

## Governance & Audit Committee 24 September 2021

<b>Audit Wales: Review of Planning Services – Carmarthenshire County Council</b>		
<b>Recommendations / key decisions required:</b> 1. To note the findings of the Audit Wales report. 2. To note the Carmarthenshire County Council response and action plan provided to Audit Wales on July 30 <sup>th</sup> 2021		
<b>Reasons:</b> 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.		
<b>Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted:</b> N/A		
<b>Cabinet Decision Required:</b> N/A <b>Council Decision Required:</b> N/A		
CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr. Mair Stephens, Deputy Leader & Cllr Philip Hughes (Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning Enforcement)		
<b>Directorate:</b> Environment <b>Name of Head of Service:</b> Noelwyn Daniel  <b>Report Authors:</b>  Noelwyn Daniel	<b>Designations:</b>  Interim Head of Planning	<b>Tel No.:</b> 01267 226270  <b>E Mail Address:</b> <a href="mailto:NDaniel@sirgar.gov.uk">NDaniel@sirgar.gov.uk</a>

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

The Council has already considered the findings and recommendations and prepared a detailed response and action plan which looks to address the issues identified. Noelwyn Daniel has been appointed as Interim Head of Planning and leads the Intervention Board, an Intervention Assurance Board is chaired by the Chief Executive which monitors and challenges progress with implementing the action plan.

**DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?**

**YES**

1. Audit Wales Report
2. Carmarthenshire response and 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
<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>

### **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 September 19<sup>th</sup> 2021.

### **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 £102k. 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