



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# Annual Improvement Report 2014-15

## Powys County Council

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This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Colin Davies and Justine Morgan under the direction of Jane Holownia.

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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.

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# Summary report

## Purpose of this report

- 1 Each year, the Auditor General is required to audit the improvement planning and reporting arrangements of Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities, and to assess whether each authority will meet statutory continuous improvement duties<sup>1</sup>. This work has been undertaken on behalf of the Auditor General by staff of the Wales Audit Office. [Appendix 1](#) provides more information about the Auditor General's powers and duties in local government.
- 2 In addition, the Auditor General undertakes an in-depth corporate assessment at each authority on a cyclical basis (currently at least once every four years). In the intervening years, in addition to audits of improvement planning and reporting, the Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Auditor General, will keep track of developments and focus further assessment work on a number of key themes, developed in discussion with each authority.
- 3 This Annual Improvement Report (AIR) summarises the audit work undertaken at Powys County Council (the Council) since the last such report was published in July 2014. This report also includes a summary of the key findings from reports issued by 'relevant regulators', namely: the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW); Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn); and the Welsh Language Commissioner. Nonetheless, this report does not represent a comprehensive review of all the Council's arrangements or services. The conclusions in this report are based on the work carried out at the Council by relevant external review bodies and, unless stated otherwise, reflect the situation at the point in time that such work was concluded.
- 4 Taking into consideration the work carried out during 2014-15, the Auditor General has provided an 'Overall Conclusion' in this report and states whether he believes that the Council is likely to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2015-16 (see [page 6](#)).
- 5 This statement should not be seen as a definitive diagnosis of organisational health or as a prediction of future success. Rather, it should be viewed as providing an opinion on the extent to which the arrangements currently in place are reasonably sound insofar as can be ascertained from the work carried out.
- 6 We want to find out if this report gives you the information you need and whether it is easy to understand. You can let us know your views by e-mailing us at [info@audit.wales](mailto:info@audit.wales) or writing to us at 24 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ.

<sup>1</sup> Duties and requirements contained within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure).

## 2014-15 performance audit and inspection work

- 7 In determining the breadth of work undertaken during the year, we considered the extent of accumulated audit and inspection knowledge as well as other available sources of information including the Council's own mechanisms for review and evaluation. For 2014-15, the Wales Audit Office undertook improvement assessment work under three themes: use of resources; governance; and performance. Individual projects undertaken by the Wales Audit Office and the other regulators during the year included:

Project name	Brief description	Dates [when the work was carried out]
<b>Wales Audit Office – Financial planning review</b>	Assessment of the Council's financial position and how it is budgeting and delivering on required savings.	June to October 2014
<b>Wales Audit Office – Audit of the Council's Improvement Plan</b>	Assessment of the Council's adherence to Welsh Government guidelines for the publication of its Improvement Plan.	April to June 2014
<b>Wales Audit Office – Audit of the Council's Performance Report</b>	Assessment of the Council's adherence to Welsh Government guidelines for the publication of its Performance Report.	November 2014 to April 2015
<b>Wales Audit Office – Strengthening Financial Scrutiny in Powys County Council</b>	Support and challenge to the Council's approach to strengthening its financial scrutiny.	July 2014 to February 2015
<b>Wales Audit Office – Review of programme and project management arrangements</b>	Assessment of the Council's programme and project management arrangements to support delivery of the One Powys Plan.	August 2014 to March 2015
<b>Wales Audit Office – Review of partnership and collaboration arrangements</b>	Assessment of the effectiveness of the Section 33 arrangements governing the ICT Partnership between the Council and Powys teaching Health Board .	August 2014 to March 2015
<b>Wales Audit Office – Review of the Leadership Development Programme</b>	Assessment of the Council's response to our statutory recommendation issued in 2011 in relation to building capacity and capability.	July 2014 to March 2015
<b>Wales Audit Office –Review of arrangements for environmental health services</b>	Assessment of progress on arrangements for provision of the Council's environmental health services.	October 2013 to October 2014

Project name	Brief description	Dates [when the work was carried out]
<b>Wales Audit Office –Review of the Council’s arrangements for distributing Discretionary Housing Benefit payments</b>	Assessment of the effectiveness of the Council’s allocation, distribution, administration and use of Discretionary Housing Benefit payments.	November to April 2014
<b>Wales Audit Office –Review of the Council’s arrangements to support the safeguarding of children</b>	Assessment of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance arrangements for the safeguarding of children.	March to November 2014
<b>CSSIW – Review of the Social Services Department’s performance in 2013-14</b>	Assessment of the performance of the Council’s Social Services function.	April 2013 to March 2014
<b>CSSIW – Inspection of safeguarding and care planning of looked-after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviour</b>	Assessment of the effectiveness of the Council’s services for looked-after children over 11 years of age and care leavers who were identified as being vulnerable and/or involved in risky behaviours.	April to May 2014
<b>Welsh Language Commissioner – Review of the Council’s Welsh Language Scheme</b>	Assessment of the effectiveness of the Scheme in providing Council services to the public in Welsh.	July to November 2014

**The Council has strengthened its governance arrangements and is making progress in its priority areas, but faces significant challenges in commissioning and providing its adult social care services**

- 8 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 Measure during 2015-16. The Auditor General has reached this conclusion because:
- a The Council has generally robust financial management arrangements, and it is further developing them to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the increasingly challenging financial climate. The Council has strengthened its arrangements for financial scrutiny and is well placed to drive improvement in relation to its medium-term financial planning. However, financial monitoring arrangements need to be extended to include service performance data. This will facilitate better scrutiny and challenge by members in order to ensure that expected service standards are not being compromised.

- b Whilst the Council has embedded a coaching approach to help address capacity and capability issues, it still faces significant challenges in the shaping and remodelling of its current and future social care provision and the robustness of its contracting and commissioning function.
- c The Council, with its partners, has established programme management arrangements to deliver the improvement priorities contained in the One Powys Plan 2014-2017, although these arrangements remain under development as the Council and the Health Board look to agree a common approach. Also, the Council recognises the need to further identify and develop measures by which outcomes and performance can effectively be measured.

