



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# Annual Improvement Report

## Newport City Council

Issued: July 2019

Document reference: 1411A2019-20



This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Gareth Jones, Allison Rees and Non Jenkins under the direction of Huw Rees.

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The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office Board, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the National Assembly.

The Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

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The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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# Summary report

## 2018-19 performance audit work

- 1 To decide the range and nature of the work we would undertake during the year, we considered how much we already know from all previous audit and inspection work and from other sources of information including Newport City Council's (the Council) own mechanisms for review and evaluation. For 2018-19, we undertook improvement assessment work; an assurance and risk assessment project and work in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations Act at all councils. At some councils, we supplemented this work with local risk-based audits, identified in the Audit Plan for 2018-19.
- 2 The work carried out since the last Annual Improvement Report (AIR), including that of the relevant regulators, is set out in [Exhibit 2](#).

## The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement

- 3 Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2019-20.

## Recommendations and proposals for improvement

- 4 Given the wide range of services provided by the Council and the challenges it is facing, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
  - make proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, we would expect it to do something about them and we will follow up what happens;
  - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
  - conduct a special inspection, publish a report and make recommendations; and
  - recommend to ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.

- 5 During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations. However, we have made a number of proposals for improvement and these are repeated in this report. We will monitor progress against them and relevant recommendations made in our national reports ([Appendix 3](#)) as part of our improvement assessment work.

## Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19

### Exhibit 1: audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19

Description of the work carried out since the last Annual Improvement Report, including that of the relevant regulators, where relevant.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
March 2019	<p><b>Assurance and Risk Assessment</b> Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources;</li> <li>• putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and</li> <li>• acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Arising from this project we identified the following topics for inclusion in our Audit Plan at the Council for 2019-20:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review of the Council's approach to embedding its Corporate and Well-being plans. We will undertake work in relation to supporting the Council to embed its new Corporate Plan and Well-being Plan and the underpinning boards.</li> <li>• follow up review of the Shared Resource Service (SRS). This review will follow up on the recommendations made by the Auditor General in his 2015 report reviewing the SRS. The review will be carried out across the four local councils that are members of the SRS.</li> <li>• a review of the Council's Financial Sustainability. A project common to all local councils that will assess financial sustainability in light of current and anticipated future challenge.</li> </ul>	Not applicable.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
March 2019	<p><b>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</b></p> <p>Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking the step of <b>maintaining our focus on regenerating the city centre to become one of the UK's top cities</b> to meet the following wellbeing objective:</p> <p><b>To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment.</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Copy of the Auditor General's report</u></a></p>	<p><b>In taking steps to regenerate the city centre, the Council has many positive examples of how it has taken account of the sustainable development principle (SDP). However, the Council recognises that there is more to do for it to consistently embed all of the five ways of working across its ambitions for the regeneration of the city centre:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council has set out its vision for regenerating the city centre over a ten-year period. The Council's forthcoming update to its Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) presents an opportunity to extend the vision into the longer term.</li> <li>• the Council is using data to improve its understanding of prevention, however, the Council needs to be clearer about how its environmental aspirations for the city centre can deliver long-term benefits.</li> <li>• the Council has made progress towards embedding an integrated approach to the step. However, this could be further improved by developing a consistent understanding of integration across the Council.</li> <li>• as the Council's collaborative forums evolve, it will be important for the Council to be clear on their respective roles in supporting its regeneration (city centre) ambitions.</li> <li>• there are a number of good examples of involvement in this step, however, the Council recognises that it needs to build on its approaches to ensure that the full diversity of citizens and stakeholders can influence Council decision making.</li> </ul>	<p>We did not make any proposals for improvement in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations report but did highlight some areas of development which the Council plans to act on.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
December 2018	<p><b>Annual Audit Letter 2017-18</b></p> <p>Letter summarising the key messages arising from the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and his reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. The Annual Audit Letter is in <a href="#">Appendix 2</a> of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newport City Council and Newport City Council Group complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources.</li> <li>• I am satisfied that the Council and the Group have appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources, but the Council continues to face significant financial challenges.</li> <li>• My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2017-18 accounts or key financial systems.</li> </ul>	None.
<b>Local risk-based performance audit</b>			
February 2019	<p><b>Waste Service follow-up review</b></p> <p>This review followed up on the Council's progress in addressing the proposals for improvement made in our 'Waste Management Review' issued in August 2016.</p> <p><a href="#">Copy of the Auditor General's report</a></p>	<p><b>The Council has made progress in addressing some of our proposals for improvement but still lacks strategic direction to secure sustainable improved outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council is improving the governance arrangements for its waste service;</li> <li>• the Council does not yet have a long-term waste strategy for its waste service;</li> <li>• the Council has made significant improvements to the performance management of its waste and recycling contracts; and</li> <li>• the Council's arrangements to review and monitor its progress in addressing our proposals for improvement do not provide sufficient oversight.</li> </ul>	<p>None.</p> <p>Whilst this follow-up report does not include any further proposals for improvement, the report identified that to enable sustained improved outcomes for waste management, the Council needs to finalise its waste strategy.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
<b>Local risk-based performance audit</b>			
November 2018	<p><b>Thematic Review: Service user perspective</b></p> <p>This review focussed on the experiences of parents using Flying Start Language and Play sessions and the nurture parenting classes. This review sought to gain insight into parents' experiences to answer the question 'Do the needs, experiences and aspirations of service users inform the design and delivery of services to more closely meet their needs?'</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Copy of the Auditor General's report</u></a></p>	<p><b>Parents are generally very satisfied with the Flying Start Language and Play and Nurture programmes, but the Council could more systematically use parents' views when planning and improving services:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council designs the services effectively to meet parents' needs, but there are further opportunities for it to better understand and act on their views;</li> <li>• parents can access the services easily, although some barriers exist;</li> <li>• parents are generally very satisfied with the quality of the services they use; and</li> <li>• communication between parents and staff in the Flying Start settings is good, but the Council could do more to systematically use parents' views to improve the programmes.</li> </ul>	<p>P1 To increase the number of eligible families accessing and benefitting from the Flying Start programme, the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that the non-attendance policy is reviewed to ensure its alignment with the Council's wider safeguarding policies; and</li> <li>• ensure that its analysis of non-attendance is used to secure improved attendance.</li> </ul> <p>P2 To ensure that the Council can demonstrate that parents and children gain the intended benefit from the Flying Start programme, the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set out clearly the intended outcomes for parents as well as children; and</li> <li>• monitor and report to elected members on the outcomes achieved by parents as well as children.</li> </ul> <p>P3 To understand parents' views more effectively, the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review its parent surveys to ensure that the same information is collected from all settings. The information collected should be relevant and useful to help ensure that the programme meets parents' needs and aspirations, for example, parental satisfaction, timing and location of sessions.</li> <li>• review the survey questions with parents whose first language is not English or Welsh to ensure that all parents are able to provide informed feedback.</li> </ul>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
<b>Local risk-based performance audit</b>			
June 2019	<p><b>Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements</b></p> <p>Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Copy of the Auditor General's report</u></a></p>	<p><b>The Council has acted on all our previous recommendations and proposals for improvement, however, aspects of some remain to be fully addressed.</b></p>	<p>Our review identified that the Council has yet to fully address the following previous national recommendations:</p> <p>R3 Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and compliance with safe recruitment policies cover all services that come into contact with children;</li> <li>• creating an integrated corporate compliance system to record and monitor compliance levels on DBS checks; and</li> <li>• requiring safe recruitment practices amongst partners in the third sector and for volunteers who provide services commissioned and/or used by the council which are underpinned by a contract or service level agreement.</li> </ul> <p>R4 Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring safeguarding training is mandated and coverage extended to all relevant council service areas, and is included as standard on induction programmes;</li> <li>• creating a corporate-wide system to identify, track and monitor compliance on attending safeguarding training in all council departments, elected members, schools, governors and volunteers; and</li> <li>• requiring relevant staff in partner organisations who are commissioned to work for the council in delivering services to children and young people to undertake safeguarding training.</li> </ul>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
<b>Local risk-based performance audit</b>			
			R6 Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• benchmarking and comparisons with others;</li> <li>• conclusions of internal and external audit/inspection reviews;</li> <li>• service-based performance data;</li> <li>• key personnel data such as safeguarding training, and DBS recruitment checks; and</li> <li>• the performance of contractors and commissioned services on compliance with council safeguarding responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Improvement planning and reporting</b>			
July 2018	<b>Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit</b> Review of the Council's published plans for delivering on improvement objectives.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement planning duties.	None.
November 2018	<b>Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit</b> Review of the Council's published performance assessment.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
<b>Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies</b>			
January 2019	<b>Estyn</b>  <a href="#"><u>Local Government Education Services inspection report</u></a>	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Overall, many pupils in Newport make strong progress during their time in primary school, but pupils' progress is too variable across other sectors and in secondary schools in particular. The local authority's support for pupils with English or Welsh as an additional language is very effective and nearly all pupils in receipt of long-term language support achieve as well as their peers.</p> <p>Officers know their schools well and have strong partnerships with individual schools. These are supportive but also robust and challenging. The school improvement services provided in partnership by the local authority and the regional consortium, EAS, are working well to support and challenge primary schools to improve. However, the services have had little impact in promoting improvement in a minority of secondary schools that are causing concern.</p> <p>There are effective strategies to support young people at risk of leaving education, employment or training, but provision to support pupils eligible for free school meals lacks a coherent plan. Provision to improve attendance and reduce exclusions is purposeful and nearly all schools apply agreed strategies consistently. The local authority has a clear vision for the long-term development of digital technologies and an appropriate strategy to promote these across its services, including schools.</p> <p>Senior elected members and officers have a clear vision and high expectations of outcomes for children and young people. However, the quality of self-evaluation processes at all levels in the education service is too variable. Leaders respond appropriately to key financial pressures and are flexible in their approach to delivering priorities.</p>	<p>Estyn made five recommendations:</p> <p>R1 Improve the overall performance of secondary schools.</p> <p>R2 Establish a coherent strategy across all relevant services to improve the outcomes of pupils eligible for free school meals.</p> <p>R3 Ensure that self-evaluation activities focus on the impact that services have on outcomes and their value for money.</p> <p>R4 Strengthen opportunities at a local authority level for children and young people to influence decisions that affect them.</p> <p>R5 Deliver the strategic plans to develop Welsh-medium education further.</p>

