

Committee: **Governance and Audit Committee**
Date of meeting: **4th October 2020**
Report Subject: **Audit Wales: Review of People, Performance and Financial Resilience in Community Services**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr J Wilkins, Executive Member Environment**
Report Submitted by: **Clive Rogers, Head of Community Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
7 Sept 21	9 Sep 21		02.11.21		4 Oct 21			

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Audit Wales (AW) Report, 'Review of People, Performance and Financial Resilience in Community Services' (Appendix 1) to the Committee.

This report also includes the Community Services action plan in response to AW Proposals for Improvement.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 AW published their report 'Review of People, Performance and Financial Resilience in Community Services' in July 2021 following workshops and interviews of staff that took place early 2021.
- 2.2 AW undertook this review because their work had previously identified risks in the Council's financial management culture and its impact on the Council's ongoing resilience, in areas such as financial, people and performance management.
- 2.3 In agreement with the Council, AW selected Community Services as a tracer to explore the Council's resilience and its arrangements to support and drive sustainable improvement.
- 2.4 This review also provided AW with the opportunity to follow up on their 2017 'Review of Waste Services'.

This review undertaken at this time reported that whilst the Council was committed to improving its waste and recycling performance a long term well thought through business plan and engagement with users was needed to deliver the service effectively, improve performance and avoid potential financial penalties.

Key findings of the Audit Wales July 21 report

- 2.5 Waste Services has achieved substantial progress over the period since 2015 through sound strategic planning supported by the adoption of a learning culture to manage change effectively.
- 2.6 The Council is developing a new corporate workforce strategy and although Community Services understands its key workforce issues and is taking steps to address them, there is scope for closer collaboration with HR to improve workforce planning and resilience
- 2.7 Waste and recycling performance has improved significantly but the use of performance data is inconsistent across Community Services and some performance reports lack sufficient detail
- 2.8 Robust corporate budget monitoring arrangements have helped manage Community Services' overspends but the scope and focus of financial planning is overly short-term

Community Services Resilience – People & Finances

- 2.9 Attracting, retaining and managing an ageing workforce are key elements in managing resilience across the spectrum of activities undertaken by Community Services.
- 2.10 Neighbourhood Services adopted a new way of classifying frontline workforce with the introduction of the Integrated Workforce operative back in 2018. This consolidated all frontline Services into a single multi-functional role allowing far more flexibility to react to resource requirements across the whole range of frontline services.
- 2.11 This Integrated Workforce approach has really proved its worth particularly over the last 18 months enabling effective deployment of front line worker into priority areas of work.
- 2.12 The Division has also taken on 5 apprentices in Street lighting, Fleet, Engineering & Property and are key to long term succession planning within the service.
- 2.13 Every opportunity is given through both the academic attainment route and 'on the job' training to develop staff and to create career progression opportunities throughout all service areas. This not only provides opportunities for local sourced staff with its economic circular economy implications but creates resilience and belonging within the Service.
- 2.14 Community Services are working closely with Resources to look at how medium term financial resilience can be strengthened.

- 2.15 Large elements of the Community Services revenue budget are reactive led and can be significantly adversely effected by factors out of our control, these include:

Weather – Snow, ice, rain and the resultant costs associated with damaged highways, winter maintenance costs & reactive flood works

Public Behaviour – Rates of recycling, residual waste, littering & fly tipping costs.

- 2.16 The development of potential financial reserves to specific service areas when these areas have shown in year surpluses will help offset overspends in leaner times.
Trading Accounts are currently being developed around Trade Waste & Professional Services.

The AW Proposals for Improvement

- 2.17 In order to strengthen its resilience, Community Services should ensure that learning and good practice that exists within its different service areas is shared throughout the directorate.

AW have subsequently identified the following areas for improvement.

‘To strengthen its resilience, Community Services should ensure that learning and good practice that exists within its different service areas is shared throughout the directorate.

The Council should also consider whether it would benefit from sharing some examples more widely across the Council.’

- 2.18 The Community Services response to this identified ‘Areas for Improvement’ is found in the Appendix 2: Audit Wales Management Response

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 CLT has responded to the AW that they approve of the information contained within the report.

The Community Services Scrutiny Committee supported this report on 4th October 2021.

Option 1

The Committee is assured that the management response will respond to the Audit Wales proposals for improvement.

Option 2

Provide comment on the Audit Wales review and management response to implement the proposals for improvement for officers to implement in order to provide continuous improvement.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been used to scope out this AW review. This will also be the focus of future reviews undertaken by the AW.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct financial implications as part of these audit reports and all proposals for improvement will be met within existing resources.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Council recognises it needs to address the proposals for improvement from the AW in order to ensure compliance with legislation and audit reports. If these requirements are not met, the Council is at risk of reputational damage and intervention.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no additional workforce implications as part of the AW review as business plans already identify where capacity is required in order to deliver the service.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

In response to the AWs proposal for improvement the Council has identified the steps it will take to achieve these suggested improvements (Appendix 2: Management Response).

The activities delivering these improvements will be undertaken largely by the Community Services Department and will be monitored through business plans and reported within the Joint Finance and Performance Report.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

That front line services are effectively and efficiently delivered.

6.3 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

That future proofing, succession planning and financial prudence is in place to ensure continuity of services delivery over the long term.

6.4 ***Integration (across service areas)***

That Community Services service delivery is fully integrated with all elements of the Authority and plays its part in achieving the Council vision and meeting key corporate objectives.

6.5 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Community Services continues to use collaboration both within and outside the council to achieve its objectives.

6.6 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Community Services continue to ensure appropriate consultation, engagement & participation across all areas in the delivery of its key services.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The proposals for improvement from the AW will be included within the relevant business plan which will be updated with progress on a quarterly basis.

The information will be reported within the Joint Finance and Performance Report to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Audit Wales: ‘Review of People, Performance and Financial Resilience in Community Services’

Appendix 2 – Audit Wales Management Response