



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Governance & Audit Committee

At: Remotely via Microsoft Teams

On: Wednesday, 11 January 2023

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Paula O'Connor

Membership:

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

Lay Member(s): Gordon Anderson, Julie Davies and Philip Sharman

Watch Online: <http://bit.ly/3hQYnqh>

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
4	Annual Complaints Report 2021-22. (For Information) (Sarah Lackenby)	9 - 21
5	Accounts Receivable. (Rachael Davies / Michelle Davies)	22 - 30
6	Report on the Audit Wales 'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales Report Recommendations. (For Information) (Lee Cambule)	31 - 99
7	Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker Report. (For Information) (Jeremy Parkhouse)	100 - 106
8	Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan 2022-23. (For Information) (Jeremy Parkhouse)	107 - 126

Next Meeting: Wednesday, 8 February 2023 at 2.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Thursday, 5 January 2023

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, 14 December 2022 at 1.30 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)

Julie Davies
Philip Sharman

Also Present

Councillor C A Holley

Chair of the Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Panel

Officer(s)

Ness Young
Carol Morgan
Julie Davies
Nichola Rogers
Debbie Smith
Paula Livingstone

Interim Director of Corporate Services
Head of Housing & Public Health
Head of Child & Family Services
Western Bay
Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Divisional EHO, Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing
Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager
Chief Auditor
Corporate Fraud Team Investigator
Democratic Services Officer

Richard Rowlands
Simon Cockings
Jonathon Rogers
Jeremy Parkhouse

Also Present

Gillian Gillett

Audit Wales

Apologies for Absence

A J Jeffery and K M Roberts

63 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

64 Minutes.

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

65 Internal Audit Recommendation Follow-Up Report Quarter 2 2022/23.

Simon Cockings, Chief Auditor presented a 'for information' report which provided the Committee with the status of the recommendations made in those audits where the follow-ups had been undertaken in Quarter 2 2022/23, to allow the Committee to monitor the implementation of recommendations made by Internal Audit. Details of external audit recommendation tracking was also provided.

Appendix 1 provided a summary of the recommendations accepted and implemented. Appendix 2 provided details of recommendations not implemented.

Discussions followed regarding: -

- Categorisation of audits and implementation recommendations, particularly more detail being provided in respect of Fundamental Audits which were higher risk and including part implemented as a categorisation for some recommendations.
- Slow progress being made in respect of introducing a system to track Audit Wales recommendations and the hope that the new system would be functional in 2023. An update was provided by the Strategic Delivery and Performance Manager.
- The Chair highlighted that all Audit Wales reports concerning the Authority were now forwarded to a single email address and the number of appropriate people who had access to that inbox was outlined.
- Concern regarding the workload of Internal Audit going forward.
- Action taken in respect of Archives valuations and the planned follow-up.

66 Fundamental Audits 2021/22 Recommendation Tracker.

Simon Cockings, Chief Auditor presented a 'for information' report that provided a summary of the recommendations made following the fundamental audits in 2021/22 and identified whether the agreed recommendations had been implemented.

It was noted that following the completion of the 2021/22 fundamental audits, 10 out of the 14 audits had received a High Assurance rating, three audits had a substantial assurance rating (NNDR, Accounts Payable and Employee Services) and one had a moderate assurance rating (Accounts Receivable) at the time of the last audit.

Appendix 1 showed, for each fundamental audit, the number of recommendations made following the 2021/22 audits and whether they had been implemented, partly implemented, not implemented or were not yet due.

Of the 61 recommendations, 36 had been fully implemented, 18 partly implemented, 10 not implemented and 7 were not yet due for implementation. The percentage of recommendations implemented by 30 September 2022 was 67%.

It was noted that Appendix 2 and 3 showed that the majority of the recommendations that had either been partly implemented or had not been implemented, related to the Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable audits. These audits continued to be completed on an annual basis and as a result, the implementation of the outstanding recommendations would be reviewed as part of the 2022/23 audits.

Discussions followed regarding: -

- The Director of Finance raising the issue of long-standing debt disputed invoices with CMT and highlight invoices which had not been addressed by services for 90 days. The Interim Director of Corporate Services stated that she would clarify the matter with the Director of Finance.
- Explaining the large gap in performance of Fundamental audits against standard audits and how Fundamental audits contained higher risks and more recommendations.
- The number of resource issues in Accounts Payable / Accounts Receivable.
- Adding a graph to highlight the performance of Fundamental audits, similar to the graph used for standard audits.
- The Oracle Fusion project and identifying clear completion dates in order to hold Officers to account.
- Focussing attention upon significant / old arrears and the importance of Oracle Fusion to enable Officers to keep on top of matters.

67 Response to the Rechargeable Works Report 2022/23.

Paula Livingstone, Divisional Environmental Health Officer and Carol Morgan, Head of Housing and Public Health presented a 'for information' report which provided an update and response to the 2022 internal audit of Rechargeable Works.

It was outlined that as a result of an Internal Audit of the Rechargeable Works (RW) procedures in Public Health completed in August 2022, an assurance level of Moderate was given. The report addressed the one High Risk (HR) and one Medium Risk (MR) items and there were additionally one Low Risk (LR) and one Good Practice (GP) items.

An action plan was developed in response to the findings and responsibilities assigned for implementation and this was provided at Appendix A. The action plan included all the recommendations from the audit and associated actions.

It was noted that actions to address the Low Risk and Good Practice recommendations had been completed.

The action plan identified the following medium / high risk actions in relation to: -

- Recharges to Property Owners / Tenants - All invoices should be created promptly (MR).
- Monitoring arrears - Unpaid invoices report should be reviewed and contact made with the customer to encourage payment. Notes of any contact should then be recorded on the Accounts Receivable (AR) system (HR).

The Committee discussed the following: -

- The impact of staff shortages on the Public Health Team, particularly the loss of knowledge / expertise.
- Avoiding duplication of work / missing invoices and regular liaison with Legal / Finance regarding debt recovery.
- Procedures surrounding rechargeable works / actions taken under the Law of Property Act 1925.
- Making efficiency improvements in Accounts Receivable.
- Ensuring that responses to moderate reports are presented at the same meeting as the Internal Audit quarterly report.
- Recovery of £51,000 debt out of the £194,000 originally outstanding and the background surrounding rechargeable works.

The Chair thanked the Officers for providing the report and noted that Internal Audit would be undertaking a follow-up report later in the year.

68 Western Bay Adoption Service Report 2022/23.

Julie Davies, Head of Child & Family and Nichola Rogers, Western Bay presented a 'for information' report which provided an update on the Western Bay Adoption Service audit report 2022/23.

As a result of an internal audit on the Western Bay Adoption Service carried out in September 2022, an assurance level of moderate was given. An action plan, provided at Appendix A, was developed to address the issues identified and appropriate implementation steps put in place.

The report highlighted two medium risks (MR) and one high risk (HR) item only and these were provided at Appendix B, which set out the report in full and associated actions, Low Risk (LR) items and points of good practice (GP).

The action plan identified the following medium / high risk actions in relation to: -

- Expenditure - thirteen orders had been placed after the date of the invoice. (MR) and quotations had not been obtained for any of the purchases and waiver requests or Contract Award Reports had not been completed (MR).
- Travel & Subsistence Expenses - A number of instances were found where the mileage claimed were higher than expected for the description of the journey recorded on Oracle. Further investigation was being undertaken into the claims (HR based on value). In addition, Home to work mileage had not been deducted by a staff member (MR).

The Committee discussed the following: -

- Financial control weaknesses identified and the need to amend working practices to address the situation.
- The need for proper procurement processes to be in place to ensure compliance.

- The reasons why the issues arose.

The Chair thanked the Officers for providing the report and noted that Internal Audit would be undertaking a follow-up report later in the year.

69 Internal Audit Section - Corporate Fraud Function Mid-Year Update Report for 2022/2023.

Jonathan Rogers, Corporate Fraud Team Investigator presented a 'for information' report which provided a mid-year update on the work undertaken by the Corporate Fraud Function in 2022/23.

It was added that a new team structure had been agreed which included a Fraud Manager and three Fraud Investigators. The Fraud Manager left the team in September 2022, but two new fraud investigators had been appointed and their start date is imminent. The Manager post remained vacant.

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.

A brief overview of activities undertaken outside the remit of the Corporate Fraud Function Ant-fraud Plan 2022/23 was also provided.

The Chair noted the discussion that took place at the recent counter-fraud training session received by the Committee. These were in respect of enhancing counter-fraud across the Authority and improving the service.

The Committee queried progress against Audit Wales recommendations and were informed that an update would be provided in the next counter-fraud report.

70 Annual Review of Performance 2021-22.

Richard Rowlands, Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager provided a report which presented to the Committee a draft of the Council's Annual Review of Performance 2021/22.

It was added that the report met the statutory requirements to publish an annual self-assessment report and annual well-being report under Part 6 of the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 respectively.

The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 sees Councils as "Self-improving organisations through a system based on self-assessment and panel performance assessment". It also introduces 5 new statutory duties on local authorities, as follows: -

- Keep performance under review; that is, the extent to which the Council is meeting the performance requirements, which are exercising its functions

effectively; using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and its governance is effective for securing the above;

- To report on performance through self-assessment;
- Consult on performance;
- Arrange a panel performance assessment;
- Respond to a panel performance assessment.

The process for self-assessment, annual reporting, first year self-assessment and the content of the finding were detailed in the report. Reference was made to the Executive Summary Annual Review of Performance 2021/22 at Appendix D.

Ness Young, Interim Director of Corporate Services emphasised the need to reflect upon the process as it was the first year councils in Wales had been asked to produce the report, which contained a significant amount of information and took a large amount of time to process. She also acknowledges the work of officers in formulating the report.

Councillor C A Holley, Chair of the Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Panel provided feedback regarding the Scrutiny of the report. He highlighted the technical nature of the report, the need to streamline areas / how sections are produced in future and how the report reflected positively on the Authority.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- Comparisons with other local authorities in Wales and how the Authority had actively consulted with other councils.
- Recognizing that this is the first year the report had been drafted.
- Accumulating the report throughout the year and producing it earlier in the Municipal year.
- The need for reflection on the way the report is drafted, to assess the functions linked to the Corporate Plan / Well-being objectives and including performance / corporate risks in the 2022-23 report.
- Recognizing the strengths and areas requiring improvement within the report.
- The need for consistency throughout the report and using a common assessment throughout the report.
- Proof reading the document to improve accuracy.
- The importance of the Executive Summary to understanding the report.

The Chair commented upon the use of resources - strategy and vision, whether it was more appropriate to be a mixed application rather than a strong application of effectiveness.

The following were proposed: -

- Consider the methods and methodologies for 2022/23 in parts 1, 2 and 3.
- Linking the performance and risk assessments for 2022/23.
- Recognizing improvements that would need to be articulated within the report around stronger analysis.
- Improving the links between consultation engagement and stakeholder reference.

- Correlation between parts 1, 2 and 3, ensuring they are all in harmony prior to the report being presented to Council and if they are not in harmony, outlining the reasons why.
- Ensuring the report is proof read prior to being presented to Council.

Resolved that: -

- 1) The content of the report be noted and forwarded to Council for approval.
- 2) The above proposals be approved and included in the report to Council / included in the 2022/23 report.

71 Transformation Goals & Strategy Reviews.

Ness Young, Interim Director of Corporate Services presented a 'for information' report which provided the Committee with the Transformation Goals & Strategy Review presented to Cabinet on 17 November 2022.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- The method of assessing / measuring strategic goals, particularly through the Corporate Plan / Key performance indicators.
- Confidence that the portfolio approach could be delivered and the required monitoring was in place via the Transformation Delivery Board.

72 Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable - City and County of Swansea Council.

Gillian Gillett, Audit Wales presented 'for information' the Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea.

The report detailed the quarterly update and listed the following: -

- Annual Audit Summary
- Financial Audit Work
- Performance Audit Work
- Local Government National Studies Planned / In Progress
- Estyn
- Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
- Audit Wales National Reports and Other Outputs Published Since January 2022
- Audit Wales National Reports and Other Outputs Due to be Published (and other work in progress / planned)
- Good Practice Exchange Resources
- Recent Audit Blogs

73 Governance & Audit Committee Action Tracker Report.

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

74 Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan 2022-23.

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

It was noted that an Accounts Receivable update would be provided in January 2023 and added to the Work Plan.

The meeting ended at 3.42 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 4



Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 11 January 2023

Annual Complaints Report 2021-22

Purpose:	To provide assurance on the complaints handling process and report on complaints performance.
Policy Framework:	Complaints Policies
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Report Author:	Sarah Lackenby
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar
For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report aims to provide the Committee with assurance on the complaints handling process. Other Committees review complaints performance but through a different lens to the Governance and Audit Committee, i.e. Scrutiny consider performance in more detail and within the wider context including compliments, whereas the Governance and Audit Committee seeks assurance on whether the Council has an effective complaints handling process. The annual Public Services Ombudsman Wales (PSOW) letter was presented to Cabinet and this Committee in September 2022.
- 1.2 The Council recognises that in order to meet the needs and concerns of members of the public, the monitoring of complaints is a valuable resource in its requirement to continually improve services. All complaints are taken very seriously and provide valuable customer insight.
- 1.3 Requests for service are different to complaints (e.g. a request for service could be a request to repair an unlit lamp post, or missed bin collection). A complaint would only arise should the request for service not be properly dealt with.

2. Complaints Performance 2021-22

2.1 The impact of the pandemic on services continued to be seen throughout 2021-22, including:

- The increased complexity of cases across all Social Services teams
- Recruitment pressures across social care leading to staffing issues with providers
- The reduction of available staff due to sickness absence
- A delay in launching the new IT system as the Council prioritised payments and support to residents and businesses. The system will make the process easier for the public and more efficient for staff with improved reporting functionality. The aim is to go live with staff trained for the start of the new financial year.

2.2 Corporate Stage One Complaints (informal)

2.2.1 Informal complaints are defined as Stage one complaints and are dealt with by the relevant service areas. When a complaint spans several different service areas, the complaints team coordinate the handling of the complaints and provide a single, substantive response. All stage one complaints should be responded to within 10 working days.

2.2.2 Stage one complaints are logged on the current system by the complaints team. However, monitoring their progress and status is then a manual process. Moving forward, this will all be automated and improved with the new IT system. Alerts and escalations will be sent to officers when complaints are nearing the 10 working days.

2.2.3 1,274 stage one complaints were received in 2021-22, which is an 8.1% increase on the previous year.

2.3 Corporate Stage Two Complaints

2.3.1 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage one complaint, they may request that the matter be investigated by the Complaints Team, which is independent of the service department.

2.3.2 The Complaints Team will carry out an investigation, including a review of all relevant correspondence. It often incorporates separate discussions with both the complainant and relevant officers from the service department(s) concerned, and should be responded to within 20 working days. However, extensions are requested for complicated cases and new deadlines are agreed with the complainant.

2.3.3 Complainants who remain unhappy with the outcome of the Stage two investigation by a Complaints Officer can refer their complaint to the PSOW.

2.3.4 The vast majority of complainants (88%) were satisfied with the stage one response. Only 154 (12%) disagreed with the original investigation and appealed to stage two (a 16.2% increase on 2020-21). Of these only 25 were either justified or partially justified – 115 were not justified following investigation, eight were withdrawn as soon as the issue was resolved, and six were not pursued where the complainants did not respond to requests and communications from the investigating officer, therefore the investigation was unable to continue.

2.4 Social Services Complaints

2.4.1 The handling of the majority of Social Services complaints is carried out under specific legislation and the Council has a separate policy for this. The timescale for dealing with social services complaints at stage one is variable; a discussion needs to be held with the complainant within ten working days and once that discussion has taken place the responding officer then has five working days to respond in writing.

2.4.2 The timeframe for dealing with Stage two complaints under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 is 25 working days. If, due to exceptional circumstances, the local authority is not able to send a written response within 25 working days it must write to the complainant and tell them why there is a delay and when the response will be issued. This full response must be issued as soon as possible and no later than six months from the date on which the complaint was received. All instances of delay due to exceptional circumstances must be agreed by the Director of Social Services. In 2021-22, two from Adult Services and all the Child and Family Services stage two investigations were subject to extended periods of time with the Director's consent.

2.4.3 In 2021-22 Social Services received the following number of complaints:

- For Adult Services, the total number of stage one complaints received was 139, which increased by 11% in comparison with the previous year. Under the Social Services complaints policy, the legislative framework allows complainants to immediately request a stage two investigation. Although efforts to resolve complaints internally are made wherever possible, the number of stage two complaints increased from 10 to 11 compared with the previous year.
- For Child and Family Services, the number of stage one complaints received was 114, which decreased by 19% compared with the previous year. Under the Social Services Complaints Policy, both the old and new legislative frameworks allow complainants to immediately request a stage two investigation. Although efforts to resolve complaints internally are made wherever possible, the number of stage 2 complaints decreased from seven to six compared with the previous year.

2.5 Welsh Language Complaints

Seven (0.55%) of the corporate complaints received were made through the medium of Welsh, or related to Welsh Language issues. All of these were handled at stage one and none escalated to stage two.