## Headlines – a summary of key findings

- 9 The table below summarises the key findings of work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, and the other regulators, in 2014-15.

<p><b>Use of resources</b></p>	<p>Wales Audit Office – The Council has generally robust financial management arrangements, and it is further developing them to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the increasingly challenging financial climate. (paragraphs 13 to 18)</p> <p>Wales Audit Office – The Council has committed most of Discretionary Housing Payments but because of weaknesses in its management and monitoring of funds, it is not clear if those in the greatest need are receiving help. (paragraphs 19 to 24)</p>
<p><b>Governance</b></p>	<p>Wales Audit Office – The Council has undertaken a robust approach to strengthening its financial scrutiny and is well placed to drive improvement in relation to its medium-term financial planning. (paragraphs 25 to 32)</p> <p>Wales Audit Office – The governance, accountability and management arrangements for safeguarding responsibilities to children are mostly adequate but some improvements could be made. (paragraphs 33 to 38)</p> <p>Wales Audit Office – The Powys ICT partnership has improved service resilience and reduced IT risk, and section 33 arrangements provide a good basis for integrated working. (paragraphs 39 to 46)</p> <p>Wales Audit Office – The Council has embedded a coaching approach to help address capacity and capability issues. (paragraphs 47 to 50)</p> <p>Wales Audit Office – The Council’s improvement plan and its evaluation of its performance comply with the requirements of the 2009 Measure. (paragraphs 51 to 56)</p>

<b>Performance</b>	<p>CSSIW – The Council is facing significant challenges in the shaping and remodelling of its current and future social care provision and the robustness of its contracting and commissioning function. (paragraphs 57 to 64)</p> <p>Wales Audit Office – The Council is delivering environmental health services at the required standard, but will find it a challenge to take on new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment. (paragraphs 65 to 67)</p> <p>Welsh Language Commissioner – The Council has identified the Welsh-language needs of its citizens and its workforce and is integrating this information into the way it provides services. (paragraphs 68 to 74)</p>
<b>Improvement planning and reporting audits</b>	<p>Wales Audit Office – The Auditor General issued audit certificates stating that the Council had discharged its duties under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. (Appendices 2 and 3).</p>
<b>Audit of accounts</b>	<p>Wales Audit Office – On 11 December 2014, the Auditor General issued an Annual Audit Letter to the Council. The letter summarises the key messages arising from his statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 as the Appointed Auditor and his reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. It confirmed that, on 30 September 2014, he issued an unqualified opinion on the Council’s accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council’s and the Pension Fund’s financial position and transactions.</p> <p>The Annual Audit Letter highlighted some significant difficulties that were encountered by the audit team whilst testing the financial statements, and describes the action proposed by the Council’s Strategic Director of Resources to resolve them. (Appendix 4).</p>

## Recommendations and proposals for improvement

- 10 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:
- a 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;
  - b make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;



- c conduct a special inspection and publish a report and make recommendations; and
  - d recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.
- 11 The Auditor General makes no formal recommendations to the Council in this AIR. He does, however, make recommendations that may be relevant to the Council in his Local Government National Reports. A list of recommendations contained in reports issued in 2014-15 can be found in [Appendix 5](#). There are also a number of proposals for improvement for the Council arising from the work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office during the year.
- 12 In addition, CSSIW, Estyn and the included areas for improvement in their inspection reports and letters issued to the Council during 2014-15. These are available at [www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk), [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk) and [www.comisiynyddygygymraeg.org](http://www.comisiynyddygygymraeg.org).

Proposals for improvement arising from the work of the Wales Audit Office during 2014-15
The Council should:
P1 Review its working practices against the recommendations in the Auditor General's 2014-15 Local Government Reports and implement improvements where appropriate.
P2 Extend its financial monitoring arrangements to include service performance data to ensure that expected service standards are not being compromised at the expense of securing financial savings.
P3 Ensure appropriate and timely action is taken to manage risks and under performance in relation to safeguarding and ensure elected members are informed of risk management arrangements, and progress in addressing safeguarding risks is included in future scrutiny work.
P4 Improve the work of the Council's Scrutiny Committees to ensure it is providing assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements.
P5 Ensure all elected members and staff who come into contact with children on a regular basis receive training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council's corporate policy on safeguarding.
P6 Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.

# Detailed report



## Use of resources

The Council has generally robust financial management arrangements, and it is further developing them to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the increasingly challenging financial climate

- 13 During the period May to August 2014, the Wales Audit Office examined authorities' financial position and how they are budgeting and delivering on required savings. This work considered whether authorities have robust approaches in place to manage the budget reductions that they are facing to secure a stable financial position that will enable them to continue to operate for the foreseeable future. The focus of the work was on the 2014-15 financial planning period. In order to inform views on the planning for and successful delivery of budgets, we also considered the track record for previous financial years 2011-12 to 2013-14.
- 14 Over the period 2011-14, the Council has a good track record of delivering identified savings within year against the planned actions that it approved. The Council has recently completed a fundamental review of its strategic financial planning arrangements to enable it to operate its new 'commissioning council' model and to ensure that it has arrangements in place that are fit for purpose in times of significant financial challenge. This work includes a refreshed vision; new budget-setting principles; new priorities for running the 'commissioning council' operational model; and a longer-term view on financial planning to 2020.
- 15 The Council's financial management and control arrangements are fit for purpose and are being effectively managed. Following a WLGA financial peer review, the Council has restructured its finance function and is in the process of implementing a business information support and financial management service to its customers rather than continuing to operate in a traditional accountancy role. The finance function is working closely with services to identify and address the causes of volatility in delivering service budgets, for example, in relation to Adult Social Care Services.
- 16 The Council has appropriate arrangements in place for financial governance and is working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny, CIPFA and Grant Thornton to further improve their effectiveness in providing robust financial challenge, monitoring and scrutiny.
- 17 The Council has appropriate plans in place to achieve the £17.6 million of savings it has identified as necessary for 2014-15, and is carefully monitoring them to identify and mitigate any risk of significant slippage that would impact adversely on general reserves. However, there is a need for financial monitoring arrangements to be extended to include service performance data to facilitate effective scrutiny and challenge by members in order to ensure that expected service standards are not being compromised.
- 18 In 2015, the Wales Audit Office will carry out a further review of councils' financial resilience, focusing on the 2015-16 financial planning period and including further work on the use of reserves.

