



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

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This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Justine Morgan and Colin Davies under the direction of Huw Rees.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

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The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

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

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Summary report

2018-19 performance audit work

- 1 To decide the range and nature of the work we would undertake during the year, we considered how much we already know from all previous audit and inspection work and from other sources of information including Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (the Council) own mechanisms for review and evaluation. For 2018-19, we undertook improvement assessment work; an assurance and risk assessment project and work in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act at all councils. At some councils, we supplemented this work with local risk-based audits, identified in the Audit Plan for 2018-19.
- 2 The work carried out since the last Annual Improvement Report (AIR), including that of the relevant regulators, is set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement

- 3 Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2019-20.

Recommendations and proposals for improvement

- 4 Given the wide range of services provided by the Council and the challenges it is facing, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
 - make proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, we would expect it to do something about them and we will follow up what happens;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
 - conduct a special inspection, publish a report and make recommendations; and
 - recommend to ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.

- 5 During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations. However, we have made a number of proposals for improvement and these are repeated in this report. We will monitor progress against them and relevant recommendations made in our national reports ([Appendix 3](#)) as part of our improvement assessment work.

Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19

Exhibit 1: audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2018-19

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
March 2019	<p>Assurance and Risk Assessment Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources; • putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and • acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them. 	<p>Arising from this project we identified the following topics for inclusion in our audit programme at the council for 2019-20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Strategy / Use of Data / Performance Management Arrangements – a project to be scoped with Council officers to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) help shape the initiatives and actions deriving from the Council's new Data Strategy; and b) consider and evaluate the effectiveness with which data is utilised in managing the performance of Council services. • Support development of the role of the Audit Committee 	None

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
August 2019	<p>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</p> <p>Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when developing new community based models of service with a focus on early intervention and prevention, choice, control and independence to meet the following wellbeing objective:</p> <p>People – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone</p> <p>A copy of the Auditor General's report can be found here.</p>	<p>The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing and implementing the new community based models of service, and recognises a number of areas where it could further embed the five ways of working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has clearly considered how the new community based models of service will meet short-term and long-term needs and the partnership recognises the need to review the funding mechanism to ensure long-term sustainability; • The new community based models of service are focused on preventing problems from occurring and/or worsening in the future; • The Council has taken an integrated approach to delivering the new community based models of service and has considered how these services contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals, its own wellbeing objectives, and the wellbeing objectives of other public bodies; • The Council is collaborating well with its partners in designing and developing the new community based models of service; and • The Council is effectively involving stakeholders in the design and delivery of the new community based models of service. 	<p>Whilst our examination did not make any proposals for improvement, we identified issues for the Council to consider in developing its future plans for the new community based models of service. These are detailed in our full report.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
December 2018	<p>Annual audit letter 2017-18 Letter summarising the key messages arising from the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and his reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. The Annual Audit Letter is in Appendix 2 of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources; • The Auditor General is satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources but there remains scope for the Council to make further improvements; • Local authorities in Wales face significant financial challenges; and • The AGW's work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the accounts or key financial systems. 	None
Local risk-based performance audit			
August 2019	<p>Leisure Services Review of the arrangements the council has put in place to deliver leisure services building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.</p>	<p>The Council, in responding to the challenges of austerity, has invested appropriately in a model of delivering leisure services based upon its strategic vision and priorities. The Council's investment has realised increased membership and income but it is too early to evaluate any impact on long term well-being.</p>	None

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
August 2019	<p>Environmental Health</p> <p>Review of the arrangements the council has put in place to deliver environmental health services building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.</p>	<p>The Council has carried out a comprehensive risk-based assessment of its ability to deliver its statutory environmental health obligations in an increasingly challenging financial climate. To date, this has allowed the Council to shape its environmental health services within the available financial envelope and with a clear focus on strategic outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for environmental health services have reduced since 2014-15, with further reductions likely to be necessary in future years; • Service leads consider that the Council is meeting its statutory environmental health obligations; • There is an outcomes-focused corporate performance framework in place, which is in line with good practice. However, there is no holistic overview of how environmental health services are performing in the context of the wider Public Health Protection and Community service; • There is good challenge and oversight of environmental health matters when included on Scrutiny Committees' agenda; 	<p>P1 The Council should refresh its analysis of statutory/discretionary environmental health functions to ensure it remains a relevant and robust information base for any future decisions around budgets and service changes.</p> <p>P2 As part of a fresh analysis of statutory/discretionary services in environmental health, the Council should formally agree what constitutes 'required' and 'better' levels of environmental service provision for each service area. This will enable the Council to reinforce the focus on key statutory priorities and make better-informed decisions around future service provision, whilst increasing transparency for residents.</p> <p>P3 The Council should undertake an annual self-assessment of the effectiveness of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in line with an appropriate framework, for example the FRC Corporate Governance Code, to provide additional assurance to members.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council engages with residents regarding proposed changes where these are likely to affect frontline services; • The Council has begun exploring alternative delivery models and innovation to improve efficiency and value for money; and • The Council has good strategic planning arrangements in place for environmental health services. 	
August 2019	<p>Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area.</p>	<p>The Council has met, or partially met, most of our previous recommendations and proposals for improvement, but we have identified some further proposals for improvement to strengthen aspects of the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements.</p>	<p>P1 Strengthen the Corporate Safeguarding Policy in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on topics that have safeguarding implications such as modern day slavery, trafficking, child sexual exploitation, counter terrorism and the risk of radicalisation, the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and self-harm; • Cross-refer to the Council's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy; and

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the role and status of the Corporate Safeguarding Working Group. <p>P2 Strengthen the Recruitment and Selection Procedures in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to safeguarding as a key commitment in the opening section of the procedures; • The job descriptions section could refer to safeguarding for relevant posts; • Specify that job adverts for posts that require a DBS check will contain an explicit statement on safeguarding; • The induction section could refer to safeguarding; and • The Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the DBS Policy should be referenced in the 'Related Policies' section. <p>P3 The Council should gather contractual monitoring information from across all Council Directorates</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
			<p>to ensure they are all robustly monitoring safeguarding related actions.</p> <p>P4 The Council should improve its approach to safeguarding training in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate the rate of compliance with the completion of its mandatory safeguarding training and the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 training; • Clarify when mandatory safeguarding training needs to be refreshed; • Consider ways in which it could extend its safeguarding training offer, for example to taxi drivers and to those working in the night time economy; • Improve its monitoring of safeguarding training compliance; and

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify how soon new starters must complete the mandatory safeguarding training. <p>P5 The Council should consider producing performance measures (for example in respect of DBS check compliance) to enhance the performance information that goes to scrutiny and aid transparency.</p> <p>P6 The Corporate Safeguarding Working Group should have oversight of corporate safeguarding risks from across the Council.</p>
Improvement planning and reporting			
October 2018	Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit Review of the Council's published plans for delivering on improvement objectives.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement planning duties.	None
October 2018	Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit Review of the Council's published performance assessment.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies			
March 2019	Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW): Inspection of Older Adults Services	<p><u>Rhondda Cynon Taf Inspection of Older Adult Services Report</u></p> <p>Well-being Prompt professional responses are evident at times when people experience acute ill health or crisis, this is integral to help secure independence for people.</p> <p>People voice and choice People who lack mental capacity can be confident assessment and decision making is made in their best interests.</p> <p>Partnerships, integration and co-production There are examples of innovative and collaborative thinking by health and social care managers who are able to influence and demonstrate expertise and shared purpose.</p>	<p>Well-being CIW found that there was a need to consistently recognise carers' roles and to ensure the voice of the carer is heard; with improved support for carers tailored to enable them to achieve their own wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>People voice and choice CIW identified a need to ensure a consistent approach to involving people's networks of significant family and friends as appropriate so they actively participate and contribute to the assessment, planning and safeguarding process.</p> <p>Partnerships, integration and co-production CIW recommend that more developed links and effective links with GPs could improve utilisation of community services to reduce the potential deterioration of older people living independently in the community.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
		<p>Prevention and early intervention Staff from across health and social care services reflected a compassionate and shared vision to support people in the community.</p>	<p>Prevention and early intervention CIW identified a need to ensure there is clarity in health and social care collaborative planning of preventative services (for example in the development of primary care hubs and community hubs).</p>
2018/19	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales: Local authority annual performance review letter</p>	<p><u>Local authority annual performance review letter 2018/19</u></p>	None

Appendix 1

Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities (defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities) have a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'.

The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. Staff of the Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Auditor General, produce the annual improvement report. The report discharges the Auditor General's duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

The Auditor General may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the authority and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). An important ancillary activity for the Auditor General is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

Appendix 2

Annual Audit Letter

Councillor Andrew Morgan
The Leader
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale
Mid Glamorgan
CF40 2XX

Reference: 980A2018-19

Date issued: 10 December 2018

Dear Cllr Morgan

Annual Audit Letter – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council 2017-18

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources

It is the Council's responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards. On 25 September 2018 I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 25 September 2018.

The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to Full Council on 19 September 2018. I reported that the Council had delivered the draft financial statements two months earlier than the statutory deadline of 30 June and that the audit was completed by the statutory deadline of 30 September. We reported that the Council is well placed to meet the upcoming early closing deadlines, and that we are working with officers to take forward this process to ensure that statutory changes to deadlines will be met.

I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources but there remains scope for the Council to make further improvements

My consideration of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts, as well as placing reliance on the work completed under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Given the wide range of services provided by the Council and the challenges it is facing, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations for 2017-18. However, we did make a number of proposals for improvement which were reported to Council in September 2018 in our Annual Improvement Report 2017-18.

Local authorities in Wales face significant financial challenges

Austerity funding remains the most significant challenge facing all local government bodies in Wales and financial pressures are likely to continue for the medium term.

In 2017-18 the Council set and operated within its revenue budget of £459 million, delivering a surplus of £0.386 million, which members agreed to allocate to a reserve earmarked for winter maintenance.

As at 31 March 2018, the Council had useable revenue reserves of £74.9 million (an increase of approximately £1 million). This reflected a Council Fund balance of £10.7 million and other useable revenue reserves of £64.2 million.

For 2018-19, the Council set a budget of £471.6 million. It received a 0.5% increase in the Welsh Government Revenue Settlement and increased Council tax by 3.3%. As at 30 September 2018, the Council is reporting a projected out-turn of £1.3 million overspend. This does not take into account the one-off funding from Welsh Government to support sustainable social services for local government in Wales.

Financial challenges remain over the coming years and the Council's latest Medium Term Financial Strategy Plan for 2018-19 to 2021-22 identifies a budget 'gap' of £36.2 million over the three years 2019-20 to 2021-22 (£9.9 million 2019-20, £13.5 million 2020-21, and £12.8 million 2021-22). This still represents a significant challenge for the Council and we will continue to work with it as it progresses its financial position over the next 12 months.

My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the accounts or key financial systems

I have begun my audit of the 2017-18 grants. There was a key change this year as a number of previous grants were amalgamated into one Summary Return. I will report the outcomes of our grants work in early 2019 when the programme of certification work is complete. Based on the grants work to date I have not identified any significant issues that would impact on the accounts or key financial systems.

The financial audit fee for 2017-18 is currently expected to be in line with the agreed fee set out in the Annual Audit Plan.

Yours sincerely



Richard Harries

For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

cc Christopher Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Christopher Lee, Group Director Corporate & Frontline Services and Deputy Chief Executive

Appendix 3

National report recommendations 2018-19

Exhibit 2: national report recommendations 2018-19

Summary of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the Wales Audit Office, since publication of the last AIR

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
October 2018	<u>Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity</u>	<p>R1 The projections for the three residual waste projects in the Programme assume that, across the 14 councils involved, the overall amount of residual waste will increase through the lifetime of the contracts. If these projections are accurate then something significant would have to occur beyond 2040 to reach zero waste across these council areas by 2050. If the projections are not accurate then there is the risk that councils will pay for capacity they do not need. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in reviewing the Towards Zero Waste strategy, considers how its ambition of there being no residual waste by 2050 aligns with current projections for residual waste treatment; and• works with councils to consider the impact of changes in projections on the likely cost of residual waste projects and any mitigating action needed to manage these costs.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>R2 The Welsh Government’s programme support to date has mainly focused on project development and procurement. Now that most of the projects are operational, the focus has shifted to contract management. We recommend that the Welsh Government continue its oversight of projects during the operational phase by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building on its existing model of providing experienced individuals to assist with project development and procurement and making sure input is available to assist with contract management if required; • setting out its expectations of councils regarding contract management; • ensuring partnerships revisit their waste projections and associated risks periodically, for example to reflect updated population projections or economic forecasts; and • obtaining from partnerships basic management information on gate fees paid, amount of waste sent to facilities and quality of contractor service.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u>Local Government Services to Rural Communities</u>	<p>R1 Socio economic change, poor infrastructure and shifts in provision of key services and facilities has resulted in the residualisation of communities in rural Wales. We recommend that Welsh Government support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refreshing rural grant programmes to create sustainable financial structures, with multi-year allocations; and • helping people and businesses make the most of digital connectivity through targeted and more effective business and adult education support programmes. <p>R2 The role of Public Service Boards is evolving but there are opportunities to articulate a clearer and more ambitious shared vision for rural Wales (see paragraphs 2.2 to 2.9 and 2.28 to 2.31). We recommend that PSB public services partners respond more effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their different rural communities using the Welsh Governments Rural Proofing Tool and identify and agree the local and strategic actions needed to support community sustainability; and • ensuring the Local Well-Being Plan sets out a more optimistic and ambitious vision for ‘place’