3. **Performance of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

3.1 This is the first year of reporting on the key performance indicators (KPIs), therefore no comparators are available. The KPIs mirror the targets laid out in the Council's Complaints Policies and performance for 2021-22 can be seen at Appendix A. This highlights the following:

- There are no areas for significant concern. Management attention is focused on the current manual process around monitoring stage one corporate complaints to ensure they are closed on the system. This will improve with the introduction of the new IT system in the new financial year
- The continued impact of the pandemic manifesting in a range of ways including: the increased complexity of cases, staffing issues with providers, and staff absence and capacity
- The continued monitoring of complaints performance and subsequent new management measures which have been introduced across the Council and within Social Services, e.g.
 - The issuing of weekly reports out to services to improve the performance and accuracy around stage one corporate complaints. The new IT system will also help improve this process
 - In Child and Family Services, support has been drawn in from other parts of the service to mitigate the risk of delays moving forward. The Learning and Innovation Team monitor themes from complaints. In addition, trends and learning are shared in the monthly wellbeing reports
 - In Adult Services, a monthly Quality and Performance cross-departmental meeting has been introduced, which includes: monitoring the timeliness of complaints responses, sharing learning, identifying trends, and implementing improvements to practice. Any improvement actions are monitored via an action tracker.

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.
- 4.1.1 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'.
- 4.1.2 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.
- 4.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required.
- 4.3 The impacts have been categorised as medium as there is the potential to positively change and adapt services based on complaints received. The exception is where policies and processes are governed by statutory legislation, therefore the impact remains the same.
- 4.4 With regard to the summary of involvement, complaints from the public are used as a valuable tool to adapt, change and develop services.
- 4.5 Well-being and future generations considerations around this annual report include:
- Using complaints information to adapt and shape services for the future
 - Using Welsh Language complaints to ensure the Council not only meets the existing standards but also encourages and promotes the Welsh Language
 - Using complaints information to prevent problems occurring or getting worse
 - Viewing complaints in an integrated way, especially where a complaint may involve multiple public sector organisations.
- 4.6 The report adheres to the transformation and future council development well-being objective in the Corporate Plan - so that services are sustainable and fit for the future.

4.7 The report provides historic performance information and therefore risks are considered low.

4.8 With regard to the cumulative impact, this is an annual performance report. When a complaint is received by a service, opportunities to adapt, review, or change ways of working are considered at that point. However, some policies and procedures are related to statutory legislation and cannot be changed locally.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 During 2021-22, the Council spent £15,551 on complaints investigations in Social Services and paid £12,187 in financial redress, £8,600 of which relates to one case following a re-assessment. During 2020-21, the Council spent £22,700 on complaints investigations in social services and paid £3,633 in financial redress.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A Key Performance Indicators
Appendix B IIA Screening Form

Appendix A: 2021-22 Performance of KPIs

KPI	Performance Comments and Management Measures
Corporate Complaints KPIs:	
69% of stage one corporate complaints responded to within 10 clear working days	Delays due to capacity in services across the Council. In addition, some complaints were not logged as closed by services. Management measures introduced recently to improve performance include: sending out weekly reports to services so they can review stage one complaints outstanding, ensure they are dealt with in the timescale, and logged as closed on the system. The new IT system will also help improve this process.
87% of stage two corporate complaints responded to within 20 clear working days, or within any extension agreed with the customer.	Staff absence in the Complaints Team over a three-month period resulted in this delay.
Adult Social Services Complaints KPIs:	
96% of stage 1 corporate complaints responded to within 10 clear working days (no requirement for a discussion)	There have been staffing challenges within Social Services and with our providers, and operational priorities that has led to some delays in collating response information and responding within 10 days.
100% of stage two corporate complaints responded to within 20 clear working days, or within any extension agreed with the customer.	
97% of stage one social services complaints acknowledged within 2 working days	A small number of complaints being delayed due to staff capacity during September and October 2021
90.5% of stage one social services complaints discussed with complainants, i.e. appointments with a Social Services Officer	There were 11 complaints not discussed within the ten working days and eight of these were the contracting team who were dealing with an increased workload for packages of care, due to

KPI	Performance Comments and Management Measures
or Complaints Officer within 10 working days of acknowledgement	staffing issues with providers and increased demand during 2021-22.
82% of stage one responded to within 5 working days of discussion	Service users would have been advised of the delay. 10% of those delayed relate to the contracting team as they need to liaise with outside agencies to provide a response
100% of stage two complainants receiving a written summary of the complaint within 5 working days	This would be sent by the Complaints Officer but may not necessarily be the final version as that is usually agreed after meeting with the independent investigator. That version is then used to investigate the complaint
100% of stage two complaints responded to within 25 working days, or within any extension approved by the Director of Social Services.	
Child and Family Social Services Complaints KPIs:	
96% of stage 1 corporate complaints responded to within 10 clear working days (no requirement for a discussion)	There was one complaint with an excessive delay due to Team Manager capacity in Social Services. Support has been drawn in from other parts of the service to provide additional capacity to mitigate the risk of delays moving forward. The Learning and Innovation Team monitor themes from complaints. In addition, trends and learning are shared in the monthly wellbeing reports
100 % of stage two corporate complaints responded to within 20 clear working days, or within any extension agreed with the customer.	
96 % of stage one social services complaints acknowledged within 2 working days	Staff absence in the Complaints Team over a three month period resulted in this delay
82.5 % of stage one social services complaints discussed with complainants, i.e. appointments with a Social Services	Staff absence in the Complaints Team over a three month period resulted in this delay

KPI	Performance Comments and Management Measures
Officer or Complaints Officer within 10 working days of acknowledgement	Delays in Social Services due to Team Manager capacity. Support has been drawn in from other parts of the service to provide additional capacity to mitigate the risk of delays moving forward.
81% of stage 1 Social Services complaints responded to within 5 working days of discussion	Where deadlines were not met service users would have been advised of the delay
87.5% of stage two complainants receiving a written summary of the complaint within 5 working days	This would be sent by the Complaints Officer but may not necessarily be the final version as that is usually agreed after meeting with the independent investigator and that version is then used to investigate the complaint
100% of stage two complaints responded to within 25 working days, or within any extension approved by the Director of Social Services.	

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix B

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Digital & Customer Services

Directorate: Corporate Services Directorate

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:

Annual Complaints Report 2021-22. To provide assurance on the complaints handling process and report on complaints performance.

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

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

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix B

- 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

Complaints from the public are used as a valuable tool to adapt, change and develop 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

Medium risk

Low risk

-
- Q6** Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details below

-
- 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?

This is an annual report, providing assurance and reviewing past performance for 2021-22. When a complaint is received by a service opportunities to adapt, review or change ways of working are considered at that point. However, some policies and procedures are related to statutory legislation and cannot be changed locally.

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix B

Outcome of Screening

Q8 Please describe the outcome of your screening below:

- **Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)**
- **Summary of involvement (Q3)**
- **WFG considerations (Q4)**
- **Any risks identified (Q5)**
- **Cumulative impact (Q7)**

The impacts have been categorised as medium as there is the potential to positively change and adapt services based on complaints received. The exception is where policies and processes are governed by statutory legislation, therefore the impact remains the same.

With regard to the summary of involvement, complaints from the public are used as a valuable tool to adapt, change and develop services.

Well-being and future generations considerations around this annual report include:

- Using complaints information to adapt and shape services for the future
- Using Welsh Language complaints to ensure the Council not only meets the existing standards but also encourages and promotes the Welsh Language
- Using complaints information to prevent problems occurring or getting worse
- Viewing complaints in an integrated way, especially where a complaint may involve multiple public sector organisations.

The report adheres to the transformation and future council development well-being objective in the Corporate Plan - so that we and the services that we provide are sustainable and fit for the future.

The report provides historic performance information and therefore risks are considered low.

With regard to the cumulative impact, this is an annual performance report. When a complaint is received by a service opportunities to adapt, review or change ways of working are considered at that point. However, some policies and procedures are related to statutory legislation and cannot be changed locally.

(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: Sarah Lackenby
Job title: Head of Digital & Customer Services
Date: 8th December 2022
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Ness Young
Position: Director of Corporate Services

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix B

Date: 19th December 2022

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

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 11 January 2023

Accounts Receivable

Purpose:	To provide an update for the Service Centre, Accounts Receivable Function.
Policy Framework:	None
Consultation:	Legal, Finance and Access to Services
Recommendation(s):	That the Governance and Audit Committee notes that officers will continue to report to CMT on a quarterly basis as a further update on the debt position across the authority.
Report Author:	Rachael Davies (Head of HR and Service Centre) & Michelle Davies (Cash Management & Accounts Receivable Manager)
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith (Director of Finance & S151)
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith (Deputy Chief Legal Officer)
Access to Services Officer:	Catherine Window (Equalities Policy Development Officer)

Internal Audit on Accounts Receivable Function – Update January 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Accounts Receivable Internal Audit was carried out in Quarter 1 2022 and the report was issued in March 2022. An assurance level of Moderate was again given. The detail below summarises the reasons and progress to date.
- 1.2 There is 1 High Risk and 2 Medium Risk action points, one of which is from previous audits that remains outstanding. All of the Audit action points have been reviewed and included in the AR strategy. The AR team has been given priorities and targets that are aligned with the corporate strategies and the Internal Audit action plan. However, it is anticipated that it will not be possible to complete all of these actions before the next audit report for reasons that have been outlined in previous reports. For clarity, the action points referred to in this report are:

Action point reference	Risk rating	Detail
2.2.4	MR	The Director of Finance should be asked to raise the issue of long-standing disputed invoices at CMT, and highlight invoices which have not been addressed by services for over 90 days.
3.6.3	HR	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 write it off. (Previous audit recommendation)
3.6.6	MR	Appropriate follow-up procedures with debtors/service departments and diarising of invoice reviews, should be carried out by officers in the AR team as a matter of routine.

- 1.3 The Cash Management and Accounts Receivable Manager has reported to the Governance & Audit Committee periodically over the last 3 years and all committee actions have been implemented.
- 1.4 The last report to the Governance and Audit Committee was in July 2022.
- 1.5 A progress summary for the intervening period of July to December 2022 is set out below:
- a. **Debt Recovery Activities (DRA) meetings:** These meetings are held monthly and continue to ensure focus is directed to audit action plan priorities and to the debt recovery strategy. Priorities are regularly reviewed and progress is monitored. The team are continuing to focus on completing a review of the oldest debts, all high value debts, outstanding debts to large businesses and organisations and the 'Refer to Legal' reconciliation. Data reviews are carried out every 6 months to analyse the outstanding debt and move the lens to shift activities onto a different debt area. The team are currently working through these priorities and have regular review meetings.
 - b. **Outstanding Aged Debt:** The aged debt position is detailed below. The previously reported figure has been left in for comparison to the current reported figure. The Committee is asked to note the following points:
 - The large increase in the amount of debt in category '0-59 Days' should be recognised as brand new debt and is not indicative of a debt recovery issue
 - There is a significant reduction in the debt outstanding in the category '60-365 Days' confirming that there is a lower % of old debt tipping forward into this category indicating better recovery rates for new debt.
 - There is a 5% increase in the category '>365 Days' but this is expected to fall as a number of old irrecoverable debts have been approved for write off and will shortly be closed on the system.

- All aged debt figures are snapshots and the outstanding debt position changes on a daily basis

Month	Total Due	>365 Days	60 - 365 Days	0 - 59 Days
June 2022	14,666,216	2,152,759	5,016,730	7,496,727
		15% of Total Due	34% of Total Due	51% of Total Due
Nov 2022	11,176,168	2,270,466	1,184,328	7,721,374
		20% of Total Due	11% of Total Due	69% of Total Due

- c. **Write offs:** All write offs of value under £10,000 as at November 2022 have been approved and will shortly be closed on the Accounts Receivable system. A further 70 invoices have been moved to a write off category since November 2022 and a fresh list will be produced in Quarter 4 2022/2023 prior to the move to the Fusion system so that these can be approved and closed before the year end.
- d. **Referrals to legal:** The team continues to make progress with referring outstanding debts to Legal with a further 78 invoices totalling £61,875 referred to Legal in the period July to November 2022.
- e. **Service Department liaison:**
- A further communication has been issued to all service departments to remind them that where they have decided to give credit to a business or organisation they must obtain a Purchase Order number prior to the goods or services being supplied to that customer. The message also continues to be reiterated for Service Departments to seek payment for goods and services up front without the need for credit wherever possible. Departments are supported in the options available to them for collecting payment in advance or at the point of service by the Cash Management Team.
 - The AR section has also implemented a new process in conjunction with the Education Finance Department to collect all Swansea schools invoices by Direct Debit. This initiative will improve the Council's cash flow and debt collection rate as well as reducing the administration required for those customers, saving time and effort for both the central Accounts Receivable team and the schools staff.
- f. **Disputed invoices:** Invoices on dispute have reduced by a further 22% from 232 invoices in June 2022 to 182 invoices in November 2022
- g. **Legal Department liaison:** Regular quarterly meetings with the Legal Debt Recovery team continue to take place. The agenda covers monitoring of all referrals, discussion of any difficult cases as well as identifying any process improvements.
- h. **Challenges remaining:**
- The 2 vacancies on the AR team have now been filled and the new starters are expected to commence employment in early January but it will take time for

them to be fully trained and brought up to speed. This brings the staffing complement to 6 FTE.

- The move of Oracle EBS to the Cloud platform has resulted in some technical issues. Most of these have been resolved but IT support are still working on an issue with the 60 Day Debt report. This has impacted the reports sent to Service Departments since November 2022.
- The global economic situation continues to impact the Council's ability to collect outstanding debts and this is expected to have far-reaching impacts. The AR section continues to apply a flexible collection policy and seeks to negotiate with all debtors wherever possible.
- The Oracle Fusion project is due to go-live in April 2023. There is expected to be a short term impact whilst staff become familiar with the new system and processes.
- The implementation of the Statutory Debt Repayment Plan (under the Breathing Space regulatory umbrella) has been delayed following creditor consultation but is still expected to impact creditors once implemented. The likely implementation date is now 2024 so this remains a future challenge.

i. Future activities (identified in the June 2022 report)

A review of the reporting methodology will be considered so that some aspects currently captured may be better recorded in a different way e.g. direct debits for debt repayment.

Update January 2023: The detail of the invoice instalments for future collection by Direct Debit have been removed from the 60 Day Debt reports sent to all service departments. In addition, we have progressed the direct debit payment collection to now collect all Swansea schools invoices by direct debit payment method as detailed in point e) above.

The new Head of HR and Service Centre commenced employment in mid-June and has been tasked with development of the action plan, progress of which will be reported to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance in the coming months. Further reporting to CMT will also be provided as required.

Update January 2023: Action 2.2.4 has been completed during the last period and an update will be provided to CMT at the close of 2022/23, reporting on the full year.

Options for investing in additional resource in the AR function will be explored in order to improve pace of recovery given the current level of activity with existing resources.

Update January 2023: The challenging financial position for 2023 onwards has led to a pause on non-essential recruitment for the remainder of the 2022/23 year. An exception has been made for the AR team who have experienced vacancies and require a full staffing complement to continue to make progress against the audit objectives. As outlined earlier in the report, two new starters are due to commence work in January 2023 and this should enable further progress to be made by the time of the next audit review. In terms of additional investment in the function, a wider review of Service Centre functionality will be undertaken in 2023 to identify the most appropriate allocation of resources.

A further report to Governance and Audit Committee will be provided in 6 months to demonstrate further progress made against the audit plan.

Update January 2023: This report completes this action point.

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.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 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'.

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 An IIA has been undertaken which has identified minimal impacts in relation to this report (Appendix A). The report covers debt recovery strategy and performance. The AR strategy takes into account the ability of the individual to pay the debt and ensures that they are not placed into poverty as a result of debt recovery activities. The strategy also has responsibility to protect the public purse so all activities are appropriate to the individual by taking into account their circumstances whilst aiming to recover monies due to the Authority.

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	Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form
-------------------	---

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: HR and Service centre

Directorate: Corporate Services

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
- Other

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

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

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

Not applicable

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

Medium risk

Low risk

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details below

Q7 Will this initiative result in any changes needed to the external or internal website?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details below

Q8 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.)

Outcome of Screening

Q9 Please describe the outcome of your screening using the headings below:

- Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)
- Summary of involvement (Q3)
- WFG considerations (Q4)
- Any risks identified (Q5)
- Cumulative impact (Q7)

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the ‘**Integrated Assessment Implications**’ 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: Michelle Davies
Job title: Cash Management & Accounts Receivable Manager
Date: 03/01/2023
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Rachael Davies
Position: Head of HR & Service Centre
Date: 03/01/2023

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

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Cabinet Member for Community

Governance & Audit Committee – 11 January 2023

Report on the Audit Wales ‘Time for Change’ – Poverty in Wales report recommendations

Purpose:	To provide a briefing to the Governance and Audit Committee on the findings of the Auditor General for Wales review of tackling poverty in Wales and its recommendations for action by local authorities.
Report Authors:	Lee Cambule
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer:	Chris Davies
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar
For Information	

1. Introduction

1.1 Swansea Council’s Report on the Audit Wales ‘Time for Change’ Poverty in Wales report recommendations provides a summary of the report and its findings, as well as highlighting the examples of good practice by Swansea Council which were noted in the review. It also defines our response to the eight recommendations and notes areas for further action which we intend to explore further in the refresh of the Council’s Tackling Poverty Strategy.

2. Context

2.1 In November 2022, the Auditor General for Wales published the report ‘Time for Change’ – Poverty in Wales for presentation to the Senedd – a copy of the report is available at <https://audit.wales/publication/time-change-poverty-wales> for reference.

2.2 The report shares the finding of the first of three investigations by Audit Wales on the challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty. The overall conclusion of the report is that “the scale of the challenge and weaknesses in current work make it difficult for Welsh and local government to deliver the systemic change required to tackle and alleviate poverty”.

3. Content

3.1 The report identifies the ‘dimensions’ or ‘characteristics’ of living in poverty in Wales to be:

- Housing issues;
- Fuel and energy issues;
- Clothing and footwear issues;
- Food and water issues;
- Financial issues;
- Exclusion from service issues;
- Emotional and relationship issues.

3.2 Some other highlights of the report it is worth noting include:

- The number of people living in poverty in Wales is estimated to be rising and deprivation is evident in all parts of the country;
- Wales has consistently had the highest levels of relative income poverty in the UK over the last decade;
- The number of children in poverty is rising sharply, estimated at 34% of children in Wales living in poverty in March 2021;
- Data about pensioners and working-age adults in poverty has remained relatively stable but Wales has the highest numbers across the four nations in the UK;
- The Cost of Living crisis is pushing more people into poverty and has significant impacts on households in low income groups.

3.3 The report highlights the following eight recommendations:

	Recommendation	What the report says
R1	National strategy and targets for tackling and alleviating poverty	<p>We (<i>Audit Wales</i>) note that there is currently no specific target for reducing poverty in Wales and the current Child Poverty strategy needs to be refreshed. We recommend that in updating its strategy the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set SMART national actions; • establish a suite of performance measures to judge delivery and impact; • sets target for alleviating and tackling poverty; and • undertake regular evaluation of performance and public reporting
R2	Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty	<p>We highlight that councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated delivery landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely. We highlight that evaluating activity and reporting performance are also variable with many gaps. We recommend that the councils use their Wellbeing Plans to provide a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty to co-ordinate their efforts, meet local needs and support the revised national plan targets and actions. This should:</p>

	Recommendation	What the report says
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include SMART local actions with a greater emphasis on prevention; • include a detailed resourcing plan for the length of the strategy; • be developed with involvement from other public sector partners, the third sector, and those with experience of poverty; • include a robust set of consistent outcome indicators and measures to increase understanding of poverty locally; and • be subject to annual public reporting to enable a whole system view of poverty locally to help improve delivery and support.
R3	Leadership on the poverty agenda	<p>We note that just over a third of councils have lead members and lead officers for addressing poverty. Given the importance of effective leadership in driving the poverty agenda forward and breaking silos within councils and between public bodies, we recommend that each council designate a cabinet member as the council's poverty champion and designate a senior officer to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.</p>
R4	Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant-funded programmes	<p>We note that all councils are dependent on grants but weaknesses in programmes mean that funding is not making the impact it could. To ensure councils are able to maximise the impact of funding and tackle the more difficult and longstanding problems, we recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide longer timescales for announcing and receiving bids to enable better resource planning; • move away from annual bidding cycles to multi-year allocations; • enable funding to be more flexibly spent to avoid an emphasis on quicker projects, rather than more impactful interventions that take longer to establish; • allow councils to consolidate funding to reduce bureaucracy; • streamline and simplify processes and grant conditions to reduce the administrative burden; and • keep requests for information and supporting materials from councils to a minimum
R5	Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty	<p>We highlight that people in poverty are often in crisis, dealing with extremely personal and stressful issues, but they often find it difficult to access help from councils because of the way services are designed and delivered. We recommend that councils improve their understanding of their residents' 'lived experience' through meaningful involvement in decision-making using 'experience mapping' and/or 'Poverty Truth Commissions' to review and improve accessibility to and use of council services.</p>
R6	Single web landing page for people seeking help	<p>We highlight the difficulties people in poverty face accessing online and digital services. To ensure people are able to get the information and advice they need, we recommend that councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is directly accessible on the home page; • provides links to all services provided by the council that relate to poverty; and; • provides information on the work of partners that can assist

	Recommendation	What the report says
		people in poverty.
R7	Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty	<p>We note that no council has created a single gateway into services. As a result, people have to complete multiple application forms that often record the same information when applying for similar services. We highlight that whilst it is important that councils comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. We recommend that councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data; • undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests; • create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services; • undertake a data audit to provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and • review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.
R8	Complying with the socio-economic duty	<p>We set out that while all councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, approaches vary and are not always effective. We recommend that councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that they draw on relevant, comprehensive and current data (nothing over 12 months old) to support analysis; • ensure integrated impact assessments capture information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is coproducing with; ○ the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the assessment considers issues in the round and how it links across services provided across the council; ○ how the council will monitor and evaluate impact and will take corrective action; and ○ an action plan setting out the activities the Council will take as a result of the Integrated Impact Assessment

4. Way Forward

4.1 Our analysis of the findings of Audit Wales' report is detailed in the report at Appendix A. The report recognises evidence of the examples of good work already being done within the Council, our response to the recommendations and the actions planned.

5. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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’.
- 5.3 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, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 5.4 An Integrated Impact Screening has been completed for this report with no further assessment required (See Appendix C). This is an IIA Screening for the ‘For Information’ Report to the Safeguarding People and Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee regarding on the findings of the Auditor General for Wales review of tackling poverty in Wales and its recommendations for action by local authorities. A full IIA will be carried out as part of the development process for the Tackling Poverty Strategy in due course.

6. Legal implications

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

7. Finance Implications

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

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Report on the Audit Wales ‘Time for Change’ – Poverty in Wales report recommendations

Appendix B – ‘Time for Change’ – Poverty in Wales Report

Appendix C – Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Screening



Report on the Audit Wales ‘Time for Change’ – Poverty in Wales - report recommendations

Governance & Audit Committee

11 January 2023

1. Executive Summary

In 2017, Swansea Council published **Working towards prosperity for all in Swansea: A tackling poverty strategy for Swansea**. This corporate strategy represented the Council's commitment to reducing poverty and the impacts that poverty has on the people of Swansea. In line with this commitment, tackling poverty was identified as one of Swansea Council's six well-being objectives defined in its **Corporate Plan** published in 2017:

Tackling Poverty - so that every person in Swansea can achieve their potential.

On 1st November 2022, Audit Wales published the report '**Time for Change**' – **Poverty in Wales**. The report shares findings of the investigation on the challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty. The report concludes that "the scale of the challenge and weaknesses in current work make it difficult for Welsh and local government to deliver the systemic change required to tackle and alleviate poverty".

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the findings of this report (including the key recommendations for consideration) and set out proposals for our local response.

2. Context

Audit Wales compiled this report based on an extensive review conducted between April 2021 and September 2022, using document reviews, data analysis, interviews and surveys to inform the final report which was published on 1 November 2022. The report recognises that poverty is multidimensional, complex, growing and impacting more people across Wales.

The report identifies the 'dimensions' or 'characteristics' of living in poverty in Wales to be:

- **Housing** issues;
- **Fuel and energy** issues;
- **Clothing and footwear** issues;
- **Food and water** issues;
- **Financial issues**;
- **Exclusion from service** issues;
- **Emotional and relationship** issues.

Other findings of the report include:

- The number of people living in poverty in Wales is estimated to be rising and deprivation is evident in all parts of the country.
- Wales has consistently had the highest levels of relative income poverty in the UK over the last decade.
- The number of children in poverty is rising sharply, estimated at 34% of children in Wales living in poverty in March 2021.
- The Cost of Living crisis is pushing more people into poverty and has significant impacts on households in low income groups;
- Welsh Government Cost of Living budgeted support for 2022/23 totalled £162m including winter fuel, holiday hunger and vulnerable family support funds;
- Councils are changing services as a result of the pandemic and ongoing budget pressures but the new models of delivery are not always helping people in poverty.

The report covers a wide range of themes and aspects of tackling poverty that spans across public services. There are references throughout the report to Swansea demonstrating good

practice such as key poverty-focused leadership roles, a framework for tackling poverty, developing a personal debt recovery policy and regional collaborative working.

3. Recommendations

R1 - National strategy and targets for tackling and alleviating poverty

The report states: we note that there is currently no specific target for reducing poverty in Wales and the current Child Poverty strategy needs to be refreshed. We recommend that in updating its strategy the Welsh Government:

- set SMART national actions;
- establish a suite of performance measures to judge delivery and impact;
- sets targets for alleviating and tackling poverty;
- undertake regular evaluation of performance and public reporting.

Our response:

Committing to developing a revised national strategy to tackle child poverty and reviewing the national measures and milestones related to poverty is welcome.

We will engage directly with Welsh Government to explore opportunities to participate in development of the national strategy, targets and performance measures.

R2 - Local strategies, targets & performance reporting for tackling & alleviating poverty

The report states: we highlight that councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated delivery landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely. We highlight that evaluating activity and reporting performance are also variable with many gaps. We recommend that the councils use their Wellbeing Plans to provide a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty to co-ordinate their efforts, meet local needs and support the revised national plan targets and actions. This should:

- include SMART local actions with a greater emphasis on prevention;
- include a detailed resourcing plan for the length of the strategy;
- be developed with involvement from other public sector partners, the third sector, and those with experience of poverty;
- include a robust set of consistent outcome indicators and measures to increase understanding of poverty locally;
- be subject to annual public reporting to enable a whole system view of poverty locally to help improve delivery and support.

Our response:

Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Framework is referenced as good practice, having a vision with themes and outcomes linked to relevant plans. Swansea's cross-organisational co-ordination approach involving senior officers is also highlighted as good practice.

The Council's strong position provides the foundation for more engagement and commitment to tackling poverty in Swansea. The refresh of the Swansea Tackling Poverty Strategy will include SMART actions with an emphasis on prevention, revisiting and incorporating the Prevention Strategy (2017) approaches. Work has started on the refresh via the internal Poverty Forum and it will be developed further with involvement of partners via our Poverty Partnership Forum, Food Poverty Network, the Poverty Truth Commission and wider public.

We will develop a Tackling Poverty Performance Framework linking national outcomes to corporate indicators to performance measures realised by our services.

R3 – Leadership on the poverty agenda

The report states: we note that just over a third of councils have lead members and lead officers for addressing poverty. Given the importance of effective leadership in driving the poverty agenda forward and breaking silos within councils and between public bodies, we recommend each council designate a cabinet member as the council's poverty champion and designate a senior officer to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.

Our response:

Swansea is one of few councils in Wales with a Cabinet Member, senior officer and Tackling Poverty team responsible for leading on tackling poverty. A communications campaign to raise awareness and the profile of this structure with our partners and stakeholders is the next step. We continue to engage with Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) colleagues and their newly established Poverty Group to share knowledge and opportunities for learning. This will allow us to explore innovations and new ways to improve our approach to tackling poverty.

R4 - Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant-funded programmes

The report states: we note that all councils are dependent on grants but weaknesses in programmes mean that funding is not making the impact it could. To ensure councils are able to maximise the impact of funding and tackle the more difficult and longstanding problems, we recommend that the Welsh Government:

- provide longer timescales for announcing and receiving bids to enable better resource planning;
- move away from annual bidding cycles to multi-year allocations;
- enable funding to be more flexibly spent to avoid an emphasis on quicker projects, rather than more impactful interventions that take longer to establish;
- allow councils to consolidate funding to reduce bureaucracy;
- streamline and simplify processes and grant conditions to reduce the administrative burden;
- keep requests for information and supporting materials from councils to a minimum.

Our response:

The number and broad nature of the grants and funds available makes it difficult to define levels of spending focused on tackling poverty. While the report recognises that Swansea does have clear data about total Welsh Government grant funding commitments, there is

recognition that the data only goes so far and more is needed to quantify the value of investment. Whilst this is a recommendation for Welsh Government, the development of the Swansea Tackling Poverty Performance Framework will provide data about the investment of funding and the value it brings in making a difference to people's lives, both qualitative and quantitative data.

R5 - Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty

The report states: we highlight that people in poverty are often in crisis, dealing with extremely personal and stressful issues, but they often find it difficult to access help from councils because of the way services are designed and delivered. We recommend that councils improve their understanding of their residents' 'lived experience' through meaningful involvement in decision-making using 'experience mapping' and/or 'Poverty Truth Commissions' to review and improve accessibility to and use of council services.

Our response:

Swansea's Poverty Truth Commission is referenced in the report. Lived experience is vital in driving our strategic approach to tackling poverty. This includes recognising the extent of the journey that people experience when they are in or at risk of poverty, as these journeys can be very different depending on a range of factors. Experience mapping will help us to understand the experience of people living in poverty and develop the right policies, changes and services.

Swansea launched the first Poverty Truth Commission in Wales last month. This presents an opportunity to spearhead this approach and work closely with the commission and others to improve accessibility and use of council services.

R6 - Single web landing page for people seeking help

The report states: we highlight the difficulties people in poverty face accessing online and digital services. To ensure people are able to get the information and advice they need, we recommend that councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website that:

- is directly accessible on the home page;
- provides links to all services provided by the council that relate to poverty;
- provides information on the work of partners that can assist people in poverty.

Our response:

The Council recently launched a dedicated web page - <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/costoflivinghelp> with information and advice on support for people in or at risk of poverty. This includes links to Council services such as Local Area Coordinators and to external websites including Welsh Government and Citizens Advice. The intention is to use feedback on this site to explore what improvements could be made.

The corporate Digital Strategy supports this recommendation and there are further opportunities to address difficulties people in poverty face in accessing online and digital services as we refresh the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

R7 - Streamlining & improving application & information services for people in poverty

The report states: we note that no council has created a single gateway into services. As a result, people have to complete multiple application forms that often record the same information when applying for similar services. We highlight that whilst it is important that councils comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. We recommend that councils:

- establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data;
- undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests;
- create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services;
- undertake a data audit to provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share;
- review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.

Our response:

The corporate Digital Strategy supports this recommendation, along with the Information Management Policy.

The joint campaign to increase pension credit take-up between Swansea and Neath Port Talbot is included in the report as a good example of targeting those most in need to provide support and assistance.

Development of our Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy is cited as good practice but there is also a view that council services are generally more focused on helping people in crisis than prevention. Developing strategic approaches to prevention and poverty in the refreshed Tackling Poverty strategy will support this.

Through the Coordinated Crisis Support programme, we - along with our partners - have piloted a multi-agency referral process and a Wales Accord on Sharing Personal Information (WASPI) data sharing agreement is in place across Employability providers through our Swansea Working Partnership and both demonstrate this recommendation.

Community Hubs are referenced in the report as offering councils the opportunity to help people at the point of crisis and the development of the City Centre Hub will support this along with integrated health and care centres.

R8 - Complying with the socio-economic duty

The report states: we set out that while all councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, approaches vary and are not always effective. We recommend that councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent to:

- ensure that they draw on relevant, comprehensive and current data (nothing over 12 months old) to support analysis;
- ensure integrated impact assessments capture information on:
 - involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is co-producing with;
 - the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the assessment considers issues in the round and how it links across services provided across the council;
 - how the council will monitor and evaluate impact and will take corrective action;
 - an action plan setting out the activities the Council will take as a result of the Integrated Impact Assessment.

Our response:

Swansea Council is recognised in the report for its comprehensive Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) approach that provides a robust measurement of the socio-economic impact of strategic decisions.

To ensure that we draw on relevant, comprehensive and current data, we will work with Data Cymru utilising their new 'A View of Poverty' data tool. The importance of robust, quality data to inform policy development is highlighted and we will develop a Swansea-centric dashboard of data and intelligence relating to tackling poverty.

4. Way Forward

Overview of the report findings

In summary, we agree with the findings of the Audit Wales report and welcome the positive references to the good work being done in Swansea. There is clear evidence that more needs to be done and there are opportunities to contribute at national and regional levels. The Council is strongly positioned to play a key role in this work.

Section 5 includes a table summarising the eight recommendations including what could be done in the future to address the recommendations. More detailed actions and proposals will emerge from our engagement and co-production approach to the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

5. Recommendations and Actions

	Recommendation	What we do now / have already done	What we will do in the future
R1	National strategy and targets for tackling and alleviating poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established links with national groups and networks 	1. Work with Welsh Government on the national strategy, targets and performance measures.
R2	Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Framework Cross-organisational co-ordination approach to tackling poverty Targeted services such as Welfare Rights and Employability & Skills 	2. Refresh Tackling Poverty Strategy, aiming to publish by April 2023. 3. Develop Tackling Poverty Performance Framework, aiming to publish by April 2023. 4. Develop a Swansea-centric dashboard of data and intelligence relating to tackling poverty.
R3	Leadership on the poverty agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified council member, senior lead and core team aligned to tackling poverty 	5. Engage with Welsh Local Government Association Poverty Group 6. Communications campaign to promote tackling poverty leadership roles and structures with our partners, networks and communities aligned to publication of the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy.
R4	Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant-funded programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting on Welsh Government grant funding allocations and spend 	7. Develop a Tackling Poverty Data Framework to publish by July 2023.
R5	Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established Swansea Poverty Truth Commission (SPTC) Established poverty networks & forums 	8. Deliver programme of engagement and 'experience mapping' activities with people with lived experience of poverty. 9. Review and identify opportunities and draft proposals for addressing digital and social inclusion.
R6	Single web landing page for people seeking help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched dedicated web page on Swansea Council website 	10. Review feedback on web page and undertake continuous improvement of content.
R7	Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral approach between partners piloted. Swansea Working Partnership WASPI Corporate Digital Strategy Development of a Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy 	11. Develop collaborative plan of community enablement activities and commitments as part of the corporate 'Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities' priority. 12. Launch Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy to publish by April 2023.
R8	Complying with the socio-economic duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) approach 	Action 4 above.

'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales

Report of the Auditor General for Wales

November 2022



This report has been prepared for presentation to the Senedd under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

The Auditor General is independent of the Senedd and government. He examines and certifies the accounts of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, including NHS bodies. He also has the power to report to the Senedd on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which those organisations have used, and may improve the use of, their resources in discharging their functions.

The Auditor General also audits local government bodies in Wales, conducts local government value for money studies and inspects for compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General.

© Auditor General for Wales 2022

Audit Wales is the umbrella brand of the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office, which are each separate legal entities with their own legal functions. Audit Wales is not itself a legal entity. While the Auditor General has the auditing and reporting functions described above, the Wales Audit Office's main functions are to provide staff and other resources for the exercise of the Auditor General's functions, and to monitor and advise the Auditor General.

You may re-use this publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. If you re-use it, your re-use must be accurate and must not be in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Auditor General for Wales copyright and you must give the title of this publication. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned before re-use.

For further information, or if you require any of our publications in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us by telephone on 029 2032 0500, or email info@audit.wales. We welcome telephone calls in Welsh and English. You can also write to us in either Welsh or English and we will respond in the language you have used. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

Contents

Context	4
Key findings	7
Recommendations	16
Detailed report	
1 Poverty is multidimensional, complex, growing and impacting more people in Wales	18
2 The challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty in Wales	27
3 Delivering local government services to help people in poverty	37
Appendices	
Audit methods and approach	43

Context

- 1 Poverty shapes the lives of many people in Wales, with hundreds of thousands of families struggling to make ends meet. This is not a new phenomenon and tackling poverty, particularly child poverty, has been a longstanding priority for both the Welsh Government and councils in Wales.
- 2 We know that the impact of poverty can be far reaching with many damaging effects. The longer someone is in poverty, the harder it is to break out. And those who live in poverty can find it extremely difficult to play a full role in society and benefit from education and life opportunities that most of us take for granted.
- 3 Often people in crisis are unable to manage and cope. And it is in these times that they look to government – the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the 22 councils – for help and assistance to deal with their difficulties.
- 4 However, the current cost-of-living crisis, with food, fuel and energy costs all rising sharply, is hitting the pockets of many more people and placing families who have managed to live comfortably into poverty for the first time. The consequence of this is creating expectations, and a need, for government to do much more to help people who are struggling to survive.
- 5 This report looks at the challenge of poverty in Wales and how government is responding. We acknowledge that effectively tackling poverty is not easy and is exceedingly difficult for both Welsh and local government. **Appendix 1** sets out our audit approach and methods.
- 6 This is also the first of three reviews on the challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty. In our other work we focus on two potential solutions. Firstly, how councils are working to grow and expand social enterprises to help local government deliver more services and reduce demand – in essence are we making the most of social enterprises and ensuring social value and social capital stay in communities and help people who are struggling. And secondly, given the priority placed on community resilience and self-reliance in council plans, how well are councils equipping people to be less reliant on the state and reduce demand for often overstretched services.

Key findings

- 7 Our overall conclusion is that **the scale of the challenge and weaknesses in current work make it difficult for Welsh and local government to deliver the systemic change required to tackle and alleviate poverty.**
- 8 In **Part 1** of this report we highlight that poverty is multidimensional, complex, growing and impacting more people in Wales. The impact of poverty is far reaching and increasingly more difficult for people to deal with. People in all parts of Wales continue to live in poverty and the number is estimated to be rising, with the cost-of-living crisis pushing more people into poverty. Our analysis shows that poverty is the single major challenge facing all tiers of government.
- 9 In **Part 2** we consider how the different tiers of government are prioritising action on alleviating poverty. Tackling poverty remains a priority but many of the levers to alleviate poverty are outside of Wales's control. The Welsh Government adopted a Child Poverty Strategy in 2011, which was also revised in 2015, but this is out of date in the context of the current cost-of-living crisis, and the target to eliminate child poverty by 2020 was dropped. Despite this, councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated partnership landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely. In particular, understanding need and drawing on a wide range of data to shape responses remain an area for improvement. Because the agenda is so broad, it is understandable that no council has a comprehensive anti-poverty team, and activity cuts across a range of services which can reinforce silo working.
- 10 The Welsh Government makes significant revenue funding available to councils to alleviate the impact of poverty but due to the complexity and nature of the issues, the total level of spending is unknown, and no council knows the full extent of its spending on alleviating and tackling poverty. All councils are dependent on grants but the short-term nature of grant programmes, overly complex administration, weaknesses in guidance and grant restrictions, and difficulties spending monies mean that funding is not making the impact it could. Lastly, councils find it hard to deliver preventative work because of the sheer scale of demand from people in crisis.

- 11 Finally, in **Part 3** we consider how public bodies deliver services to help people in poverty. We found that only one council is formally undertaking experience mapping with service users to shape how they provide all services to help people in poverty. Despite this, councils are changing how they deliver services as a result of the pandemic and ongoing budget pressures. But the new models of delivery are not always helping people in poverty and those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.
- 12 Digital exclusion remains a major challenge and data shows that people in poverty can find it difficult to access online services. Community hubs offer an opportunity for councils to help people at the point of crisis. Comprehensive and integrated publicity, advice and information services can significantly help people who are struggling but the picture across Wales is mixed. All councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, but the approach varies and is not always effective. With a few exceptions, most councils struggle to demonstrate the value of their work in alleviating and tackling poverty.



I acknowledge that scale of challenge that poverty presents. It is essential therefore that Welsh Government and councils maximise their efforts and address the weaknesses identified in my review. We need to ensure all tiers of government work together to help people in need and my recommendations are targeted at supporting improvement.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales



Recommendations

- 13 Our recommendations are set out below. We expect each council to consider the findings of this review and our recommendations, and that its governance and audit committee receives this report and monitors its response to our recommendations in a timely way.

Recommendations

National strategy and targets for tackling and alleviating poverty

R1 In **Paragraphs 2.8 – 2.12** we note that there is currently no specific target for reducing poverty in Wales and the current Child Poverty strategy needs to be refreshed. We recommend that in updating its strategy the Welsh Government:

- set SMART national actions;
- establish a suite of performance measures to judge delivery and impact;
- sets target for alleviating and tackling poverty; and
- undertake regular evaluation of performance and public reporting.

Recommendations

Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty

- R2 In **Paragraphs 2.13 – 2.23** and **Paragraphs 3.33 – 3.35** we highlight that councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated delivery landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely. We highlight that evaluating activity and reporting performance are also variable with many gaps. We recommend that the councils use their Wellbeing Plans to provide a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty to co-ordinate their efforts, meet local needs and support the revised national plan targets and actions. This should:
- include SMART local actions with a greater emphasis on prevention;
 - include a detailed resourcing plan for the length of the strategy;
 - be developed with involvement from other public sector partners, the third sector, and those with experience of poverty;
 - include a robust set of consistent outcome indicators and measures to increase understanding of poverty locally; and
 - be subject to annual public reporting to enable a whole system view of poverty locally to help improve delivery and support.

Recommendations

Leadership on the poverty agenda

R3 In **Paragraph 2.23** we note that just over a third of councils have lead members and lead officers for addressing poverty. Given the importance of effective leadership in driving the poverty agenda forward and breaking silos within councils and between public bodies, we recommend that each council designate a cabinet member as the council's poverty champion and designate a senior officer to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.

Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant-funded programmes

R4 In **Paragraphs 2.31 – 2.38** we note that all councils are dependent on grants but weaknesses in programmes mean that funding is not making the impact it could. To ensure councils are able to maximise the impact of funding and tackle the more difficult and longstanding problems, we recommend that the Welsh Government:

- provide longer timescales for announcing and receiving bids to enable better resource planning;
- move away from annual bidding cycles to multi-year allocations;
- enable funding to be more flexibly spent to avoid an emphasis on quicker projects, rather than more impactful interventions that take longer to establish;
- allow councils to consolidate funding to reduce bureaucracy;
- streamline and simplify processes and grant conditions to reduce the administrative burden; and
- keep requests for information and supporting materials from councils to a minimum.

Recommendations

Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty

R5 In **Paragraphs 3.2 – 3.6** we highlight that people in poverty are often in crisis, dealing with extremely personal and stressful issues, but they often find it difficult to access help from councils because of the way services are designed and delivered. We recommend that councils improve their understanding of their residents' 'lived experience' through meaningful involvement in decision-making using 'experience mapping' and/or 'Poverty Truth Commissions' to review and improve accessibility to and use of council services.

Single web landing page for people seeking help

R6 In **Paragraph 3.14** we highlight the difficulties people in poverty face accessing online and digital services. To ensure people are able to get the information and advice they need, we recommend that councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website that:

- is directly accessible on the home page;
- provides links to all services provided by the council that relate to poverty; and
- provides information on the work of partners that can assist people in poverty.

Recommendations

Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty

R7 In **Paragraphs 3.15 and 3.16** we note that no council has created a single gateway into services. As a result, people have to complete multiple application forms that often record the same information when applying for similar services. We highlight that whilst it is important that councils comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. We recommend that councils:

- establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data;
- undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests;
- create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services;
- undertake a data audit to provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and
- review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.

Recommendations

Complying with the socio-economic duty

R8 In **Paragraphs 3.27 to 3.32** we set out that while all councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, approaches vary and are not always effective. We recommend that councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent to:

- ensure that they draw on relevant, comprehensive and current data (nothing over 12 months old) to support analysis;
- ensure integrated impact assessments capture information on:
 - involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is co-producing with;
 - the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the assessment considers issues in the round and how it links across services provided across the council;
 - how the council will monitor and evaluate impact and will take corrective action; and
 - an action plan setting out the activities the Council will take as a result of the Integrated Impact Assessment.



**Poverty is
multidimensional,
complex, growing
and impacting more
people in Wales**

01

1.1 In this part of the report we provide a brief overview of how poverty is defined, setting out the complexities of poverty showing its day-to-day impact on people in Wales. We outline how poverty is measured, highlighting the differences between the countries of the UK and show that poverty in Wales is growing. Finally, we consider the current cost-of-living crisis and how this is pushing more people into poverty for the first time, making poverty the single biggest challenge facing people and public services across Wales.

Defining poverty

- 1.2 Poverty may be described in different ways and there is no single, universally accepted definition. In 1995, the United Nations adopted two relative definitions of poverty, framing the issue in terms of minimum acceptable standards of living within the society in which a particular person lives. These are:
- a **absolute poverty** is defined as a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income, but also on access to services.
 - b **overall poverty** takes various forms, including a lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited, or lack of access to, education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion.
- 1.3 Poverty therefore occurs in all countries and even the most developed places will have pockets of poverty amid wealth. For instance, the loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and those who struggle to cope outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets.
- 1.4 The causes of poverty can also be structural, derived and enhanced by the way society and the economy are framed and work, which helps create a cycle that makes it more difficult for some people to provide for their families and keeps them trapped in hardship. These structures drive disparities in access to transportation, education, childcare, health care, high-quality jobs, and affordable housing. For example, people who are not able to easily access training or education can struggle to land a secure job, making it harder to escape poverty. Likewise, the operation, or inflexibility, of welfare systems can make it difficult for those struggling and trap them in poverty.

- 1.5 Consequently, poverty needs to be seen as multi-dimensional incorporating aspects of, for example, deprivation, and psychological wellbeing, such as mental health and shame. Looking at deprivation allows a wide range of aspects of living standards to be included. Here, deprivation should not be seen only in terms of material deprivation but also in the social exclusion from 'the ordinary patterns, customs and activities' of society¹.

The impact of poverty is far reaching and increasingly more difficult for people to deal with

- 1.6 Poverty is not just therefore the absence of the money people require to meet their needs. It is also the consequences of this lack of resources and how this impacts them in ways that those not in poverty often find hard to comprehend. Some of these consequences – for instance social isolation, exclusion, powerlessness, physical and emotional wellbeing – can extend and perpetuate poverty, making it difficult, if not impossible, for people to escape its impact. And often the way policies and services are set and delivered can make the situation far more challenging.
- 1.7 Through our fieldwork, in particular speaking to people in poverty, we have sought to define its characteristics or dimensions on a human level – what does it feel and look like to live in poverty. From our work, there are some common issues that re-occur for people who live in poverty. We have set these out under seven broad headings in **Exhibit 1**. Not everyone will encounter all of these, and people can experience different problems at different times. Taken as a whole, however, they demonstrate how multidimensional poverty can be and provide a sense of what it means to live in poverty and, at the extreme end, destitution.

1 Lansley, S. and Mack, J., Breadline Britain – the rise of mass poverty, London, Oneworld, (2015).

Exhibit 1 – The 'Dimensions' or 'Characteristics' of living in poverty in Wales**Housing issues**

- I have experience of being homeless, street sleeping and/or sofa surfing
- My home is insecure, and I fear losing it
- I am unable to afford to pay my rent or mortgage
- I live in poor quality/substandard housing
- People in my home share bedrooms and have inadequate space
- I cannot afford furniture or white goods in my home

**Clothing and footwear issues**

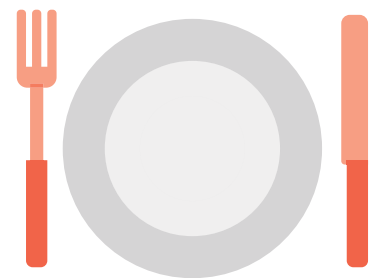
- I do not have warm clothing in winter
- I depend on handouts and charity for clothes
- I only have two pairs of shoes
- I do not have clothes for work or job interviews

Fuel and Energy issues

- My home has poor energy efficiency
- I have to use prepayment meters and/or have to use high-cost tariffs
- I have high energy usage due to my and/or my family's ill health
- I have high energy use due to the size of my family
- I am regularly unable to afford to use electricity or gas
- I depend on an off-grid, more expensive energy supply – oil

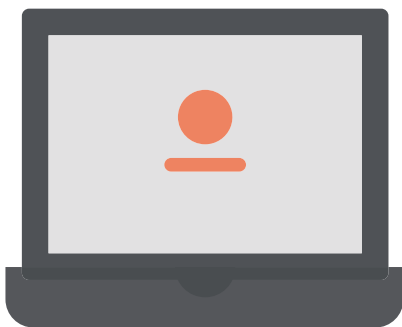
Food and water issues

- I cannot guarantee a regular and sufficient supply of food and water
- I am unable to purchase sufficient food and water to meet me and my family's needs
- I am unable to eat healthily
- I periodically have no food available
- I regularly miss meals
- I am unable to afford to wash myself and/or my clothes



Financial issues

- I have insufficient income to afford to meet my living costs
- My income is unstable, and I do not know how much money I have week to week
- I am unable to access credit
- I have no savings
- I am in debt
- I depend on welfare benefits and/or charity

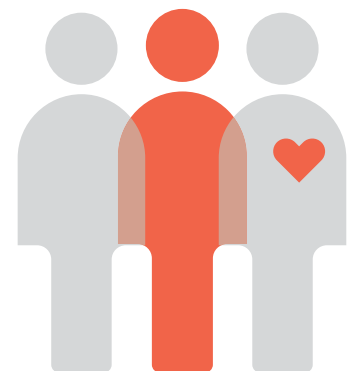


Exclusion from services issues

- I am unable to register for health, dental and care services
- Transport is unreliable and I find it difficult to access and/or afford transport
- I do not have a computer, a SMART phone and/or tablet
- I do not have access to the internet at home
- I find it difficult to access the essential public services I need
- I find it difficult to participate in or influence decisions that affect me – eg not registered to, or do not, vote
- I find it difficult to get the advice and information I need to help me
- I feel marginalised by the services I seek help from

Emotional and relationship issues

- I lack confidence and self esteem
- I find it difficult to deal with problems
- I find it difficult communicating with people and services
- I have poor literacy and numeracy skills
- I find it difficult to build and/or maintain relationships
- I experience feelings of shame and stigma because of my circumstances



People in all parts of Wales continue to live in poverty and the number is estimated to be rising

- 1.8 There is no single source of evidence that is universally drawn on to determine levels of poverty in Wales. Consequently, we have based our analysis on three key data sets. These are the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation; the Department of Work and Pensions' (DWP) households-below-average-income data; and persistent poverty information, again published by the DWP.
- 1.9 Taken together, this information shows us that a significant number of people are living in poverty in Wales and deprivation reaches all part of the country. Importantly, the levels of poverty remain stubbornly high and are impacting all parts of the population – children, working-aged people and pensioners. Significantly, many people also continue to experience poverty on an ongoing basis.

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

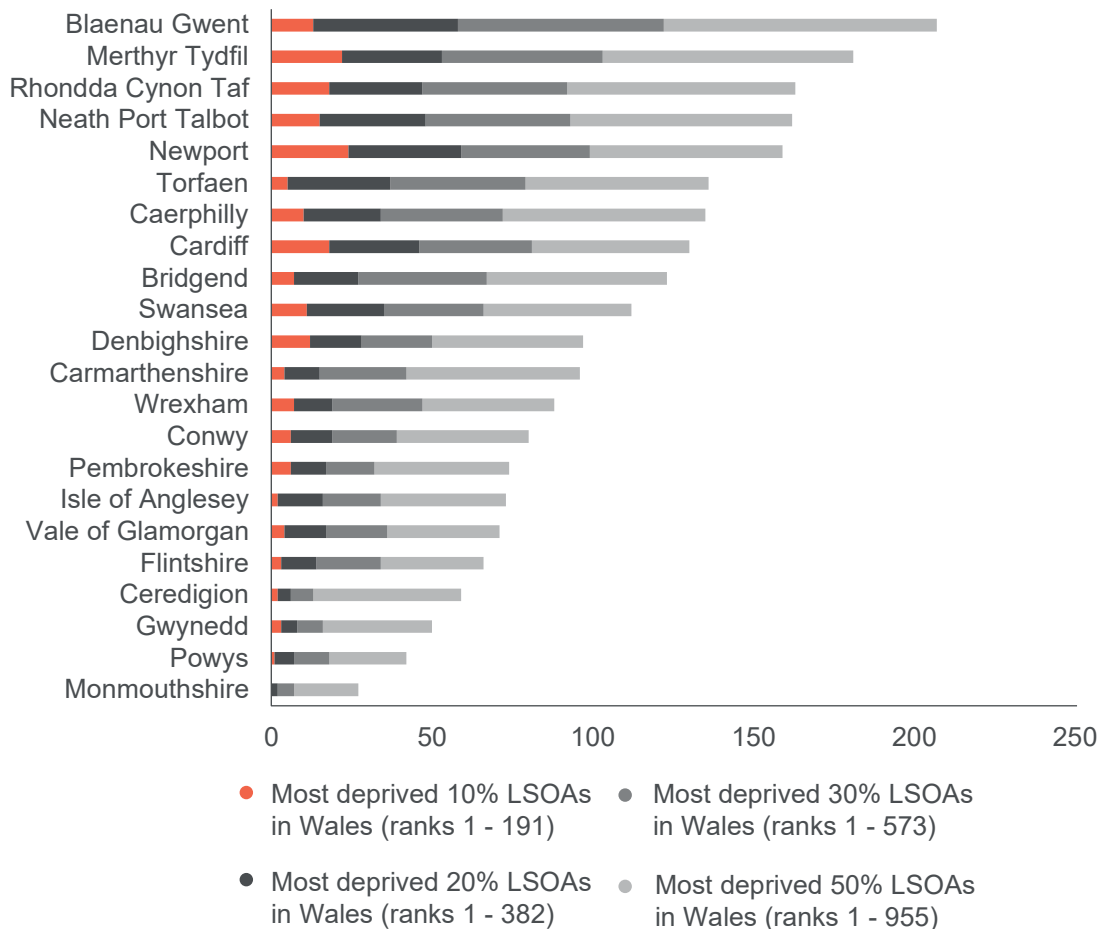
- 1.10 The Welsh Government uses the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) to measure relative deprivation of small areas of Wales and then ranks them from the most to the least deprived. The WIMD uses 47 indicators split into eight domains – income, employment, health, education, access to services, housing, community safety, and the physical environment. WIMD is a measure of multiple deprivation that is both an area-based measure and a measure of relative deprivation.
- 1.11 WIMD ranks all small areas in Wales from 1 (most deprived) to 1,909 (least deprived). Using this information it is therefore possible to say that one area is more or less deprived than another². The full WIMD is revised every four to five years and was last updated in 2019, before the pandemic and the impact of the current cost-of-living crisis. Nonetheless, the WIMD remains the best available data for comparing levels of poverty by council.
- 1.12 Using the WIMD data, we set out in **Exhibit 2** the comparative levels of deprivation by council based on this small-areas analysis. In broad terms, the WIMD shows us that all areas of Wales have pockets of deprivation, but the urban areas of south-east Wales are where people are persistently experiencing poverty and are struggling the most.

2 The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the Welsh Government's official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It identifies areas with the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation. WIMD ranks all small areas in Wales from 1 (most deprived) to 1,909 (least deprived). Small areas are Census geographies called Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). **Page 62**

- 1.13 Tackling and alleviating poverty is at the heart of providing for the wellbeing of citizens, and government at all levels in Wales clearly operates many programmes to support this. This includes the NHS, education, welfare payments, infrastructure, and utilities. The broad nature of poverty and the wide range of areas that it touches on mean that it inherently crosses over the different constitutional boundaries of the UK.
- 2.14 Wales has had stubbornly high levels of poverty for many years (**Exhibit 2**) and as a result poverty remains a longstanding priority of the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government recognises that due to the nature of poverty, it cannot be tackled alone and must be tackled collaboratively between all levels of government. Notwithstanding, the Welsh Government exercises considerable autonomy when it comes to tackling poverty. For instance, major areas of economic development, education, health and housing policy are its responsibility, and it can decide where it allocates its budgets.

Exhibit 2 – Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation – Council Analysis by Lower-layer Super Output Areas

People in all parts of Wales are experiencing poverty, but it is most acutely felt in the urban and valley areas of South Wales.



Source: Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, Welsh Government, November 2019

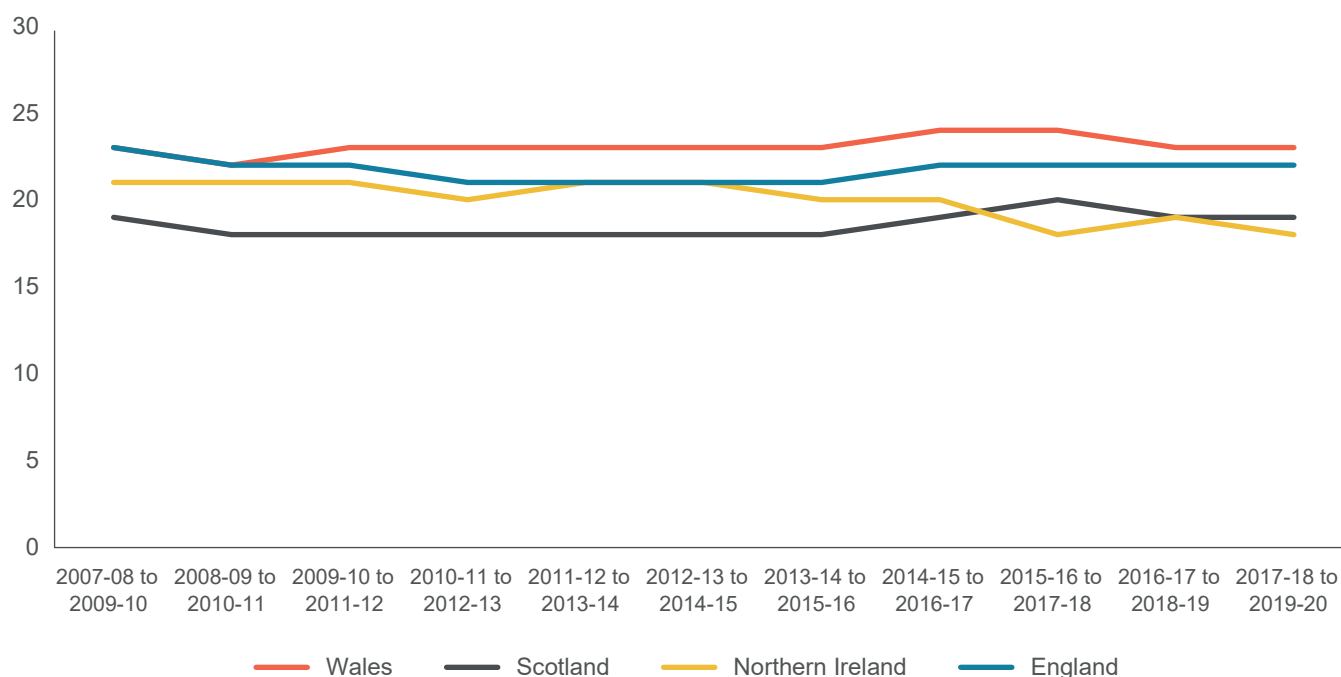
Households Below Average Income

1.15 Most official measures of poverty use relative income to assess who is in poverty; an income threshold is set and those who fall below it are seen to be 'in poverty'. The current benchmark for judging relative levels of poverty is the number of households who get less than 60% of the average wage. Using this measure³, and drawing on data published by the DWP, 23% of people in Wales live in poverty and Wales continues to have the highest levels of poverty in the United Kingdom – **Exhibit 3**.

3 Relative income is the sum of money after housing costs such as mortgage interest payments/rent, water rates and structural house insurance have been paid.

Exhibit 3 – Percentage of people living in relative income poverty by UK countries between 2007-08 to 2009-10 and 2017-18 to 2019-20 (three-year averages of financial years)

Wales has consistently had the highest levels of relative income poverty in the UK in the last decade.



Source: Households Below Average Income, Family Resources Survey, Department for Work and Pensions, reported on StatsWales (Indicator [SIEQ0031](#)), March 2021

1.16 Digging below the surface of the headline figures allows us to identify some important trends on poverty in Wales, and the differences between Wales and the other countries of the UK. While the number of children living in relative income poverty in Wales fell from 32% in 2010-11 to 28% in 2018-19, the numbers rose sharply in 2019-20 to 31%. The most recent data published by the DWP⁴ in March 2022 (as analysed by the Welsh Government⁵) suggests that this trend is continuing with 34% of children in Wales predicted to be living in poverty in March 2021⁶. Across the four countries of the UK, Wales has the highest number of children in relative income poverty.

4 [Households Below Average Income](#), Department for Work and Pensions, March 2022

5 [Measures of poverty: April 2020 to March 2021](#), Welsh Government, March 2022

6 It should be noted that the most recent data for Wales is based on the Family Resources Survey which samples around 900 households in Wales every year. This is why data is presented as three-to-five year rolling averages, to reduce (but not eliminate) unreliability.

- 1.17 Pensioners have the lowest levels of poverty in Wales, with numbers remaining consistent at 18% in the last decade, although the most recent Welsh Government analysis for March 2021 suggests this has marginally risen to 19%. Again, when comparing numbers across the UK, Wales has more pensioners in poverty than the other three nations. Finally, with regard to working-age adults, the data has remained stable at 22%, but Wales again has the highest numbers classed as in relative income poverty across the four countries of the UK.
- 1.18 One growing problem facing many working-age adults is 'in-work poverty' – poverty faced by anyone living in a household where someone is in work but whose income (including welfare benefits) has and is not keeping up with the cost of day-to-day living. In-work poverty is not new and is an issue that has been growing since the mid-1990s. It has, however, become a more acute problem in the last 12 months. This growing trend highlights that while work reduces the risk of poverty, incomes are often not sufficient to allow someone to escape from poverty. Research suggests that in-work poverty increased across the UK in 2021 but rose most sharply in London (22% of households), Wales and the North of England (both – 18% of households)⁷.

Persistent Poverty

- 1.19 The DWP also produces an incomes dynamics report on changes in income over time highlighting rates of persistent low income for different groups. This is often referred to as 'persistent poverty.' Individuals are classed as living in persistent poverty if they are in relatively low income for at least three out of four consecutive years.

- 1.20 Persistent poverty is a major concern. Evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that the negative consequences of poverty are worse for families the longer they spend, and the deeper they are, in poverty⁸. The most recent DWP data published in March 2022 found that:
- a an individual in England and Wales had a 12% chance of being in persistent poverty between 2016 and 2020 (after housing costs were paid). This is more than in Scotland (10%), and in Northern Ireland (9%);
 - b a child in Wales had a 13% likelihood of being in persistent poverty, which is less than for England (19%) but higher than for Northern Ireland (12%) and Scotland (10%);
 - c a working-age adult in Wales had a 13% likelihood of being in persistent poverty, which is higher than England (11%), Scotland and Northern Ireland (10%); and
 - d a pensioner living in Wales had a 10% likelihood of being in persistent poverty, which is lower than in England and Scotland, both at 11%. The likelihood in Northern Ireland is 5%.

The cost-of-living crisis is pushing more people into poverty

- 1.21 The 'cost-of-living crisis' refers to the fall in 'real' disposable incomes (adjusted for inflation and after taxes and benefits) that the UK has experienced since late 2021. It is predominantly caused by high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases and has been further exacerbated by recent tax increases. The price of goods, especially of essentials, is increasing at a faster rate than most people's income and is squeezing household finances, especially those on low wages. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that inflation is now higher than at any time since 1982⁹, affecting the affordability of goods and services for millions of households.

8 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [UK Poverty 2022](#), January 2022

9 Office for National Statistics, [CPIH Annual Rate](#), May 2022

- 1.22 In January 2022, the Institute for Fiscal Studies reported that the lowest-income tenth of households will face around 1.5 percentage points more inflation than the highest-income tenth over the year¹⁰. Similarly, research by the Resolution Foundation concluded that the poorest quarter of households are set to see their real incomes drop by 6% in 2022-23¹¹. Because energy prices are rising particularly quickly, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates that low-income families will now need to spend 19% of their income on energy costs alone in 2022-23, compared to middle-income families who will need to spend 7% of their take-home pay¹² (although these figures may be lower following the UK Government's recent announcement to provide help with¹³ energy bills until April 2023). Finally, the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts household incomes when adjusted for inflation will fall in 2022-23 by the largest amount (-2.2%) since records began in the mid-1950s¹⁴.
- 1.23 **Exhibit 4** draws together a range of data to show the rapid changes taking place in energy and food costs and the impact this is having. This research shows that greater numbers of people are now experiencing energy and food insecurity, and the poorer you are, the greater the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is having on you. Importantly, because it is difficult to record and report poverty data in real time, the number of people impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and living in poverty is absent from current data.

10 Institute for Fiscal Studies, The cost-of-living Crunch, January 2022

11 Resolution Foundation, The Living Standards Audit 2022, July 2022

12 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Energy Price Analysis, March 2022

13 <https://www.itv.com/news/2022-10-17/jeremy-hunt-to-outline-mini-budget-tax-spending-and-plan-today>

14 Office for Budget Responsibility, [Economic and fiscal Outlook](#), March 2022

Exhibit 4 – Changes in energy and food costs and the predicted impact

Energy and food cost changes in 2021 and 2022

From April 2021 to April 2022, domestic gas prices increased by 95% and domestic electricity prices by 54%.

On 1 April 2022, the new price cap came into force. The regulator Ofgem announced the cap would increase from its current equivalent annual level of £1,277 per year to £1,971; a 54% increase.

The Chief Executive of Ofgem said on 24 May that he expected the price cap to increase to around £2,800 in October 2022, a 40% increase. Recent research suggests that this will rise again to £4,200 by January 2023. Ofgem estimates that the increase in the price cap will affect around 22 million customers.

In September 2022, the UK Government announced that it will freeze energy bills at an average of £2,500 a year for two years from 1 October 2022.

Between August 2021 and August 2022 unleaded petrol has risen by 48.6 pence per litre and diesel by 56.2 pence.

Impact on people

YouGov reported that 87% of adults in the UK reported an increase in their cost of living in March 2022 and 83% cited an increase in gas and energy as a significant contributor.

In August 2022, YouGov noted that 78% of people in Great Britain are worried about the current price of their household's energy bills – including a third (37%) who are 'very' worried about the cost. Of those with the lowest household incomes (£19,999 a year or less), 83% say they are concerned about how much they spend on energy.

Households in the lowest income group spent 7.1% of their overall spending on electricity and gas, compared to 2.5% for households in the highest income group.

A January 2022 YouGov poll found 49% of people from households with an income of less than £15,000 a year say they cannot afford to heat their home when it is very cold outside.

According to Welsh Government research 14% of Welsh households now live in 'fuel poverty' and 11% are at risk of 'fuel poverty'.



Energy and food cost changes in 2021 and 2022

Food and non-alcoholic drink prices were 6.7% higher in the year to April 2022. This is up from 5.9% and the highest rate of increase since June 2011.

An index of world food prices compiled by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation hit a record high in March 2022. It fell slightly in April but remains 29.8% higher than in April 2021.



Impact on people

YouGov reported that 80% of adults in the UK had seen an increase in their cost of living in March 2022 and 85% of these cited increased price of food as the reason. 54% of those responding to the survey who reported a rise in the cost of living in March 2022 say they are spending less on non-essentials as a result and 33% report spending less on food and essentials. The most recent analysis from YouGov in September 2022 notes that 21% of UK citizens now say they have found themselves forced to make cutbacks to their essential food-item spending.

The Food Foundation's Insecurity Tracker reported that 13.8% of UK households (7.3 million adults) experienced food insecurity in April 2022. Amongst those on Universal Credit, the figure rose to 47.7%.

Sources: ONS, [Energy prices and their effect on households](#), February 2022; Ofgem, [Default Tariff Cap Level](#), February 2022; [Fuel poverty modelled estimates for Wales \(headline results\): as at October 2021 \(gov.wales\)](#); The Food Foundation, [Food Insecurity Tracking](#), April 2022; Cornwall Insights, [Price Cap Forecasts](#), August 2022; YouGov, [Eurotrack Survey Results](#), March 2022; YouGov, [Finances Survey Results](#), March 2022; and YouGov Results, [Energy Bills](#), August 2022; and YouGov, [Essential Spending Results](#), September 2022

1.24 In conclusion, and considering the information in this section as a whole, poverty is a long-term problem facing all parts of Wales, but areas in the south in particular. Comparatively, data suggests that Wales has the highest levels of poverty across the four countries of the UK, and this is growing. There remain significant numbers who persistently live in poverty and find it difficult to escape its impact. And the effect of the current 'cost-of-living crisis' is pushing more people into poverty. Given this situation, in the proceeding sections we look at how government in Wales is responding.



The challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty in Wales

02

2.1 In this part of the report we set out how government is currently alleviating and tackling poverty in Wales. We highlight the limitations that Welsh and local government have in responding to poverty and also review current plans and strategies. We set out how alleviating and tackling poverty are resourced and how weaknesses in current arrangements limit the potential positive impact of this funding.

Tackling poverty remains a priority for all tiers of government but many of the levers to alleviate poverty are outside of Wales's control

Exhibit 5 – The purpose of 'Government'

Western democratic governments, in general, have the same key purposes, although vary in their delivery of them. They are:



To establish laws

Government has the legitimate authority to set law that everyone is required to follow.



Maintain law and order

Government, through the courts or police, can enforce law and punish those who do not follow it to regulate and protect others from harm.



