

Governance and Audit Committee

15 December 2023

Audit Wales Report: Digital Strategy Review – Carmarthenshire County Council

Recommendations / key decisions required:

1. To consider the findings and recommendations of the Audit Wales local report.
2. To approve the Carmarthenshire County Council response to the recommendations of the report relevant to the Council.

Reasons:

We have a duty to consider regulatory report recommendations and Proposals for Improvement.

Cabinet Decision Required NO

Council Decision Required NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Cllr Philip Hughes, Cabinet Member for Organisation and Workforce

Chief Executive's Department	Designations:	Tel:
Jason Jones	Head of Regeneration, Digital & Policy	JaJones@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
Gareth Jones	Chief Digital Officer	garethjones@carmarthesnshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit Wales Report: Digital Strategy Review - Carmarthenshire County Council

Why the audit was undertaken?

This is part of a national review but individual local reports are being prepared for each Council. Digital technology is key to delivering a wide range of council services in a more economic, efficient and effective way. It is also an important means of councils delivering their wellbeing objectives and carrying out sustainable development.

Having a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital can bring several benefits such as:

- establishing a common vision for use of digital and the intended outcomes for local communities linked to the council's strategic objectives
- helping to ensure that councils' use of digital technology is aligned with their key strategic objectives and other plans and strategies and is informed by a good understanding of current and future trends;
- reducing the risk of duplication both within councils and with partners;
- consideration of resourcing digital over the short, medium and longer term together; and
- providing a framework against which to monitoring progress over the short, medium and long term.

The focus of the audit

Audit Wales looked at the extent to which Carmarthenshire County Council's strategic approach to digital has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the Council's resources.

Key findings

The Council has a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital, that is informed by a good understanding of current and future trends and is understood by key elected members and officers. There are strong governance arrangements to monitor the progress of digital projects supported by implementation plans that include milestone and performance measures. The Council has also reviewed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of its digital strategy and has applied learning from this to inform its strategic approach.

The Council's arrangements could be further strengthened through improved public engagement, clarifying how it could contribute to the national well-being goals and further exploring opportunities for partnership working. The Council also aims to monitor value for money via project post-implementation reviews, however, these are not always completed, and achievement of savings is not always monitored.

Report recommendations

The report makes 4 recommendations, and the Council's action plan response is attached.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES:

- 1 Audit Wales Report**
- 2 Carmarthenshire Action Plan response**

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:

Jason Jones

Head of Regeneration, Digital & Policy

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
Yes	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Corporate Strategy

The report's recommendations support the Corporate Strategy and our Well-being Objectives.

Regulatory Reports

- National/Thematic reports are undertaken by regulators to look at all Councils in Wales (in an integrated programme of work consulted and agreed upon with local government) to identify best practice.
 - Most of these reports contain recommendations. Sometimes the recommendations are for Welsh Government and/or local government.
 - Not all recommendations contained in reports may apply to Carmarthenshire as in some instances we could be the area of best practice proposed, be already doing what is identified or it may not be applicable.
- All regulatory report recommendations are entered onto the Council's performance monitoring system (PIMS) and any reasons for discounting recommendations should be explained and recorded. Progress against recommendations is monitored and reported.
- All regulatory reports will now be considered by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet, Governance and Audit Committee and where appropriate relevant scrutiny committees.

Governance and Audit Committee

- The role of the Governance and Audit Committee is to review and assess the risk management, internal control, performance management and corporate governance arrangements of the Council, it is expected that the council's Governance and Audit Committee formally consider all reports of external review bodies – principally; Audit Wales, Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).
- As well as actively considering reports, committees are expected to assure themselves that there are arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate progress against any recommendations contained in them. The focus here should be on holding executives and officers to account to ensure that reports and recommendations have been acted upon.

Scrutiny

Some reports may also be relevant for consideration by scrutiny committees.

CONSULTATIONS

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

Jason Jones	Head of Regeneration, Policy & Digital
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1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination	N/A
If yes include the following information: -	
Scrutiny Committee	
Date the report was considered:-	
Scrutiny Committee Outcome/Recommendations:-	

2. Local Member(s)

3. Community / Town Council

4. Relevant Partners

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED	Cllr. Philip Hughes
YES	

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

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Audit Wales Digital Strategy Review		Cymraeg: Adolygiad Strategaeth Ddigidol – Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin Audit Wales English: Digital Strategy Review – Carmarthenshire County Council Audit Wales