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p style="text-align: center;">with joint priorities co-produced by partners and with citizens to address agreed challenges.</p> <p>R3 To help sustain rural communities, public services need to think differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). We recommend councils provide a more effective response to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring service commissioners have cost data and qualitative information on the full range of service options available; and • using citizens' views on the availability, affordability, accessibility, adequacy and acceptability of council services to shape the delivery and integration of services. <p>R4 To help sustain rural communities, public services need to act differently in the future (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12). We recommend councils do more to develop community resilience and self-help by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with relevant bodies such as the Wales Co-operative Centre to support social enterprise and more collaborative business models; • providing tailored community outreach for those who face multiple barriers to accessing public services and work;

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing and recognising the role of town and community councils by capitalising on their local knowledge and supporting them to do more; • encouraging a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by establishing pan-public service community hubs, networks of expertise, and clusters of advice and prevention services; • enabling local action by supporting community asset transfer identifying which assets are suitable to transfer, and having the right systems in place to make things happen; and • improving community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.
November 2018	<u>Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling</u>	<p>R1 Benchmarking work has found that the cost of certain waste management services show surprising variation (paragraphs 1.31-1.39). The Welsh Government should work with councils to understand better the basis of the variation in spending on waste management services that are fundamentally the same and ensure that waste management costs are accounted for in a consistent way.</p> <p>R2 The Welsh Government believes that, if applied optimally, its Collections Blueprint offers the most cost-effective overall means of collecting recyclable resources but is planning</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>further analysis (paragraphs 1.40-1.51). When undertaking its further analysis to understand better the reasons for differences in councils' reported costs, and the impact on costs where councils have adopted the Collections Blueprint, we recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explores how the cost of collecting dry recyclables may affect the overall cost of providing kerbside waste management services to households; and • compares the actual costs with the costs modelled previously as part of the Welsh Government-commissioned review of the Collections Blueprint for councils that now operate the Collections Blueprint. <p>R3 The Welsh Government has undertaken to consider alternatives to the current weight-based recycling targets which can better demonstrate the delivery of its ecological footprint and carbon reduction goals (paragraphs 2.38-2.45). We recommend that the Welsh Government replace or complement the current target to recycle, compost and reuse wastes with performance measures to refocus recycling on the waste resources that have the largest impact on carbon reduction, and/or are scarce. We recognise that the Welsh Government may need to consider the affordability of data collection for any alternative means of measurement.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>R4 In refreshing Towards Zero Waste, the Welsh Government needs to show that wider sustainability benefits sought through municipal recycling offer value and cannot be more readily attained in other ways and at lower cost including, but not necessarily limited to, other waste management interventions (paragraphs 2.52-2.53). The Welsh Government should demonstrate in the revised waste strategy that not only is it possible to recycle a greater proportion of municipal waste, but how doing so maximises its contribution to achieving its sustainable development objectives.</p>
November 2018	<p><u>Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer</u></p>	<p>R1 Local authorities need to do more to make CATs (Community Asset Transfers) simpler and more appealing, help build the capacity of community and town councils, give them more guidance in raising finance, and look to support other community development models such as social enterprises that support social value and citizen involvement. In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs.</p> <p>R2 Local authorities have significant scope to provide better and more visible help and support before, during, and after the community asset transfer process. We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities:</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify community assets transfer's role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services; • work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs; • identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer; • ensure their CAT policy adequately covers aftercare, long term support, post transfer support, signposting access to finance, and sharing the learning about works well; and • support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.
December 2018	<p><u>The maturity of local government in use of data</u></p>	<p>R1 Part 1 of the report highlights the importance of creating a strong data culture and clear leadership to make better use of data. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a clear vision that treats data as a key resource; • 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; and