Protect from external threats

Government can use military, diplomatic actions, or international agreements to protect citizens from threats.



Provide for the general wellbeing of citizens

Government attempts to ensure the health, happiness, and prosperity of citizens through healthcare, education, and other programmes.

2.2 However, in other respects the Welsh Government is significantly constrained, most obviously its inability to control key areas which are reserved by the UK Government. This includes welfare benefits, wider social security, taxation and employment law, such as the minimum wage. The Welsh Government is unable to influence the UK Government's policy or the powers they reserve, but often has divergent views on the role of the state in tackling and alleviating poverty. This leaves the Welsh Government without the key levers to act on this priority area.

UK and Scottish Governments' strategies

2.3 UK Governments led by both major parties had, until 2016, a longstanding target to end child poverty by 2020 that was enshrined in the Child Poverty Act 2010. This was repealed in 2016 and since then there have been no targets at a UK level.

2.4 In response, the Scottish Government set its own targets to reduce child poverty by 2030 through the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 (the Act). The Act requires the Scottish Government to publish a national delivery plan and annual reports, to be supported by joint annual reports from councils and health boards to demonstrate how the strategy is being implemented. The Act also establishes a Poverty and Inequality Commission to monitor progress and to hold the Scottish Government to account.

2.5 Progress on poverty in Scotland is aided by greater powers being devolved from Westminster. The Scottish Government has additional powers over finance and welfare that are not devolved to Wales which enables it to invest and develop policy that helps alleviate and tackle poverty directly. This includes the Scottish Child Payment. The Scottish Government estimates that this alone could result in a 5% reduction in child poverty in 2023-24¹⁵.

There is no national target for reducing child poverty and the current Child Poverty Strategy needs to be refreshed

2.6 In 2011, the Welsh Government set a national target to eradicate child poverty by 2020 under the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. This was subsequently repeated in 2015 but the target was dropped during the Fifth Senedd. While the strategy remains relevant and provides the focus for work on poverty, it does not reflect the current challenges facing people in Wales and has no targets to focus work and effort.

- 2.7 The Welsh Government also produced a [Child Poverty: Income Maximisation Action Plan](#) in November 2020. This set out a series of practical actions to help increase the incomes of families living in poverty, reduce essential living costs and provide support to build their financial resilience. It does however fall short of a refreshed and up-to-date strategy.
- 2.8 From our fieldwork we conclude that a revised national strategy would enable the Welsh Government to articulate an up-to-date vision, direct delivery to support objectives and put in place appropriate measures to judge impact. A refreshed national strategy would help set a strategic vision with expectations and ambitions for the whole public sector to achieve collectively. And the need to update and refresh the strategy has been recognised by the Minister for Social Justice, who has committed to introduce a revised Child Poverty strategy¹⁶. In addition, under the [Child Poverty Strategy \(Corporate Joint Committees\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2021](#) the four recently established [Corporate Joint Committees \(CJCs\)](#) will also be required to review local child poverty strategies and produce a report. This provides an opportunity for councils to reconsider their local plans and collaborate with neighbours. Finally, the Welsh Government has also recently consulted on new national milestones which include measures related to improving household income per head and income poverty¹⁷.
- 2.9 Despite this, as the sections below outline, the Welsh Government and other public bodies continue to invest in a wide range of initiatives to tackle and alleviate poverty. The Welsh Government, via specific cost-of-living grants, supports public bodies to deliver programmes that help those in poverty, and much money is being invested in this way. Within councils this includes Families First and Flying Start programmes, as well as targeted grants, such as those for food or period poverty. These elements could be better co-ordinated and measured through a national strategy and indicators.
- 2.10 To enhance this at a time of acute need, some have called for the Welsh Government to do more following the Scottish Government's lead. For example, the Bevan Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have called for the Welsh Government to implement a 'Welsh Benefits System', which would take existing programmes of financial and other support for families and integrate them into a single welfare system. This would mean the myriad of current funding programmes, many of which are administered by councils, would be amalgamated into a single fund, which would help streamline and improve efficiency.

16 [Welsh Parliament, Plenary Record, 13 July 2022](#)

17 [Shaping Wales' Future: Using National Indicators and Milestones to measure our Nation's progress \(gov.wales\)](#)

Councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated delivery landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely

- 2.11 The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 placed a duty on councils to produce a child poverty strategy to support the national strategy. Since 2015, this has been discharged through local well-being plans from councils or Public Service Boards (PSB). Overall, our review found a complicated picture of how public bodies are working to address poverty across Wales.
- 2.12 While all councils have well-being objectives that would support those living in poverty, only 12 have specific objectives addressing poverty. We found that five councils also have dedicated anti-poverty strategies that are council-wide and draw on their corporate and well-being objectives. Other councils target individual dimensions of poverty, such as energy or food poverty. Some also include poverty as a PSB objective or theme to be addressed alongside other partners. Nine also reference poverty within their Strategic Equality Plans.
- 2.13 The strongest strategies provide clear definitions of poverty and link to wider corporate objectives. Swansea's Tackling Poverty Framework is an example of this, setting out a vision with themes and outcomes, linked to other plans. Bridgend also effectively links its plan by using consistent objectives with other strategies. This enables a focus on poverty to exist alongside wider corporate objectives.
- 2.14 A common theme across many councils is, however, a lack of ambition to address the causes of poverty over a longer period. While the key drivers of poverty, primarily decisions on welfare spending and entitlements, are outside the control of councils, there are local changes that can be made to support people. Most councils are reactive only and focus on delivering the Welsh Government's grants and programmes. This leads to an inward focus on what the council can achieve for people in crisis who are already known to them and within the public service delivery system. Those on the margins of poverty, and those being pushed into poverty by the cost-of-living crisis, are often overlooked.
- 2.15 Worryingly, some officers we interviewed stated that poverty strategies are not needed because they see all their councils' work as inherently about tackling poverty. Having a strategy was seen as resulting in poverty being 'lost' in the overall corporate plan. Whilst this view recognises the holistic nature of poverty, it can also result in a lack of co-ordination and silo working, with each service focusing on delivering the programmes they are responsible for rather than how they collectively contribute to the bigger picture.

- 2.16 Employment remains a dominant theme for councils, both as a cause of poverty but also its solution. However, as noted above, this often overlooks the large and growing numbers of people who experience in-work poverty. The dominant narrative concerning those on welfare benefits in poverty, results in an overly significant focus on employability programmes over other actions. Whilst minimum income levels are not set in Wales, employability should be seen in the context of the wider issues that those living in poverty experience.
- 2.17 Due to the broad nature of the poverty agenda, there are a wide range of potential partners for councils to engage with. This includes PSBs, CJs, Regional Partnership Boards and other local forums. We found that councils have adopted widely different approaches to working in partnership to tackle and alleviate poverty. And, because of the limitations in the national strategy and a lack of targets, the inconsistency between councils is adding an unnecessary level of complexity to partnership working, especially with public bodies that operate regionally.
- 2.18 To enable the greatest impact from services, councils need to plan specifically to tackle and alleviate poverty, drawing on a range of evidence and meaningful collaboration with partners. However, we found that planning is often focused on the contribution of the council alone, rather than the contribution of all partners. Councils deliver a large range of services that help and support people living in poverty, but few look to build on this with meaningful links with other partners. The lack of co-ordination often means councils are reliant on individual service areas forming their own links, despite lacking the spare capacity to do this.
- 2.19 Collaboration in some councils takes place within existing forums that overlap with the poverty agenda, both internally and externally, but other councils have gone further. Swansea formed a council-wide co-ordination group that brings senior officers together within their Tackling Poverty Framework. Similarly, Wrexham has recently created a cost of living working group to support local residents in relation to benefit maximisation, reducing costs on energy, fuel poverty and winter pressures. Others, such as Monmouthshire and Flintshire, have drawn together external reference groups to involve other partners, such as food banks or Citizens Advice. The PSB has played a similar role in Ceredigion.
- 2.20 The best councils have prioritised their work with third-sector partners to invest and deliver advice and information activity to specifically help those in poverty. For example, Cardiff funds the local Citizens Advice and the Cardiff and Vale Credit Union to provide bespoke advice to individuals who present themselves to the council's Money Advice Team. To ease their partners' administrative burden, Bridgend has a central grants team to streamline grants provided.

- 2.21 Effective leadership is also required to drive the poverty agenda forward. Strong and coherent leadership can offer the impetus for councillors and officers to break silos to work collaboratively to deliver shared objectives and provide a focus for partnership working. We found that only eight councils have a cabinet member responsible for poverty and eight councils a senior officer with corporate responsibility for leading on tackling poverty.
- 2.22 One growing concern is the difficulty in attracting sufficient talent to deliver what are often very demanding and challenging services. A significant proportion of council officers we interviewed noted a growing problem of recruiting and retaining essential staff, both within their organisation but also key third-sector partners. Issues of growing workloads, reductions in capacity, increasing burn-out from frontline work during the pandemic, less competitive salaries and the impact of inflation on wages were all flagged as major risks.
- 2.23 In 2022, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) established a Poverty Group bringing council officers together to share approaches, identify opportunities for joint working and lobby for change. Whilst at an early stage in development, this group offers a potential forum for good practice exchange and collaboration. The roles of officers that attend are wide reaching, reflecting the broad poverty agenda, but also the absence of a central anti-poverty team in most councils. This will make it more difficult for the group to co-ordinate and agree concerted action because the responsibilities and influence of individual officers vary from council to council. This is something the WLGA is planning to address.

Large sums of money are being invested in tackling and alleviating poverty, but no one knows how much, and the way money is allocated and managed limits its positive impact

The Welsh Government makes significant revenue funding available to councils to alleviate the impact of poverty but the total level of spending is unknown

- 2.24 The Welsh Government funds a wide range of programmes that support people in poverty. This includes wide-ranging awards, such as the Children and Communities Grant, and more targeted funding, such as digital inclusion. Collectively, we estimate that this revenue funding is worth over £1 billion in 2021-22¹⁸.

2.25 In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the Welsh Government has allocated additional funding in both 2021-22 and 2022-23. £152 million was provided in 2021-22 to fund £150 support payments for households living in properties within council tax bands A to D. A further £25 million was also made available for a discretionary council tax scheme, with payment criteria to be set by councils according to local need. This has included:

- a payments to those who are exempt from council tax;
- b payments to people living in homes in bands E and F;
- c payments to those receiving free school meals;
- d supporting homelessness prevention support; and
- e top-ups for discretionary housing payments.

Additional budgeted support for 2022-23 totalled £162 million and includes a winter fuel support fund, holiday hunger support, and vulnerable family support.

2.26 Because the poverty agenda is so broad and poverty-related activity is captured within the broader Welsh Government base budgets, it is difficult to identify and quantify the specific level of spending that is being provided to tackle and alleviate poverty in Wales. This, in turn, makes assessing the impact, or the value for money, of this funding difficult to measure.

No council knows the full extent of its spending on alleviating and tackling poverty

2.27 No council has a dedicated budget or can identify the total amount of revenue spending used to tackle and alleviate poverty. As with the Welsh Government, this is largely due to the wide definition of programmes that support those in poverty, limitations in budget designations and a lack of understanding on how money is allocated and used.

2.28 Some councils, such as Swansea and Carmarthenshire, do know the total Welsh Government grant funding provided to them and committed on poverty initiatives. But no council officer we interviewed was able to quantify the proportion of spend or how many staff in frontline services are helping to alleviate and tackle poverty. Given the significant amount of activity related to poverty, this would be a significant task that councils do not have the capacity to undertake.

All councils are dependent on grants but weaknesses in programmes mean that funding is not making the impact it could

2.29 The vast majority of officers we interviewed acknowledged that the funding provided by the Welsh Government is essential to helping councils tackle and alleviate the impact of poverty. Without this funding it is clear the situation would be much worse than at present. Despite this, during our interviews, some common weaknesses were identified.

- 2.30 Poverty-related Welsh Government grants are often linked to defined programmes for councils to deliver, such as Families First. These are often seen as separate to council-initiated programmes within corporate plans. As a result, often when the Welsh Government funding stops the programme stops, leading to short-term, limited interventions.
- 2.31 Funding is generally allocated to initiatives that are tightly focussed and/or have a high administrative burden to process and deliver. Often grants have short timescales which can make it challenging to submit comprehensive, impactful bids or to fully spend funding prior to the financial year-end. Many we interviewed and surveyed noted that the annual cycle of bidding does not support councils to tackle the more difficult and longer standing problems. This promotes spending on easy to deliver initiatives, rather than on activity which can make a greater impact. It also means that officers are under significant pressure to deliver existing work and to respond to grants due to a lack of resources after cuts during years of austerity.
- 2.32 Weaknesses in guidance and grant restrictions can also limit the impact of funding. Some grant restrictions mean that groups that experience poverty, such as residents in Houses of Multiple Occupancy or members of the travelling community, are unable to receive funding. Digitally excluded residents can also be prevented where schemes are administered and resourced online.
- 2.33 This increases the importance of having knowledgeable customer-facing staff in order to navigate the complex range of funding streams and the different programme conditions. Some councils reported finding it particularly challenging to recruit to grant-funded roles in recent years due to the short-term nature of project working and uncertainty of whether grant funding will continue. Multiple application processes, programme eligibility restrictions, and difficulties in applying have all led to lower levels of take-up under some programmes, which has required councils to invest additional resources to increase their coverage. These each function as barriers to people receiving the intended support and limit the impact of programmes and interventions.

- 2.34 Unsurprisingly, some councils have sought to address this by streamlining activity to reduce bureaucracy and duplication. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taf brought together separate funding programmes into a single service to help target action on the most vulnerable and to avoid people slipping through the net. The Council acknowledges that there is more to be done, but this new single gateway approach is supporting the council to shift to focus on early intervention and prevention. Likewise, Bridgend brought together five different employment funding streams under Employability Bridgend to create a single gateway to services. Caerphilly also recently created a £3 million cost of living hardship fund to undertake a series of initiatives aimed at providing support to those most in need¹⁹.
- 2.35 Grant funding to support people in poverty has also historically been provided by EU Structural Funds (ESF). Between 2014 and 2020, Wales spent £595.12 million of ESF on a range of skills, youth employment and attainment, and employability programmes. The UK Government has replaced ESF with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). The SPF monies are calculated using a formula and are allocated directly to councils rather than managed by the Welsh Government. The LUF is allocated by the UK Government according to bids against assessment criteria.
- 2.36 Overall, the Welsh Government has calculated that Wales will receive substantially less funding through the SPF than ESF, a shortfall of £772 million between 2021-22 and 2024-25²⁰. And with LUF based on bids, some areas of the country are likely to miss this funding in its entirety. Consequently, Wales is predicted to have less money available to tackle and alleviate poverty going forward²¹.

¹⁹ <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/23019836>

²⁰ Welsh Government, [Written Statement: Loss of funding to Wales as a result of the UK Government's arrangements for replacement EU funding](#), May 2022

²¹ Welsh Parliament, [The Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up funds: what's the latest?](#), May 2022



Delivering local government services to help people in poverty

03

- 3.1 In this final section of our report, we consider how councils are shaping their services to consider the needs of people living in poverty, looking at the importance of experience mapping and the work of poverty truth commissions. We look at how councils are changing and modernising service delivery and how they need to shape these responses to consider people in poverty. Finally, we consider how councils evaluate past work to help determine future policy choices and consider the robustness of socio-economic impact assessments.

The lived experience of poverty is mostly not shaping council service delivery

- 3.2 Because people often only seek help at the point of crisis, it is crucial that councils create person-centred services. This is especially important in respect of poverty which carries a stigma of embarrassment and shame. People we spoke to noted that by the time they seek help, they are often dealing with extremely personal and seemingly impossible problems, which creates considerable stress and anxiety. If councils are to fully understand the nature of living with poverty, and how the decisions they take and the services they deliver improve or worsen this experience, then they need to understand what it is like to navigate your way through what can often be complex and daunting council processes.
- 3.3 Working to understand these experiences at scale is best done through experience mapping – **Exhibit 6**.

Exhibit 6 – Experience mapping

Experience mapping can help a council understand the overall experience a customer has with its services, physical and digital. It then allows councils to make better-informed decisions when setting policy and agreeing budgets to ensure they are doing all they can to help people in poverty. Identifying barriers that are common to people seeking support from councils can prompt changes to services making it a less daunting and more inclusive experience for people.

Elements of a successful experience would include:

- focusing on poverty from the user's lived experience to determine whether services are geared and structured to help tackle poverty;
- judging how well councils are targeting resources where they can have the most effect;
- collaborating with people to understand the causes behind their experiences of poverty;
- ensuring consistent face-to-face contact is the norm to offer a personal service and to talk through the process and act as an advocate to help them navigate through services;
- working to understand 'what matters' to that person;
- understanding the barriers to that person accessing services –where the pinch points are, and whether services are sufficiently co-ordinated and integrated; and
- involving the individual in creating an action plan that helps lift them out of poverty.



- 3.4 One approach to gathering 'lived experience' views to help inform policy and budget choices is through the use of 'Poverty Truth Commissions.' Poverty Truth Commissions are models of direct citizen engagement in decision-making, usually hosted by councils but independent of them. They bring together people with lived experiences of poverty, decision-makers, public and private-sector leaders and wider civil society. A nationally recognised model of practice, Poverty Truth Commissions enable residents to directly inform and shape the policies and programmes of councils and partners to ensure those experiencing poverty offer challenge and feedback.