**The Council has committed most of Discretionary Housing Payments but because of weaknesses in its management and monitoring of funds, it is not clear if those in the greatest need are receiving help**

- 19 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 heralds a significant change to the administration and distribution of benefits and will have a major impact on many citizens. In April 2011, the UK Government embarked on a programme of reform, which will culminate in the phased introduction of Universal Credit between October 2013 and 2017. A major focus of the UK Government's plans are changes to Housing Benefit, which are aimed at reducing annual expenditure by around £2.3 billion. These changes mean that millions of households in Great Britain will receive less in benefits, creating hard choices for them about how they use their money and manage financially on a day-to-day basis.
- 20 In January 2015, the Auditor General for Wales published his report on how well councils are managing the impact of welfare reform changes on social housing tenants in Wales. His report reviewed the management and use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) by councils in Wales and concluded that the allocation, distribution, administration and use of these payments have significant inconsistencies and weaknesses. We followed up this work at individual councils.
- 21 Our review found that the Council has some processes in place to support vulnerable customers to apply for DHP. The Council's website provides some information regarding how an applicant can apply for assistance and an application form. This online information is relatively easy for an applicant to find and includes a downloadable application form. The form cannot, however, be completed online but is relatively short at five pages in length.
- 22 The Council does not have a published strategy or policy statement to explain how DHP contributes towards addressing the impact of welfare reform, although the 'One Powys Plan' sets out the Council's priority of working to reduce poverty. However, the 'One Powys Plan' does not identify how the Council will administer and use DHP to support delivery of this strategic objective, or to meet the financial hardships faced by families in housing need.
- 23 The Council has a process in place to monitor the level of expenditure against the money provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, and the number of people it has helped. However, the Council does not monitor the number of landlords assisted to ensure there is good coverage across all sectors and areas, nor does it monitor the impact of its DHP payments and how these resources have helped customers affected by the changes introduced under welfare reform and its impact on sustaining tenancies.
- 24 The Council had paid out £459,723 of its Department for Work and Pensions allocation of £560,638 at the end of November 2014 and assisted 1,228 people. This represents 82 per cent of its allocation. Whilst the Council is seeking to ensure it fully utilises its DHP funds, because of weaknesses in its monitoring and evaluation arrangements it cannot be sure that DHP is having a positive impact on those in the greatest need.

## Governance

### The Council has undertaken a robust approach to strengthening its financial scrutiny and is well placed to drive improvement in relation to its medium-term financial planning

- 25 As part of its Welsh programme of support, the Centre for Public Scrutiny has been working with the Council in strengthening its approaches to financial scrutiny. A key element of this work related to the establishment of a Finance Scrutiny Panel to undertake budget and finance scrutiny comprising members of the Audit Committee together with the chairs of the scrutiny committees and Group Leaders of Non-Executive Groups.
- 26 The purpose of the Panel is to provide high-quality support and challenge to the Council with regard to the development and delivery of its Medium Term Financial Strategy. It has also considered ways in which the annual budget setting process may be strengthened with a view to facilitating more high-quality engagement with elected members.
- 27 The Council is showing evidence of robust internal challenge and scrutiny. The Council showcased its newly developed approach to Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning scrutiny at the recent national CfPS Conference in London. Its approach was supported and informed by CfPS Wales, CIPFA and Grant Thornton, and we consider it to be good practice.
- 28 The Council set out to achieve greater trust between the Cabinet, Senior Management Team and Scrutiny to enable the Council to better demonstrate 'whole council' leadership in a climate of reduced funding and service transformation. It sought to demonstrate high levels of knowledge, skills and confidence by non-executives in their financial scrutiny roles. It also, very importantly, wanted the concept of challenge to be seen as essential by the leadership in testing how the Council makes strategic choices about resource allocation.
- 29 This collaborative approach, with CfPS Wales/Grant Thornton and CIPFA, involved a baseline assessment of elected member capacity and capability; the establishment of a dedicated Finance Scrutiny Panel; the development and delivery of a series of 10 learning seminars for Cabinet, Scrutiny and Senior Management team and the co-development and implementation of a Finance Scrutiny Work Programme for 2015-16.
- 30 The Council and CfPS have each undertaken their own evaluation and found different types of inter-related impacts were achieved as a result of the programme. These included effects on knowledge and skills; interpersonal relations; and culture and behaviours. The evaluation identified what worked well and why; and clarified what this meant for the Council in terms of what good scrutiny looks like.
- 31 The reflective learning identified that:
  - a effective scrutiny helps to direct attention to things that matter which can influence both cause and effect as organisations respond to change;

- b successful scrutiny is dependent on leadership, tenacity, a commitment to accessing knowledge and skills and an application of considerable emotional intelligence; and
  - c understanding that adopting the right tone is as much an ‘end’ as it is a ‘means’ which helps to avoid defensiveness, denial and dismissal often typical in situations where scrutiny takes the initiative.
- 32 Going forward the Finance Scrutiny Panel will consult upon and refine its draft Forward Work Programme 2015-17, including the review of the Council’s financial planning model and draft savings proposals for 2016-17. The Panel also intends to examine the Council’s organisational development plan and explore its relationship with the Council’s cost improvement strategy. Attention also needs to focus on increasing levels of engagement and participation in budget setting processes.

