



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Governance & Audit Committee

At: Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

On: Wednesday, 17 January 2024

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Paula O'Connor

Membership:

Councillors: A Davis, P R Hood-Williams, J W Jones, M B Lewis, M W Locke, S Pritchard, L V Walton and T M White

Lay Member(s): Gordon Anderson, Julie Davies and David Roberts

Watch Online: <https://rb.gy/lirc3f>

Agenda

Page No.

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence. | |
| 2 | Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.
www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests | |
| 3 | Minutes.
To approve & sign the Minutes of the previous meeting(s) as a correct record. | 1 - 8 |
| Part A - Reports For Discussion. | | |
| 4 | Fundamental Audits 2022/23 Recommendation Tracker. (Nick Davies) | 9 - 25 |
| 5 | Implementation of Accounts Receivable Internal Audit Service's (IAS) Follow Up Review Recommendations. (Rachael Davies / Michelle Davies) | 26 - 31 |

Part B - Reports For Information.

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 6 | Audit Wales Digital Strategy Review. (Sarah Lackenby) | 32 - 57 |
| 7 | Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker Report. (Jeremy Parkhouse) | 58 - 63 |

Next Meeting: Wednesday, 28 February 2024 at 2.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans

Head of Democratic Services

Wednesday, 10 January 2024

Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923

Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Wednesday, 6 December 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present: Paula O'Connor (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
M W Locke
T M White

Councillor(s)

J W Jones
S Pritchard

Councillor(s)

M B Lewis
L V Walton

Lay Member(s)

Gordon Anderson
David Roberts

Officer(s)

Ness Young	Director of Corporate Services
Ben Smith	Director of Finance / Section 151 Officer
Stephen Holland	Principal Solicitor
Simon Cockings	Chief Auditor
Richard Rowlands	Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager
Jonathon Rogers	Corporate Fraud Team Manager
Jeremy Parkhouse	Democratic Services Officer

Also Present

Bethan Roberts Audit Wales

Apologies for Absence

Councillor A Davis, Julie Davies and Gillian Gillet

51 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests were declared: -

Councillors P R Hood-Williams, M B Lewis and T M White declared personal interests in Minute No.55 – Internal Audit Monitoring Report – Quarter 2 – 2023/24.

52 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the previous meeting(s) of the Governance & Audit Committee be approved as a correct record.

53 Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23.

Ben Smith, Director of Finance presented the Draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 'for information' and review.

The Draft Accounts for 2022/23 had been prepared and were signed by the Section 151 Officer on 27 October 2023. A copy was appended at Appendix A of the report.

It was confirmed that the Accounts had been formally presented to the Council's auditors – Audit Wales, who had commenced the audit of the Accounts. It was explained that as part of the audit process, the Accounts would be made available for inspection by the public for a four week period from 4 January to 31 January 2024.

Finance Department staff were thanked by the Director for their work on the accounts, which was echoed by the Chair and the Committee.

The Committee asked a number of technical questions of the Director of Finance / Section 151 Officer, which were responded to accordingly. The proposal to adopt a risk based approach to valuations was noted. The Chair asked about financial shifts, particularly the drop in gross income.

Responses would be circulated in respect of the drop in gross income in specific areas and the increase in the balance of long term debtors at Note 17.

54 Finance Directorate: Internal Control Environment 2023/2024.

The Director of Finance provided a 'for information' report which presented the Finance Directorate control environment, including risk management, in place to ensure functions were exercised effectively; there was economic, efficient and effective use of resources, and; effective governance to secure these arrangements.

It was outlined that the Directorate and the associated Director of Finance role, was created following decision of Council in November 2021, followed by appointment at the end of January 2022. In practice, it was separated formally with effect from 1 April 2022 at the start of the new financial year. As such, it was still the newest directorate and a relatively small one (in net budget terms), having previously been part of the former Resources directorate.

It was added that the directorate's initial approach to its own operations was based on how it operated as the major part of the former Resources Directorate. As the directorate had a bearing on whole Council activity and finances it also led on as well as participates in many of the common control processes. Details of these areas were listed.

The assurance framework including the key elements and key aspects of the Finance Directorate's arrangements were outlined. It was noted that the wider operational reach of the Directorate meant that its activities were highly geared and often complex.

It was noted that media reporting on councils which got into difficulty were currently most often associated by being undone by finances unravelling relatively quickly, with the risks and implications of decisions being taken proven not to be widely fully understood by stakeholders and members. Across the UK, council accounts were being delayed in draft production and in finalisation of audit as matter of routine and the Authority was no different. This was in tandem with a growing general concern about the overall state of funding for all councils.

The scale of gross and net operations directly managed by the Directorate and balance sheet items in direct control were listed.

Details of risk management, business continuity, Performance management / KPI's, planning, decision making, budget, fraud and impropriety, compliance with policies, rules and regulatory requirements and resources management were provided.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- Changing the month the report is provided in future years.
- The capacity / demand for services and associated risks, especially when services are rationalised in future.
- Lack of capacity and resilience within the Directorate and the actions taken to address the issues faced.

The Director of Finance was thanked for a detailed and comprehensive review.

55 Internal Audit Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 - 2023/24.

Simon Cockings, Chief Auditor presented a detailed 'for information' report which showed the audits finalised and any other work undertaken by the Internal Audit Section during the period 1 July to 30 September 2023.

A total of 16 audits were finalised during the quarter. The audits finalised were listed in Appendix 1, which also showed the level of assurance given at the end of the audit and the number of recommendations made and agreed. Appendix 2 provided a summary of the scope of the reviews finalised during the period. Appendix 3 showed each audit included in the Plan approved by Committee on the 12 April 2023 and identified the position of each audit on 30 September 2023.

An analysis of the assurance levels of the audits finalised was given and a total of 95 audit recommendations were made and management agreed to implement all of the recommendations.

It was added that staff sickness in the Internal Audit Team continued to be significant during the second quarter, with a total of 71 days absence recorded and cumulative sickness absence to the end of quarter two totalled 104 days. The Committee were also updated regarding staff appointments.

It was noted that at 30 September 2023, 36 audits (31%) out of 116 activities had been completed in the Internal Audit Annual Plan. In addition, 1 activity had been

substantially completed, resulting in 37 audit activities being completed to at least draft report stage (32%), with 30 in progress by the end of the quarter. This meant 58% of audit activities within the plan were completed or in progress.

The Committee were also provided with details of the follow-ups with moderate, high and substantial assurance levels completed during the period.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- The escalation process for non-action, which included being forwarded to the appropriate director / head of service / Corporate Management Team.
- Timelines of between 3 and 6 months for follow-up timelines.
- Audits being regarded as stand-alone and resulting actions.
- Moderate assurance follow-ups during the quarter and procedures follow, especially in relation to Freedom of Information.
- Review of corporate governance and the high level of risks involved.
- Audit reports circulated.

The Chair queried whether the effectiveness of the control measures on the risk register had been audited as part of the Corporate Governance audit.

The Chief Auditor confirmed that he would respond regarding the review of corporate governance and would circulate all audit reports not forwarded to the Chair.

56 Internal Audit Section - Corporate Fraud Function Mid-Year Update Report for 2023/2024.

Jonathan Rogers, Corporate Fraud Team Manager presented a 'for information' report which provided a mid-year update on the work undertaken by the Corporate Fraud Function in 2023/24 and reviewed progress against the outcomes contained in the Fraud Function Anti-Fraud Plan 2023/2024.

It was explained that a Fraud Team Manager was appointed in May 2023. The post was ring-fenced to the current three investigation officers, and now the team structure contains a Fraud Manager and two Fraud Investigators.

It was highlighted that good progress had been made against all eight planned activities contained within the Corporate Fraud Function Plan and the team were on target to complete all activities by year end. Details were provided at Appendix 1.

It was added that within the first half year, the team had recorded total savings of £150,483.94 and issued a civil penalty of £100. In addition, the team had assisted in the recovery of the return of two properties back to housing stock and undertaken a proactive exercise of stock potentially being used as short- term serviced holiday accommodation.

A brief overview of urgent employee investigations, Human Resources support, alleged fraud, data requests, inter-agency work and data exchange was provided.

The Chair congratulated the team on the progress made to date.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- Additional team members allowing the team to be proactive.
- Patterns of fraud cases and how the team dealt with matters on a day to day basis.
- Inter-agency work completed and the importance of pooling resources.

57 Corporate Risk Overview 2023/24 - Quarter 2.

Richard Rowlands, Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager presented 'for information' an overview of the status of the Council's corporate risks to provide assurance to the Committee that they were being managed in accordance with the Council's risk management policy and framework.

The following summarised the status of risks recorded in the Corporate Risk Register at the end of Quarter 2 2023/24: -

There were 5 Red status risks in the Corporate Risk Register as at the end of Q2 2023/24: -

- Risk ID 153: Safeguarding.
- Risk ID 159: Financial Control: Medium Term Financial Plan delivery
- Risk ID 222: Digital, Data and Cybersecurity.
- Risk ID 334: Cost of living crisis.
- Risk ID 338. Net Zero 2030 target.

It was outlined that during Quarter 2 all of the corporate risks were recorded as having been reviewed at least once; no new risks were added to the Corporate Risk Register; no corporate risks were deactivated; no risks were escalated to the Corporate Risk Register; no corporate risks were de-escalated from the Corporate Risk Register; two Corporate risks changed their RAG status; and four corporate risks changed their residual risk score.

Appendix A presented the risks recorded on the Council's Corporate Risk Register as at 30 September 2023. The reports for each risk included general explanatory information relating to their classification.

Discussions followed regarding the following: -

- The Committee being aware of the level and likelihood of risk.
- The introduction of a five-score matrix which would outline the likelihood and impact of risk.
- The number of aspects used to determine the level of risk.
- Reviewing how other local authorities measure risk.
- Ensuring the Committee receive appropriate training on risk.
- Omissions on the register which would be updated prior to the next quarterly report.
- Omission of information relating to the Mandatory training risk.

The Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager would circulate the omitted information relating to Mandatory training, update the register prior to the next quarterly report and details of training.

58 Audit Wales Recommendations Tracker.

The Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager presented 'for information' a report which presented a tracker providing progress updates meeting Audit Wales recommendations.

It was highlighted that all relevant recommendations from Audit Wales national and local reports were recorded in a tracker and were monitored for progress. The tracker was provided at Appendix A and listed the relevant Audit Wales report, the recommendations, the actions that the Council intended to undertake to implement the recommendations, progress to date and target dates for completion.

The first sheet in the tracker listed all the Audit Wales recommendations that were considered closed and complete as at November 2023. The second sheet in the tracker listed all the Audit Wales recommendations that were considered open, as at November 2023.

The Chair welcomed the introduction of the tracker and highlighted its importance going forward. She queried if the action addressed the recommendation and if it was completed in relation to all Wales recommendations on the Audit Wales report on 'Together we can' – Community resilience and self-reliance. The Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager would review the information in the tracker.

In addition, the Chair requested that the tracker report be provided to every other Committee meeting in future.

59 Audit Wales - Setting of Well-being Objectives - City and County of Swansea Council.

The Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager presented 'for information' the Audit Wales report and the Council's response into the setting of well-being objectives.

It was explained that the Audit Wales report fulfilled the duty on the Auditor General to carry out examinations to assess the extent to which public bodies had acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives.

