

Governance and Audit Committee

14 July 2023

Audit Wales Follow-up Review: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?

Recommendations / key decisions required:

1. To note the findings and recommendations of the Audit Wales report on their follow-up review.
2. To note the Carmarthenshire County Council response to the recommendations of the report.

Reasons:

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

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted

- The report will be presented to Governance & Audit Committee (as part of Audit Wales requirements).

Cabinet Decision Required: NO

Council Decision Required: NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Cllr Linda Davies Evans

Deputy Leader

Directorate:
Chief Executive

Designations

Tel

Name of Head of Service:
Linda Rees Jones

Head of Administration &
Law

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit Wales Follow-up Review: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?

Audit Wales Follow-up Review: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? – Carmarthenshire County Council – July 2022

In June 2018 Audit Wales published a report 'Overview and Scrutiny Fit for the Future – Carmarthenshire County Council', which included six proposals for improvement for the Council to address. Audit Wales followed up the Council's progress with implementing these proposals for improvement during October – November 2021 as part of their ongoing Assurance and Risk Assessment work. They undertook the follow up work through document reviews, observing meetings and interviews with key Council officers.

As the new Council is undertaking a review of its own scrutiny arrangements currently, Audit Wales thought it would be helpful to specifically report the findings of our work at this point to provide independent feedback to the Council to inform its own review.

As well as the findings from follow up work against the proposals for improvement previously issued, the report notes further issues for the Council to consider in its own review of its overview and scrutiny arrangements.

Audit Wales Overall Findings

Overall, the Council has made some progress in addressing previous proposals for improvement but still needs to strengthen arrangements to assess the effectiveness and impact of its scrutiny function.

	2018 Proposal for Improvement	Audit Wales Finding in 2022
1	<i>Review the overview and scrutiny committee structure to ensure it is able to meet current and future challenges.</i>	Partially met
2	<i>Clarify the role of Executive Board members in the overview and scrutiny committee process, to ensure that committees are undertaking their role in holding the Executive to account.</i>	Met
3	<i>Be specific in the reports presented to overview and scrutiny why the committee is receiving the information and how this relates to the role of the scrutiny committee</i>	Partially met
4	<i>Ensure that Chairs and committee members control committee agendas by deciding on and agreeing content and prioritising the issues that scrutiny examines, to allow enough time for more effective scrutiny.</i>	Met
5	<i>Identify and implement further ways to encourage greater public involvement in overview and scrutiny.</i>	Partially met
6	<i>Put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.</i>	Not met

Audit Wales have issued a further recommendation in this follow up report (see page 6, Exhibit 2) and also included some further issues for the Council to consider in its review of its overview and scrutiny arrangements (see page 10, paragraph 15) in the Audit Wales report.

The Carmarthenshire action plan response is also attached for consideration.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES: 1. Audit Wales Report 2. Carmarthenshire Action Plan response
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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:

Linda Rees-Jones

Head of Administration &
Law

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

- 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 are considered by lead Director, 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.
- Constitution- Scrutiny-Terms of Reference-item 6
To monitor progress in the undertaking of WA reviews including the recommendation of future service options/performance targets to Cabinet/Council and the monitoring of subsequent action plans

CONSULTATIONS

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

Signed: **Linda Rees-Jones, Head of Administration & Law**

1. Local Member(s) – N/A
2. Community / Town Council – N/A
3. Relevant Partners – N/A

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO
HOLDER(S) AWARE / CONSULTED?
YES

Cllr. Linda Davies Evans

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Audit Wales Follow-up Review: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? (July 2022)		Audit Wales Follow-up Review: Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? – Carmarthenshire County Council – July 2022