

Audit Wales Recommendations and Key Actions

The table below now contains all seventeen recommendations from the Audit Wales report that was provided in draft to Carmarthenshire County Council on June 14th – the final version was received on July 13th 2021.

Work has commenced on ensuring actions are put in place and being delivered to address all recommendations as articulated by Audit Wales.

Strategic impact					
R1 - Align its planning service to its corporate ambitions to ensure:					
R1.1 - It can respond effectively to deal with its regeneration ambitions and can deliver them at pace;					
R1.2 - That the planning service is effectively contributing to and collaborating with other services to deliver on the corporate agenda.					
R2 - Review the role and outcomes it expects from its planning service as part of its strategic groups, to ensure the service is effectively integrated and delivering the required outcomes.					
Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R1.1 & R1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a dedicated team of Development Management staff to focus on 'Major Projects' that support the county's economic recovery plan outputs and aspirations. 	07/06/21	02/08/2021	On-Going	Jason Jones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Corporate Major Projects Group comprising council officers representing the range of services involved in development proposals, e.g. Planning, Regeneration, Highways & Legal (but not limited to). Priority focus to be afforded to projects that deliver jobs and growth in support of the Council's economic recovery plan. This will be led by the Head of Regeneration. 	24/05/21	05/07/21	Complete	Jason Jones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protocol to be developed covering applications for major development projects (schemes above 	12/07/21	27/08/21	On-Going	Jason Jones

	<p>10 residential units or 1,000 m² of commercial development) – setting out how we will engage with applicants / developers, with clarity and commitment on the process(es) we will adopt to provide a quality and efficient planning process. Protocol will include, and clearly articulate, the programme activities, timescales and responsibilities that will support CCC’s protocol and commitment to determine major applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration to be given to whether a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) should be entered into with applicants for major development projects. PPA would set out the scope and timetable for pre-application engagement and subsequent submission and determination of the planning application. Possible useful project management tool that would be bespoke to each development, requiring commitment from both parties – applicant and LPA. 	28/07	17/09/21	On-Going	Jason Jones
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Progress Report June 24th 2021

- Expressions of Interest were sent out on June 7th with a closing date of June 21st. First officer will commence on July 1st whilst a further two officers will commence on August 2nd 2021.
- Gary Glenister commenced on July 1st
- Officers have been identified that will attend this Corporate Major Projects Group. First meeting will be on w/c July 5th

Progress Report July 25th 2021

- Gary Glenister and Stuart Walters have met as the Major Projects Group, to review the list of major planning applications. Projects have been prioritised based upon greatest economic impact (Number of jobs created), quick win applications with only minor issues left to resolve.
- Meetings have been convened with internal consultees such as highways, ecology and legal to explore solutions as to how we can collectively work together to process the applications efficiently. Dialogue is also ongoing with external consultees, agents and applicants to move applications forward to determination.
- Prospero a private sector planning agency are assisting and of the 133 applications are currently processing 23 of the major project application.
- The current position on the major applications is as follows:
 - 133 total number of applications
 - 22 approved to date
 - 3 refusals
 - 3 Withdrawals
 - 105 yet to be determined
- Protocol for major developments commenced and envisage completion of draft proposal August 21.

R2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the relevant strategic groups that already exist to ensure Planning Services are fully integrated within their Terms of Reference. 	01/07/21	30/09/21	On-Going	Ian R Llewelyn
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure outcomes expected from the Planning Service in delivering the outcomes of these Strategic Groups is clearly documented and agreed. 	06/09/21	30/09/21	Not Started	Ian R Llewelyn

Service delivery – development management

R3 - Develop a plan and timeline to deal with its planning application backlog, in particular the historic backlog.

R4 - Review its planning data collection arrangements to ensure they are being done correctly and reported accurately.