- 3.5 An additional benefit of the Commissions is the relationships that are forged between the community – both sets of Commissioners will gain valuable insight from the other, who can then feed this intelligence back to their social and professional networks. They have proved successful in enabling councils like Glasgow and Leeds to design services that better meet the needs of people in poverty.
- 3.6 The Swansea Poverty Truth Commission²² brings together those living at the sharp end of poverty with key decision makers to work together towards tackling and overcoming poverty in Swansea. It is placing those affected by poverty at the heart of decision-making about poverty by creating safe spaces for people with lived experience of poverty to tell their stories, build relationships with each other, and with influential decision makers in the local area. The Swansea commission has just been established and is in the early stages of organising its programme of work. However, other councils have not adopted this model and people we interviewed noted that service users are not consistently shaping policies, service delivery choices and budgets for tackling and alleviating poverty.

The experience of commissioners in Swansea...

'Going to the services is like continually hitting a brick wall. Not just having to repeat the story all the time, it's being unable to reach a person who is not a jobsworth.'

'There needs to be recognition that services cavuse a lot of people's trauma. Whether that is social care, education or health. A lot of the services cause trauma. Not even just about communication. The system has processes to work through that are damaging.'

'It's like the underground with the train coming into the platform and it's 'mind the gap.' This gap has just got wider and wider over the years.'



Source: Audit Wales interview with the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission, April 2022

Councils are changing how they deliver services as a result of the pandemic and ongoing budget pressures, but the new models of delivery are not always helping people in poverty

- 3.7 The pandemic created many challenges for councils. Offices, schools and workplaces closed, and face-to-face interactions between many staff and people requiring services stopped. Consequently, councils had to respond creatively to ensure that the services people needed and depended on were available and accessible. In the wake of the pandemic, these innovative solutions, strategies, and technologies have helped to create a new service delivery landscape.
- 3.8 Councils and citizens alike are now living in a challenging and transformative climate where 'brick-and-mortar' provision is less prevalent and relevant, and digital is becoming the default options for many services. For some councils, this is part of a journey that they embarked on pre-pandemic. For others, it is just the beginning. For all councils, however, it is important they continue to connect with and work to help those who most need their assistance, in particular people in poverty. This should be central to the decisions and choices they make.

Shifting services online continues to grow in importance but digital exclusion remains a major challenge, especially for people in poverty

- 3.9 There are clear benefits to shifting to digital services, for both service users and councils. Encouraging those who are at most risk of poverty to access services online helps people to be more self-reliant, gives them access to up-to-date advice and can help users who are unable to travel long distances access the services they need. For councils, they are able to reduce administration costs, and with a well-designed system, can ensure services are better integrated.
- 3.10 However, digitising services can cause difficulties. Data published by the Office for National Statistics²³ (ONS) shows that the number of people who have never used the internet remains stubbornly high in Wales – 8% of the population. This is higher than Scotland and England but lower than Northern Ireland. The areas in Wales with the poorest levels of connectivity are Powys (20.3%); Central South Wales Valleys (15.4%); and Gwent Valleys (14%). The areas with the best connectivity and internet usage are Monmouthshire and Newport (4.2%); Swansea (5.3%); and Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan (5.4%).

- 3.11 In terms of economic activity status, at a UK level those with the poorest levels of internet usage are retired people (28.9% of whom never or rarely use the internet) and people who are economically inactive (9.5% of the total). Research published by Lloyds²⁴ also found that Wales has the highest number of people who have not used the internet in the last three months – 13% of the population – and those earning under £20,000 are more likely to be offline and less able to use digital services.
- 3.12 Ensuring the growing shift to digital does not leave anyone behind or, if people struggle to access services digitally, support is put in place to help them is therefore critical. We found that most councils recognise the problem of digital exclusion, with 14 of the 22 Welsh councils having adopted a digital strategy and many of these focus on tackling digital exclusion. For example, Cardiff Council's digital strategy makes a commitment to reduce potential exclusion from digital services by:
- a employing officers with specific responsibilities for digital inclusion;
 - b providing 4G devices to those who are unable to afford to purchase equipment;
 - c offering digital surgeries across the city;
 - d introducing free weekly drop-in sessions to provide help assistance to people who are less IT confident; and
 - e creating a dedicated public phone line for digital queries.
- 3.13 However, the range and comprehensiveness of support in Cardiff is not always replicated elsewhere. While 15 of the 22 councils specifically reference the negative impact of digital exclusion as an area for action in a corporate plan or strategy, only 12 councils are providing people with access to a digital skills inclusion programmes and only five provide devices to help people access online services. In addition, no council has a single landing page or dedicated web resources focussed on poverty that bring together all the councils work in one easy-to-find area which proactively promotes in a single place what people need to do get the help they require.
- 3.14 One priority of the Welsh Government's Child Poverty: Income Maximisation Action Plan is to ensure families in Wales are supported to claim all the financial support they are entitled to through the development of a 'tell us once' approach. Having a 'single entry point' to services helps to reduce complexity in the system and places the citizen at the heart of service delivery by requiring councils to make the links and provide services rather than someone having to write, telephone or even attend each service individually to ask for help.

3.15 The findings from our review highlight that councils still administer, manage and provide services in a wide variety of ways and no council has created a single gateway into services. For example, people have to complete multiple application forms that often record the same information when applying for similar services. Having to tell and re-tell your story in order to access related services, as information is not shared between organisations, can discourage people from seeking help. For instance, links with other types of support provided by other organisations such as managing debt, food banks and wider advice vary widely. There is also an enduring resistance to sharing information across systems, between council departments and with partners because of concerns over data protection and a fear of being penalised.

Comprehensive and integrated publicity, advice and information services can significantly help people who are struggling but the picture across Wales is mixed, and councils find it hard to prioritise preventative work because of the high numbers of people in crisis

3.16 The public service landscape is wide, varied and complex with a mix of organisations from different sectors delivering a huge range of services which are rarely co-ordinated with one another. People can find it difficult to navigate the system and access the support they need, particularly when they are struggling to make ends meet.

3.17 We found some positive examples of how council and third-sector services are integrating and collaborating to provide a comprehensive response focused on helping people in need. For instance, in Cardiff, the local Citizens Advice Bureau, the Cardiff and Vale Credit Union and Cardiff Council advice services operate from community Hubs across the city. Through this collaborative work the council and its partners are providing a one-stop advice service which is helping people to access more money and support.

3.18 Similarly, Denbighshire County Borough Council are working through the Rhyl Community Development Board to target those in the most need and provide support and assistance. Some councils also regularly run advertising campaigns to ensure people are aware of what is available and to what they are entitled. Flintshire's [Holiday Hunger](#) campaign which supported the distribution of thousands of meals during school holidays and Neath Port Talbot and Swansea councils' joint communication campaign to increase take-up of pension credit.

- 3.19 However, these approaches are not always replicated, and some councils operate independently of partners, which can create difficulties for people in poverty. Those we spoke to noted that they often find it hard to find information, do not know where to start, or who to go to, particularly when multiple organisations offer similar services. Feedback from people who use advice services noted that when they are able to access services quickly and can get in-depth advice and support, this is often sufficient to prevent smaller problems turning into an unmanageable crisis.
- 3.20 Citizens Advice Cymru and Swansea Council both noted that people are often reluctant to engage with a council and seek help if they also owe money to them, fearing that the council will pursue them for non-payment of debt. To address this, Swansea Council is developing a Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy which will set out the principles for supporting people that have overdue personal debt with the council.
- 3.21 During interviews, most officers felt that council activity is mostly focused on dealing with people in crisis rather than preventing people getting into poverty in the first place. This is mostly a reflection of the high levels of demand for services from people who are struggling day to day and are unable to manage without support. For example, Citizens Advice recently reported that demand for their services has increased by 200% in the last two years²⁵. We also found that the main focus of prevention work is the provision of timely advice, especially ensuring people access the benefits they are entitled to, and supporting people into employment. These services can be provided directly by councils but also by third-sector bodies, in particular, organisations like Citizens Advice.

Community hubs offer an opportunity for councils to help people at the point of crisis

- 3.22 Shifting services to communities, particularly through the development of community hubs, allowed councils to co-ordinate responses and ensure services remained available during the pandemic. These hubs strengthened the visibility of council services in the community during the pandemic and were often the first port of call for vulnerable people. With poverty in mind they can also act as the first port of call to ensure people get help.
- 3.23 Some provided services directly while others offered a triage service, assessing need and making referrals to other council or partner services. During the pandemic, they helped distribute fuel poverty funding and fast-tracked self-isolation payments. For example, Cardiff created 22 community hubs, Ceredigion has five community hubs, Newport four community hubs, and under the North Wales Economic Ambition Board there are five Covid Support Hubs.

²⁵ <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2022-10-03/its-a-scary-time-citizens-advice-sees-200-jump-in-people-needing-help>

3.24 Hubs are also often multi-purpose, providing and hosting a range of activities and services that are used by lots of different people. The range of services reflects local need and may be delivered by local people, other organisations or public agencies. They also support better joint working and more integrated services. They can transform existing, unused buildings and provide a focus for community-led regeneration. Their core strength is that they provide a stronger presence in communities and are able to respond more quickly to people who are struggling. Community hubs can therefore help build more cohesive and resilient communities.

Understanding the potential impact of policy decisions and knowing what works vary widely

3.25 Understanding the impact of policy and budget decisions, both at the point you agree action but also when you evaluate the impact and success of your decisions, is essential if councils are to maximise their efforts in tackling and alleviating poverty. A thorough and informed impact assessment will help public services to avoid making bad decisions and support them to deliver their legal responsibilities. And having comprehensive, good quality and relevant data that is evaluated, scrutinised and challenged will strengthen accountability and enable corrective action to be taken quickly.

All councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, but the approach varies and is not always effective

3.26 The Socio-economic Duty came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021. It aims to improve decision making and help those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Councils now have to think about how their strategic decisions, such as setting objectives and developing public services, can improve equality of outcome for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. In particular, when making strategic decisions on tackling poverty, councils must demonstrate how they are effectively considering the views of those affected by those decisions. This can only be achieved by involving people through effective engagement and consultation, considering their views carefully and ensuring that policy reflects the views of citizens.

3.27 We found that all councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of decisions. Many use an integrated impact assessment that brings together all statutory and key corporate policy considerations in one place, focussing on the implications in relation to, most usually, corporate plan priorities; well-being objectives; the Welsh language; equalities; wider council legal, people and finance issues; and the new socio-economic duty. Some also consider the Human Rights Act and the UN convention of human rights for children.

- 3.28 Swansea Council has a comprehensive integrated impact assessment that not only considers in detail the likely impact of a policy decision on the various statutory responsibilities but also includes sections covering:
- a involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is co-producing with;
 - b an assessment of the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the policy is considered in the round showing how it links across services provided across the council;
 - c how the council service will monitor and evaluate impact to be able to make changes swiftly; and
 - d an action plan setting out the activities the Council will take as a result of the Integrated Impact Assessment.
- 3.29 Caerphilly also includes six detailed socio-economic assessments rather than a single catch-all consideration. These cover specific assessments looking at low income/income poverty; low and/or no wealth; material deprivation; area deprivation; socio-economic background; and socio-economic disadvantage. This enables the Council to consider socio-economic issues in significant depth to better target action.
- 3.30 We also found weaknesses in other councils' socio-economic impact assessments. Several impact assessments we reviewed concluded that there is no need to conduct a thorough assessment even when the policy has clear socio-economic implication. For example, reductions in services and cuts in budgets. In others we found that some completed assessments were very brief, skirting over the potential socio-economic impact of a policy and lacked detail on critical socio-economic implications in relation to COVID Recovery plans, changes to criteria for grants and other assistance. And this was despite several councils framing the policy presented for decision in helping it to address poverty.
- 3.31 The evidence drawn on and used to complete assessments also varies in terms of depth and quality and not all use the rigour adopted in Swansea and Caerphilly. For instance, we found consultation and involvement information was often out of date drawing on pre-pandemic data or insufficient to provide meaningful feedback to help shape conclusions in the impact assessment.

Understanding need and drawing on a wide range of data to shape responses remain an area for improvement and most councils struggle to demonstrate the value of their work in alleviating and tackling poverty

- 3.32 Good understanding of local and national data is needed to develop specific, timely actions that can make the most impact. It also enables councils to identify effective programmes with positive outcomes, which is essential to creating effective oversight and scrutiny of activity. Most councils draw on WIMD data to identify local areas of deprivation. Whilst this is a useful foundation, this data is mostly historic and out of date. It is now particularly weak as it was last updated prior to both the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis²⁶.
- 3.33 We found, however, that councils are not making full use of the significant amounts of data they collect and hold. At present, councils focus more on recording delivery of specific projects capturing numbers assisted and not enough on impact, wellbeing and the wider benefits of investment. These weaknesses and limitations in coverage and focus do not allow for a comprehensive evaluation of performance, especially as councils often report information in silos and do not collate data to enable a comprehensive picture of activity and impact across the council to be drawn. Similarly, we found that there is little comparison or benchmarking of performance with other councils to help identify opportunities for improvement. This is not helped by the lack of national indicators and targets. As a result, while councils can identify the actions they are taking, these weaknesses make it difficult to truly know how well they are performing and whether the resources they are spending are making the best impact they can and represent value for money.
- 3.34 Efforts to improve data gathering and analysis to better target actions and impact are therefore an area for improvement. The Isle of Anglesey and Ceredigion councils have developed dashboards of publicly available data to help prioritise future action. The Isle of Anglesey worked in collaboration with Data Cymru to develop such a dashboard.
- 3.35 Going further, Neath Port Talbot uses a low-income tracker that combines council and publicly available data to improve how and where they target support for those who are known to the council and already receive services. In addition, Data Cymru has recently published a [data tool](#) that collates publicly available key data in one place.
- 3.36 Cardiff collects good data to demonstrate the impact of its interventions. In 2020-21, the Council assisted roughly 17,000 people through its advice centre and through the Adviceline, and claimed an additional £14 million in welfare benefits for people. Similarly, the 'Caerphilly Cares' programme in 2020-21 secured an additional £5 million of income for council-house tenants in the county borough and prevented any evictions from council housing.

26 The [Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) was last updated in 2019.



Appendices

1 Audit approach and methods

1 Audit approach and methods

Approach

Our approach was to understand councils' strategic planning and delivery of actions to support those who live in poverty. We examined the ability to alleviate the immediate impact of poverty on people, as well as councils' ability to tackle it as an issue in the long term.

This report sits alongside other forthcoming reviews examining how councils empower the resilience of communities and the role of social enterprises in delivering public services. Combined they serve to examine how councils empower citizens to tackle and prevent issues developing into a crisis that requires statutory intervention.

We examined all 22 principal councils in Wales at a high level, managing delivery to be mindful of the pressures council officers are under during both the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. We ensured coverage was sufficient to draw a view on the whole sector but not to significantly detract from officers' delivery. Our approach was flexible to fit around officers when agreeing and delivering our fieldwork.

Methods

We completed our review between April 2021 and September 2022 and used a range of methods in delivering our review:

- **document review:** we reviewed documentation from the Welsh Government, councils, Public Service Boards and other relevant public bodies. We also reviewed a range of publications from charities, representative groups, other public bodies in other UK countries, and publications by the UK Government.
- **interviews** – we undertook a range of different interview types:
 - officer interviews – we interviewed officers nominated by all Welsh principal councils, generally those with responsibility for poverty or an associated service area, such as employability, benefits, or Welsh Government programmes. These took place between January and May 2022.
 - national interviews – we interviewed representatives of Welsh charities, food banks, third-sector groups, and civil servants. We also interviewed representatives of UK charities, organisations, and officers of councils in other UK countries. These took place between March and July 2022.
 - academic interviews – we interviewed academics focused on poverty and destitution from three UK universities. These took place between March and April 2022.
- **focus groups** – we undertook two types of focus groups:
 - officer focus groups – in line with our approach, some councils felt it was more appropriate for us to speak to a range of officers in focus groups to reduce our impact on service delivery.
 - lived experience focus group – we held a focus group in April 2022 with representatives of Swansea Poverty Truth Commission to understand and listen to their experiences.
- **survey** – we surveyed 16 clients of Rhondda Cynon Taf Citizens Advice for their experiences of poverty in June 2022.
- **data analysis** – we collected and analysed a range of publicly available datasets from the Welsh Government, the UK Government, the Office for National Statistics, and third-sector organisations.



Audit Wales

24 Cathedral Road

Cardiff

CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

We welcome telephone calls in
Welsh and English.

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix C

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Tackling Poverty Service

Directorate: Adult Social Services

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:

This is an IIA Screening for the 'For Information' Report to the Audit & Governance Committee regarding the recent publication by Audit Wales of the 'Time to Change – Poverty in Wales' report of the Auditor General for Wales (published 1 November 2022).

The report is to inform the Committee of the findings of Audit Wales' investigation, summarise the recommendations of their review and highlight the proposals for actions to be taking by the Council in response to the review. These actions will be incorporated into the refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

A full IIA will be carried out as part of the Tackling Poverty Strategy development in due course.

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

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further investigation
	+	-	+	-	+	-	
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix C

Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

In relation to the Audit Wales investigation, Council staff contributed to the review undertaken by the Auditor General for Wales through a series of interviews and the provision of documentation / information between April 2021 and September 2022.

In relation to the actions proposed in this report, we plan to take these actions through our planned approach to refreshing the Council’s Tackling Poverty Strategy. We intend to undertake a range of activities working with our poverty networks and forums as well as targeted engagement and consultation activities but this will be highlighted in our update on the strategy development approach.

A full IIA will be carried out as part of the Tackling Poverty Strategy development in due course.