The aim of the examination was to:

- explain how Swansea Council (the Council) applied the sustainable development principle throughout in the process of setting its well-being objectives;
- provide assurance on the extent that the Council applied the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives; and
- identify opportunities for the Council to further embed the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives in future.

Audit Wales set out to answer the question 'to what extent has the Council acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its new well-being objectives'. They did this by exploring the following questions: -

- Was the process the Council put in place to set its well-being objectives underpinned by the sustainable development principle?
- Has the Council considered how it will make sure it can deliver its well-being objectives in line with the sustainable development principle?
- Has the Council put in place arrangements to monitor progress and improve how it applies the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives?

Appendix 1 of the Audit Wales report listed the positive indicators Audit Wales used to inform their examination and report.

The Audit Wales findings and Council's response were detailed. It was noted that the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Panel considered the Audit Wales report and the Council's response on 17 October 2023 and the letter from the Panel Convenor to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance was provided at Appendix B.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- Feedback from the digital citizens' panel, the potential of expanding it and the Committee being informed of future progress made.
- The progress made by Coproduction Wales.
- Corporate performance and success measures for 2023/24, their review including outcome measures and the results being made available to the Committee.

The Chair requested that the Committee be kept updated regarding progress as listed above.

60 Audit Wales Letter - Review of Council's Transformation Programme.

Ness Young, Director of Corporate Services presented a report which provided an overview of the update letter issued by Audit Wales, regarding the progress Swansea Council was making around its Transformation Programme.

It was explained that the focus of the work was to understand if the Council was effectively planning and monitoring its approach to its organisational transformation programme and the delivery of associated savings. The Audit Wales letter was provided at Appendix A.

The report detailed the Audit Wales findings and the Swansea Council response.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- The importance of Service Transformation Committees in the process and all Councillors being aware of developments.
- The process of identifying savings, clearly identifying and managing these through the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Recognising the size of the programmes involved and the amount of time it will take to deliver them.
- The variety of performance indicators being used to monitor progress.

The Chair welcomed the very informative report. She noted the huge amount of work involved and stressed the need to avoid duplication of work, while still being made aware of developments, in order for the Committee to have assurance going forward.

Resolved that: -

- 1) The recommendations made within the report be noted.
- 2) The Committee is updated early in the New Year regarding progress.

61 Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker Report.

The Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker was reported 'for information'.

62 Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan.

The Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan was reported 'for information'.

The Chair requested that training session(s) be arranged on the following areas: -

- Performance management framework;
- Risk management;
- Internal audit.

The meeting ended at 3.58 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 4



Report of the Chief Auditor

Governance & Audit Committee – 17 January 2024

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 Recommendation Tracker

Purpose:	This report provides a summary of the recommendations made following the fundamental audits in 2022/23 and identifies whether the agreed recommendations have been implemented.
Policy Framework:	None.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services
Recommendation:	It is recommended that the contents of the report be discussed and noted.
Report Author:	Simon Cockings
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Stephen Holland
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Internal Audit Section has defined follow up procedures which are designed to provide assurance that agreed recommendations have been implemented by management within the agreed timescales. For fundamental audits, a Recommendations Tracker exercise is completed each year where the auditor will review the actions taken to implement the agreed recommendations.
- 1.2 The fundamental audits are the systems which are so significant to the achievement of the Council's objectives that they are audited either annually or every two years.

- 1.3 The Recommendations Tracker identifies the actions agreed by management at the end of each fundamental audit and confirms whether the accepted recommendations have been implemented by the agreed date.
- 1.4 This report summarises the position as at 30 September 2023 on the implementation of the recommendations made following the 2022/23 fundamental audits.

2. Recommendations Tracker 2022/23

- 2.1 The following systems are considered to be fundamental and until 31 March 2014 were subject to an annual audit.
 - Main Accounting System (2)
 - Fixed Assets (2)
 - Housing and Council Tax Benefit (2)
 - Council Tax (2 + Follow-up)
 - NNDR (2 + Follow-up)
 - Cash (2)
 - Accounts Payable (2 + Follow-up)
 - Accounts Receivable (1)
 - External Investments and Borrowing (2)
 - Pension Fund Investments (2)
 - Employee Services (Payroll) (2)
 - Pensions Administration (2)
 - Teachers Pensions (2)
 - Housing Rents (2)

The fundamental audits are those systems that are considered to be most significant to the achievement of the Council's objectives. From 2014/15, a risk-based approach was taken to determine the required frequency of these audits. Any audits which had received the highest level of assurance for 3 consecutive years were moved to a 2-year cycle with audits receiving a lower assurance rating being completed annually. From 2023/24 we revised the planned timetable for the fundamental audits, as summarised below:

- i) Fundamental audits that receive a High Assurance rating are moved to a two-year audit cycle, with a full audit being completed every two years (noted as '2' above).
- ii) Fundamental audits that receive a Substantial Assurance rating are moved to a two-year audit cycle, with a full audit being completed every two years. In addition to this a follow-up audit will be completed in the first year to re-test all Medium and/or High-Risk recommendations (noted as '2 + Follow-up' above).

- iii) Fundamental audits that receive a Moderate Assurance rating remain on an annual audit cycle, with a full audit being completed every year (noted as '1' above).
- 2.2 The number of years between each audit is shown in brackets above and is subject to an annual review as part of the audit planning process. It should also be noted that following the completion of the 2022/23 fundamental audits, 10 out of the 14 audits have received a High Assurance rating, three audits have a substantial assurance rating (Business Rates (NNDR), Accounts Payable and Council Tax). Accounts Receivable has a moderate assurance rating at the time of the last audit.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 shows, for each fundamental audit, the number of recommendations made following the 2022/23 audits and whether the recommendations have been implemented, partly implemented, not implemented or are not yet due.
- 2.4 The position as at the 30 September 2023 of the 61 recommendations made is summarised in the following table:

Recommendations	Number	%
Implemented	27	53
Partly Implemented	7	14
Not Implemented	7	14
Not Yet Due	10	19
Total	51	100

- 2.5 Ignoring the recommendations which are not yet due for implementation, the percentage of recommendations implemented by 30 September 2023 is 66%.
- 2.6 An analysis of classification of the recommendations noted as partly or not implemented is attached in Appendix 2 and further details of the recommendations can be found in Appendix 3.
- 2.7 Appendices 2 and 3 show that most of the recommendations that have either been partly implemented or have not been implemented relate to the Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable audits. The Accounts Receivable audit continues to be completed on an annual basis. The Accounts Payable audit is audited in full every two years but is also subject to a mid-cycle follow-up review. The implementation of the outstanding recommendations will be reviewed as part of the 2023/24 audits. The remaining outstanding recommendations relating to the other fundamental audits will be followed-up when the audits are next completed.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Overall, the results of the Recommendations Tracker exercise to the 30th September 2023 are positive with 27 (66%) of agreed recommendations due for implementation being fully implemented.
- 3.2 A small number of recommendations still require work to implement or are due for implementation prior to the end of the financial year. Progress on the implementation of these recommendations will be reviewed during the completion of the next audit.

4. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.
- 4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

4.4 The completion of the Integrated Impact Assessment Screening revealed that:

- The Fundamental Audit Recommendation Tracker Report has a low positive impact across all groups.
- It has been subject to consultation with the Chief Finance & S151 Officer, Legal and Access to Services.
- All Well-being of Future Generations Act considerations are positive and any risks identified are low.
- The overall impact of the Fundamental Audit Recommendation Tracker Report is positive as it will support the Authority in its requirement to protect public funds.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: Fundamental Audit Reports 2022/23.

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Implementation of Recommendations

Appendix 2 – Classification of Recommendations

Appendix 3 – Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 4 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 1

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 Implementation of Recommendations

Audit	Recommendations				Total No. of Recs.
	Implemented	Partly Implemented	Not Implemented	Not Yet Due	
Fixed Assets (Capital Accounting)*	0	0	0	0	0
Main Accounting	1	0	0	0	1
Housing & Council Tax Benefit*	0	0	0	0	0
Cash	2	0	0	0	2
Business Rates (NNDR)	0	4	1	3	8
Council Tax	4	0	0	1	5
Accounts Receivable	7	0	1	6	14
Accounts Payable	7	3	4	0	14
Treasury Management - B&I	2	0	0	0	2
Pension Fund Investments*	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Services (Payroll)	4	0	1	0	5
Pensions Admin*	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers Pensions*	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Rents*	0	0	0	0	0

Fundamental Audits 2022/23
Classification of Recommendations

Audit	Partly Implemented				Not Implemented			
	HR	MR	LR	GP	HR	MR	LR	GP
Fixed Assets (Capital Accounting)*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Main Accounting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Council Tax Benefit*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cash	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business Rates (NNDR)	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
Council Tax	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accounts Receivable	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Accounts Payable	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	1
Treasury Management - B&I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pension Fund Investments*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Services (Payroll)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pensions Admin*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers Pensions*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Rents*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	2	5	0	0	0	5	2

* Audits not due in 2022/23

Key

- HR - High Risk
- MR - Medium Risk
- LR - Low Risk
- GP - Good Practice

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

Report Ref	Recommendation	Class	Agreed Action/Comments	Responsibility for Implementation	Implementation Date	Action Taken
Accounts Receivable						
Disputes						
2.2.6	Income should be clawed back from a service if a "Dispute" is not resolved within six months. <i>(Previous audit recommendation)</i>	LR	The periodic dispute review process will be reviewed to ensure that all disputed invoices are followed up	MD/LB	Jun-23	<p>Not Implemented. Not yet implemented due to the pressures on staff resource as a result of the ongoing issues with the Fusion system. This action will be implemented as soon as is practically possible. Update</p> <p>08/12/2023: Since Fusion go-live in April 2023 the pressure on the AR Team has remained unrelenting. The Dispute lists continue to be sent to Heads of Service and Service Area managers every month as ultimately it is the Service Area responsibility to resolve these disputes. However, the AR section has been unable to make progress in this area, choosing to prioritise the testing of correct functionality, the raising of invoices, cash balancing, collection of Direct Debits, internal invoice admin requests, refunds and any debt recovery activities that we can fit in above the Dispute Clawback process. It is still recognised as an important process and once we see a reduction in the pressures on the section the outstanding invoice disputes will be reviewed.</p>
Accounts Payable						

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

Duplicate and Erroneous Payments						
2.4.4 a) to d) & 2.4.9	Communications should be issued to all staff who have the ability to raise purchase orders, reminding them that the order should be raised in advance and not retrospectively. In exceptional circumstances where Orders are raised retrospectively, sufficient checks should be undertaken to ensure payment has not already been made. <i>(Previous Audit Recommendation)</i>	LR	Agreed	Neil Payne	Sep-23	Partly implemented. Update 11/12/23 - Accounting Instruction 4 updated requesting PO' created in advance of goods and services ordered. Comms will be released shortly to staff.
2.4.4 a) to d) & 2.4.9	Services should also be reminded that when placing an order that it is raised using the correct supplier	LR	Agreed	Neil Payne	Sep-23	Partly implemented - Update 11/12/23 - will form part of above comms to be issued shortly.
Payments over £50,000						
2.8.3	It should be ensured that confirmation of checks undertaken by approving officers have been received prior to payments over £50k being submitted.	LR	Agreed	Neil Payne	Jun-23	Not implemented – NP needs to review, as current process allows officers 24hours to approve file after it has been transmitted. Undertaking a review will require resource from team and Accountancy. Giving the low risk of recommendation it is not a priority.
Unallocated Suppliers Credits on the System						

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

2.10.3	Procedure Notes should be reviewed and updated if necessary.	GP	Agreed	Neil Payne	Sep-23	Not implemented – not a priority due to high resource required to complete a low risk recommendation.
Supplier with Address of Cashiers						
2.13.5	The procedure note for Cheque Collection to be updated. <i>(Previous Audit Recommendation)</i>	LR	Agreed	Neil Payne	Sep-23	Not implemented due to resource and low risk.
Data Protection and Document Retention						
2.17.2	A review of the records maintained should be undertaken as soon as time allows to ensure records are held in compliance with the agreed retention policy.	LR	Agreed	Neil Payne	Sep-23	Not implemented due to resource and low risk.
Other Issues – Accounting Instructions						

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

2.18.1	Accounting Instructions No's 4 & 5 should be reviewed and updated. <i>(Previous Audit Recommendation)</i>	LR	Agreed	Neil Payne	Sep-23	Partly implemented. Update 11/12/23 – AI4 updated. AI5 will be reviewed next.
Employee Services - Payroll						
Leavers / Overpayments						
2.3.1 & 2.4.1 e) f)	Action should be taken to ensure that the invoice raised for overpayments are paid and a record of steps taken noted on Oracle. <i>(Previous Audit Recommendation)</i>	LR	Agreed – we now monitor a spreadsheet of overpayments, resource issues during the implementation of the Oracle project will impact this, further meetings will take place with AR post go live of Fusion	JJ	After fusion go live possibly April 2023	Not Implemented - This has been impacted by staff sickness and lack of resources we will address once supervisors return from sickness
Business Rates (NNDR)						
						Partially implemented - There is

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

2.3.5	Arrangements should be made to ensure all vacant properties are inspected and the void inspection report recorded on W2 or the Northgate system. <i>(Previous Audit Recommendation)</i>	LR	A review of the parameters used to select cases for inspection needs to be made and consideration given to appointing an additional Void Inspector.	Paula Lewis / Julian Morgans	30.09.2023	a current rolling inspection timetable. A new void inspector position has been approved and is expected to go to external advert from 20/10/23 to increase resources in this area. Recruitment has/will be impacted by general delays with the recruitment process across the authority. Update 13/12/23: interviews for the position will be carried out on 19/12/23, however it is likely that due to delays in pre-employment checks the successful candidate will not be in post until Feb/March 2024.
Page 20	Continued efforts should be made to address the backlog of accounts with arrears.	MR	Agreed.	Paula Lewis	On-going	Partially Implemented - Recruitment of additional staff to support this is already underway but is being severely impacted by general delays with the recruitment process across the authority. Update 13/12/23: start date confirmed of 8/1/24 and we hope that by the end of the year some progress will have been made on the current backlog of work

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

2.6.3	All regular and routine procedures for the recovery of arrears should be reinstated.	MR	Agreed subject to sufficient resources being available.	Paula Lewis	On-going	<p>Partially Implemented - This is a slow process and is reviewed regularly. Reminders are up to date and some progress is being made on catching up with court summons.</p> <p>Recruitment of additional staff to support this is already underway but is being severely impacted by general delays with the recruitment process across the authority.</p> <p>Update 13/12/23: start date confirmed of 8/1/2024.</p>
2.6.4	Accounts with special arrangements should be monitored and action taken if the rate payer defaults on the arrangement. <i>(Previous Audit Recommendation)</i>	LR	Agreed subject to sufficient resources being available this can be done on a more regular basis.	Paula Lewis	On-going	<p>Not Implemented - Little progress. Recruitment of additional staff to support this is already underway but is being severely impacted by general delays with the recruitment process across the authority.</p> <p>Update 13/12/23: start date is confirmed as 8/1/2024. It is hoped that some progress on this can be made by the end of the financial year</p>

Fundamental Audits 2022/23 - Recommendation Tracker

Not or Partly Implemented Recommendations

Appendix 3

2.6.6	Cases identified as suitable for recovery by Bailiffs should be referred for collection.	LR	Agreed subject to sufficient resources being available this can be done on a more regular basis.	Paula Lewis	On-going	<p>Partially Implemented - A small number of cases have been referred to enforcement agents, this work is ongoing. Recruitment of additional staff to support this is already underway but is being severely impacted by general delays with the recruitment process across the authority. Update</p> <p>13/12/23: start date is confirmed as 8/1/2024. It is hoped that some progress on this can be made by the end of the financial year.</p>
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Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Internal Audit

Directorate: Resources

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g., new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Board, which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

Quarterly report to the Governance and Audit Committee outlining the follow up work undertaken by the Audit Team in the period.

Q2 What is the potential impact on the following: the impacts below could be positive (+) or negative (-)

n/a – no impact

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further investigation
	+	-	+	-	+	-	
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

- Q3 What involvement has taken place/will you undertake e.g. engagement/consultation/co-productive approaches? Please provide details below – either of your activities or your reasons for not undertaking involvement**

Consultation undertaken with the Chief Finance & S151 Officer, Legal, Access to Services.

- Q4 Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:**

- a) Overall does the initiative support our Corporate Plan's Well-being Objectives when considered together?
Yes No
- b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?
Yes No
- c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?
Yes No
- d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
Yes No

-
- Q5 What is the potential risk of the initiative? (Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...)**

High risk <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium risk <input type="checkbox"/>	Low risk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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-
- Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?**

Yes No If yes, please provide details below

Council Services included within the Internal Audit planned programme of work for 2022/23 will be subject to internal audit reviews which may result in recommendations being made to improve compliance with Council policies and procedures and consequentially may result in changes to operations/processes within service areas if required.

-
- Q7 What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified within the screening and any other key decisions affecting similar groups/ service users made by the organisation?**

(*You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups/ communities more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making. For example, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, e.g., disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc.*)

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

To update committee on the follow up work undertaken by Internal Audit in the period in relation to tracking the implementation of the recommendations in the Fundamental Audits completed in 2022/23.

Outcome of Screening

Q8 Please describe the outcome of your screening below:

The completion of the Integrated Impact Assessment Screening revealed that:

- The Fundamental Audit Recommendation Tracker Report has a potentially low positive impact across a number of identified groups.
- It has been subject to consultation with the Chief Finance & S151 Officer, Legal and Access to Services.
- All WFG considerations are positive and any risks identified are low.
- The overall impact of the Fundamental Audit Recommendation Tracker Report is positive as it will support the Authority in its requirement to protect public funds.

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the relevant section of corporate report)

- Full IIA to be completed
- Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:
Name: Simon Cockings
Job title: Chief Auditor
Date: 28/12/23
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Ben Smith
Position: Chief Finance & S151 Officer
Date: 28/12/23 (e-mail)

Please return the completed form to accesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Governance and Audit Committee – 17 January 2024

Implementation of Accounts Receivable Internal Audit Service's (IAS) Follow Up Review Recommendations

Purpose:	To provide an update on implementation of the IAS review of the Accounts Receivable function
Policy Framework:	None
Consultation:	Legal, Finance and Access to Services
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that the contents of the report be discussed and noted.
Report Author:	Rachael Davies & Michelle Davies
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	N/A

Internal Audit on Accounts Receivable Function – Update January 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2022 Internal Audit undertook a review of the Accounts Receivable function, providing a Moderate assurance rating. The report made 12 recommendations and actions were agreed to address them. A follow up review report was issued in March 2023, which also provided 14 recommendations and a Moderate assurance rating as 3 actions from the previous review were still outstanding.
- 1.2 The Governance and Audit Committee received an update on progress in June 2023. This report provides a further update.

2. Progress summary July 2023 to December 2023

- 2.1 At the end of December 2023 eight of the fourteen agreed actions had been completed as follows:
- A reminder has been sent to the AR Team to advise them that:
 - all emails from services relating to the reconciliation of their interfaces should be saved on the AR server for evidence
 - Officers should use diary entries on Outlook when dealing with disputed invoices to ensure the timely recovery action is taken
 - the Daily Transaction register should be checked thoroughly to ensure there are no gaps in the invoice numbering and any invoices not in sequential order should be reviewed and recorded in the Deleted Items spreadsheet
 - care needs to be taken create the correct profile in the Customer Account to ensure “Dunning” reminders are issued
 - write-off proformas /email instructions should be saved to the customer’s account on the AR server in all instances
 - invoices on the Oracle AR system should be updated with the Write-Off status in a timely manner,
 - The periodic dispute review process has been reviewed and income is being clawed back from a service if a dispute is not resolved within six months,
 - Refund approval notes are now always being input on to the “Invoice Notes” screen in the AR system.
- 2.3 The three other high/medium risk recommendations continue to be progressed, as follows:
- invoices are now being escalated on a timely basis in accordance with established protocols
 - Appropriate follow-up procedures with debtors or services and diarising of invoice reviews are being carried out by officers in the AR team as a matter of routine - Debt Recovery Activities (DRA) meetings are held monthly ensuring maintained focus on debt recovery. Priorities are regularly reviewed, and progress is monitored. Where debtors have not paid within the timescales allowed, decisions are being made on whether to refer the invoice to Legal or submit for write-off, focusing on the oldest and highest value debts
 - The backlog of unpaid invoices is being worked on as staff capacity allows
- 2.4 The AR Team is aiming to implement the recommendations in 2.3 in full by September 2024 at the latest, albeit recognising that there will always be a level of overdue debt. Additional staff resources may be required to achieve this, and this will be kept under review.

2.5 Table A presents a monthly breakdown of the council's total outstanding debt profile since the previous Committee update in June 2023.

Table A: July – November 2023 Monthly Analysis of Total Outstanding Debt

2023 (£)	Total O/S debt 30 to >365 Days	> 365 days	120-365 Days	60-119 Days	30-59 Days	0-29 Days
July	8,179,737	2,185,052	3,111,453	2,069,234	813,998	2,817,662
August	7,659,300	2,187,112	3,247,455	1,377,190	847,543	4,129,864
September	5,918,158	2,221,162	1,184,158	702,516	1,810,322	2,792,077
October	6,017,183	2,294,240	1,174,381	1,790,988	757,574	46,228,348
November	7,032,935	2,356,050	1,541,538	1,708,312	1,427,035	52,430,152
Average	6,961,463	2,248,723	2,051,797	1,529,648	1,131,294	

2.6 As Table A shows, reducing outstanding debt continues to fluctuate and to be a challenge due to the impact of the global economic situation as well as limited staff capacity in part due to implementation of the Oracle Fusion system. However, additional staff resource has now been secured for the remainder of the financial year which should help the position in the final quarter.

2.7 The figures shown in the final column of Table 1 represent the value of payments the council expects to receive within the normal expected payment period based on invoices raised and is not therefore considered to be overdue. Overall, the level of overdue debt (i.e., debt of 30 days, to more than 365 days) fell from £8.2 million in July to £7 million in November. While this shows an improving picture since July, the November figures are ten percent higher than the previous 12 months' monthly average.