**The governance, accountability and management arrangements for safeguarding responsibilities to children are mostly adequate but some improvements could be made**

- 33 The Council published its ‘Child Protection Policy and Procedure’ in 2011 and the policy was endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The Council has established a work plan of policy and procedure reviews, with all policies being reviewed within a three-year cycle. The LSCB is also engaged in the monitoring, and reviewing of policies and procedures particularly at times of Welsh Government consultation or changes in statutory guidance.
- 34 The Council has a clear accountability framework for safeguarding including specific lead officers in Social Services and Education, and lead members in Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee. We found these arrangements to be well known within the Council.
- 35 Whilst safeguarding does appear on the Corporate Risk Register, and risk management is described as being in place at several levels, we found limited evidence of effective risk management and reporting in practice. We also found awareness and knowledge of risk management amongst elected members to be poor.
- 36 The Council’s arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its safeguarding responsibilities to children are mostly adequate. Child Protection Management Reports are provided to the LSCB, and to Scrutiny and Cabinet quarterly. Reports include performance against a range of measures as well as anonymised stories of individual children’s experience of Council services. The Council’s Scrutiny Committee has a sub-group specialising in Education and Social Services and this has enabled members to develop and improve their knowledge on key safeguarding issues. Safeguarding training is mandated for Social Services and Education staff and for school governors and elected members. However, there is no evidence of safeguarding training (beyond corporate induction) being provided to all relevant service areas.

- 37 The Council's approach to identifying and acting on improvements in its safeguarding arrangements is adequate but some improvements could again be made. The Council has previously been the subject of a fine for a data protection breach. As a consequence an Improvement Plan was created and implemented. However, Internal Audit has not had a significant role looking at Children's safeguarding arrangements, which weakens the Council's ability to satisfy itself that its safeguarding arrangements are working effectively.
- 38 Overall Whistleblowing arrangements were found to be poor, but the Council has begun to tackle the issues, starting with policy. The next steps are to design and implement appropriate arrangements for caseload reporting, scrutiny, staff training and raising awareness.

**The Powys ICT partnership has improved service resilience and reduced IT risk, and section 33 arrangements provide a good basis for integrated working**

- 39 In July 2012, the Council and Powys teaching Health Board (the Health Board) entered into a formal partnership (the partners) to deliver information and communications technology (ICT) services from a joint team formed by the integration of the ICT teams from both organisations. The partners employed a section 33 agreement as a mechanism to create pooled revenue and capital funding. The section 33 agreement provides a formal basis for partnership working into which individual partnership schemes slot. The first scheme to enter into the agreement was the ICT scheme, which became operational from 1 July 2012.
- 40 The Council and Health Board developed the section 33 agreement with the intention that it lasted for a minimum of four years (to 2016) with an annual review allowing amendment as appropriate. The Council is the host of the ICT joint service and the agreement. The host's financial management and financial accounting rules apply. This means that the joint service can reclaim VAT as well as utilising other financial flexibilities available to local government bodies.
- 41 We have not previously formally reviewed or reported on the section 33 agreement adopted in 2012 or, in particular, the effectiveness of the joint ICT partnership. This review was included in the regulatory programme at both the Council and the Health Board. The purpose of the review was to determine whether:
- a the joint ICT arrangement had delivered against its operational service aims and;
  - b its annual plans as set out at initiation;
  - c the service is currently meeting users' needs, has effective governance and oversight, and is financially sound; and
  - d there are clear medium-term plans that support achievement of the Council and Health Board's wider strategic and service aims.

- 42 The work took place during October and November 2014 and was reported in February 2015. The conclusions were that the section 33 ICT partnership has delivered against most of its agreed objectives, but there are greater challenges where improvements depend on a third party.
- 43 We drew this conclusion because:
- a the section 33 partnership's business aims were agreed and effectively designed to help focus the work of the new partnership; and
  - b the ICT partnership effectively delivered against most of the objectives and has reduced overall service risk but it has had more difficulty achieving changes which were outside the direct control of the ICT partnership and in integrating teams.
- 44 The ICT partnership is set up effectively to deliver annually agreed services and to support continuous improvement. There is effective and fair budget setting and financial management for pooled funds. The ICT service is tightly resourced to meet current needs and partnership management is effectively integrated, but more could be done to integrate operational service teams to create efficiencies and further strengthen ICT team resilience.
- 45 There is effective and appropriate oversight and governance of the section 33 ICT partnership and there are reasonable performance metrics in place but more now needs to be done to redesign performance measures to include revised service standards, operational aims, project impact and using ICT as an enabler for wider service change.
- 46 There are good approaches for developing ICT strategy, but there remain opportunities for using technology to support wider service efficiency. The ICT partnership has, in the main, successfully delivered against its 2011 strategy and has developed a stable service. The ICT Partnership are developing the 2015-2018 ICT strategy and this will need to focus the development of technology as an enabler for both service modernisation and cashable efficiencies across both the Council and Health Board.

### **The Council has embedded a coaching approach to help address capacity and capability issues**

- 47 During 2010-11 a number of reviews and reports, including a statutory recommendation from the Wales Audit Office, identified that the Council did not have the leadership capacity or capability to drive through the changes required, if services were to be delivered effectively in the future. In response the Council has been highly committed to embracing and embedding coaching to build capacity and address capability issues across the Council. This was at a time of significant change within the structure of the organisation and when further collaborative external relationships were being developed with the Health Board.



- 48 The approach taken, with the support of the University of South Wales and the Institute of Leadership and Management(ILM), has been to develop a core team from across the organisation of in-house coaches to level 5 of ILM and beyond, to act as a hub and conduit for further coaching support for staff. Ambassadors for the programme have successfully integrated the value of the 'coaching model' to junior and senior officers with the support of its council members to help shape a new culture, in a sustainable way.
- 49 In evaluating the impact of its coaching programme over the last three years, the Council considers that it has positively developed organisational culture and behaviours and, increasingly, helped in the achievement of positive outcomes putting citizens at the centre. Champions from across the organisation have shared their experiences of the coaching programme, keen to contribute their story to the bigger evaluation picture and share their learning across the organisation.
- 50 The Council has commissioned the University of South Wales to undertake an independent evaluative review of its coaching programme.