# Appendix 1

## Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities (defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities) have a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'.

The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. Staff of the Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Auditor General, produce the annual improvement report. The report discharges the Auditor General's duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

The Auditor General may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the authority and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). An important ancillary activity for the Auditor General is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

# Appendix 2

## Annual Audit Letter

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Please contact us in Welsh or English.

Cysylltwch â ni'n Gymraeg neu'n Saesneg.

Mr. Will Godfrey  
Chief Executive  
Newport City Council  
Civic Centre  
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Newport  
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**Reference:** 961A2018-19

**Date issued:** 4 December 2018

Dear Will

## Annual Audit Letter – Newport City Council and Newport City Council Group 2017-18

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

**Newport City Council and Newport City Council Group complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources**

It is Newport City Council's (the Council's) and Newport City Council Group's (the Group's) responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;

- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Council's and the Group's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards. On 25 September 2018 I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's and Group's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts. The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members of the Audit Committee in my Audit of Financial Statements report on 20 September 2018. A further report outlining recommendations arising from the audit was presented to the Audit Committee on 22 November 2018.

**I am satisfied that the Council and the Group have appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources but the Council continues to face significant financial challenges**

My consideration of the Council's and Group's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts as well as placing reliance on the work completed under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Auditor General highlights areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made in his Annual Improvement Report<sup>1</sup>.

Austerity funding remains the most significant challenge facing all local government bodies in Wales and these financial pressures are likely to continue in the medium term. The recent provisional local government funding settlement, announced in October, will see the Council's settlement increase by 0.2% in 2019-20. Nevertheless, service and demographic pressures will continue to impact on the Council's finances. In its September 2018 financial update to Cabinet, the Council identified areas of significant financial strain such as children's out of area residential placements, special educational needs provision and adult community care. Reserves held by the Council's schools have also reduced from £5.8 million in 2015-16 to £3.9 million in 2017-18.

<sup>1</sup> [The Council's Annual Improvement Report can be accessed on the Wales Audit Office website](#)

In 2017-18, the Council set a balanced budget with in-year expenditure of £405.2 million. The Council achieved a balanced position at year-end, maintaining an unallocated Council Fund reserve of £6.5 million and with earmarked reserves reducing from £88.9 million to £87.5 million. The Council is also forecasting financial balance for the 2018-19 financial year, on the basis that planned savings targets will be achieved and financial pressures will be managed.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan identifies a total funding deficit of £39.2 million in the period from 2018-19 to 2021-22, assuming a 1% decrease in Welsh Government settlements each year from 2019-20. With only £11.1 million of savings schemes currently identified in that period, there is a remaining deficit of £28.1 million that the Council will need to address.

As things stand, the Council is planning to maintain its unallocated Council Fund balance in the medium term. Given the on-going financial pressures and the current funding deficit identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council will need to carefully monitor its financial position and any potential impact on reserves.

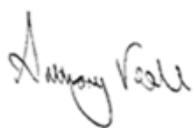
**I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 25 September 2018**

**My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2017-18 accounts or key financial systems**

A more detailed report on my grant certification work will follow in 2019 once this year's programme of certification work is complete.

The financial audit fee for 2017-18 is currently expected to be in line with the agreed fee set out in the Annual Audit Plan.