2.8 Looking at this more closely, the latest debt position:

- Includes a few high value invoices for a small number of customers, as well as a high number of invoices with an average value of £75. The pursuit of these debts are being prioritised in DRA meetings, based on their value and volume.
- Reflects the council's requirement to adhere to the UK Government's Debt Respite Scheme (known as Breathing Space) which provides a debtor with the right to legal protections from their creditors in specific circumstances. The total number of Breathing Space notifications received by Swansea Council has doubled in this financial year (2023/2024) compared to the previous 2 financial years, reflecting the significant impact of the 'Cost of Living' crisis on debt recovery actions in Swansea. Whilst these notifications relate to individuals who have sought official help with problem debt it is indicative of the financial climate for families and small businesses who are struggling to make ends meet.
- Has been impacted by implementation of the Oracle Fusion system. Since June 2023, the AR team has had to learn the new system and to manage some limitations in the software functionality. We are exploring potential system improvements with Oracle and are re-designing the invoice

interface process internally which should in time release more staff capacity to work on debt recovery activity.

- 2.9 Notwithstanding the challenges, the AR team continues to make progress, referring outstanding debts to Legal, with 66 invoices totalling £69,511 being referred between July and December 2023. In addition, outstanding debt of £20,563 in respect of 93 invoices has been written off in the current financial year. There are a small number of disputed invoices and several payment plan agreements in place under which repayments are being made by debtors.
- 2.10 The AR Team, with support from Legal Services, continues to prioritise reducing the aged debt position, within the context of the Council's flexible collection policy and negotiating with debtors wherever possible. It is anticipated that directing additional staff resource solely to support debt recovery activity for the remainder of the financial year, will assist with end of year figures.
- 2.11 The following three remaining low priority actions will be progressed by the AR Team during 2024-25 as resources allow:
 - Introduce bi-monthly reviews of invoices with "awaiting evidence" status
 - Undertake a review with officers in Legal Services of all invoices with the status "Referred to Legal"
 - All physical/electronic records must be disposed of in accordance with the Council's official retention policy.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications other than those set out in the body of the report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications other than those set out in the body of the report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A Accounts Receivable internal audit report action plan points

APPENDIX A

Accounts Receivable internal audit report action plan points

Ref	Recommendation	Risk Level	Agreed Action	Lead	Completion Date
Interfaces					
2.1.4	All emails from services relating to the reconciliation of their interfaces should be saved on the AR server for evidence. <i>(Previous audit recommendation)</i>	GP	A reminder will be issued to the AR team	MD	Implemented April 2023
Disputes					
2.2.5	Officers in AR team should use diary entries on Outlook when dealing with disputed invoices to ensure the timely recovery action is taken. <i>(Previous audit recommendation)</i>	LR	A reminder will be issued to the AR team	MD	Implemented April 2023
2.2.6	Income should be clawed back from a service if a "Dispute" is not resolved within six months. <i>(Previous audit recommendation)</i>	LR	The periodic dispute review process will be reviewed to ensure that all disputed invoices are followed up	MD/LB	Implemented June 2023
Invoices					
3.3.1	The Daily Transaction register should be checked thoroughly to ensure there are no gaps in the invoice numbering and any invoices not in sequential order should be reviewed and recorded in the Deleted Items spreadsheet.	LR	A reminder will be issued to the AR team	MD	Implemented April 2023
Debt Recovery					
3.6.4	Staff should be reminded of the importance of creating the correct profile in the Customer Account to ensure "Dunning" reminders are issued.	LR	A reminder will be issued to the AR team	MD	Implemented April 2023
3.6.5	All invoices should be escalated on a timely basis in accordance with established protocols. Where debtors have not paid within the timescales allowed, a decision should be made on whether to refer the invoice to Legal or submit for write-off. <i>(Previous audit recommendation)</i>	HR	This action is being implemented as quickly as available staff resources will allow. We are aiming for full implementation by September 2024 at the latest.	MD/LB	September 2024
3.6.6	The backlog of unpaid invoices should be addressed at the earliest opportunity. <i>(Previous audit recommendation)</i>	MR	This action is being implemented as quickly as available staff resources will allow. We are aiming for full implementation by September 2024 at the latest.	MD/LB	September 2024

Ref	Recommendation	Risk Level	Agreed Action	Lead	Completion Date
3.6.8	a) Appropriate follow-up procedures with debtors or services and diarising of invoice reviews should be carried out by officers in the AR team as a matter of routine. (Previous audit recommendation)	MR	This action is being implemented as quickly as available staff resources will allow. We are aiming for full implementation by September 2024 at the latest.	MD/LB	September 2024
3.6.8	b) Invoices on "Awaiting Evidence" status should be reviewed on a bi-monthly basis.	LR	Bimonthly reviews will be in place during 2024-25	MD/LB	March 2025
Invoices with Legal					
3.7.3	A review of all invoices with the status of "Referred to Legal" should be carried out with officers in Legal Services. (Previous audit recommendation)	LR	The review will be undertaken during 2024-25	MD/LB	March 2025
Write-Offs					
3.8.2 b)	Write-off proformas/email instructions should be saved to the customer's account on the AR server in all instances.	LR	A reminder will be issued to the AR team	MD	April 2023
3.8.2 c)	Invoices on the Oracle AR system should be updated with the Write-Off status in a timely manner.	GP	A reminder will be issued to the AR team	MD	April 2023
Refunds					
3.9.2	Refund approval notes should always be input on to the "Invoice Notes" screen in the AR system. (Previous audit recommendation)	GP	Investigations revealed that notes were being made on the debit memo rather than the invoice by one member of staff. This has now been corrected	MD	Implemented
GDPR/Data Retention					
3.11. 3	All physical/electronic records must be disposed of in accordance with the Council's official retention policy. (Previous audit recommendation)	LR	The team will work on records management when workloads allow	LB	March 2025

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Head of Digital & Customer Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 17 January 2024

Audit Wales Digital Strategy Review

Purpose:	To present the Audit Wales review of the Digital Strategy 2023-28.
Policy Framework:	Performance Management Framework Transformation & Financial Resilience well-being goal within the Corporate Plan Successful and Sustainable Swansea
Consultation:	Finance and Legal.
Report Authors:	Sarah Lackenby
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
For Information	

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Audit Wales have undertaken a review of the digital strategies of the 22 principal Councils in Wales.
- 1.2 The review sought to provide assurance that Councils' digital strategies will help to deliver well-being objectives, are in accordance with the sustainable development principle, are meeting people's needs, and delivering better outcomes. This work also builds on the 'springing forward' review undertaken during 2021-22.

2. Findings

- 2.1 The Audit Wales review (Appendix A) concluded that the Council:

- Has a clear vision for its approach to digital and is developing comprehensive arrangements to support the delivery and monitoring of its digital strategy.
 - Used a wide range of different sources to inform its digital strategy
 - Has a clear digital vision and is planning to deliver its vision over an appropriate timescale.
 - Understands the wider impact of digital and works collaboratively to help deliver its digital aspirations.
 - Has allocated resources to deliver its digital strategy and has arrangements to assess the costs, benefits and risks.
 - Has comprehensive arrangements to assess and monitor the impact of the Council's digital approach and the value for money.
- 2.2 Audit Wales also made one recommendation (Appendix B). The previous strategy ran from 2015 to 2020 and began at the point the Council was exiting the external Capgemini contract. Although the Council reviewed its previous digital strategy, this was not a formal review and Members did not receive its outcome. This was due to the timing of the pandemic. At the end of March 2020, the Council went into business continuity mode because of the COVID19 pandemic.
- 2.3 In the report, Audit Wales acknowledges the lack of a formal review has not prevented the Council from improving its arrangements to monitor and assess the current strategy, particularly arrangements to assess the costs and benefits of financially supporting the implementation of digital projects.
- 2.4 The Council responded to the Audit Wales recommendation with a set of actions that will help the review of the current digital strategy in 2027, capturing any and all learning as part of developing and agreeing the new strategy from 2028 onwards.

3. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.
- 3.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- This report is for information only. Any activities following this report will be subject to the IIA process as required.
- 4. Financial Implications**
- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 5. Legal Implications**
- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix A Audit Wales Digital Strategy Review Report
Appendix B Recommendation and Response



Digital Strategy Review – City and County of Swansea

Audit year: 2022-23

Date issued: October 2023

Document reference: 3823A2023

This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The section 45 code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to Audit Wales at infoofficer@audit.wales.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Contents

Report summary	4
Detailed report	
What we looked at and why – the scope of this audit	6
Why we undertook this audit	6
The Council's digital strategy	7
What we found: The Council has a clear vision for its approach to digital and is developing comprehensive arrangements to support the delivery and monitoring of its digital strategy	7
Appendices	
Appendix 1: key questions and audit criteria	13

Report summary

Report summary

Exhibit 1: report summary

The exhibit below summarises the reason we undertook this audit, our key findings and recommendations for the Council.

Why a strategic approach to digital is important

- 1 Digital technology is key to delivering a wide range of council services in a more economic, efficient and effective way, is also an important means of councils delivering their wellbeing objectives and carrying out sustainable development.
- 2 Having a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital can bring several benefits such as:
 - establishing a common vision for use of digital and the intended outcomes for local communities linked to the council's strategic objectives;
 - helping to ensure that councils' use of digital technology is aligned with their key strategic objectives and other plans and strategies and is informed by a good understanding of current and future trends;
 - reducing the risk of duplication both within councils and with partners;
 - consideration of resourcing digital over the short, medium and longer term together; and
 - providing a framework against which to monitoring progress over the short, long and medium term.

The focus of our audit

- 3 We looked at the extent to which the Council's strategic approach to digital has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the Council's resources.

Our key findings

- 4 We found that the Council has a clearly articulated strategic approach to digital that is informed by a good understanding of current and future trends and is understood by key elected members and officers. It also has comprehensive arrangements to assess and monitor the impact of its digital approach and the value for money. The Council also understands the wider impact of digital and works collaboratively to help deliver its digital aspirations. The Council reviewed its previous digital strategy, but this was not a formal review and members did not receive its outcome.

Our recommendation for the Council

Strategy review benefits

- R1 When the Council conducts future reviews of its digital strategy, to help ensure it learns from the reviews and shares this learning widely the Council should:
- determine if it had sufficient and appropriate information at the outset to determine the value and benefits of delivering the strategy overall and individual digital projects;
 - assess whether digital projects were delivered on time, to cost with perceived benefits being realised and identify any barriers preventing successful delivery of projects;
 - review the timeliness of its monitoring and reporting of progress to assess if emerging risks and issues were highlighted earlier enough for officers to deliver mitigating actions; and
 - review the effectiveness of the governance arrangements for its digital strategy to ensure they effectively support its delivery.

Detailed report

What we looked at and why – the scope of this audit

- 1 We reviewed the Council's strategic approach to digital, and specifically the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle; and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the Council's resources.
- 2 Our findings are based on document reviews and interviews with a sample of Cabinet Members and senior officers. The evidence we have used to inform our findings is limited to these sources. We undertook this review in June and July 2023.
- 3 We set out to answer the question '**In developing its digital strategy has the Council acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle and put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources?**' We did this by exploring the following questions:
 - Is the Council's digital strategy informed by a good understanding of current and future trends?
 - Does the Council have a clear vision of what it wants to achieve through the use of digital technology?
 - Is the Council working effectively with the right people and partners to design and deliver its digital strategy?
 - Has the Council resourced delivery of its digital strategy so it can deliver long-term/preventative benefits?
 - Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress?
 - Is the Council learning lessons from how it works?
- 4 **Appendix 1** sets out the detailed questions we set out to answer along with the audit criteria we used to arrive at our findings.

Why we undertook this audit

- 5 This audit was undertaken to help fulfil the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 6 We sought to:
 - provide assurance that councils' digital strategies will help to deliver well-being objectives in a way that secures value for money in the use of resources;
 - provide assurance that councils are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in the design of their digital strategies;

- explain how councils are using/planning to use digital technology to meet people's needs and deliver better outcomes; and
- inspire and empower councils and other public sector bodies by identifying and sharing examples of notable practice/approaches where relevant.

The Council's digital strategy

- 7 In April 2023, Cabinet approved the Council's current digital strategy 2023-28.
- 8 The Council's vision for digital as stated within the strategy is for the Council 'to use digital technology to improve people's lives, to enable digital access to services 24 hours a day, and to improve operational efficiency'.
- 9 This vision is supported by six digital strategic goals:
1. Excellent Customer Service aligned with our service standards
 2. People focused digital services
 3. Resilient digital infrastructure and systems
 4. Accessible data that supports communities and council performance
 5. Digitally skilled and confident workforce and communities
 6. A digitally connected city and county
- 10 The Council has allocated an initial £2 million to support delivery of its digital strategy.

What we found: The Council has a clear vision for its approach to digital and is developing comprehensive arrangements to support the delivery and monitoring of its digital strategy

The Council used a wide range of different sources to inform its digital strategy

- 11 The Council considered an extensive range of current data and likely future trends when developing its digital ambitions resulting in a good understanding of its current situation. The Council's strategic digital approach was informed by:
- the National Survey for Wales 2021-22 results;
 - the Office of National Statistics data on access to the internet, internet usage and technology devices;
 - the demographic profile of Swansea and how it might change in the long term and the potential impact on the Council's digital approach;
 - the Older People's Commissioner for Wales guidance issued in November 2021 on – 'Ensuring access to information and services in a digital age';

- risks and opportunities highlighted in the Council's Digital Service service plans; and
 - public consultation.
- 12 The Council is also agile in its thinking in how services may need to evolve in the longer-term. The Council's use of data and intelligence to identify future, potential long-term trends, strengthens the Council's ability to evolve its approach to meet future demands and opportunities.
- 13 The Council consulted the public to inform its digital strategy. This included diverse sectors of the population, for example, the over 50s forum, a Welsh Language forum, Poverty forum and Disability Liaison group. The Council analysed the data and consultation responses to inform its final digital strategy. Through its analysis, the Council identified the importance of retaining traditional means of communication, such as face-to-face and telephone options as it expands online services. The Council wants to ensure the methods of accessing and communicating with the Council are flexible, so residents are not limited to one route. By involving the diversity of its citizens in developing its strategic digital approach, helps the Council to have assurance it is designing an approach that meets citizens' needs and is more likely to secure value for money.

The Council has a clear digital vision and is planning to deliver its vision over an appropriate timescale

- 14 The Council is several years into its digital transformation journey. The Council began its digital transformation in 2015. The priority at that time was ensuring the County had the right digital infrastructure for internet capacity and capability. The digital projects currently being scoped and delivered are a result of the improvements to the digital infrastructure.
- 15 The County has improved its digital infrastructure since 2015, and so its vision has also evolved to 'use digital technology to improve people's lives, to enable digital access to services 24 hours a day, and to improve operational efficiency'. This vision is set out in the Council's 2023-28 digital strategy. The Council has communicated this vision across the organisation and is understood across services and among key Elected Members. This means there is a wide and common understanding of what the Council is aiming to achieve.
- 16 The Council has considered what is an appropriate timescale for its digital strategy. The Council has adopted a five-year timeframe to reflect the change and pace of digital technology evolving. The timeframe for the current digital strategy aligns with corporate planning and the electoral cycle. However, the vision and digital strategic goals will be delivered over a longer-term as will the digital strategy's eight outcomes. The Council intend to review the strategy's progress in 2028 and use this learning to inform the next iteration of its strategic digital approach.

The Council understands the wider impact of digital and works collaboratively to help deliver its digital aspirations

- 17 The Council is committed to aligning its digital approach with partners. A Digital Transformation Board oversees the digital strategy and this Board forms part of the Council's wider corporate transformation programme. The digital strategy clearly aligns with 'Delivering a Successful and Sustainable Swansea' (The Council's Corporate Strategy 2023-28), in particular with the Council's wellbeing objective of 'Transforming our Economy and Infrastructure'. Digital transformation is one of the priorities supporting the Council's delivery of this well-being objective. Including digital transformation within the Corporate Plan raises its profile and its importance for the Council in delivering its wider transformation programme that has the potential to improve service efficiency and effectiveness for its workforce and service-users.
- 18 There is clear alignment between the Council's Workforce Strategy and Plan 2022-27 and the Digital Strategy. The Workforce Strategy has a role to deliver improved digital skills and confidence and the Council's Asset Management Plan 2021-2025 refers to using digital technology to implement the Council's Agile Programme. The Council view digital as a key enabler in achieving other Council priorities.
- 19 Through analysing data and understanding current rates of digital exclusions, the Council is committed to reduce exclusion rates. This commitment aligns closely with the Public Services Board action to reduce digital exclusion. In addition, the digital strategy aligns with the City Deal digital programme business case and the Council considered the Welsh Government Digital Strategy for Wales in its consideration of its own digital ambitions and priorities. At the time of our fieldwork, while the Local Health Board had not yet finalised its digital strategy, the Council has representation on the relevant Health Board working group tasked with producing it. Consideration of other stakeholders' digital intentions and alignment of internal and external strategies can help the Council in sharing of resources, avoid duplication of efforts and help to identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits.
- 20 The Council developed critical success factors based on the five ways of working of the sustainable development principle to help it assess whether the benefits and outcomes of its digital transformation programme will be realised. In addition, the Council has considered how the digital strategy can contribute to the national wellbeing goals. This strengthens the Council's ability to measure the impact of its strategic approach.
- 21 The Council values partnership working in delivering its digital strategic ambitions. The Council's annual review of performance 2021-22 details many different collaborative activities with other councils in the region, the private sector and the third sector to improve digital connectivity, digital infrastructure, digital inclusion, and digital skills. The digital strategy refers to partnership working for example through the City Deal and with education partners. The Council also has a constructive collaboration with a Business Improvement District. This partnership

recognises each organisation's skills and expertise, and is working together to develop a product that it hopes will jointly benefit both businesses and the public.

- 22 The Council is a key partner in the Swansea Bay City Deal's Digital Infrastructure Programme and the partnership works collaboratively to assist each other deliver its digital transformation strategy as well as supporting economic growth and improving social inclusion. Working in partnership can result in a sharing of knowledge, expertise and/or resources that can lead to better outcomes whilst also improving value for money.

The Council has allocated resources to deliver its digital strategy and has arrangements to assess the costs, benefits and risks

- 23 The Council views digital as a key enabler of change for driving transformational improvement and has allocated £2 million to help fund delivery of its strategic digital approach. The Council allocated this amount based on the end of financial year balance from the Council's Restructuring Reserve. The Council has also used this reserve to fund other aspects of its wider transformational programme, so the rationale as to why the Council allocated this amount for digital is unclear. While allocating specific funding for digital transformation demonstrates the Council's commitment and recognition of its importance, the current source of funding from a reserve's balance may fluctuate over time. This could lead to services being unclear on the future availability of funding resulting in potential uncertainty from services to develop future digital projects, particularly for services unable to secure external sources of funding.
- 24 The Council has set up a structured approach to assess the costs, benefits and risks for each digital project requesting funding. Services that submit plans to the Digital Transformation Board must include estimated costs, any Medium-Term Financial Plan savings, expected benefits and project risks. To assess each digital project, the Council developed a robust scoring criteria to determine which digital projects to financially support within the overall funding available. In June 2023, the Digital Transformation Board considered the first tranche of projects. The Board considered 21 projects with 6 receiving financial support to deliver the digital projects over the medium-term. For those digital projects not approved for the £2m digital fund, there are other sources of funding, such as the Housing Revenue Account and Education Fund, therefore will still be delivered.

There are comprehensive arrangements to assess and monitor the impact of the Council's digital approach and the value for money

- 25 The Council has established comprehensive arrangements that should provide a basis for it to effectively monitor individual digital projects and its digital strategy. However some of the arrangements are new, or under development so it is too early to assess their effectiveness.

- 26 The Council set up a Digital Transformation Board to oversee the digital strategy and individual digital projects. The Cabinet Member for Service Transformation chairs the Digital Transformation Board. Each directorate is represented on the Board as well as officers from corporate functions such as HR, finance, and the digital team. Representation across Council services can reduce the risk of duplication of efforts, it can identify opportunities for different services to collaborate to deliver multiple benefits and ensure a common understanding of the Council's digital priorities.
- 27 The Digital Transformation Board will monitor progress and risks for all digital projects regardless of funding source, therefore providing corporate oversight of all digital transformation projects. As the Council has allocated funding for its first tranche of digital projects, at the time of our fieldwork, the Council was developing a 'benefits' tracker which the Digital Transformation Board will be responsible for monitoring. This oversight has the potential to help the Council to have a comprehensive view of all its digital transformation projects, identify areas of success, and projects not delivering to time or delivering intended benefits.
- 28 The Council has identified performance measures to support its digital strategy but currently these measures are not supported with baseline data, targets or timescales. At the time of our fieldwork, the Council were compiling a Programme Plan which should include greater detail on how the Council plans to deliver the different aspects of the strategy and by when. Without this detail, it will be difficult for the Council to monitor progress, achievement of its desired outcomes and to determine if it is securing value for money.
- 29 The Council does have information at an individual digital project level to be able to determine progress and value for money in the future. Services that submit digital project ideas to the Digital Transformation Board need to demonstrate alignments with the sustainable development principle, Council's digital strategy as well as:
- MTFP saving (with amount and by when);
 - identifying other funding opportunities;
 - non cashable benefits; and
 - whether the project directly improves customer service.
- 30 The Council has developed a robust scoring criteria to assess the merits of the individual proposed digital projects based on the above detail provided by services. The scoring criteria is comprehensive and designed to include several key components to aid decision making and consider the future outcomes of each project.
- 31 By requesting that services stipulate the costs and benefits of individual projects when requesting financial support, the Council has the information at the outset to assess and monitor the costs and benefits when monitoring progress.

The Council reviewed its previous digital strategy, but this was not a formal review and members did not receive its outcome

- 32 The Council reviewed the previous digital strategy to establish what it achieved compared to what the Council set out to achieve. This was not a formal review and Cabinet did not receive the outcome however, we recognise the previous strategy ended at the time when the Council's priority was responding to the pandemic. The review did not look at the wider arrangements in place at that time to oversee the monitoring and reporting of the previous strategy. However, the lack of a formal review has not prevented the Council from improving its arrangements to monitor and assess the current strategy, particularly arrangements to assess the costs and benefits of financially supporting the implementation of digital projects.
- 33 The Council is committed to learning lessons from delivering its current digital strategy. The Council intend to complete an audit of its Digital Strategy and Programme Plan in 2026 and review the strategy and produce an end of Programme closure report in 2028. Reviewing the effectiveness of its strategic approach, and learning and sharing lessons from this can help the Council to improve the effectiveness and value for money of its approach in future.

Appendix 1

Audit questions and audit criteria

Below are the questions we sought to answer in carrying out this audit, along with the audit criteria we used to arrive at our findings.

Main audit question: **In developing its digital strategy has the Council acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle and put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources?**

Exhibit 2: audit questions and audit criteria

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
<p>1. Is the Council's digital strategy informed by a good understanding of current and future trends?</p>	<p>1.1 Is there is a thorough understanding of the 'as is' (ie current demand/issues to be addressed) and the reasons why/underlying causes?</p> <p>1.2 Is there a thorough understanding of the long-term factors that will impact and the challenges and opportunities that may result (eg risks and opportunities)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has drawn on a broad range of information from internal and external sources to develop a thorough understanding of the 'as is' and how it is likely to change. This includes information (including data) relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – service sustainability/resilience and resourcing challenges. – the needs of citizens and communities. – the underlying causes of current demand/issues to be addressed. – analysis of future trends and how they might impact, eg social, economic/political, environmental, cultural or technological. They might include known trends eg ageing population, depleting natural resources and particularly technological advances. They might also include those with a higher level of uncertainty eg jobs and skills needed in the future. • The analysis of the 'as is' and how it is likely to change is well informed by involvement activity, as appropriate, that reflects recognised good practice (eg <u>National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales</u>, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales advice and guidance). • The Council uses its evidence base effectively to:

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – identify actions in its strategic approach to digital that are likely to be most effective and why, including how they could address the root causes of problems; – inform decisions around its use of digital technology that seek to balance the need to meet short and longer-term objectives.
2. Does the Council have a clear vision of what it wants to achieve through the use of digital technology?	2.1 Is the Council planning over an appropriate timescale?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has considered what long term means in planning its approach to digital – ie how far ahead it can/should plan and why (at least ten years with consideration of longer-term trends as appropriate). • The Council has considered how actions can deliver the best impact over that timeframe in terms of outcomes and most effective use of resources. This could include consideration of appropriate intervention points linked to the Commissioner's definition of prevention. (More details can be found in: Taking account of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the budget process – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales). • The Council has set out measures for its digital strategy that reflect short and long-term impacts and value for money, with milestones that reflect progress as appropriate. • The Council has set out how its digital strategy will be resourced over the longer term as far as is practical (see also criteria relating to integration).
	2.2 Has the Council thought about the wider impacts its digital strategy could have, including:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has considered how its digital strategy can make a contribution across the well-being goals. • Staff developing the digital strategy understand what colleagues and partners do and how their work relates, and have sought to integrate their

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how it could contribute to each of the seven national well-being goals? • how delivery will impact on the other things it is trying to achieve (ie its well-being objectives and wider priorities)? • how delivery will impact on other what other public bodies are trying to achieve (ie their well-being objectives)? 	<p>work with that of their colleagues from across the Council and with partner organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration is evident in the alignment of the digital strategy with other key corporate strategies and service plans. For example medium-term financial plan, workforce plan, asset management strategies, well-being statement and carbon reduction plans. • The digital strategy is aligned with other strategic intents such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – customer experience; – management of demand/reductions in demand failure and prevention; and – design and implementation of new service delivery models. • The Council's digital strategy aligns with the plans/strategies of local and national partners including the Welsh Government's Digital Strategy for Wales Digital strategy and well-being plans.
	2.3 Is there a wide and common understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and senior officers responsible for implementing the digital strategy have a common and clear understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve and the intended impact on service delivery. • The Council's digital strategy is clearly communicated to staff and partners who may help deliver it.

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
3. Is the Council working effectively with the right people and partners to design and deliver its digital strategy	3.1 Has the Council identified who it needs to involve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a good understanding of who will be directly and indirectly affected by its digital strategy and who it needs to involve. • The Council has effectively involved the full diversity of views in developing its digital strategy, including from non-traditional sources and from those it may have previously failed to reach.
	3.2 Is the Council effectively involving the full diversity of people affected by its digital strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has provided genuine opportunities for people to influence the design and delivery of its digital strategy from an early stage, including representatives of groups who share protected characteristics. • The Council has used the results of involvement to shape the design and delivery of its digital strategy.
	3.3 Is the Council collaborating effectively with the right partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is collaborating to ensure it delivers better outcomes and value for money through its digital strategy and has put appropriate arrangements in place to support this, for example for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sharing or pooling expertise and resources; – sharing information; – ensuring effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability including consideration of value for money.

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
4. Has the Council resourced delivery of its digital strategy so it can deliver long-term/preventative benefits?	4.1 Does the Council understand long-term resource implications?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has assessed the costs and benefits of using digital technology to invest in long-term, preventative approaches and the cost (both financial and in terms of outcomes) of not doing so. • The Council has thought about the resources it will need to deliver its digital strategy over the medium and longer term (whole life costs) and how it could manage risks/meet those costs including, for example, planned 'invest to save' initiatives and managed reductions in technical debt. • The Council has calculated and set out any savings it intends to make through implementing its digital strategy.
	4.2 Does the Council allocate resources to deliver better outcomes over the long-term?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action (including preventative action) that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and/or use of resources over the longer term is promoted and supported, even: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs; – where the benefits are likely to be accrued by or attributed to another organisation.

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
5. Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress?	5.1 Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress towards, short, medium and longer-term objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council monitors the costs and benefits of delivering its digital strategy from a value for money perspective. • The Council is measuring the wider contribution the digital strategy is making across its own/partnership objectives. • Progress is measured against short, medium and long-term objectives.
6. Is the Council learning lessons from how it works?	6.1 Does the Council review the effectiveness of its digital strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of its digital strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – effectiveness of its collaborative activity; – effectiveness of its involvement activity, including the impact of the strategy on service users including those who are digitally excluded; – the impact of the strategy on those who share protected characteristics; – the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the digital strategy overall in helping the Council to achieve its strategic objectives. • The Council has reviewed lessons learned from its response to the pandemic and is applying this learning to its digital strategy.
	6.2 Does the Council share lessons learned from its approach to its digital strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council shares and applies any lessons learned from the development and delivery of its digital strategy widely across the organisation, and with partners where relevant.



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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.



Organisational response

Report title: Digital Strategy Review

Completion date: October 2023

Document reference: 3823A2023

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>When the Council conducts future reviews of its digital strategy, to help ensure it learns from the reviews and shares this learning widely the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. determine if it had sufficient and appropriate information at the outset to determine the value and benefits of delivering the strategy overall and individual digital projects; b. assess whether digital projects were delivered on time, to cost with perceived benefits being realised and identify any barriers preventing successful delivery of projects; c. review the timeliness of its monitoring and reporting of progress to assess if emerging risks and issues were highlighted earlier enough for officers to deliver mitigating actions; and 	<p>The Council will undertake a review from 2027 onwards as a new revised Digital Strategy will be underway. This work will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of whether the external environment analysis proved to be the anticipated trajectory and what that means for any new strategy. The review will also determine if the Council had sufficient and appropriate information at the outset to determine the value and benefits of delivering the strategy overall and individual digital projects • Feedback from internal and external stakeholders on the 2023-28 strategy and its delivery • Analysis from the 2023-28 end of programme review and report. This will document how the programme has performed with regard to cost, benefits, risks, resources, and any barriers preventing successful delivery • Review of the effectiveness of the 2023-28 governance arrangements to ensure they effectively supported delivery, including the timeliness of monitoring and reporting of progress to assess if emerging risks and issues were highlighted earlier enough for officers to deliver mitigating actions. 	<p>The review will begin in 2027 and complete by 2028 in order to inform the new Digital Strategy from 2028 onwards. This timescale allows for the review and final approval of the new strategy through Cabinet.</p>	Head of Digital & Customer Services

- d. review the effectiveness of the governance arrangements for its digital strategy to ensure they effectively support its delivery.

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 17 January 2024

Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker Report

Purpose:	This report details the actions recorded by the Governance & Audit Committee and response to the actions.
Report Author:	Jeremy Parkhouse
Finance Officer:	N/A
Legal Officer:	N/A
Access to Services Officer:	N/A
For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 During the course of Governance & Audit Committee meetings various actions may be decided which are recorded on the minutes of the meetings.
- 1.2 As agreed in 2016/17 an Action Tracker process was put in place to ensure transparency over the outcomes of actions agreed by Committee.
- 1.3 The Action Tracker records the actions agreed by the Governance & Audit Committee and provides an outcome for each action.
- 1.4 The up to date Action Tracker 2023/24 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.5 The Action Tracker is regularly updated and any completed actions will be marked 'Completed' and coloured in grey.
- 1.6 The Action Tracker is reported to each Governance & Audit Committee meeting for information.

2. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 2.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 2.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.
- 2.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 2.2 There are no implications associated with this report.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker 2023/24 (Recently closed actions highlighted).

Appendix 1

Governance & Audit Committee - Action Tracker 2023/2024				
Date of Meeting	Minute Ref	Action	Nominated Officer(s)	Status / Timescale
06/12/23	62	Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan		
		The Chair requested that training session(s) be arranged on the following areas: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management framework; • Risk management; • Internal audit. 	Jeremy Parkhouse / Richard Rowlands / Simon Cockings	Ongoing
06/12/23	60	Audit Wales Letter - Review of Council's Transformation Programme		
		The Committee is updated early in the New Year regarding progress.	Ness Young	Closed Copies of Cabinet reports on the Corporate Transformation Programme will be provided to the Committee for information.
06/12/23	58	Audit Wales Recommendations Tracker		
		The Chair welcomed the introduction of the tracker and highlighted its importance going forward. She queried if the action addressed the recommendation and if it was completed in relation to all Wales recommendations on the Audit Wales report on 'Together we can' – Community resilience and self-reliance. The Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager would review the information in the tracker. In addition, the Chair requested that the tracker report be provided to every other Committee meeting in future.	Richard Rowlands / Jeremy Parkhouse	Closed External Audit Tracker will be provided as a For Information report quarterly Added to the 28/02/24 agenda.
06/12/23	57	Corporate Risk Overview 2023/24 - Quarter 2		
		The Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager would circulate the omitted information relating to Mandatory training, update the register prior to the next quarterly report and details of training.	Richard Rowlands	Closed
06/12/23	55	Internal Audit Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 - 2023/24		
		The Chair queried whether the effectiveness of the control measures on the risk register had been audited as part of the Corporate Governance audit. The Chief Auditor confirmed that he would respond regarding the review of corporate governance and would ensure the Chair received all audit reports finalised as requested.	Simon Cockings	Ongoing In 2024-25 the IAS will review the effectiveness of the council's risk management framework, policy and procedures.

06/12/23	54	Finance Directorate: Internal Control Environment 2023/2024		
		Changing the month the report is provided in future years.	Jeremy Parkhouse	Closed Added to the Work Plan for September 2024.
06/12/23	53	Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23		
		Responses would be circulated in respect of the drop in gross income in specific areas and the increase in the balance of long term debtors at Note 17.	Ben Smith	Closed Response circulated to the Chair / Committee
25/10/23	47	Audit Wales stated that it planned to report on the Statement of Accounts in March 2024.	Audit Wales	Ongoing
25/10/23	46	Report on the Audit Wales 'Together We Can' - Community Resilience and Self-Reliance Report Recommendations		
		The Chair recognised the work already completed and the large amount of work outstanding, which could take time to complete. She requested that the Tackling Poverty Service Manager provides an update on the timelines at a future meeting.	Lee Cambule	Ongoing
25/10/23	45	Report on the Audit Wales 'A Missed Opportunity' - Social Enterprises Report Recommendations		
		The Chair recognised the work already completed and the large amount of work outstanding, which could take time to complete. She requested that the Tackling Poverty Service Manager provides an update on the timelines at a future meeting.	Lee Cambule	Ongoing
25/10/23	44	The Governance and Assurance Arrangements of Swansea Council's Strategic Partnerships		
		The Chair requested that future reports highlight the key challenges and achievements of the partnerships during the period being reported.	Richard Rowlands	Ongoing
25/10/23	43	Public Services Ombudsman of Wales Annual Letter 2022-23		
		The Chair requested that the Head of Digital & Customer Services circulates to the Committee details of 'various other' complaints dealt with by the Ombudsman.	Sarah Lackenby	Ongoing
25/10/23	38	Absence Management Audit Report Update		
		Ness Young, Director of Corporate Services highlighted that an update on the Council's Management Arrangements for Sickness Absence and Occupational Health was scheduled for Committee on 6 December 2023. The Chair noted that the report would therefore be moved to the meeting on 10 April 2024.	Rachael Davies	Ongoing Added to the agenda for 10 April 2023.
	38	The Head of Human Resources and Service Centre was requested to provide details of time lost due to accidents in the next update report.	Rachael Davies	Ongoing

25/10/23	37	Employment of Agency Staff - 2023 Update		
		The Head of Human Resources and Service Centre was requested to provide details of agency workers who had been employed on permanent contracts by the Authority and the cost of employing agency workers in previous years.	Rachael Davies	Ongoing
13/09/23	30	Education Directorate: Internal Control Environment 2023/2024		
		The Chair noted that the monitoring of the position at Clydach Primary School would be done by the Education Performance Scrutiny Panel and added that the Committee would gain assurance from their findings. She requested that it be added to the Action Tracker Report.	Education Performance Scrutiny Panel	Ongoing The Panel are meeting with the Acting Head and Chair of Governors on 22 February 2024.
13/09/23	28	Internal Audit Recommendation Follow-Up Report Quarter 1 2023/24		
13/09/23	28	The Committee also queried the reporting of all outstanding high / medium risks that had not been actioned in future in order for long term outstanding risks to be identified.	Nick Davies / Simon Cockings	Ongoing For consideration. This will require the interrogation of the audit system and ultimately, some additional man hours to see the required information can be extracted. Feasibility to be investigated.
19/07/23	19	Internal Audit Section - Fraud Function Annual Report for 2022/2023		
		The Corporate Fraud Manager stated that he would provide responses regarding / action the following: - • Provide reasons for closure in future reports. • Provide examples of cases studies in future training sessions.	Jonathon Rogers	Ongoing
14/06/23	13	Governance & Audit Work Plan		
		It was highlighted that there was not any training contained in the Work Plan. The Chair stated that future training was being considered. Training to be on understanding of general audit processes, understanding the terminology used and measuring criteria used.	Simon Cockings / Jeremy Parkhouse	Closed Duplicate with Minute No.62 – 06/12/23.
14/06/23	7	Accounts Receivable		
		The Chair thanked the officers for a detailed report and requested an update be provided in approximately 6 months.	Rachael Davies / Michelle Davies	Closed Included on agenda for 17 January 2024.

08/03/23	105	Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker Report		
		<p>The Chair highlighted the following: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute 90 (08/02/2023) – Audit Wales Reports – Readiness of the Public Sector for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 – Councillor A S Lewis (Deputy Leader of the Council) had updated the Climate Change and Nature Performance Panel regarding progress and would provide the Committee with a briefing note in order to provide assurance. 	Councillor Andrea Lewis / Geoff Bacon	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Audit Wales have rightly identified the need for all public bodies to develop costed plans to meet political aspirations and legal obligations. It remains relatively early days and at this stage it is not realistic to have a fully costed plan that's aligned to the MTFP and beyond. The costed plan doesn't and couldn't align with a 4-year MTFP as the programme will develop and continues up until 2030.</p> <p>As yet there has been no statement from WG concerning additional funding. The council recognises its obligations and the expectations placed upon it and the wider public sector and will continue to develop its own methodology and share and learn best practice with others to try and ensure comparability and consistency where possible. Conversations are ongoing with Welsh Government Energy Services as to how an action plan can be refined and properly delivered which strikes a pragmatic balance between the realistic and affordable at a truly local, council wide level and what will require regional, national and international joint working and very substantial additional funding support. A future draft/interim report will follow when completed.</p> <p>A report on Swansea Council NZ30 emissions (22-23) due at Cabinet imminently and Welsh Government are continuing to develop standardised frameworks to assist public body reporting.</p>

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 17 January 2024

Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan

Purpose:	This report details the Governance & Audit Committee Work Plans to May 2024.
Report Author:	Jeremy Parkhouse
Finance Officer:	N/A
Legal Officer:	N/A
Access to Services Officer:	N/A
For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan to May 2024 in Terms of Reference Order is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The Additional Work programme Governance and Audit Committee as a result of the Local Government and Elections Act is attached at Appendix 2.
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan 2023/24 report is attached at Appendix 3.
- 1.4 The Scrutiny & Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory (AIR) Reports (2023/24) is attached at Appendix 4.
- 1.5 The updated Governance & Audit Committee Terms of Reference is attached at Appendix 5.
- 1.6 The dates included for the meetings in 2023/24 were approved at the Council's Annual Meeting on 18 May 2023.

2. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 2.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 2.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.
- 2.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 2.2 There are no impact assessment implications associated with this report.
- 3. Financial Implications**
- 3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.
- 4. Legal Implications**
- 4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan to May 2024 in Terms of Reference Order.
- Appendix 2 - Additional Work Programme - Governance and Audit Committee as a result of the Local Government and Elections Act.
- Appendix 3 - Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan 2023/24
- Appendix 4 - Scrutiny & Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory (AIR) Reports (2023/24).
- Appendix 5 - Governance & Audit Committee Terms of Reference.

Governance & Audit Committee Workplan 2023/24

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference	14 June 2023	19 July 2023	13 September 2023	25 October 2023	6 December 2023	17 January 2024	28 February 2024	10 April 2024	June 2024 (24/25)
Training									
Governance & Assurance	Election of Chair & Vice Chair Appointment of Committee Member on Annual Governance Group	Complaints Update Report 2022/23		Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23. The Governance and Assurance Arrangements of Swansea Council's Strategic Partnerships – 6 Month Update Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual letter to the Council for the period 2022-23			Update on the Council's Transformation Programme, including Governance Annual Complaints Report	Draft Committee Work Programme 2024/25 Update on the Council's management arrangements for sickness absence and occupational health	Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 Draft Governance & Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24 Election of Chair & Vice Chair Appointment of Committee Member on Annual Governance Group
Internal Audit	IA Quarter 4 2022/23 Monitoring Report IA Quarter 4 2022/23 Recommendation Tracker Report Fleet Maintenance Update Accounts Receivable Update DBS Update	Annual Report of School Audits 2022-23	IA Quarter 1 2023/24 Monitoring Report Moderate Report - Catering and Cleaning Team 23/24 IA Quarter 1 2023/24 Recommendation Tracking Report	Employment of Agency Staff Update Management of Absence Update Moderate Report – Clydach Primary School External Assessment Report 2023/24.	IA Quarter 2 2023/24 Monitoring Report Fundamental Audits 2022/23 – Rec Tracker Report	Accounts Receivable Update Fundamental Audits 2022/23 – Rec Tracker Report	IA Quarter 3 2023/24 Monitoring Report IA Quarter 3 2023/24 Recommendation Tracker Report IA Annual Plan Methodology Report 2024/25 Draft IA Annual Plan 2024/25	IA Charter 2024/25 IA Strategy & Annual Plan 2024/25 Employment of Agency Staff Update Management of Absence Update	Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24
Risk Management & Performance			Q1 Risk Monitoring Report The Annual Review of Performance 2022-23 (including Self-Assessment Report)		Q2 Risk Monitoring Report		Q3 Risk Monitoring Report Risk Management Review (Verbal)		Q4 Risk Monitoring Report

Governance & Audit Committee Workplan 2023/24

Appendix 1

Counter Fraud		Corporate Fraud Annual Report 2022/23 and Corporate Fraud Annual Plan 2023/24			Corporate Fraud – Six Month Update				
Operational matters / key risks			Update on Internal Control Environment – Director of Education	Update on Internal Control Environment - Director of Social Services	Update on Internal Control Environment - Director of Finance		Update on Internal Control Environment – Director of Place	Update on Internal Control Environment – Director of Corporate Services	
External Audit	Audit Wales Report - City & County of Swansea Annual Audit Summary	Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council.		Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council. Audit Wales – 2023 Audit Plan 'A Missed Opportunity' - Social Enterprises. 'Together we can' - Community Resilience and Self-Reliance	Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council. Setting of well-being objectives – City and County of Swansea Council Audit Wales Letter – Review of the Council's Transformation Programme External Audit Recommendations.	Audit Wales - Audit of the Council's Digital Strategy 2023-28	Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council. External Audit Tracker Report	Audit Wales - Assurance and Risk Assessment - Financial Position Update Audit Wales Report - City & County of Swansea Annual Audit Summary Update on the Council's response to the Audit Wales 2023 Report on Social Enterprises Audit Wales - Audit of Accounts Report - City & County of Swansea - Draft.	Audit Wales - 2024 Audit Plan Update on the Council's response to the Audit Wales 2023 Report on Community Reliance and Self Reliance External Audit Tracker Report
Financial Reporting					Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23				

Additional Work programme Governance and Audit Committee
As a result of the Local Government And Elections Act.

Across all areas of the work programme, consideration and acknowledgement will be given to the views, feedback and assurance from the scrutiny and performance committees that robust overview and scrutiny has taken place of decisions, policies and proposals and the assurance then given to Audit committee when they are reviewing the area of work in relation to Assurance, risk environment, Regulatory compliance and overall governance.