R5 - Address the financial risks associated with the continued overspend in its planning service and the potential fee reimbursement associated with non-determination of applications.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-Locate key staff involved in determination of planning applications that are within Planning Services within the same office accommodation. 	07/06/21	21/06/21	Completed	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish process for data cleansing of planning applications. 	14/06/21	02/08/21	On-Going	Jon Owen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish active backlog per team/per officer 	24/05/21	10/06/21	Complete	Jon Owen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce robust performance and case management processes. 	21/06/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review capacity to address backlog & develop specialist roles. 	18/05/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current workload provided to consultants Prospero to assist with planning application backlog and ensure continuous monitoring of workload. 	09/06/21	31/10/21	On-Going	Hugh Towns

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review short term opportunities to streamline the processing and recording of Development management process. 	07/06/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Hugh Towns
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Planning Hwb to act as a single point of contact for Development Management and Enforcement. 	06/06/21	21/06/21	Complete	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Scheme of Delegation and Planning Protocol and seek approval at CRWG/Full Council. 	27/05/21	19/09/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review officer attendance at Planning Committee. 	04/06/21	11/06/21	Completed	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review support provided to Chair of Planning Committee during the meetings 	22/06/21	13/07/21	Completed	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ALL internal consultees that play a part within the determination of a Planning Application. All consultees to be contacted and meeting arranged to discuss priorities. 	08/06/21	18/06/21	Completed	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an agreed procedure for use of Extension of Time Letter and ensure Arcus is utilised for this purpose. 	28/06/21	01/07/21	Completed	Hugh Towns
R4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review validation of planning applications and ensure its in line with Procedure Order to ensure accurate capturing of data. 	01/07/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Hugh Towns
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a thorough review of all Data collection arrangements with regards to Planning Applications and ensure accuracy and reporting via Arcus Global 	01/07/21	30/09/21	On-Going	Hugh Towns

R5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a thorough review into all spends within the Planning Service and review all current income streams. 	12/07/21	30/09/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and agree an options paper for mitigating the potential fee reimbursement with non determination of applications. 	03/09/21	30/09/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel

Service delivery – Planning Enforcement

R6 - Develop a plan and timeline to deal with its planning enforcement backlog, in particular the historic backlog.

R7 - Review the resources and capacity within its planning enforcement service to address the accruing caseload.

R8 - Ensure that other related Council services are able to accommodate any increases in planning enforcement action.

R9 - Ensure that any changes to its enforcement policy are assessed for impact and consulted on, to ensure all consequences are considered.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify numbers of applications in each priority and agree time-line and resources for reviewing/closing/progressing cases. 	14/06/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Sue Watts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proformas/templates to be developed to support above. 	14/06/21	18/06/21	Completed	Sue Watts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree case sign off/closure processes with EBM 	14/06/21	01/07/21	Completed	Sue Watts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review backlog/caseload of individual officers and re-allocate where appropriate 	14/06/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Sue Watts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Planning input into backlog progress discussion 	14/06/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Sue Watts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSU to coordinte the functions of licensing and housing. 	14/06/21	18/06/21	Complete	Sue Watts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Progress against above actions and determine a realistic timeline to clear historic backlog 	06/09/21	01/10/21	Not Started	Sue Watts
R7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deploy an experienced officer to support the Intervention Board to lead improvement in Planning Enforcement. 	18/05/21	07/06/21	Completed	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and Increase capacity within the Planning Enforcement team to address accruing caseload and backlog. 	07/06/21	29/10/21	On-Going	Sue Watts
R8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process map the full Impact Assessment on Council Services due to Planning Enforcement action and identify areas for streamlining and greater collaboration. 	06/09/21	30/10/21	Not Started	Sue Watts
R9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Enforcement Policy and seek approval at Executive Board ensuring completion of Integrated Impact Assessment. 	06/09/21	26/11/21	Not Started	Sue Watts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Planning Enforcement Charter and seek approval at Executive Board ensuring completion of Integrated Impact Assessment. 	06/09/21	26/11/21	Not Started	Sue Watts

Risk management

R10 - Review its corporate risk register to ensure that the planning risks, related to development management and planning enforcement are comprehensively defined and have clear mitigating actions.

