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Consultation on three-year forward programme of work

I am consulting on a three-year programme of work. For the first time, there is a single consultation across all of my national studies: central government and cross-cutting studies, local government studies and the local audit work that I plan to undertake across all relevant NHS bodies. The attached Annex sets out potential topics for inclusion in my work programme between 2019-20 and 2021-22. Our [Annual Plan 2018-19](#), set out the national work already in train, some of which has recently been completed.

Having taken account of the responses to our public consultation – *Shape Our Audits* – that ran over the summer, I have selected topics that will help to achieve the strategic aim of the Wales Audit Office: that the people of Wales and National Assembly know whether public money is being managed wisely. This is my first programme of work as Auditor General and I am keen to ensure that it covers the big issues facing Welsh public services, as well as enabling us to offer detailed commentary on governance, management and service delivery. The proposals are anchored in the following themes, aimed at providing balanced coverage of new topics alongside ongoing follow-up work:

- Key risks and opportunities facing Welsh public services, such as austerity, demographic change, Brexit, digital and public service transformation.
- Governance and management of Welsh public bodies.
- Delivery of key programmes, projects and services.

For ease of comment, I have separated out my programme into three broad categories around central government & cross cutting topics, health and local government. For each sector, I have included more potential study topics than I could possibly deliver and I am conscious that there may be some overlap between proposals. I will use your views to help me prioritise and develop a final programme of work that is balanced, relevant, impactful and takes account of cross-cutting issues. I will also, of course, retain flexibility within the programme to respond to any emerging or unanticipated issues over the next three years.

As well as specific topics for future studies, you may also wish to be aware that I am considering changes in the way that we carry out our work and the nature of our reports and outputs. I am keen to produce shorter, sharper reports, make more use of data analytics, issue more real-time commentary on the big issues facing public services, and use different media to communicate our messages.

Central government and cross-cutting studies

For 2019-20, I have set out my preferred options for value for money work, funded from the Welsh Consolidated Fund. While these are my preferred options for that year, I would very much welcome your views on priorities within that list. For 2020-21 and 2021-22, I have set out a long list of potential topics on which I would welcome your views. These proposals will be delivered alongside work to follow-up previous studies. Also, I have initiated a programme of work on preparations for Brexit that is already in train, which I may choose to expand to respond to emerging issues over the coming months.

Health related studies

Plans for my 2019 programme of local work at NHS bodies are already well advanced and include work to fulfil my statutory duties in relation the Well Being of Future Generations Act, alongside my annual structured assessment work. The latter will include a specific review of the governance arrangements underpinning quality and safety committees in NHS bodies, given the challenges observed in this area over recent years.

The studies shown could be funded and delivered in a number of ways and I will decide on the best approach for each topic when finalising the programme. Please note that for any given year I would typically look to include a maximum of two thematic reviews in my local audit plans alongside annual structured assessment work. Those thematic reviews may include follow up of topics I have previously examined.

Local government studies

While some of the topics set out in my national value for money programme may cover aspects of local government, I have a distinct national programme of studies covering local government. The Annex contains a list of proposed topics over the three years 2019-20 to 2021-22. The programme focuses on how local authorities are responding to the challenge of working with less money and on services and/or topic specific issues that local authorities and others have identified as significant risks or where opportunities exist to improve performance, efficiency, use of resources and impact on citizens.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales