

Committee: **Governance and Audit Committee**
 Date of meeting: **8th March 2023**
 Report Subject: **Audit Wales: 'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member Corporate Overview and Performance**
 Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Director Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	23.02.23		08.03.23					

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with the Audit Wales Report, '*Time for Change - Poverty in Wales*' (Appendix 1).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 Audit Wales published their report, '*Time for Change – Poverty in Wales*' in November 2022 and covers the audit year 2021/22.
 - 2.2 The Audit Wales report looks at the challenge of poverty in Wales and how government is responding. It is acknowledged that effectively tackling poverty is not easy and is exceedingly difficult for both Welsh and local government.
 - 2.3 This is the first of three reviews on the challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty.
 - 2.4 This report identified 8 recommendations, 2 for Welsh Government to implement and 6 for Local Authorities. Audit Wales expect councils to consider the findings of this review and the recommendations, and that its governance and audit committee receives this report and monitors its response to the recommendations in a timely way.
 - 2.5 Audit Wales identified the following recommendations for Council's to implement:
 - **Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty** - We recommend that the councils use their Wellbeing Plans to provide a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty to co-ordinate
 - their efforts, meet local needs and support the revised national plan targets and actions.
 - **Leadership on the poverty agenda** - We recommend that each council designate a cabinet member as the council's poverty champion and

designate a senior officer to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.

- **Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty** - We recommend that councils improve their understanding of their residents' 'lived experience' through meaningful involvement in decision-making using 'experience mapping' and/or 'Poverty Truth Commissions' to review and improve accessibility to and use of council services.
- **Single web landing page for people seeking help** - We recommend that councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website
- **Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty** - no council has created a single gateway into services, data needs to be shared to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services.
- **Complying with the socio-economic duty** - We recommend that councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent

The full recommendations can be found in Appendix 1.

2.6 Next Steps

- 2.6.1 The Council has in place a strategic lead for Poverty, Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director Social Services.
- 2.6.2 The Council has in place an Operational Cost of Living Group. This is chaired by the Interim Corporate Director Social Services, with representation from each directorate across the Council. This group will take undertake implementation of the recommendations identified by Audit Wales. The Operational Cost of Living Groups supports the work of the Cost of Living Crisis Cross Party Working Group
- 2.6.3 The recommendations will be included within the relevant business plans for monitoring and reporting, these will link to the Officers identified on the Operational Cost of Living Group.
- 2.6.4 The Council has an identified Member Lead for Poverty, Cllr Carl Bainton, who will have an active role in supporting the implementation of the poverty agenda within the Council and is represented on the Cost of Living Crisis Cross Party Working Group
- 2.6.5 An Estyn Inspection of Local Authority Education Services was carried out during November / December 2022. The report was published in February 2023 and is also included on the agenda for this committee meeting. The report stated that the local authority has a clear commitment to reducing the impact of poverty on education outcomes and a summary of comments is highlighted below:
 - The local authority has a clear commitment to reducing the impact of poverty on education outcomes. Officers know their communities well

and use information they gather locally, national surveys and reports to identify needs and prioritise resources.

- Officers collaborate well across directorates on issues relating to poverty to enable resources to be targeted towards those most in need.

Options for Recommendation

3.1 Prior to the final report being provided to the Council, CLT and relevant Officers provided comment back to Audit Wales on their findings.

3.2 Option 1

Governance and Audit Committee is assured that the Next Steps, identified in paragraph 2.6, will appropriately respond to the Audit Wales recommendations.

Option 2

Provide comment on the Audit Wales review and Next Steps, identified in paragraph 2.6, to address the recommendation for Officers to implement in order to provide continuous improvement.

4. Monitoring Arrangements

4.1 The recommendations from Audit Wales will be included within the business plan and updated on a quarterly basis.

The Operational Cost of Living Group will have responsibility for monitoring implementation of the recommendations.

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

Regular meetings are held with Audit Wales to assess progress of reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Audit Wales Report – ‘Time for Change’ Poverty in Wales