



To:
**Councillor David Hopkins,
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Performance**

BY EMAIL

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Scrutiny

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31 October 2023

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance concerning the meeting held on 17 October 2023 and the Audit Wales Report – Setting of Well-being Objectives. This letter does not require a response.

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

On the 17 October, the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Audit Wales Report – Setting of Well-being Objectives. The Panel are grateful to Richard Rowlands, Corporate Performance Manager for attending and appreciated the opportunity to hear Audit Wales present their report findings and ask questions.

Audit Wales informed us that overall, Swansea Council has applied the sustainable development principle when setting its new well-being objectives and embedding its approach to engagement and performance monitoring will further strengthen this. Audit Wales shared good practice from Swansea Council including the robust setting and selecting of wellbeing objectives, good understanding of how wellbeing objectives support national goals and ensuring that the corporate plan is set in the context of available resources to deliver well-being objectives.

There are opportunities for the Council to develop processes further and Audit Wales focussed on three. These were, increasing the diversity of consulted citizens, strengthening how progress on outcomes is measured and expanding the range of outcome measures, and thirdly once the process of completing service plans has been carried out to look at the cumulative actions and measures to evaluate progress on well-being objectives.

The officer reported that the Council was pleased with the report and updated us on progress made with areas for improvement including the updated Consultation Engagement Strategy, digital panels, and the progress with co-production. We noted that consultation is a challenging area for many Councils. We asked Audit Wales for clarity on expectations of diversity and additionally, what is their benchmark for

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consultations. Audit Wales informed us there is no formal benchmark and that this is mainly judged on offering a broad range of engagement activity. Regarding diversity, Swansea Council was found to have lower engagement levels of older citizens. In both cases Audit Wales preferred to base its judgement on effort to engage rather than numbers engaged. We felt that in absence of a benchmark examples of good practice would be useful. Audit Wales have agreed to consider sharing examples of good practice in engagement in future. The officer felt that a national outcomes framework would be helpful, and benchmarking has become more difficult since the removal of the public accountability measures.

We asked whether Integrated Impact Assessments are an adequate means of monitoring well-being objectives and were informed that they are viewed as the start of a process to provide evidence of a report considering well-being objectives followed by further monitoring, self-assessments, and performance reports.

We were interested in how future financial challenges will be balanced against the need to meet well-being objectives and how this could be viewed by Audit Wales. Audit Wales recognised the competing pressures, who will measure well-being objectives realistically against funds available. The officer highlighted internal work from financial officers who have established processes in place to ensure that the Council's financial resources are aligned to the achievement of the Council's well-being objectives and delivery of the statutory obligations. Additionally, financial resilience forms part of our corporate risk register.

Continuing this concern, we asked if any financial implications had been mapped out to cost out how much meeting the well-being objectives would be, for instance how much is being put towards investment in consultation. Audit Wales responded to say they have not carried out a financial impact assessment, but this would be something the Council may consider for themselves as part of an action plan for carrying out the recommendations. Although the Council officer could not offer a detailed response, said that financial implementation of the well-being objectives are assessed during the budget setting process.

Your Response

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Chris Holley

Convener, Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

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