Area of work	Owner	Frequency <i>The frequencies are a guide and additional reviews may take place as and when the committee feel necessary.</i>	Month to present to committee
To review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework	Ness Young / Richard Rowlands	Every 2 years	See Annual Governance Statement
To review the Council's draft annual Self-Assessment Report,	Richard Rowlands	Annual	September
To review the Council's draft response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report	Richard Rowlands	Once every 4 years	TBC
To review the Council's draft response to any Auditor General's recommendations arising from a special inspection in respect of the Council's performance requirements	Ness Young	As and When required	TBC
To review the programme of work from regulators	Richard Rowlands	Annually	Quarterly

Appendix 2

To review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively	Sarah Lackenby	Annual	January
To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval	Richard Rowlands	Annual	May
To consider the Council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.	Richard Rowlands / Ness Young	Annual	Possibly covered to a degree in the self-assessment report but too early to say.
To consider the Council's framework of assurance	Richard Rowlands / Ness Young	Annual	See Internal Audit Assurance Map
To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management	Richard Rowlands	Each meeting	Quarterly Overview of Risk Reports
To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions	Simon Cockings	As and when required	Quarterly Monitoring Reports throughout the year.
To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption	Simon Cockings	Every 6 months	Fraud Function Annual Plan – March Fraud Function Annual Report – July Fraud Function Half-Year Update Report - December
To monitor the counter fraud strategy, actions and resources	Simon Cockings	Every 6 Months	Fraud Function Annual Plan – March Fraud Function Annual Report – July

Appendix 2

			Fraud Function Half-Year Update Report - December
To Receive proposals in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations	Simon Cockings	as and when	n/a
To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations	Director of Corporate Services / Richard Rowlands / Relevant Director	Annual / as and when new Partnerships or collaborations are established	June/July
To approve the internal audit charter and resources	Simon Cockings	Annual	Internal Audit Charter Report – April
To consider the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the Council's corporate governance arrangements	Simon Cockings	Annual	Internal Audit Annual Report – May
To consider reports from the Chief Internal Auditor on Internal Audit's performance during the year including the performance of external providers of internal audit services	Simon Cockings	Every 6 months	Quarterly Monitoring Reports throughout the year.
To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the Annual Governance Statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations	Simon Cockings	Annual	Internal Audit Annual Report – June

Appendix 2

To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the Chief Internal Auditor. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments	Simon Cockings	Annual	Internal Audit Charter Report – April
To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Chief Internal Auditor has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions	Simon Cockings	As and when	Quarterly Monitoring Reports throughout the year.
To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of the providers of internal audit services	Simon Cockings	As and when required	Quarterly Monitoring Reports throughout the year.
To consider a report from internal audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale.	Simon Cockings	Quarterly	Quarterly Monitoring Reports throughout the year.
To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years	Simon Cockings	Every 5 Years	Internal Audit Annual Report – May
To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and to those charged with governance.	Ben Smith	Annual	External Auditor's annual letter – July

Appendix 2

To review the annual statement of accounts.	Ben Smith	Annual	Report of S151 officer including Statement of Accounts – December
To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts	Ben Smith	Annual	External Audit Annual Report - July
To publish an annual report on the work of the committee.	Paula O'Connor	Annual	Draft Audit Committee Annual Report – June

Appendix 3

Scrutiny Programme Committee – Work Plan 2023/24

ACTIVITY	18 Jul 2023	19 Sep 2023	17 Oct 2023	14 Nov 2023	19 Dec 2023	16 Jan 2024
Scrutiny Work Programme	Agreement of Scrutiny Work Programme	Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23				
Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibility Q & A Sessions		Active Travel (CM for Environment & Infrastructure)			Support for Business (CM for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism)	Leader / Economy, Finance & Strategy
Other Cabinet Member / Officer Reports Page 74			Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board (PSB Chair – Cllr Andrea Lewis)	- Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report (CM for Care Services / Director of Social Services) - Children & Young People's Rights Scheme (annual report) (CM for Community – Support)	Delivery of Corporate Priority – Tackling Poverty (annual item) (Leader / CM for Wellbeing)	
Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Reports			Education	Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance	Adult Services	Child & Family Services
Pre-decision Scrutiny	FPR7 Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street - Community Hub Project		Oracle Fusion Project Implementation / Project Closure Report (Leader / CM for Service Transformation)			
Final Scrutiny Inquiry Reports / Follow Up on Scrutiny Recs.				- Follow Up on Bus Services Working Group (CM for Environment & Infrastructure) - Anti-Social Behaviour Inquiry Final Report		Follow Up on Road Safety Working Group (CM for Environ. & Infrastructure)

ACTIVITY	13 Feb 2024	19 Mar 2024	16 Apr 2024	14 May 2024		
Scrutiny Work Programme				End of Year Review		
Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibility Q & A Sessions	Delivery against Workforce Development Strategy (CM for Corporate Services & Performance					
Other Cabinet Member / Officer Reports		- Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board (PSB Chair – Cllr Andrea Lewis) - Annual Complaints Report 2022-23 (CM for Service Transformation / CM for Care Services)	Crime & Disorder Scrutiny - Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership (Joint Chairs of Safer Swansea Partnership)			
Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Reports	Climate Change & Nature	Education	Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance			
Pre-decision Scrutiny						
Final Scrutiny Inquiry Reports / Follow Up on Scrutiny Recs.				Follow Up on Co-production Working Group (CM for Community - Support)		

To be scheduled:

- Audit / Scrutiny Relationship – Discussion w/ Chair of Governance & Audit Committee
- Welsh Language Standards (annual report) (CMs for Education & Learning / Culture, Human Rights & Equalities)

Scrutiny & Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory Reports (2023/24)

The Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee and Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee decide between them the route that specific reports should take, i.e., whether reported to and monitored by G & A Committee or SPC, as deemed appropriate.

External reports that are relevant for Scrutiny are allocated either to the Scrutiny Programme Committee or referred to relevant Scrutiny Performance Panels and scheduled for discussion, as appropriate.

When a report has been issued to the Council and is available for Scrutiny, the relevant Scrutiny Chair / Convener is made aware, and it can be highlighted to Committee / Panel members within the next available meeting agenda.

Reporting to Scrutiny will typically require relevant Cabinet Members / Officers to attend meetings to discuss implications and present action plans along with statements about progress. Scrutiny Officers will engage with relevant Cabinet Members / Officers to forward plan the scheduling of Committee / Panel discussion at the right time, e.g., with a response / action plan (showing any progress to date), making the best use of time given pressure on scrutiny work plans / workloads.

The Committee / Panel can then receive assurance from Council leads about their response to any external reports and provide challenge to ensure improvement, making observations, and arranging further monitoring as necessary.

Depending on content, every report may not require the same level of involvement and consideration (given degree of importance or interest) therefore it will be up to relevant scrutiny lead member(s) to determine best approach in dealing with relevant reports. In certain cases, the Committee / Panel may take an exceptional approach to reports, e.g., being provided with information outside of meetings and only scheduling for discussion at a meeting with relevant Cabinet Member / Officer where there are specific issues, concerns about action / progress. Flexible approaches will relieve pressure on workloads and ensure best use of time and resources.

The Governance & Audit Committee is provided with a log of reports being dealt with by Scrutiny so that it can maintain an oversight of monitoring and be assured that reports are being effectively followed up.

Appendix 4

Page 77

Report Title	Type of Report	Lead Cabinet Portfolio	Scrutiny Committee / Performance Panel	Report(s) to Scrutiny	Monitoring by Scrutiny Complete (YES / NO?)
<u>A report on education services in City and County of Swansea</u> (September 2022)	Estyn	Education & Learning	Education Panel	<u>27 October 2022</u> <u>15 December 2022</u> <u>15 June 2023</u> <u>14 December 2023</u>	NO Further monitoring scheduled for Dec 2024
<u>'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales</u> (November 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Economy, Finance & Strategy AND Well-being	Scrutiny Programme Committee	<u>17 January 2023</u> <u>19 December 2023</u>	YES Tackling Poverty is an annual item at Committee
<u>'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises</u> (November 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Care Services	Adult Services Panel	<u>5 September 2023</u>	NO Discussion on Action Plan / progress to be arranged – likely Mar 2024
<u>'Together We Can' – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance</u> (January 2023)	Audit Wales (National)	Community (Support)	Adult Services Panel	<u>7 August 2023</u>	YES
<u>Rose Cross Residential Care Home Inspection</u> (May 2023)	CIW	Care Services	Adult Services Panel	<u>28 June 2023</u>	YES
<u>Ty Waunarlwydd Home For The Elderly Inspection</u> (June 2023)	CIW	Care Services	Adult Services Panel	<u>28 June 2023</u>	YES

Appendix 4

<u>Setting of Wellbeing Objectives</u> (August 2023)	Audit Wales (National)	Corporate Services & Performance	Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance	<u>17 October 2023</u>	YES
<u>Digital Strategy Review</u> (November 2023)	Audit Wales (National)	Service Transformation	Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance	<u>12 December 2023</u>	YES
Building Safety in Wales	Building Control Wales	Corporate Services & Performance	Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance	12 March 2024	
Use of Performance Information	Audit Wales (National)	Corporate Services & Performance	Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance	9 April 2024	

NOTE:

Estyn: All individual School Estyn Inspection outcome summaries and links to full reports are included in Education Scrutiny Performance Panel agendas for information / awareness. The Panel will follow up on any where there are concerns and some when good practice has been highlighted.

Governance & Audit Committee – Terms of Reference

Statement of Purpose

The Governance and Audit Committee is a key component of the City and County of Swansea's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of the Governance and Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the performance assessment of the Council. It provides an independent review of the governance, performance assessment, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

Membership

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 provides that two thirds of the members of the Committee are to be members of the council and one third must be lay members. Only one member of the Cabinet or Assistant to the Cabinet may sit on the Committee, and that person must not be the Leader. The Chair must be a lay member and the vice chair must not be a member of the Cabinet or an Assistant to the Cabinet.

Governance, Performance, Risk and Control

- a) To review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances.
- b) To review the Council's draft annual Self-Assessment Report, and make any appropriate recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions the Council intends to make.
- c) To review the Council's draft response to the Panel Performance Assessment Report, and make any appropriate recommendations for changes.
- d) To review the Council's draft response to any Auditor General's recommendations arising from a special inspection in respect of the Council's performance requirements and to make any appropriate recommendations for changes.
- e) To review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make any associated reports and

recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

- f) To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances.
- g) To consider the Council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
- h) To consider the Council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.
- i) To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the Council.
- j) To monitor progress in addressing risk related issues reported to the Committee.
- k) To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
- l) To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption.
- m) To monitor the counter fraud strategy, actions and resources.
- n) To review any proposals in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.
- o) To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

Internal Audit

- p) To approve the internal audit charter and resources.
- q) To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, containing internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurances and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
- r) To approve significant interim changes to the risk based internal audit plan and resource requirements.

- s) To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Chief Internal Auditor to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
- t) To consider the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the Council's corporate governance arrangements.
- u) To consider the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report.
- v) To consider reports from the Chief Internal Auditor on Internal Audit's performance during the year including the performance of external providers of internal audit services.
- w) To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the Annual Governance Statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- x) To consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the Chief Internal Auditor. To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
- y) To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.
- z) To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Chief Internal Auditor has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
 - aa) To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of the providers of internal audit services.
 - bb) To consider a report from internal audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale.
 - cc) To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.
 - dd) To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.

- ee) To provide free and unfettered access to the Governance and Audit Committee Chair for the Chief Internal Auditor, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the Committee.

External Audit

- ff) To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and to those charged with governance.
- gg) To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.
- hh) To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
- ii) To commission work from external audit.
- jj) To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external audit and other inspector agencies or relevant bodies

Financial Reporting

- kk) To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.
- ll) To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Accountability Arrangements

- mm) To report to full Council on a regular basis on the Committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose.
- nn) To report to Council on an annual basis and to publish an annual report on the Committee's work, its performance in relation to the Terms of Reference, and its effectiveness in meeting its purpose.
- oo) To raise the profile of probity generally within the Council and to report on matters of concern to the individual Cabinet Member, relevant Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or to Council as necessary and appropriate.
- pp) To work in synergy with the Scrutiny Committees of the Council and liaise with other Council Committees as and when appropriate to avoid duplication in work programmes.

- qq) To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the Appendix 1 adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions

- rr) To publish an annual report on the work of the committee.

Training and Development

- ss) To attend relevant training sessions including specialist training tailored for Members of the Governance and Audit Committee.