set up to respond to the recommendations identified a subset of 49 actions to be taken forward and an action plan for delivery. In the intervening 15 months exceptional reporting on progress against the delivery of the action plan has been provided to Cabinet, Governance & Audit Committee and senior management to provide assurance of progress made in mitigating the recommendations.

Audit Wales have followed the progress against the action plan over the intervening 15 month period and produced a follow up report. The reports summary findings set out ;

" The Council is to be commended for the swift, decisive action it took in response to the findings of our 2021 report, and for the way it has driven improvements in its planning service.

The constructive way in which the Council received our report and acted on the recommendations is a particularly positive example of a Council demonstrating its commitment to driving improvement in service delivery.

The Council has learnt lessons from the review that it has also applied more widely, particularly in relation to performance management.

Overall, we found that, the Council has successfully addressed all our recommendations and has responded at pace to deliver significant improvements in its planning service."

At the end of the financial year 2021/2022 annual Planning performance standards set by the Welsh Government have been exceeded for the first time;

PAM/018 Percentage of all planning applications determined in time. Cumulative 12-month figure - **80.4%** (WG target 80%)

PAM/019 Percentage of planning appeals dismissed. Cumulative 12-month figure - **75%** (WG target 70%)

Quarter 1 and 2 performance standards for 2022 indicate that progress has further improved to outperform the standards set by the Welsh Government.

Audit Wales propose to publish the report on their website on 21 October.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

Audit Wales follow up report



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: Rhodri Griffiths Head of Place and Sustainability

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

Legal

Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation and the Planning Protocols were agreed by the Council as part of the proposals that will assist with improving performance of the Planning Division in February 2022. The council approved the Enforcement Statement in March 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. Financial implications identified relating to the undetermined planning application that were outside of the allocated 8-week time currently stand at £372k down from £755k in 2021.

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. Risk profiles have been downgraded from substantial /probable to moderate/ possible as a result of the progression of actions taken to address the recommendations.

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 in the last 6 months amounting to approximately 30% of the service's total workforce. The division is currently going through a structural review to regularise the temporary re-organisation put in place to respond to the recommendations, provide future opportunity for the development and progression of staff and in light of the department's new Sustainability responsibilities. Recruiting of experienced professional staff remains challenging across the whole planning sector, however the department has been successful in attracting new experienced professional staff in enforcement and ecology. Staff well-being is critical to maintain service improvement and everything is being done to support staff as the department reshapes its service.

CONSULTATIONS

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

Signed: Rhodri Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability

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

**CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)
AWARE/CONSULTED:**

Yes

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

There are none