R11 - Assure itself that its corporate arrangements for risk management are effective¹.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure the Corporate Risk Register accurately reflects the significant risks presented by Development Management and Planning Enforcement to the delivery of the Authorities Priorities and the associated financial risk.	02/08/21	24/09/21	Not Started	Noelwyn Daniel
R11	We will review the corporate arrangements for risk management to ensure they are effective and assess progress made on the recommendations made by the Audit Wales report 'Review of Risk Management Arrangement' in July 2019.	06/09/21	29/10/21	Not Started	TBC

Responding to review findings

R12 - The Council should ensure that in responding to findings of all reviews into the effectiveness of its planning service that it:

R12.1 - Prioritises the actions;

R12.2 - Regularly evaluates the impact of the changes that it is making; and

R12.3 - Regularly reports progress to senior officers and Members to ensure transparent and timely oversight and monitoring, and that any corrective action is taken.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate all recommendations proposed by the Independent Review into Planning Services in Autumn 2019 and determine which are superseded by the recommendations made by Audit Wales. Due to the passage of time evaluate recommendations and decide whether they remain valid and need to be included and monitored within this Action Plan. 	06/09/21	30/09/21	Not Started	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all Recommendations made by TIC over the last 5 years and amalgamate those recommendations if appropriate within this Action Plan. 	06/09/21	30/09/21	Not Started	Jon Owen

Performance management

R13 - Ensure that the data available under the new planning performance management system (Arcus) is designed, maximised, and presented for analysis at relevant meetings.

R14- Ensure that it presents a consolidated range of planning performance information to senior officers and Members to provide them with a fuller picture of service performance. This should include:

R14.1 - performance data;

R14.2 - financial data;

R14.3 - complaints information; and
R14.4 - risk management information.

R15 better benchmark, collaborate and share learning with other Local Planning Authorities to maximise opportunities to identify and implement good practice.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish management dashboards for key areas of the Planning Service. 	24/05/21	01/07/21	Complete	Jon Owen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree format for presenting these performance management dashboards and identify all relevant meetings. Links in with R2 	02/08/21	03/09/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Planning Service monitoring framework for Planning Committee. 	02/08/21	03/09/21	Not Started	Ian R Llewelyn
R14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A revised Corporate Performance Monitoring framework is being established. This will ensure a comprehensive picture of performance will be available for all services via a single dashboard which incorporates to begin with performance data, financial data, complaints and Member enquiries together with risk management information. 	01/07/21	29/10/21	On-Going	Gwyneth Ayers
R15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop a robust and consistent approach to benchmarking the planning service and seek to maximise all avenues to identify and then implement good practise. 	06/09/21	29/10/21	Not Started	Ian R Llewelyn

Service user perspective

R16 - The Council should better consider and apply the perspective of its service users in designing and delivering its planning services to continuously improve the service in a sustainable way. This should include:

R16.1 - Understanding the current position regarding trends in complaints and customer feedback, and taking action to address any issues;
 R16.2 - Setting out clear standards that service users can expect;
 R16.3- Improving engagement and ongoing communication with customers.
 R16.4 - Establishing an improved mechanism for gathering, evaluating, and applying customer feedback.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R16.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setup of the Planning Hwb will act as a single point of contact for all service users. Analyse the intelligence gathered by the Planning Hwb and develop an action plan and implement sustainable improvements 	21/06/21	30/10/21	On-Going	Noelwyn Daniel
R16.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Planning Customer Charter setting out clearly the standards and timescales service users can expect. 	06/09/21	30/09/21	Not Started	Ian R Llewelyn
R16.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Planning Services content online and improve availability of online forms. 	07/06/21	01/11/21	On-Going	Deina Hockenhill
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an on-going engagement programme with customers including agents & developers/ 	02/08/21	30/09/21	Not Started	Deina Hockenhill
R16.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See action against R16.1 				

Well-Being of Future Generations

R17 The Council should take the opportunity in any changes to the planning service to consider how it might act more closely in accordance with the sustainable development principle² in contributing to the delivery of the Council's well-being objectives.

Ref No	Action	Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Status	Responsible Officer
R17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will carry out a full Integrated Impact Assessment and ascertain opportunities to fully 	01/09/21	01/11/21	Not Started	Noelwyn Daniel

	embed all sustainable development principles of the Well-Being of Future Generations to ensure any changes contribute fully to the Council's Well-Being objectives.				
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