Yours sincerely



**Anthony Veale – Engagement Director  
For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales**

**cc. Cllr. Debra Wilcox – Leader  
Meirion Rushworth – Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer**

# Appendix 3

## National report recommendations 2018-19

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
October 2018	<u>Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity</u>	<p><b>R1</b> The projections for the three residual waste projects in the Programme assume that, across the 14 councils involved, the overall amount of residual waste will increase through the lifetime of the contracts. If these projections are accurate then something significant would have to occur beyond 2040 to reach zero waste across these council areas by 2050. If the projections are not accurate then there is the risk that councils will pay for capacity they do not need. <b>We recommend that the Welsh Government:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in reviewing the Towards Zero Waste strategy, considers how its ambition of there being no residual waste by 2050 aligns with current projections for residual waste treatment; and</li><li>• works with councils to consider the impact of changes in projections on the likely cost of residual waste projects and any mitigating action needed to manage these costs.</li></ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R2</b> The Welsh Government's programme support to date has mainly focused on project development and procurement. Now that most of the projects are operational, the focus has shifted to contract management. <b>We recommend that the Welsh Government continue its oversight of projects during the operational phase by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>building on its existing model of providing experienced individuals to assist with project development and procurement and making sure input is available to assist with contract management if required;</b></li> <li>• <b>setting out its expectations of councils regarding contract management;</b></li> <li>• <b>ensuring partnerships revisit their waste projections and associated risks periodically, for example to reflect updated population projections or economic forecasts; and</b></li> <li>• <b>obtaining from partnerships basic management information on gate fees paid, amount of waste sent to facilities and quality of contractor service.</b></li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u><a href="#">Local Government Services to Rural Communities</a></u>	<p><b>R1</b> Socio economic change, poor infrastructure and shifts in provision of key services and facilities have resulted in the residualisation of communities in rural Wales. <b>We recommend that Welsh Government support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>refreshing rural grant programmes to create sustainable financial structures, with multi-year allocations; and</b></li> <li>• <b>helping people and businesses make the most of digital connectivity through targeted and more effective business and adult education support programmes.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>R2</b> The role of Public Service Boards is evolving but there are opportunities to articulate a clearer and more ambitious shared vision for rural Wales (see paragraphs 2.2 to 2.9 and 2.28 to 2.31). <b>We recommend that PSB public service partners respond more effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their different rural communities using the Welsh Government’s Rural Proofing Tool and identify and agree the local and strategic actions needed to support community sustainability; and</b></li> <li>• <b>ensuring the Local Well-Being Plan sets out a more optimistic and ambitious vision for ‘place’ with joint priorities co-produced by partners and with citizens to address agreed challenges.</b></li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R3</b> To help sustain rural communities, public services need to think differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). <b>We recommend councils provide a more effective response to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ensuring service commissioners have cost data and qualitative information on the full range of service options available; and</b></li> <li>• <b>using citizens' views on the availability, affordability, accessibility, adequacy and acceptability of council services to shape the delivery and integration of services.</b></li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R4</b> To help sustain rural communities, public services need to act differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). <b>We recommend councils do more to develop community resilience and self-help by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>working with relevant bodies such as the Wales Co-operative Centre to support social enterprise and more collaborative business models;</b></li> <li>• <b>providing tailored community outreach for those who face multiple barriers to accessing public services and work;</b></li> <li>• <b>enhancing and recognising the role of town and community councils by capitalising on their local knowledge and supporting them to do more;</b></li> <li>• <b>encouraging a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by establishing pan-public service community hubs, networks of expertise, and clusters of advice and prevention services;</b></li> <li>• <b>enabling local action by supporting community asset transfer identifying which assets are suitable to transfer, and having the right systems in place to make things happen; and</b></li> <li>• <b>improving community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.</b></li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u><b>Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling</b></u>	<p><b>R1</b> Benchmarking work has found that the cost of certain waste management services shows surprising variation (paragraphs 1.31-1.39). <b>The Welsh Government should work with councils to understand better the basis of the variation in spending on waste management services that are fundamentally the same and ensure that waste management costs are accounted for in a consistent way.</b></p> <p><b>R2</b> The Welsh Government believes that, if applied optimally, its Collections Blueprint offers the most cost-effective overall means of collecting recyclable resources but is planning further analysis (paragraphs 1.40-1.51). <b>When undertaking its further analysis to understand better the reasons for differences in councils' reported costs, and the impact on costs where councils have adopted the Collections Blueprint, we recommend that the Welsh Government:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explores how the cost of collecting dry recyclables may affect the overall cost of providing kerbside waste management services to households; and</li> <li>• compares the actual costs with the costs modelled previously as part of the Welsh Government-commissioned review of the Collections Blueprint for councils that now operate the Collections Blueprint.</li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R3</b> The Welsh Government has undertaken to consider alternatives to the current weight-based recycling targets which can better demonstrate the delivery of its ecological footprint and carbon reduction goals (paragraphs 2.38-2.45). <b>We recommend that the Welsh Government replace or complement the current target to recycle, compost and reuse wastes with performance measures to refocus recycling on the waste resources that have the largest impact on carbon reduction, and/or are scarce. We recognise that the Welsh Government may need to consider the affordability of data collection for any alternative means of measurement.</b></p> <p><b>R4</b> In refreshing Towards Zero Waste, the Welsh Government needs to show that wider sustainability benefits sought through municipal recycling offer value and cannot be more readily attained in other ways and at lower cost including, but not necessarily limited to, other waste management interventions (paragraphs 2.52-2.53). <b>The Welsh Government should demonstrate in the revised waste strategy that not only is it possible to recycle a greater proportion of municipal waste, but how doing so maximises its contribution to achieving its sustainable development objectives.</b></p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer</u>	<p><b>R1</b> Local authorities need to do more to make CATs (Community Asset Transfers) simpler and more appealing, help build the capacity of community and town councils, give them more guidance in raising finance, and look to support other community development models such as social enterprises that support social value and citizen involvement. <b>In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs.</b></p> <p><b>R2</b> Local authorities have significant scope to provide better and more visible help and support before, during, and after the community asset transfer process. <b>We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify community assets transfer's role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services;</b></li> <li>• <b>work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs;</b></li> <li>• <b>identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer;</b></li> <li>• <b>ensure their CAT policy adequately covers aftercare, long term support, post transfer support, signposting access to finance, and sharing the learning about what works well; and</b></li> <li>• <b>support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.</b></li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
December 2018	<u><a href="#">The maturity of local government in use of data</a></u>	<p><b>R1 Part 1 of the report highlights the importance of creating a strong data culture and clear leadership to make better use of data. We recommend that local authorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have a clear vision that treats data as a key resource;</li> <li>• establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data;</li> <li>• undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests; and</li> <li>• create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services.</li> </ul> <p><b>R2 Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that authorities comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data with partners to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. Whilst these two things are not mutually exclusive, uncertainty on data protection responsibilities is resulting in some officers not sharing data, even where there is agreement to provide partners with information. We recommend that authorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and</li> <li>• review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.</li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R3</b> In Part 3 of our report, we conclude that adequate resources and sufficient capacity are ongoing challenges. However, without upskilling staff to make better use of data, authorities are missing opportunities to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify staff who have a role in analysing and managing data to remove duplication and free up resources to build and develop capacity in data usage; and</li> <li>• invest and support the development of staff data analytical, mining and segmentation skills.</li> </ul> <p><b>R4</b> Part 4 of our report highlights that authorities have more to do to create a data-driven decision-making culture and to unlock the potential of the data they hold. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set data reporting standards to ensure minimum data standards underpin decision making; and</li> <li>• make more open data available.</li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
March 2019	<p><b><u>Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste</u></b></p>	<p><b>R1 Increasing the focus on waste prevention to reflect the overall aims of Towards Zero Waste</b></p> <p>Available data on the amount of waste produced suggests mixed progress to deliver the Welsh Government's waste prevention targets. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) revisits the relative priority it gives to recycling and waste prevention as part of its review of Towards Zero Waste;</li> <li>b) sets out clearly the expectations on different organisations and sectors for waste prevention; and</li> <li>c) revisits its overall waste prevention targets and the approach it has taken to monitor them in light of progress to date, examples from other countries and in the context of current projections about waste arising through to 2050.</li> </ul> <p><b>R2 Improving data on commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste</b></p> <p>The Welsh Government is a partner in initial work to assess the feasibility of developing a new digital solution to track all waste. If this preferred option does not succeed, we recommend that the Welsh Government works with Natural Resources Wales to explore the costs and benefits of other options to improve non-municipal waste data in Wales, including additional powers to require waste data from businesses.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R3 Enhancing producer responsibility and using more legal, financial and fiscal levers</b></p> <p>The Welsh Government has opportunities to influence waste prevention through legislation and financial incentives. It can also influence changes at the UK level where fiscal matters are not devolved. We recommend that the Welsh Government consider whether provisions to extend producer responsibility and the use of financial powers such as grant conditions, fiscal measures and customer charges and incentives, are needed to promote and to prioritise waste prevention.</p>
June 2019	<p><b><u>The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales</u></b></p>	<p><b>R1</b> Part 1 of the report sets out the complexities of the planning system showing how challenging it is for local planning authorities to effectively engage with and involve stakeholders in choices and decisions. <b>To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>local planning authorities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose;</b></li> <li>– <b>use ‘Place Plans’ as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making; and</b></li> <li>– <b>improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>the Welsh Government:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>review the Development Management Procedure Order 2012 and update the engagement and involvement standards for local planning authorities.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R2</b> Part 2 of the report highlights that local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. <b>To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>review their building control fee regimes to ensure the levels set better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding; and</b></li> <li>• <b>improve capacity by working regionally to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>integrate services to address specialism gaps;</b></li> <li>– <b>develop joint supplementary planning guidance; and</b></li> <li>– <b>develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>R3</b> Part 2 of the report highlights that the cost of development control services is not reflected in the charges set for these services and progress in developing regional responses to strengthen resilience has been slow. <b>We recommend that the Welsh Government:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>review development control fees to ensure the levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services; and</b></li> <li>• <b>consider how to use the powers in the Planning (Wales) Act to support and improve local planning authority capacity and resilience.</b></li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R4</b> Part 3 of the report summarises the effectiveness and impact of local planning authorities' decision making and how well they are performing against national measures. <b>We recommend that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority;</li> <li>• revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned; and</li> <li>• enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings.</li> </ul> <p><b>R5</b> Part 4 of the report identifies the central role of planning to deliver the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. <b>We recommend that local planning authorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving wellbeing;</li> <li>• provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate wellbeing training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities;</li> <li>• set appropriate measures for their administration of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on wellbeing; and</li> <li>• annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities' impact on wellbeing.</li> </ul>



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