



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

Carmarthenshire County Council

Issued: August 2019

Document reference: 1445A2019-20

This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Timothy Buckle, Alison Lewis, Gareth W. Lewis and Sara Leahy under the direction of Huw Rees.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

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.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

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.

Contents

Summary report

2018-19 performance audit work	4
The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement	4
Recommendations and proposals for improvement	4
Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19	6

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Status of this report	13
Appendix 2 – Annual Audit Letter	14
Appendix 3 – National report recommendations 2018-19	17

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 Carmarthenshire County 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 Wellbeing 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 1](#).

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 AIR, including that of the relevant regulators, where relevant.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
January 2019	<p>Assurance and Risk Assessment</p> <p>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"> • putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources; • putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and • acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them. 	<p>Arising from this project we identified the following topics for inclusion in our audit programme at the council for 2019-20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance and risk assessment (ongoing work); • financial sustainability (theme delivered across Wales); • a Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 examination; • a review of the planning service; and • Swansea Bay City Deal considered from the perspective of a watching brief with ongoing monitoring as part of the ARA project. 	Not applicable.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
February 2019	<p>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</p> <p>Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when 'increasing the range of physical activity opportunities available for children, and targeting those at higher risk of inactivity', a 'step' the Council is taking to meet its well-being objectives.</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: The Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting the 'step' and has effectively taken account of the five ways of working in the actions it is taking to deliver it.</p> <p>We came to this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has considered the long-term in setting this step and is already seeing improvement in the activity levels of young people; • Consideration of prevention is fundamental to the actions the Council is taking; • The Council has effectively considered how the actions it is taking contributes to the well-being goals, its other objectives and the objectives of other public bodies; • The Council is collaborating with a range of partners in planning and delivering this step; • The Council is involving young people in the design and delivery of the step but could extend its engagement activities to be more inclusive. 	<p>Whilst our examinations did not make any proposals for improvement, we identified areas in which the Council could improve. These are detailed in our full report.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
December 2018	<p>Annual audit letter 2017-18 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 Appendix 2 of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting. • I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, but significant financial challenges remain. • Local authorities in Wales continue to face significant financial challenges. • My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified any issues that would impact on the accounts or key financial systems. 	None.
Local risk-based performance audit			
May 2019	<p>Service User Perspective Review: Online Services Our review sought 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?' Our focus in this review was on the Council's approach to channel shifting services online.</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: Most service users in our survey were satisfied with the Council's online services but the Council needs to establish a process for involving service users in developing its online provision and assessing user satisfaction. We reached this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most service users in our survey said online services were easy to use but the Council does not have a process for involving users in the design of these services; • the Council is successfully shifting services online and most service users in our survey 	<p>P1 The Council should develop a systematic approach to involving service users in the future design and development of its online/channel shifted services.</p> <p>P2 The Council should develop ways to capture service user satisfaction data on its online services, so that it can continue to make improvements.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
		<p>said they would recommend the Council's online services;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Council is widening access to services by improving its online offer and increasing the number of customer service hubs; and most service users in our survey said it was easy to let the Council know about issues with its online provision, but the Council does not routinely assess user satisfaction. 	
February 2019	Llanelli Life Science and Well-being Village	As a result of our review, we have concluded that, to date, Carmarthenshire County Council has followed appropriate processes and effectively managed risk to protect public money in its activities relating to the Llanelli Life Science and Well-being Village. We will continue to monitor progress of this and other Swansea Bay City Deal projects.	None.
July 2019	<p>Review of Risk Management Our review sought to answer the question: Are the Council's risk management arrangements effective?</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: The Council has a risk strategy, but a lack of guidance, tools and training is leading to inconsistent implementation and assurance and monitoring arrangements need strengthening. We reached this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Council has a risk strategy which would benefit from more detail to improve its effectiveness; 	<p>Procedures and Guidance</p> <p>P1 The Council should develop suitable procedures and guidance to underpin its risk management strategy to ensure that risk management is consistently embedded across the organisation.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lack of guidance, tools and training leads to inconsistent operational risk management; and • the Audit Committee's oversight of corporate risks is improving although the Council's other assurance mechanisms are not sufficiently effective. 	<p>Risk Appetite</p> <p>P2 The Council should define its corporate risk appetite to ensure that it manages risks and opportunities effectively.</p> <p>Performance Management</p> <p>P3 The Council should further align its risk management arrangements with its performance management arrangements.</p> <p>Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>P4 The Council should review and clarify the roles and responsibilities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers • Staff • Risk champions • The Risk Management Steering Group in its risk management arrangements. <p>Risk Management System</p> <p>P5 The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify the system it is using to identify and capture risks to ensure a consistency in approach across the organisation; and