**The Council's improvement plan and its evaluation of its performance comply with the requirements of the 2009 Measure**

- 51 The Council is required to prepare and publish an Improvement Plan describing its plans to discharge its duties to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. The Auditor General's July 2014 Improvement Plan Certificate ([Appendix 2](#)) concluded that the Council had discharged its improvement planning duties under the Measure.
- 52 The Council has adopted the One Powys Plan 2014-2017. This is a plan for change between all partners in the Powys Local Service Board. There are five improvement priorities in the plan:
- a Integrated Health and Adult Social Care
  - b Children and Young People
  - c Transferring Learning and Skills
  - d Stronger, safer and economically viable communities
  - e Organisation and Partnership Development
- 53 The Council, with its partners, has established a programme management arrangement. Each improvement priority is being managed by a programme board.
- 54 The programme arrangements remain under development. The Council and the Health Board are reviewing the project management methodology as they look to agree a common approach. The quality and completeness of the information in the project management templates are variable across the different programme boards. The benefit profiles and measures that have been identified are not yet at an advanced enough stage to provide sufficient rigour by which outcomes and

performance can effectively be measured. To date there has also been limited training in the new programme management system and the Council recognises this is something which needs to be addressed.

- 55 The One Powys Plan is the key strategic document for the work of the Local Service Board. It is therefore important that the management and monitoring of progress on delivering the stated outcomes are effective; because of this a review of the ongoing development of this work will feature in our 2015-16 work programme.
- 56 The Council also met its improvement reporting duties under the Measure. The Auditor General's November 2014 Improvement Assessment Certificate ([Appendix 3](#)) concluded that the Council had discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure.

## Performance

### The Council is facing significant challenges in the shaping and remodelling of its current and future social care provision and the robustness of its contracting and commissioning functions

- 57 A real challenge for the Council this year has been the re-tendering of its domiciliary care provision. The negative impact of this on a large number of vulnerable adults in the community has been significant. The Council intends to undertake an independent review of its commissioning and retendering process and is working with the Social Services Improvement Agency to progress this.
- 58 The CSSIW has been actively involved in the multi-agency response to ensuring the welfare of people using domiciliary care services within the county, and has monitored the performance of both the provider agencies and the Council's ongoing care management, contracting and commissioning of these services. This oversight has culminated in CSSIW's inspection of Powys adult social care services and specifically its arrangements for the provision of domiciliary care within the county which was undertaken during March to May 2015.
- 59 The CSSIW published its Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/2013 in October 2014 and this is available on its website: [www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk). The CSSIW reported that the Council is facing significant budget reductions, this together with the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and an ambitious service improvement agenda will present significant challenge.
- 60 The Council has now recruited its senior leadership team for social services which has included the appointment of a statutory director and heads of adult and children's services. This change of leadership has been alongside a number of political changes, including to the portfolio holders for social services.
- 61 The Council, in agreeing its 2014-15 budget, has identified the need to make significant savings of some £40 million over the next three years. The total savings for 2014-15 to be found for adult social care are £2.7 million and for children's services are £675,000. This is a challenging situation especially in the context of service delivery and modernisation in adult social care.
- 62 The Council submitted its statement of intent for the delivery of integrated health and social care services for older people with complex needs to the Welsh Government in March 2014. This provides an assessment of current arrangements and sets out the position for the delivery of integrated services and a series of commitments for building on these in the future.
- 63 The Council recognises the need to deliver services to people in a language of their choice. In responding to 'Mwy na Geiria', 'More than Just Words' – the strategic framework for Welsh language services in health, social services and social care – this is being embedded into commissioning contracts, and the requirement to provide services through the medium of Welsh. The children and young people's partnership is also establishing a Welsh-language standards challenge and scrutiny group, which will be led by the Welsh language officer in order to support the children and young people's partnership.

- 64 The Council has progressed the development of its county-wide re-ablement service, to the extent that it is now fully operational within a large part of the county.

**The Council is delivering environmental health services at the required standard, but will find it a challenge to take on new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment**

- 65 Councils have many statutory environmental health duties but spending is not being protected during the current period of financial austerity, which is making it more difficult for the service to deliver national strategic priorities.
- 66 The Council is delivering most of its environmental health services at above minimum levels as judged against the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Best Practice Standards. The Council made significant cuts in both environmental health budgets and staff numbers between 2011-12 and 2013-14, and new environmental health statutory duties are being introduced which the Council will find challenging to deliver.
- 67 A staff survey indicates that respondents are mostly positive about the current standard of environmental health service but there is a low awareness of current performance or future plans amongst citizens.

**The Council has identified the Welsh-language needs of its citizens and its workforce and is integrating this information into the way it provides services**

- 68 The role of the Welsh Language Commissioner (the Commissioner) was created by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. New powers to impose standards on organisations came into force through subordinate legislation on 31 March 2015. The Commissioner will continue to review Welsh-language schemes by virtue of powers inherited under the Welsh Language Act 1993.
- 69 The Commissioner works with all councils in Wales to inspect and advise on the implementation of language schemes. It is the responsibility of councils to provide services to the public in Welsh in accordance with the commitments in their language schemes. Every council is committed to providing an annual monitoring report to the Commissioner outlining its performance in implementing the language scheme. The Commissioner analyses every monitoring report, provides a formal response and collects further information as required.
- 70 The Commissioner reported that a customer satisfaction survey on the Council's Welsh-language services was held during 2013-14. The Council intends to use the findings to identify any gaps in the provision and the support needed by services and their staff.
- 71 There was a delay again this year in submitting the annual monitoring report on the implementation of the Welsh-language scheme. As a result, the monitoring process has not been completed. The achievement date of a number of targets has been postponed.

- 72 The Council continues to try and obtain complete information about the language skills of the workforce. Data was collected about 57.5 per cent of the staff during 2013-14. The Corporate Scrutiny Group is now responsible for considering matters relating to the Welsh language, following the dissolution of the Equalities and Welsh Language Steering Board. The Children and Young People's Partnership is in the process of establishing a scrutiny and support group for the Welsh language.
- 73 The Council acknowledges that there is a weakness in the link between the Service Improvement Plans and the language scheme. It intends to strengthen the Improvement Plans by focusing on evaluating specific Welsh-medium provision and needs.
- 74 Due to cuts in the Council's budget, there is a danger that Welsh speakers may be lost from key posts. In order to try and reduce the risk, Welsh language and equality impact assessments were held in the context of all budgetary decisions.

