

Report title: Assurance and Risk Assessment Review

Local or National Report: Local

Completion date: Published November 2022 (audit year 2021/22)

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer / group
R1	<p>The Council should ensure that the high level actions in its Decarbonisation Plan (Readiness Assessment) are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritised based on clear criteria, including carbon and financial impact; 2. Aligned with its Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme; and 3. • Integrated into Business Plans. 	<p>Criteria and MTFS / Capital Programme - The readiness assessments include evidence in order to establish prioritisation of actions. Financial impact is considered as part of this.</p> <p>Actions identified from the Council's Climate Change Group readiness assessments are included into the relevant business plan for continued monitoring.</p>	<p>In line with the readiness assessments and prioritisation of actions.</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Council's Climate Group</p> <p>Professional Lead Climate Change / Service Manager Performance and Democratic</p>
R2	<p>The Council should develop a robust set of metrics to measure and report progress on its decarbonisation journey.</p>	<p>The Council responds to the national and statutory performance indicator requirements as part of the Carbon Footprint Annual Report which includes the calculating and reporting of emissions.</p> <p>Work to be undertaken to develop new reporting elements for the next annual report.</p>	<p>On going as required</p> <p>In line with Welsh Government reporting deadlines</p>	<p>Council's Climate Change Group</p>

Report title: Corporate Safeguarding Follow-up

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R1	The Council needs to take further action to fully comply with the recommendations in the October 2019 follow-up report on corporate arrangements for safeguarding of children.	The Strategic Safeguarding Leads Group has identified the actions where further improvement is needed. A self-assessment process has been implemented across the council. The first of which took place in November 2022. The findings of the self-assessment are reported back to the strategic leadership group and actions are set against these findings. It has been further agreed that a corporate safeguarding report is produced annually, and this report will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee and will include self assessment findings. The corporate self-assessment will take place annually with the second due to commence late summer 2023.	Self assessment – late summer 2023 Implementing actions from self assessment - ongoing	Strategic Safeguarding Leads Group
R2	The Council needs to strengthen its monitoring arrangements of third parties so it can assure itself that they comply with the Council's safeguarding policies. It should consider whether a self-assessment tool like that recently used by Council directorates can be used with third parties to better understand compliance.	<p>Monitoring of safeguarding arrangements for third parties will be tested by Internal Audit in line with the risk assessed Audit Plan. This will evidence how well the monitoring arrangements work and provide an opportunity for the CSL Group to further strengthen these arrangements. The plan will contain the following audit areas, split between Corporate Procurement and Schools and each of these areas will be considered for audit as part of the annual risk review.</p> <p>Corporate Procurement - A systems audit will be conducted in Qtr. 2/3 of 2023/4, testing the arrangements in place that require third parties to meet minimum safeguarding standards as part of the procurement process. Further, more targeted testing, will be undertaken for services where enhanced safeguarding measures are required. The audit report will be issued to the CSL group for any weaknesses identified through the audit to be rectified.</p> <p>Schools - Schools are required to complete an annual Control Risk Self-Assessment (CRSA) explaining the measures they have in place to mitigate risks. The CRSA questionnaire will be updated to include specific questions on safeguarding in relation to third parties, either through procurement or volunteering. The answers provided will be assessed and if required a systems audit of third party safeguarding in schools will be conducted. The CRSA questionnaire will be issued to schools in April.</p>	Audit Quarter 2/3 2023/24	Strategic Safeguarding Leads Group

Report title: 'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises

Local or National Report: National

Completion date: Published December 2022 (audit year 2021/22)

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R1	<p>We recommend that local authority officers use the checklist in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current Social Enterprise engagement, management, performance and practice; • identify opportunities to improve joint working; and • jointly draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation. 	<p>Owing to few resources in this area, the Council prioritises working with, engaging and supporting businesses to survive. Support is provided to social enterprises through the Community Asset Transfer process when requested.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Estates and Business and Innovation</p>
R2	<p>To drive improvement we recommend that the local authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally approve the completed Action Plan; • regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and • revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance. 	<p>Information on social enterprises to be included in directorate reports and annual self evaluation processes where the information is available.</p>	<p>In line with reporting</p>	<p>Corporate Performance Team</p>
R3	<p>To ensure the local authority delivers its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises we recommend that it reports on current activity and future priorities following the evaluation of its Action Plan including the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services.</p>	<p>The Annual Report of the Director of Social Services make reference to the delivery of its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises.</p>	<p>July 2023 (in line with statutory reporting)</p>	<p>Tanya Evans, Interim Director Social Services</p> <p>Corporate Performance Team</p>

Report title: Springing Forward

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R1	Equality impact assessments o Ensure that all decisions are informed by a timely equality impact assessment where required.	<p>A full review of the integrated impact assessment process and criteria has been undertaken (including socio-economic duty). Guidance and development of research library also developed, the assessments states that all decisions, policy reviews or policy implementation will require a completed Integrated Impact Assessment.</p> <p>The corporate report template includes a section on impact assessments so that decisions can be informed by relevant information.</p> <p>On-going work to scope a Corporate Equality Training Programme for Managers, Staff and Members.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing in line with Council decisions.</p> <p>Within the 2023/24 cycle</p>	<p>Development, training and review sits within the Governance and Partnership Section.</p> <p>Implementation of the process is for everyone to embed.</p>
R2	Develop a longer-term asset strategy o In developing its new strategic asset management strategy, the Council should apply the sustainable development principle and specifically ensure that it: o builds on learning from its experience of the COVID-19 pandemic; o takes account of longer-term trends that may affect service provision and the efficient use of assets; o aligns with other strategic documents, including decarbonisation, commercial, workforce and digital strategies; o sets out the Council's intended outcomes over the short, medium and longer term; o takes account of the needs of staff, service users and partners; and o sets out SMART performance measures and appropriate monitoring and reporting arrangements.	<p>A new SAMP will be developed which will consider the areas identified from Audit Wales. The CAMWG will lead on this work as it includes staff from across departments.</p>	<p>To be agreed in consultation with CLT</p>	<p>CAMWG</p>