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services. <p>R2 Part 2 of the report notes that whilst it is important that authorities comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data with partners to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. Whilst these two things are not mutually exclusive, uncertainty on data protection responsibilities is resulting in some officers not sharing data, even where there is agreement to provide partners with information. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>R3 In Part 3 of our report, we conclude that adequate resources and sufficient capacity are ongoing challenges. However, without upskilling staff to make better use of data, authorities are missing opportunities to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. We recommend that authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify staff who have a role in analysing and managing data to remove duplication and free up

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>resources to build and develop capacity in data usage; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invest and support the development of staff data analytical, mining and segmentation skills. <p>R4 Part 4 of our report highlights that authorities have more to do to create a data-driven decision-making culture and to unlock the potential of the data they hold. We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set data reporting standards to ensure minimum data standards underpin decision making; and • make more open data available.
March 2019	<u>Waste Management in Wales – preventing waste</u>	<p>R1 Increasing the focus on waste prevention to reflect the overall aims of Towards Zero Waste</p> <p>Available data on the amount of waste produced suggests mixed progress to deliver the Welsh Government’s waste prevention targets.</p> <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revisits the relative priority it gives to recycling and waste prevention as part of its review of Towards Zero Waste; • sets out clearly the expectations on different organisations and sectors for waste prevention; and • revisits its overall waste prevention targets and the approach it has taken to monitor them in light of progress to date, examples from other countries and

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p>in the context of current projections about waste arising through to 2050.</p> <p>R2 Improving data on commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste</p> <p>The Welsh Government is a partner in initial work to assess the feasibility of developing a new digital solution to track all waste. If this preferred option does not succeed, we recommend that the Welsh Government works with Natural Resources Wales to explore the costs and benefits of other options to improve non-municipal waste data in Wales, including additional powers to require waste data from businesses.</p> <p>R3 Enhancing producer responsibility and using more legal, financial and fiscal levers</p> <p>The Welsh Government has opportunities to influence waste prevention through legislation and financial incentives. It can also influence changes at UK level where fiscal matters are not devolved. We recommend that the Welsh Government consider whether provisions to extend producer responsibility and the use of financial powers such as grant conditions, fiscal measures and customer charges and incentives, are needed to promote and to prioritise waste prevention.</p>

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June 2019	<u>The effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales</u>	<p>R1 Part 1 of the report sets out the complexities of the planning system showing how challenging it is for local planning authorities to effectively engage with and involve stakeholders in choices and decisions. To improve involvement with stakeholders and ownership of decisions we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local planning authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose; – use ‘Place Plans’ as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making; and – improve transparency and accountability by holding planning meetings at appropriate times, rotating meetings to take place in areas which are subject to proposed development, webcasting meetings and providing opportunities for stakeholders to address committee meetings. • Welsh Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – review the Development Management Procedure Order 2012 and update the engagement and involvement standards for local planning authorities. <p>R2 Part 2 of the report highlights that local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and</p>

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		<p>struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review their building control fee regimes to ensure the levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services and make the service self-funding; and • improve capacity by working regionally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – integrate services to address specialism gaps; – develop joint supplementary planning guidance; and – develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities. <p>R3 Part 2 of the report highlights that the cost of development control services is not reflected in the charges set for these services and progress in developing regional responses to strengthen resilience has been slow. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews development control fees to ensure the levels set, better reflect the actual cost of providing these services; and • consider how to use the powers in the Planning (Wales) Act to support and improve local planning authority capacity and resilience. <p>R4 Part 3 of the report summarises the effectiveness and impact of local planning authorities decision making and how well they are performing against national measures. We</p>

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		<p>recommend that local planning authorities improve the effectiveness of planning committees by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing their scheme of delegation to ensure planning committees are focussed on the most important strategic issues relevant to their authority; • revising reporting templates to ensure they are clear and unambiguous to help guide decision making and reduce the level of officer recommendations overturned; and • enforcing the local planning authorities' standards of conduct for meetings. <p>R5 Part 4 of the report identifies the central role of planning to delivering the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set a clear ambitious vision that shows how planning contributes to improving wellbeing; • provide planning committee members with regular and appropriate wellbeing training and support to help deliver their wider responsibilities; • set appropriate measures for their administration of the planning system and the impact of their planning decisions on wellbeing; and • annually publish these performance measures to judge planning authorities impact on wellbeing.

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: post@archwilio.cymru

Gwefan: www.archwilio.cymru