



Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 6 December 2023

Audit Wales – Setting of Well-being Objectives – City & County of Swansea

Purpose:	To make available to the committee ‘for information’ the Audit Wales report and the Council’s response into the setting of well-being objectives. The Audit Wales report fulfils the duty on the Auditor General to carry out examinations to assess the extent to which public bodies have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives.
Report Author:	Richard Rowlands
Finance Officer:	Paul Roach
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar
For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) places a ‘well-being duty’ on 48 public bodies. The duty requires those bodies to set and publish ‘well-being objectives’ that are designed to maximise their contribution to achieving each of the Act’s seven national well-being goals. They must also take all reasonable steps, in exercising their functions, to meet those objectives.
- 1.2 The Auditor General must carry out examinations to assess the extent to which public bodies have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives.
- 1.3 To do something in accordance with the sustainable development principle means acting ‘in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future

generations to meet their own needs'. To achieve this, a public body must take account of the five ways of working: long term, integration, involvement, collaboration, and prevention.

2. Aim of the examination

2.1 The aim of this 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.

2.2 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?

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

3. Findings

3.1 Audit Wales found that the Council had applied the Sustainable Development Principle in setting its Well-being Objectives (WBO's). They concluded that embedding its approach to engagement and performance monitoring will further strengthen this.

3.2 Audit Wales made the following recommendation:

- The Council should continue to build on the progress it has made in applying the sustainable development principle in the setting of its well-being objectives by:
 - embedding its new Consultation and Engagement strategy and its Co-Production Policy and using them to draw on the views of the full diversity of its citizens in designing and delivering its WBO's;

- clearly demonstrating how future financial savings and risks might impact the delivery of its WBO's;
- ensuring that cumulatively its refreshed Service Plans are able to effectively measure progress on delivering its WBO's; and
- ensuring that any future Service Plans also takes the opportunity to include / expand the number of measures which focus on outcomes and impacts.

4. Updated Council response

- 4.1 The Council was pleased that the report acknowledged that the Council had applied the sustainable development principle to the setting of its well-being objectives.
- 4.2 The Council's updated Consultation and Engagement Strategy was approved by Council in May. The Council commissioned Coproduction Wales to work with us to improve our knowledge and capacity for undertaking more co-productive activity across the Council. A Coproduction champions network has been established and regular training opportunities have been provided to council staff. Pilot projects have been selected to put co-production into practice and work has begun on producing a Coproduction Policy for the Council, which is scheduled to go to Council in December.
- 4.3 In addition to the new Consultation and Engagement Strategy and the recent work with Coproduction Wales, the Council also recently piloted a digital citizens' panel to improve engagement as part of its part 6 performance duties under the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 to help strengthen how we engage with citizens on our WBO's. A survey was also undertaken in October 2023 to seek resident and service users views to help the Council understand how they feel about our performance and to ensure that the Council's future planning and priority setting aligns with what is needed.
- 4.4 When next reviewing service plans, the Council will look to include more information on collaboration with partners to deliver its WBO's and will also examine how the golden thread between the steps in the corporate plan and the detail set out within service plans can be possibly strengthened.
- 4.5 The Council has identified corporate performance and success measures for 2023/24 but will continue to keep these under review, including outcome measures, to measure the steps to deliver our well-being objectives and their impact; although alternative and perhaps more sustainable ways to measure the citizens perspective are also being investigated. The Council is developing its performance management and reporting arrangements to integrate performance measures with corporate risks and updates on delivering the steps in the corporate plan, which will provide a more holistic and comprehensive view on performance meeting our WBO's. The

residents survey and the development of population outcome indicators for the PSB well-being plan and links to each of our WBO's will help supplement this work. That said, the Council still believes that a national outcomes framework would help local authorities address this issue and would also allow benchmarking to take place.

- 4.6 The Council is reviewing its plans for the prevention strategy and will reflect on its financial planning to see if it can further strengthen how its considered future financial risks and savings targets could impact the delivery of the Councils WBO's. The Council will implement any changes to its performance management framework as a result of the above as quickly as possible, while making sure any changes have been fully explored and consulted on before being implemented.
- 4.7 As part of budget planning for the coming year Cabinet/Corporate Management Team are seeking to align any proposed budget decisions with the current WBO's so there is an ongoing alignment between the objectives, the budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan and the individual service plans.

5. Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Panel

- 5.1 The Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Panel considered the Audit Wales report and the Councils response on 17th October 2023. The letter from the Convener of the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Panel to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance is attached at Appendix B.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 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.

- 6.1.1 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’.
- 6.1.2 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.
- 6.1.3 This report sets out the findings from a recent Audit Wales examination on the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its new well-being objectives; there is no direct impact on people or communities.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 None.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 None.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix A Audit Wales report. Setting of well-being objectives – City and County of Swansea Council
- Appendix B Letter from the Convener of the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Panel to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance dated 31 October 2023.
- Appendix C IIA