# Appendix 1 – Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. This requirement covers local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities.

This report has been produced by staff of the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Measure. 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.

Improvement authorities are under a general duty to ‘make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions’. Improvement authorities are defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities.

The annual improvement assessment is the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The improvement assessment is a forward-looking assessment of an authority’s likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. It also includes a retrospective assessment of whether an authority has achieved its planned improvements in order to inform a view as to the authority’s track record of improvement. The Auditor General will summarise his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority (under section 24).

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 – Audit of Powys County Council’s 2014-15 Improvement Plan

## Certificate

I certify that I have audited Powys County Council’s (the Council) Improvement Plan in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) and my Code of Audit Practice.

As a result of my audit, I believe that the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.

## Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Auditor General

Under the Measure, the Council is required to prepare and publish an Improvement Plan describing its plans to discharge its duties to:

- make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions;
- make arrangements to secure achievement of its improvement objectives; and
- make arrangements to exercise its functions so that any performance standard specified by Welsh Ministers is met.

The Measure requires the Council to publish its Improvement Plan as soon as is reasonably practicable after the start of the financial year to which it relates, or after such other date as Welsh Ministers may specify by order.

The Council is responsible for preparing the Improvement Plan and for the information set out within it. The Measure requires that the Council has regard to guidance issued by Welsh Ministers in preparing and publishing its plan.

As the Council’s auditor, I am required under sections 17 and 19 of the Measure to carry out an audit of the Improvement Plan, to certify that I have done so, and to report whether I believe that the Council has discharged its duties to prepare and publish an Improvement Plan in accordance with statutory requirements set out in section 15 and statutory guidance.

## Scope of the Improvement Plan audit

For the purposes of my audit work I will accept that, provided an authority meets its statutory requirements, it will also have complied with Welsh Government statutory guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.

For this audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information, or whether the Improvement Plan published by the Council can be achieved. Other assessment work that I will undertake under section 18 of the Measure will examine these issues. My audit of the Council's Improvement Plan, therefore, comprised a review of the plan to ascertain whether it included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the plan complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing its plan.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 17 and 19 of the Measure cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

**I make no recommendations under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009**

Huw Vaughan Thomas  
**Auditor General for Wales**

CC: Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Local Government and Government Business  
Colin Davies, Manager  
Justine Morgan, Performance Audit Lead



# Appendix 3 – Audit of Powys County Council’s assessment of 2013-14 performance

## Certificate

I certify that I have audited Powys County Council’s (the Council) assessment of its performance in 2013-14 in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) and my Code of Audit Practice.

As a result of my audit, I believe that the Council has discharged its duties under sections 15(2), (3), (8) and (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.

## Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Auditor General

Under the Measure, the Council is required to annually publish an assessment which describes its performance:

- in discharging its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions;
- in meeting the improvement objectives it has set itself;
- by reference to performance indicators specified by Welsh Ministers, and self-imposed performance indicators; and
- in meeting any performance standards specified by Welsh Ministers, and self-imposed performance standards.

The Measure requires the Council to publish its assessment before 31 October in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as Welsh Ministers may specify by order.

The Measure requires that the Council has regard to guidance issued by Welsh Ministers in publishing its assessment.

As the Council’s auditor, I am required under sections 17 and 19 of the Measure to carry out an audit to determine whether the Council has discharged its duty to publish an assessment of performance, to certify that I have done so, and to report whether I believe that the Council has discharged its duties in accordance with statutory requirements set out in section 15 and statutory guidance.

## Scope of the audit

For the purposes of my audit work I will accept that, provided an authority meets its statutory requirements, it will also have complied with Welsh Government statutory guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.

For this audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information. Other assessment work that I will undertake under section 18 of the Measure may examine these issues. My audit of the Council's assessment of performance, therefore, comprised a review of the Council's publication to ascertain whether it included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the assessment complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing it.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 17 and 19 of the Measure cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

**I make no recommendations under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009**

Huw Vaughan Thomas  
**Auditor General For Wales**

CC: Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Local Government and Government Business  
Colin Davies, Manager  
Justine Morgan, Performance Audit Lead

# Appendix 4 – Annual Audit Letter

Cllr Barry Thomas  
Leader  
Powys County Council  
County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

Dear Councillor Thomas

## **Annual Audit Letter – Powys County Council 2013-14**

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

### **The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources**

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 30 September 2014, I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's and the Pension Fund'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 26 September 2014, and a more detailed report will follow in due course.

The report to Audit Committee, referred to above, highlighted some significant difficulties that were encountered by the audit team whilst testing the financial statements, such as:

- Material errors found in the draft financial statements. Our work identified a number of material errors in the draft accounts (including internal recharges, fixed assets and trading accounts), which needed to be amended before I gave my opinion.
- Quality Assurance checks were not undertaken prior to issuing the draft Financial Statements, and resulted in a large number of errors and generally a poor quality of accounts.
- My team encountered delays in getting responses and/or evidence to answer audit queries. This made the clearance of some issues very protracted and resulted in very late additional queries and adjustments.

Our report highlighted other weaknesses and difficulties encountered during the audit, which meant that there was a risk of not meeting the statutory deadline for publishing audited accounts. In order to meet the deadline the Audit Committee had to approve incomplete accounts on the caveat that they would be made aware of any further significant changes prior to them being signed.

This is clearly a situation that the Council wishes to avoid in future years, and the Strategic Director for Resources has commissioned external consultants to help improve the process for producing the draft financial statements. This includes improving closedown plans, understanding the requirements of external auditors, undertaking robust quality review, and ensuring all staff throughout the Council understand the importance of producing and clearing the Financial Statements.

In 2014, in common with other recent years, we continue to receive more items of correspondence, challenge and whistle-blowing from members of the public and Council employees than we plan for in our Audit Outline. These items do not always result in significant reviews, but two of the more time-consuming items reported this year include our report of allegations made under whistle-blowing legislation (April 2014 Audit Committee) and my letter to the Section 151 Officer regarding concerns on the Capital part of the Substance Misuse grants (October 2014 Audit Committee). As documented in our Audit Outline, we include a small amount each year within our audit fee for such items but, again this year, the time taken to clear these items has been considerably more than planned and this forms part of the additional fee reported at the end of this letter.