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R3	<p>Further develop workforce strategy and planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o In delivering its workforce strategy, the Council should ensure that it:<ul style="list-style-type: none">♣ incorporates learning from the COVID-19 pandemic;♣ takes a sufficiently long-term view, for example, taking into account upcoming reviews of service delivery and longer-term trends which may affect workforce planning;♣ provides service managers with the necessary skills and capacity to develop their workforce plans;♣ collates service workforce plans to understand what actions it needs to take at a corporate level to strengthen its workforce;♣ expands workforce information to include detail on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• i. current skills and current and future skills gaps;• ii. talent and succession planning; and• iii. critical posts and the risks associated with them becoming vacant;♣ strengthens the underlying action plans by developing SMART objectives so progress can be monitored and scrutinised; and♣ aligns with other strategic documents, including decarbonisation, commercial, asset management and digital strategies.	<p>The Council's Workforce Strategy 2021-26 was approved by Council on 29th July 2021. The Strategy is a key enabler in delivering the Council's ambition, the New Council Operating Model, and key priorities. It has a focus on the future, integrating the Council's vision, objectives and financial planning arrangements.</p> <p>The five-year Strategy is underpinned by an annual delivery plan that supports its implementation.</p> <p>The Council has an annual workforce planning process which supports delivery of the Workforce Strategy and some of the recommendations stated will be built into that process from May 2023.</p>	In line with the with the next review of the strategy.	Head of Organisational Development

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R4	<p>Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o As part of the review of the new operating model, seek the views of residents on the community hubs to provide assurance around the Council's decision and to inform the future development of hubs.o Consider how the Council might adapt its public engagement methods so it can continue to engage with the public in the event of future lockdowns or other restrictions.o Work with local businesses to monitor and understand the impact of the closure of the Civic Centre and how the Council can support those businesses whilst the site remains vacant.	<p>Development of an engagement strategy which will be informed by residents, businesses, staff, user groups and members. This will include consideration of engagement methods.</p> <p>Work with existing forums and groups to engage on Council activity moving forward.</p>	<p>Strategy to be approved late 2023.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Governance and Partnership Section to lead on the development of the strategy and engagement activity.</p> <p>Engaging with groups will be a Council wide responsibility.</p>
R5	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Identify the costs of delivering the assets and workforce strategies and incorporate these into the medium-term financial strategy.o Collaborate with public sector partners across Gwent to evaluate the potential benefits of developing a strategic long-term approach to a single public estate.o Build on existing examples of collaborative working by developing a more systematic approach to collaboration.	<p>When developing business cases Officers to consider the areas as outlined by Audit Wales including assets, workforce, and collaboration</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All Senior Managers</p>
R6	<p>Sustainable development principle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o The Council should seek to fully embed the sustainable development principle in its decision making.	<p>The report format includes sustainable development and it is a requirement for all reports to consider these and include detail in reports.</p> <p>Members and officers need to consider sustainable development when considering reports and making decisions. Member training to be held on this.</p>	<p>Report format completed. Reporting ongoing.</p> <p>To be held as part of the member development programme in the new 2023/24 cycle</p>	<p>All report authors</p> <p>Governance and Partnership Section</p>

Report title: 'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales

Local or National Report: National

Completion date: Published November 2022 (audit year 2021/22)

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R1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Council's 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. 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. Councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website Creation of a single gateway into services Councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent 	<p>The Well-being Plan is to be agreed in July. The draft includes the poverty agenda.</p> <p>The interim Director of Social Services is the lead officer for Poverty and chairs the Cost of Living Officer Groups and sits on the Cost of Living Member Group.</p> <p>The Council has identified a Member Poverty Champion.</p> <p>The Cost of Living Group includes action to consider how best to inform residents of what's available to them and this includes the Council website and contacting services.</p> <p>Listening Commissions (also known as Truth Commissions) are being actioned as part of the Cost of Living Group. The arrangements are currently being scoped.</p> <p>The Council has undertaken a full review of its integrated impact assessment which is linked to reporting and decision making.</p>	<p>July 2023</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>In line with the action plan</p> <p>In line with the action plan</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Interim Director of Social Services and Cost of Living Group</p>

Report title: Together we can' Community Resilience and Self-Reliance

Local or National Report: National

Completion date: Published January 2023

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	<p>To strengthen community resilience and support people to be more self-reliant, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authorities use the evaluation tool in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• self-evaluate current engagement, management, performance and practice;• identify where improvement is needed; and• draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified in completing the evaluation tool.	<p>Work to be undertaken by the Cost of Living Group to complete the self assessment tool as described at appendix 2 of the Audit Wales report.</p> <p>Work undertaken and analysis to be completed on understanding digital exclusion issues, including external review of customer service experience, work to support residents to be more digitally included, transactional cost shift to understand why residents contact us and data insight work done within the Cost of Living Group in Social Services and working with businesses.</p> <p>Building on the work undertaken with partners to support community resilience such as the BT engagement exploring the smart borough approach</p> <p>The Council is reviewing its Engagement Strategy which will include working with the community.</p>	In line with the action plan of the Cost of Living Group	Cost of Living Group
R2	<p>To help local authorities address the gaps they identify following their self-evaluation, we recommend that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• formally approve the completed Action Plan arising from the evaluation exercise;• regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and• revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance	Information on social enterprises to be included in directorate reports and annual self evaluation processes where the information is available.	In line with reporting	Corporate Performance Team