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the information recorded on risk registers throughout the organisation to ensure information is up to date, complete, and has enough detail to ensure risks can be appropriately managed. <p>Effectiveness of Risk Management Arrangements</p> <p>P6 The Council should improve the effectiveness of its risk management arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training staff; • regularly seeking assurance on the effectiveness of all aspects of its arrangements and acting on the findings; and • embedding a process for identifying lessons learned and sharing good practice across the organisation.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Improvement planning and reporting			
July 2018	Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit 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	Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit Review of the Council's published performance assessment.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None.
Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies			
No reviews by Estyn have taken place during the time period covered in this report.			
August 2019	Care Inspectorate Wales: Inspection of Older Adults Carmarthenshire County Council		
2018/19	Care Inspectorate Wales: Local authority annual performance review letter 2018/19		

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

24 Cathedral Road / 24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Cardiff / Caerdydd
CF11 9LJ
Tel / Ffôn: 029 2032 0500
Fax / Ffacs: 029 2032 0600
Textphone / Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660
info@audit.wales / post@archwilio.cymru
www.audit.wales / www.archwilio.cymru

Please contact us in Welsh or English.
Cysylltwch â ni'n Gymraeg neu'n Saesneg.

Cllr Emlyn Dole
Leader
Carmarthenshire County Council
County Hall
Jail Hill
Carmarthen
SA31 1JP

Reference: 943A2018-19

Date issued: 7 December 2018

Dear Cllr Dole

Annual Audit Letter – Carmarthenshire County Council and Dyfed Pension Fund 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.

The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting

It is the Council'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 arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its 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 28 September 2018 I issued unqualified audit opinions on the Council's and Dyfed Pension Fund's accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's and Pension Fund's financial position and transactions. I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of both sets of financial statements had been completed on the same date. My report and certificate are contained within the individual Statement of Accounts.

The key matters arising from both accounts audits were reported to members of the Audit Committee on 28 September 2018.

I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, but significant financial challenges remain

My consideration of the Council'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 has highlighted areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements could be improved in his Annual Improvement Report 2017-18 which was issued to the Council in August 2018.

Local authorities in Wales face significant financial challenges

Austerity funding remains the most significant challenge facing all local government bodies in Wales and these financial pressures are likely to continue for the medium term. There will continue to be uncertainty over the UK's relationship with Europe and this will have an impact on Welsh Public Services following Brexit.

In 2017-18 the Council set a net expenditure revenue budget of £334.4 million. The 2017-18 financial statements showed an out-turn position for 2017-18 of £331.9 million. The surplus of £2.5 million was put into reserves, with £2 million set aside for a new Swansea Bay city deal reserve. This continues a trend of the Council delivering year-end underspends and to achieve these the Council has demonstrated that it has consistently delivered on its cost reduction plans that have been in place in recent years.

The 2017-18 financial statements confirm that the Council's general fund had increased by £479,000 to £9.7 million as at 31 March 2018 and since 1 April 2016 earmarked reserves had increased by £15 million to £81.1 million. This increase in reserve levels places the Council in a relatively strong financial position for the future financial challenges and these reserves will be used to help support the capital expenditure programme the Council has approved.

For 2018-19, the Council has set a budget of £351.5 million. This assumes the achievement of efficiency savings totalling £8.3 million and a 4.45% Council Tax increase. At 30 June 2018 the Council was forecasting a revenue budget overspend of £3 million for the financial year after allowing for a drawdown from departmental reserves of £600,000. In February 2018 the Council approved a five-year capital programme totalling £199 million, of which £62.2 million was to be incurred in 2018-19.

Financial challenges remain over the coming years across the Local Government sector and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan agreed in February 2018 identifies a total of £17.2 million of savings for 2019-20 and 2020-21. In 2019 we will undertake a more detailed review of the Council's continuing work on meeting their financial challenges.

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

My ongoing work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the financial statements 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 fees for 2017-18 are currently expected to be slightly less than those set out in the Annual Audit Plans and we will consider this as part of our planning for 2018-19 and will report the out-turn to you in the Audit Plan.