### **I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources**

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 as part of the Improvement Assessment under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Auditor General will highlight areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made when he publishes his Annual Improvement Report.

In line with other unitary authorities in Wales, Powys County Council is facing a very challenging financial environment in the short and medium term. It identified required savings of £17.6 million in 2014-15, and total savings of circa £70 million by 2020.

Our overall view on the Council's financial management arrangements is that they are generally robust, and it is further developing them to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the increasingly challenging financial climate. However, the Council does not currently align its financial and service performance monitoring arrangements to mitigate the risk that expected service standards are compromised in delivering financial savings. We came to this conclusion because we found that:

- Over the period 2011-14, the Council has a good track record of delivering identified savings within year against the planned actions that it approved.
- The Council has recently completed a fundamental review of its strategic financial planning arrangements to enable it to operate its new 'commissioning council' model and to ensure that it has arrangements in place that are fit for purpose in times of significant financial challenge. This work includes a refreshed vision; new budget-setting principles; new priorities for running the 'commissioning council' operational model; and a longer term view on financial planning to 2020.
- The Council's financial management and control arrangements are fit for purpose and are being effectively managed. Following a WLGA financial peer review, the Council has restructured its finance function and is in the process of implementing a business information support and financial management service to its customers rather than continuing to operate in a traditional accountancy role. The finance function is working closely with services to identify and address the causes of volatility in delivering service budgets, for example in relation to Adult Social Care Services.
- The Council has appropriate arrangements in place for financial governance and is working with Centre for Public Scrutiny, CIPFA and Grant Thornton to further improve their effectiveness in providing robust financial challenge, monitoring and scrutiny.
- The Council has appropriate plans in place to achieve the £17.6 million savings it has identified as necessary for 2014-15, and is carefully monitoring them to identify and mitigate any risk of significant slippage that would impact adversely on general reserves. However, there is a need for financial monitoring arrangements to be extended to include service performance data to facilitate effective scrutiny and challenge by members in order to ensure that expected service standards are not being compromised.

**I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts had been completed on 30 September 2014**

**My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2014-15 accounts or key financial systems**

A more detailed report on my grant certification work will follow in March 2015 once this year's programme of certification work is complete. Our report on the 2012-13 grants certification work highlighted some weaknesses in your arrangements for monitoring expenditure incurred by third parties.

As reported above, we encountered significant difficulties during the audit of the Financial Statements, and have undertaken more work than planned on items of correspondence received and whistle-blowing information. Consequently, the financial audit fee for

2013-14 will be £26,832 more than originally set out in the Annual Audit Outline.

Yours sincerely

John Herniman

**For and on behalf of the Appointed Auditor**

cc Jeremy Patterson, Chief Executive  
David Powell, Strategic Director – Resources

## Appendix 5 – National report recommendations 2014-15

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2014	Good Scrutiny? Good Question!	R1 Clarify the role of executive members and senior officers in contributing to scrutiny.
		R2 Ensure that scrutiny members, and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny.
		R3 Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide a clear rationale for topic selection;</li> <li>• be more outcome focused;</li> <li>• ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and</li> <li>• align scrutiny programmes with the council's performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements.</li> </ul>
		R4 Ensure that scrutiny draws effectively on the work of audit, inspection and regulation and that its activities are complementary with the work of external review bodies.
		R5 Ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function's effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes.
		R6 Undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the 'outcomes and characteristics of effective local government overview and scrutiny' developed by the Wales Scrutiny Officers' Network.
		R7 Implement scrutiny improvement action plans developed from the Wales Audit Office improvement study.
		R8 Adopt Participation Cymru's 10 Principles for Public Engagement in improving the way scrutiny engages with the public and stakeholders.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
July 2014	Young people not in education, employment or training - Findings from a review of councils in Wales	R1 Together with partners, map and review expenditure on NEETs services to better understand the resources required to deliver the Framework.
		R2 Clarify their strategic approach to reducing the proportion of 19 to 24 year olds who are NEET as well as their approach for 16 to 18 year olds.
		R3 Focus on young people with significant or multiple barriers to engaging with education, employment or training rather than those who are more likely to re-engage without significant additional support.
		R4 Develop their objectives and targets for reducing the number of young people NEET so that they can be held to account and their work aligns with the Welsh Government's targets and objectives.
		R5 Ensure that elected members and partners fully understand that councils have a clear responsibility for leading and co-ordinating youth services for 16 to 24 year olds.
		R6 Improve the evaluation of the effectiveness and relative value for money of the services and interventions in their area that are intended to reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET.