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

Medium risk

Low risk

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?
 Yes No **If yes, please provide details below**

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix C

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.)

N/A at this stage.

Outcome of Screening

Q8 Please describe the outcome of your screening below:

- **Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)**
- **Summary of involvement (Q3)**
- **WFG considerations (Q4)**
- **Any risks identified (Q5)**
- **Cumulative impact (Q7)**

This is an IIA Screening for the 'For Information' Report to the Audit & Governance Committee regarding the recent publication by Audit Wales of the 'Time to Change – Poverty in Wales' report of the Auditor General for Wales. The recommendations of this investigation are for Councils to incorporate into their approach to tackling poverty.

The report is to inform the Committee of the findings of Audit Wales' investigation, summarise the recommendations of their review and highlight the proposals for actions to be taking by the Council in response to the review (which are to be incorporated into the plans for refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy). This report has identified no implications with the IIA.

A full IIA will be carried out as part of the Tackling Poverty Strategy development in due course.

(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: Lee Cambule
Job title: Tackling Poverty Service Manager
Date: 23/12/22

Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Amy Hawkins
Position: Head of Adult Social Services and Tackling Poverty
Date: 04/01/23

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form – Appendix C

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

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 11 January 2023

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 2022/23 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 2022/23 (Closed actions removed).

Governance & Audit Committee - Action Tracker 2021/2022

Date of Meeting	Minute Ref	Action	Nominated Officer(s)	Status
14/12/22	74	Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan 2022-23		
		It was noted that an Accounts Receivable update would be provided in January 2023 and added to the Work Plan.	Rachael Davies / Michelle Davies / Jeremy Parkhouse	Closed Included on agenda for the 11/01/23 meeting.
14/12/22	70	Annual Review of Performance 2021-22		
		The content of the report be noted and forwarded to Council for approval and to include the following: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlation between parts 1, 2 and 3, ensuring they are all in harmony prior to the report being presented to Council and if they are not in harmony, outlining the reasons why. Ensuring the report is proof read prior to being presented to Council. 	Richard Rowlands	Ongoing Report scheduled to be reported to Council on 30/03/23.
		The following be added to the 2022/23 report: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider methods & methodologies for 2022/23 in parts 1, 2, 3. Linking the performance and risk assessments for 2022/23. Recognizing improvements that would need to be articulated within the report around stronger analysis. Improving the links between consultation engagement and stakeholder reference. 	Richard Rowlands	Ongoing To be included in the 2022/23 report.
14/12/22	66	Fundamental Audits 2021/22 Recommendation Tracker		
		The Director of Finance raising the issue of long-standing debt disputed invoices with CMT and highlight invoices which had not been addressed by services for 90 days. The Interim Director of Corporate Services stated that she would clarify the matter with the Director of Finance.	Ness Young / Ben Smith	Closed Action completed and email circulated to the Committee on 15/12/22.
	66	Adding a graph to highlight the performance of Fundamental audits, similar to the graph used for standard audits.	Simon Cockings	Ongoing For consideration.
	66	The Oracle Fusion project and identifying clear completion dates in order to hold Officers to account.	Ness Young	Ongoing Updated deadlines to be included in next

				quarterly Fundamental Audits Tracker report.
14/12/22	65	Internal Audit Recommendation Follow-Up Report Quarter 2 2022/23		
		Categorisation of audits and implementation recommendations, particularly more detail being provided in respect of Fundamental Audits which were higher risk and including part implemented as a categorisation for some recommendations.	Simon Cockings	Ongoing
	65	Action taken in respect of Archives valuations and the planned follow-up.	Simon Cockings	Ongoing
09/11/22	62	Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan 2022/23		
		The Chair referred to the CIPFA new guidance model and added that she had asked the Chief Legal Officer to look at the Committee's terms of reference to see if changes were required.	Tracey Meredith / Chair	Ongoing
		The Chair had asked the Chief Auditor to examine a CIPFA questionnaire which would allow the Committee to examine its effectiveness.	Simon Cockings / Ben Smith / Chair	Ongoing The questionnaire has been forwarded to the Chair for consideration. The committee will need to determine how it wishes to undertake the performance review, with either Democratic Services or Audit Wales facilitating the review as has been the case in the past.
09/11/22	60	Social Services Directorate: Internal Control Environment 2022/23		
		The Chair requested that the Quarter 3 Risk report includes the directorate level risks for Social Services in order to provide the Committee with assurance.	David Howes / Richard Rowlands	Ongoing Details to be provided in the Corporate Risk Overview Quarter 3 2022/23 report in February 2023.
09/11/22	57	Moderate Report – Destination Lettings 2022/23		
		Ensuring that the processes put in place by Officers are effective and a future update being provided.	Sue Reed / Jamie Rewbridge	Ongoing Update report added to the Work Plan for 12/04/23.
09/11/22	56	Internal Audit Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2022/23		
		The Chair asked if audit could include 'performance' into the scope of their Corporate Governance review. The Principal Auditor stated that the review of Corporate Governance would be reported later in the financial year.	Simon Cockings / Nick Davies	Ongoing Consideration will be given to include 'performance monitoring' elements as part of the Corporate Governance review. Note also that as advised by the Strategic

				Delivery & Performance Manager, Audit Wales periodically review performance monitoring arrangements within the Council and will report finding back to the committee in due course.
		The Chair highlighted the escalating costs in respect of the Oracle Cloud project and queried when it would be reviewed. The Principal Auditor stated that he would liaise with the appropriate staff regarding starting the Oracle Cloud review and update the Committee.	Simon Cockings / Nick Davies	Ongoing Meeting has been arranged for the 15 th December with the Director of Resources and Head of Digital and Customer Services to agree the scope of the review, with a view to commencing the audit in quarter 4.
27/09/22	47	Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan 2022-2023		
		Public Participation Strategy to be reported to a future meeting.	Huw Evans	Ongoing The report is scheduled for Council on 02/02/23.
27/09/22	41	Employment of Agency Staff Audit Report 2019/20 - 2022 Update		
		Provision of details of agency workers employed for more than 12 months in a future report.	Adrian Chard	Ongoing Work commenced to review and report back to Committee. Added to the Work Plan for February 2023.
		Provision of details of high usage of agency workers against high sickness levels in a future report.	Adrian Chard	Ongoing Work commenced to review and report back to Committee. Added to the Work Plan for February 2023.
		Provision of details of agency worker figures from the amalgamated Parks and Cleansing Services.	Adrian Chard	Ongoing Work commenced to review and report back to Committee. Added to the Work Plan for February 2023.
27/09/22	40	Absence Management Audit Report Update		
		Provision of additional details including reasons in relation to sickness within the Social Services Directorate.	Adrian Chard	Ongoing Work commenced to review and report back to Committee. Added to the Work Plan for February 2023.
27/09/22		The Chair requested that an evaluation of the effectiveness of Occupational Health be completed.	Rachael Davies	Ongoing A review of sickness management and the end-to-end absence management process including Occupational Health will be completed by September 2023. The timeline

				is expected to be completed by the end of September 2023.
31/05/22	7	Draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22		
		The Annual Governance Statement be agreed and subject to the amendments highlighted by the Committee being added, be forwarded to Council for approval as part of the Statement of Accounts.	Ben Smith	<p>Ongoing Statement of Accounts to be approved by Council. Closure of accounts formally deferred pending national developments on accounting code of practice and Audit Wales approach to all Councils (predominantly balance sheet valuation matters). Draft signed accounts with Audit Wales and audit underway.</p> <p>Anticipated coming to March Council. Audit Training provisionally booked for 28 February – special audit committee required to receive accounts</p>
12/04/22	93	Audit Wales Report – City & County of Swansea Annual Audit Summary 2021		
		The Committee requested that an update be provided regarding the current position of discussions. He added that a joint Council & AW note would be circulated to the Committee regarding progress made.	Ben Smith	<p>Ongoing Historic debt delisting from stock exchange achieved in full during 21-22. Detailed work continued during 21-22 with AW locally re historic valuation of assets and reserve split. Position now signed off by AW technical team and considered by S151 evidenced to be not material for 21-22 and thus should fully resolve immediate ongoing qualification issue. Work to be progressed on wider historical tracking back on both sides. Emerging audit issue across all Councils over historic infrastructure asset valuations which raise new qualification risk, but this is a sector wide not Swansea specific risk. Draft signed accounts with Audit Wales and audit underway.</p> <p>Anticipated coming to March Council. Governance & Audit Committee Training</p>

				provisionally booked for 28 February – Special Governance & Audit Committee required to receive accounts.
08/03/22	87	Governance & Audit Committee Work Plan		
		The Deputy Chief Executive added that the recent split of the former Resources Directorate into the Finance and Corporate Services Directorates meant that the updates on the control environment reports in respect of both departments would be provided during the next Municipal year.	Ness Young / Richard Rowlands	Ongoing The Director of Corporate Service will present a control environment report to the Committee in April 2023.
08/02/22	76	Place: Internal Control Environment 2021/22		
		The Chair referred to Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and requested additional information be provided in future reports surrounding both positive and negative results, particularly regarding high levels of sickness in Waste, Parks and Cleansing. She requested that assurance be provided regarding high sickness levels and the use of agency staff as cover.	Mark Wade	Ongoing Added to 2022/2023 Work Plan for February 2023. An additional dedicated Absence Management Resource is being trialled across the Place service areas. One of the early areas targeted was Waste, Parks and Cleansing where absence levels (excluding Covid) reduced from 5.65% to 5.51% over the four months of the trial. The additional resource has now been made permanent and will continue to be rotated around the Place service areas to ensure progress is maintained.
08/02/22	74	Internal Audit Recommendation Follow-Up Report - Quarter 3 2021/22		
		The Chair highlighted that a suitable solution in respect of External Audit Recommendation Tracking should be found as soon as possible in order for the Council to have a far better control of the situation.	Ness Young / Richard Rowlands	Ongoing A software solution will be rolled out during 2022/23.

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 11 January 2023

Governance & Audit Committee – Work Plan 2022/23

Purpose:	This report details the Governance & Audit Committee Workplan to May 2023.
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 2023 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 2022/23 is attached at Appendix 3.
- 1.4 The Scrutiny & Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory (AIR) Reports (2022/23) 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 2022/23 were approved at the Council's Annual Meeting on 24 May 2022.

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 2023 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 2022/23.
- Appendix 4 - Scrutiny & Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory (AIR) Reports (2022/23).
- Appendix 5 - Governance & Audit Committee Terms of Reference.

Terms of Reference	31 May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023
Training	Governance and Audit Committee Induction Training	Organisational Knowledge / Committee Role & Function / Financial management & accounting / External audit / Values of good governance	Corporate complaints / Governance / Performance management & monitoring					Counter fraud	Corporate complaints Update / Cyber Security	Understanding Financial Statements		
Governance & Assurance	Election of Chair & Vice Chair Appointment of Committee Member on Annual Governance Group Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 Draft Governance & Audit Committee Annual Report		Local Code of Corporate Governance: Framework of Assurance Overview of Governance & Assurance arrangements - Partnerships & Collaborations Workforce Strategy Update Update Report – South West Wales CJC		The Annual Review of Performance 2021-22 (including Self-Assessment Report) Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual letter to the Council for the period 2020-21	Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22.		Transformation Goals & Strategy Review	Annual Complaints Report	Update on the Council's transformation programme, including governance	Council partnerships (Governance) Public Participation Strategy	
Internal Audit	Internal Audit Annual Report	IA Quarter 4 Monitoring Report Service Centre – Accounts Receivable Update. FOI/SAR/EIR Audit Update IA Recommendation Tracking Report Q4	Annual Report of School Audits 2021-22 Internal Audit Report - Accounts Receivable Action Plan.		IA Recommendation Tracking Report – IA Q1 Recommendations Tracker IA Quarter 1 Monitoring Report Management of Absence Update Employment of Agency Staff		IA Q 2 Monitoring Report Moderate Report – Destination Lettings	IA Recommendation Follow-up Report – Q2 Fundamental Audits – Recommendation Tracker Report Rechargeable Works Western Bay Adoption Services & Adoption Allowances	Accounts Receivable	IA Recommendation Tracking Report – Q3 IA Q 3 Monitoring Report Management of Absence Update Employment of Agency Staff	IA Annual Plan Methodology Report 2023/24 Draft IA Annual Plan 2023/24	IA Charter 2023/24 IA Strategy & Annual Plan 2023/24 Update - Moderate Report – Destination Lettings

Governance & Audit Committee Workplan 2022/23

Appendix 1

Risk Management & Performance					Q1 Risk Monitoring Report		Q2 Risk Monitoring Report	The Annual Review of Performance 2021-22 (including Self-Assessment Report)		Q3 Risk Monitoring Report		Q4 Risk Monitoring Report
Counter Fraud			Internal Audit Section – Fraud Function Annual Report 2021/2022 Internal Audit Section – Fraud Function Anti-Fraud Plan for 2022/23					Corporate Fraud – Six Month Update				
Operational matters / key risks			Complaints Report – 6 Month Update.		Update on Internal Control Environment – Director of Education		Update on Internal Control Environment - Director of Social Services / Director of Finance		Delivery of Corporate Priority – Tackling Poverty	Update on Internal Control Environment – Director of Place		Update on Internal Control Environment – Director of Corporate Services
External Audit		Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council. Audit Wales – 2022 Audit Plan			Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council. Assurance Risk Assessment (ARA) progress update letter	Joint Presentation - Audit of the Council's coming out of COVID activities		Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council.		External Audit Annual Letter Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 Audit Wales - Assurance and Risk work - carbon reduction - C&C Swansea	Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – City and County of Swansea Council. Audit Wales Annual Summary	
Financial Reporting											Statement of Accounts	

Reports Carried Over to 2023-2024 Municipal Year

Terms of Reference	Report Title
Governance & Assurance	Appointment of Committee Member on Annual Governance Group

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	December
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	TBC

Appendix 2

To review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively	Sarah Lackenby	Annual	
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	Deputy Chief Executive / 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 – May

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 year	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 – July
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 – May

Scrutiny Programme Committee – Work Plan 2022/23

ACTIVITY	19 Jul 2022	16 Aug 2022	13 Sep 2022 CANCELLED	18 Oct 2022	15 Nov 2022	13 Dec 2022
Scrutiny Work Programme	Agreement of Scrutiny Work Programme	Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22				
Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibility Q & A Sessions		Archives / Community Hub (CM for Equalities & Culture)	Fly Tipping (CM for Community Services)	Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board	Fly Tipping (CM for Community Services)	Homelessness (CM for Service Transformation)
Other Cabinet Member / Officer Reports					Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report (CM for Care Services / Director of Social Services)	
Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Reports						
Pre-decision Scrutiny				Oracle Project Investment Update		
Final Scrutiny Inquiry Reports / Follow Up on Scrutiny Recs.					Follow Up: Scrutiny Working Group - Workforce (CM for Corporate Services & Performance)	

ACTIVITY	17 Jan 2023	14 Feb 2023	14 Mar 2023	18 Apr 2023	16 May 2023	June 2023
Scrutiny Work Programme					Work Programme Review	Work Planning Conference
Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibility Q & A Sessions	Leader / Economy, Finance & Strategy (incl. focus on Policy Commitments / Council Priorities; Recovery & Transformation Plan; Council Budget)	Houses in Multiple Occupation (CM for Corporate Services & Performance)			Parks (CM for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism)	
Other Cabinet Member / Officer Reports	Delivery of Corporate Priority – Tackling Poverty (annual item) (Leader / CM for Wellbeing)	Scrutiny of Public Services Board (Draft Local Well-being Plan)	Children & Young People's Rights Scheme (annual report) (CM for Care Services / Education & Learning)	Crime & Disorder Scrutiny - Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership		
Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Improvement & Finance Education 	Adult Services	Child & Family Services	Development & Regeneration	Climate Change & Nature	
Pre-decision Scrutiny						
Final Scrutiny Inquiry Reports / Follow Up on Scrutiny Recs.			Follow Up on Bus Services Working Group recommendations (CM for Environment & Infrastructure)			

Other topics to schedule:

- Cabinet Member Q & A: Community Growing (Cabinet Member for Community Support); Community Groups, Engagement & Development (Cabinet Member for Community Support)
- Audit / Scrutiny Relationship – Discussion w/ Chair of Governance & Audit Committee
- Periodic 'Scrutiny Dispatches Impact Reports'

Scrutiny & Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory Reports (2022/23)

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.

Report Title	Type of Report	Lead Cabinet Portfolio	Scrutiny Committee / Performance Panel	Report to Scrutiny	Monitoring by Scrutiny Complete (YES / NO?)
<u>Direct Payments for Adult Social Care</u> (published April 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Care Services	Adult Services Panel	8 November 2022	YES
<u>Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030</u> (July 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Service Transformation	Climate Change & Nature Panel	10 January 2023	
<u>A report on education services in City and County of Swansea</u> (September 2022)	Estyn	Education & Learning	Education Panel	27 October 2022	NO Further monitoring scheduled for 15 Dec 22 and 20 Apr 23
<u>Equality Impact Assessments: more than a tick box exercise?</u> (September 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Equalities & Culture	Service Improvement & Finance	6 December 2022	YES
<u>'Time for Change' – Poverty in Wales</u> (November 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Economy, Finance & Strategy AND Well-being	Scrutiny Programme Committee	17 January 2022	
<u>'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises</u> (November 2022)	Audit Wales (National)	Care Services	Adult Services Panel	tbc	

<u>Regenerating Town Centres in Wales</u> (September 2021)	Audit Wales (National)	Investment, Regeneration and Tourism	Development & Regeneration Panel	20 March 2023	
---	---------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------	--

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.