Yours sincerely



Richard Harries
For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

cc. Mark James, Chief Executive
Chris Moore, Chief Finance Officer

Appendix 3

National report recommendations 2018-19

Exhibit 2: national report recommendations 2018-19

Summary of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the Wales Audit Office, since publication of the last AIR.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
October 2018	<u>Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity</u>	<p>R1 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. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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• 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.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>R2 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. We recommend that the Welsh Government continue its oversight of projects during the operational phase by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • setting out its expectations of councils regarding contract management; • ensuring partnerships revisit their waste projections and associated risks periodically, for example to reflect updated population projections or economic forecasts; and • obtaining from partnerships basic management information on gate fees paid, amount of waste sent to facilities and quality of contractor service.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Local Government Services to Rural Communities</u>	<p>R1 Socio economic change, poor infrastructure and shifts in provision of key services and facilities has resulted in the residualisation of communities in rural Wales. We recommend that Welsh Government support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refreshing rural grant programmes to create sustainable financial structures, with multi-year allocations; and • helping people and businesses make the most of digital connectivity through targeted and more effective business and adult education support programmes. <p>R2 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). We recommend that PSB public services partners respond more effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • ensuring the Local Well-Being Plan sets out a more optimistic and ambitious vision for ‘place’

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p style="text-align: center;">with joint priorities co-produced by partners and with citizens to address agreed challenges.</p> <p>R3 To help sustain rural communities, public services need to think differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). We recommend councils provide a more effective response to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring service commissioners have cost data and qualitative information on the full range of service options available; and • using citizens' views on the availability, affordability, accessibility, adequacy and acceptability of council services to shape the delivery and integration of services. <p>R4 To help sustain rural communities, public services need to act differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). We recommend councils do more to develop community resilience and self-help by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with relevant bodies such as the Wales Co-operative Centre to support social enterprise and more collaborative business models; • providing tailored community outreach for those who face multiple barriers to accessing public services and work;

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing and recognising the role of town and community councils by capitalising on their local knowledge and supporting them to do more; • 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; • 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 • improving community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.
November 2018	<u>Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling</u>	<p>R1 Benchmarking work has found that the cost of certain waste management services show surprising variation (paragraphs 1.31-1.39). 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.</p> <p>R2 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</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>further analysis (paragraphs 1.40-1.51). 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explores how the cost of collecting dry recyclables may affect the overall cost of providing kerbside waste management services to households; and • 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. <p>R3 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). 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.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>R4 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). 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.</p>
November 2018	<p><u>Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer</u></p>	<p>R1 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. In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs.</p> <p>R2 Local authorities have significant scope to provide better and more visible help and support before, during, and after the community asset transfer process. We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities:</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify community assets transfer's role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services; • work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs; • identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer; • 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 • support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.
December 2018	<p><u>The maturity of local government in use of data</u></p>	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a clear vision that treats data as a key resource; • establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data; • undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests; and

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services. <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and • review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities. <p>R3 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"> • identify staff who have a role in analysing and managing data to remove duplication and free up

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>resources to build and develop capacity in data usage; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invest and support the development of staff data analytical, mining and segmentation skills. <p>R4 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"> • set data reporting standards to ensure minimum data standards underpin decision making; and • make more open data available.
March 2019	<p><u>Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste</u></p>	<p>R1 Increasing the focus on waste prevention to reflect the overall aims of Towards Zero Waste</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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) revisits the relative priority it gives to recycling and waste prevention as part of its review of Towards Zero Waste; b) sets out clearly the expectations on different organisations and sectors for waste prevention; and 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

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>in the context of current projections about waste arising through to 2050.</p> <p>R2 Improving data on commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste</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>
March 2019	<p><u>Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste</u></p>	<p>R3 Enhancing producer responsibility and using more legal, financial and fiscal levers</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>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
June 2019	<u>The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales</u>	<p>R1 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. To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local planning authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose; – use ‘Place Plans’ as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making; and – 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. • Welsh Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – review the Development Management Procedure Order 2012 and update the engagement and involvement standards for local planning authorities. <p>R2 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. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • improve capacity by working regionally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – integrate services to address specialism gaps; – develop joint supplementary planning guidance; and – develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities. <p>R3 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. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews development control fees to ensure the levels set better reflect the actual cost of providing these services; and • consider how to use the powers in the Planning (Wales) Act to support and improve local planning authority capacity and resilience. <p>R4 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. We recommend that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority;

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned; and • enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings. <p>R5 Part 4 of the report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving wellbeing; • provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate wellbeing training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities; • set appropriate measures for their administration of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on wellbeing; and • annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities impact on wellbeing.

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: post@archwilio.cymru

Gwefan: www.archwilio.cymru