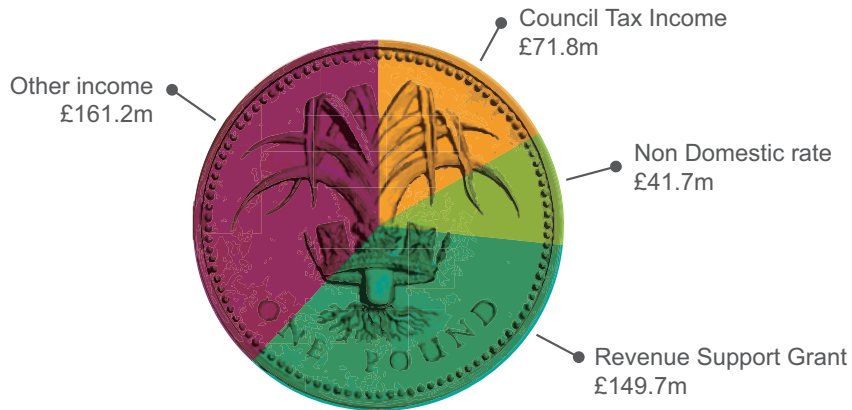
Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
October 2014	Delivering with less – the impact on environmental health services and citizens	<p>R1 Revise the best practice standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• align the work of environmental health with national strategic priorities;</li> <li>• identify the wider contribution of environmental health in delivering strategic priorities of the Welsh Government; and</li> <li>• identify the benefit and impact of environmental health services on protecting citizens.</li> </ul>
		<p>R2 Provide scrutiny chairs and members with the necessary skills and support to effectively scrutinise and challenge service performance, savings plans and the impact of budget reductions.</p>
		<p>R3 Improve engagement with local residents over planned budget cuts and changes in services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consulting with residents on planned changes in services and using the findings to shape decisions;</li> <li>• outlining which services are to be cut and how these cuts will impact on residents; and</li> <li>• setting out plans for increasing charges or changing standards of service.</li> </ul>
		<p>R4 Improve efficiency and value for money by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying the statutory and non-statutory duties of council environmental health services.</li> <li>• Agreeing environmental health priorities for the future and the role of councils in delivering these.</li> <li>• Determining an 'acceptable standard of performance' for environmental health services (upper and lower) and publicise these to citizens.</li> <li>• Improving efficiency and maintaining performance to the agreed level through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– collaborating and/or integrating with others to reduce cost and/or improve quality;</li> <li>– outsourcing where services can be delivered more cost effectively to agreed standards;</li> <li>– introducing and/or increasing charges and focusing on income-generation activity;</li> <li>– using grants strategically to maximise impact and return; and</li> <li>– reducing activities to focus on core statutory and strategic priorities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<p>R5 Improve strategic planning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying, collecting and analysing financial, performance and demand/need data on environmental health services;</li> <li>• analysing collected data to inform and understand the relationship between 'cost: benefit: impact' and use this intelligence to underpin decisions on the future of council environmental health services; and</li> <li>• agree how digital information can be used to plan and develop environmental health services in the future.</li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2015	<b>Managing the Impact of Welfare Reform Changes on Social Housing Tenants in Wales</b>	<p>R1 Improve strategic planning and better co-ordinate activity to tackle the impact of welfare reform on social-housing tenants by ensuring comprehensive action plans are in place that cover the work of all relevant council departments, housing associations and the work of external stakeholders.</p>
		<p>R2 Improve governance and accountability for welfare reform by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appointing member and officer leads to take responsibility for strategic leadership on welfare reform and be accountable for performance; and</li> <li>• ensuring members receive adequate training and regular briefings on welfare reform to be able to challenge and scrutinise performance and decisions.</li> </ul>
		<p>R3 Ensure effective management of performance on welfare reform by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting appropriate measures to enable members, officers and the public to judge progress in delivering actions;</li> <li>• ensuring performance information covers the work of all relevant agencies and especially housing associations; and</li> <li>• establishing measures to judge the wider impact of welfare reform.</li> </ul>
		<p>R4 Strengthen how welfare-reform risks are managed by creating a single corporate-level approach that co ordinates activity across the Council and the work of others to provide adequate assurance that all the necessary and appropriate actions to mitigate risk are taking place.</p>
		<p>R5 Improve engagement with tenants affected by the removal of the spare-room subsidy through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the provision of regular advice and information on the options open to them to address the financial impact of the change in their circumstances;</li> <li>• the promotion of the ‘Your benefits are changing’ helpline; and</li> <li>• the provision of support to tenants specifically affected by the removal of the spare-room subsidy to participate in regional/national employment schemes.</li> </ul>

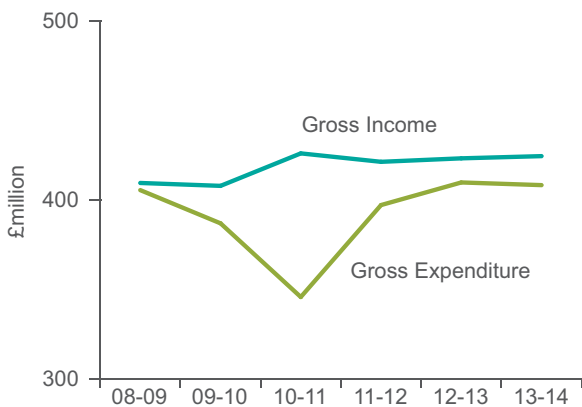
Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2015	<p><b>Managing the Impact of Welfare Reform Changes on Social Housing Tenants in Wales</b></p>	<p>R7 Improve management, access to and use of Discretionary Housing Payments by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing a clear policy or guide that is available in hard copy and online to the public that sets out the Council's policy and arrangements for administering Discretionary Housing Payments;</li> <li>• clearly defining eligible and non-eligible housing costs covered by Discretionary Housing Payments in application forms, policy documentation and applicant guidance leaflets;</li> <li>• clearly setting out the maximum/minimum length of time that such payments will be provided;</li> <li>• setting and publishing the timescale for the Council making a decision on Discretionary Housing Payments applications;</li> <li>• including information within public literature on the Council's policy for right to review or appeal of a decision and the timescales and process to be followed in deciding on these; and</li> <li>• clearly define the priority groups for Discretionary Housing Payments in public literature to ensure that those seeking assistance, and those agencies supporting them, can assess whether such payments are a viable option to address their housing and financial needs.</li> </ul>

# Appendix 6 – Useful information about the Council’s resources

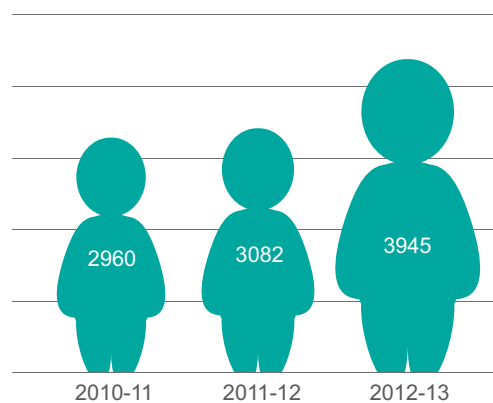
Total Gross Income 2013-14



Total Income and Expenditure



Number of whole time equivalent staff 2010-11 to 2012-13



Total Gross Expenditure by service area





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