



**To/
Councillor Clive Lloyd
Cabinet Member for Business
Transformation and Performance**

BY EMAIL

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:
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Overview & Scrutiny

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4th July 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Performance. The letter concerns the Wales Audit Office Report for Local Government Use of Data.

Dear Councillor Lloyd,

On the 24th June 2019 the Panel met to discuss the Wales Audit Office report on the Local Government Use of Data. We were told that the Action Plan which will accompany this report will be coming to the Panel in the next quarter.

The Panel are grateful to all who attended to provide information and answer questions.

The Panel do have some thoughts and observations to share with you.

We were told that the Wales Audit Office undertook a suite of data tools (questionnaires) against a range of issues relating to data. They also did some desktop research before arriving at the conclusions within the report. You explained that the Wales Audit Office may have expected to see a specific separate data strategy, however this is included within other strategies.

We heard from you how ensuring compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) can be difficult but the teams who work on this are doing a very good job. The word 'Data' is used to mean both numerical data and information such as addresses.

We heard that sharing data between departments has been a challenge and that legal opinions can differ on guidance around GDPR even between Councils. Using information effectively should help to breakdown silos between departments and lead to a more cohesive delivery of services. We discussed that there have been instances where departments within the Council have not communicated effectively and shared information as well as they could have; so we welcome data sharing for

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these purposes. There is still much work to do to develop an overall definition that can be used to develop effective practice around data use.

We were told how personal data is not shared between departments unless people give express permission and this process is being worked on by departments. However, individuals can contact the Council to find out what their information is being used for.

You explained that there is an intention to develop a 'Corporate Approach' to peoples data so that there is an online account that can be updated by the individual it relates to. We look forward to hearing how this develops.

It was interesting to hear that technology is advancing so that anonymised data can be used to develop Applications (Apps) which could potentially be used to help plan projects and budget decisions. We were also told that evidence based decisions using anonymised data are part of long-term plans and could provide cross-cutting and cross-departmental reports in the future to assist in work planning. Again, we will look forward to seeing how this technology develops and what part it plays in Council decision making and policies.

It was pleasing to hear that the Council have a good working relationship with the Information Commissioners Office and significant training has been delivered to ensure staff are up to date. Ongoing training and development are essential to ensure lessons are always being learned and we are at the forefront of the issue.

One issue that was discussed was the use of social media and the information which can be accessed from it. We were told that relevant topical issues or public concerns are picked up by the Council so they can be addressed and monitored where possible. We wonder whether all relevant Facebook and Twitter accounts (including those of elected members) are regularly monitored for information? If so, do we let people know this is happening?

We also had a query around how data is managed by Social Services and the database that is used to do this, considering this is some of the most sensitive data the Council hold.

We would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by 25th July 2019 and welcome any thoughts you may have. Could you please address the following questions in your response?

1. We were told that relevant topical issues or public concerns are picked up by the Council so they can be addressed and monitored where possible but we wonder whether all relevant Facebook and Twitter accounts (including those of elected members) are regularly monitored for information? If so, do we let people know this is happening?
2. We also had a query around how data is managed by Social Services and the database which is used to do this, considering this is some of the most sensitive data the Council hold. Can you provide some clarification around this?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CHolley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
✉ cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk