



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# Annual Improvement Report

## Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

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This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Colin Davies, Alison Lewis, Katherine Simmons and Sara Leahy under the direction of Huw Rees.

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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 Neath Port Talbot 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

Description of the work carried out since the last AIR, including that of the relevant regulators, where relevant.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
January 2019	<p><b>Assurance and Risk Assessment</b> 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"> <li>• putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources;</li> <li>• putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and</li> <li>• acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Arising from this project we identified the following topics for inclusion in our audit programme at the council for 2019-20:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assurance and risk assessment (ongoing work);</li> <li>• financial sustainability (theme delivered across Wales);</li> <li>• a Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 examination;</li> <li>• a review of the Council's new integrated system (CAMMS) for reporting risks and performance data.</li> </ul>	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
July 2019	<p><b>Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations</b></p> <p>Examination of the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principles in its well-being objective 'To improve the well-being of children and young people'. Under the improvement priority 'children in their early years will benefit from integrated and effective pre-school programmes that maximise their well-being and their readiness for learning'. The work will be focused on the step 'We will work with partners to ensure that we target support to those children at risk of adverse childhood experience in the first 1,000 days of their lives'</p>	<p>Overall, we found: <b>The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing the step but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has considered the long-term benefits in setting this step and recognises the need to develop outcome measures;</li> <li>• Prevention is fundamental to the approach the Council is taking in developing the step;</li> <li>• The Council recognises the need for an integrated approach to maximise benefits from the step and is supporting this through the Public Service Board;</li> <li>• The Council is collaborating with partners in designing and developing the step; and</li> <li>• The Council is involving key partners in developing the step and going forward needs to ensure it effectively involves the full diversity of its communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Whilst our examinations did not make any proposals for improvement, we identified areas in which the Council could improve. These are detailed in our full report.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
November 2018	<p><b>Annual audit letter 2017-18</b></p> <p>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 <a href="#">Appendix 2</a> of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources;</li> <li>• The Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources;</li> <li>• The work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2018-19 accounts or key financial systems; and</li> <li>• The Council has a track record of managing its finances but the financial challenge will continue over the medium term.</li> </ul>	None.
<b>Local risk-based performance audit</b>			
June 2019	<p><b>Service User Perspective Review: Online Services</b></p> <p>Our review sought to answer the question, 'Do the needs, experiences and aspirations of service users inform the design and delivery of services to more closely meet their needs?' Our focus in this review was on the Council's approach to channel shifting services online.</p>	<p>Overall, we found that: <b>most service users in our survey were satisfied with the Council's online services but the Council is not gathering user satisfaction data on the individual services it has shifted online.</b> We reached this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council has undertaken some involvement of service users in the design of its online services and most service users in our survey said the Council's online services were easy to use;</li> <li>• the Council is successfully shifting services online and most service users in our survey</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service user involvement</b></p> <p>P1 The Council should develop a systematic approach to involving service users in the future design and development of its online/channel shifted services.</p> <p><b>Service user satisfaction</b></p> <p>P2 The Council should develop additional ways to generate more service user feedback on its online services, so that it can continue to make improvements.</p>



Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
		<p>said they would recommend the Council's online services;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Council is extending its range of online services while still allowing people to access services through more traditional means; and</li> <li>most service users in our survey said it was easy to let the Council know about issues with its online provision, but the Council is not capturing user satisfaction data for individual services it has shifted online.</li> </ul>	
June 2019	<p><b>Leisure Services</b> 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>Overall, we found that: <b>The Council's arrangement with Celtic Leisure is working well at an operational level but the Council is not considering how leisure services could contribute more to its wider strategic objectives.</b></p>	<p>P1 Develop a strategic plan for leisure services.</p> <p>P2 Develop a broad range of performance information to enable the Council to assess the effectiveness and outcomes from its leisure provision.</p>
June 2019	<p><b>Environmental Health</b> 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>Overall, we found that: <b>The Council considers that it is continuing to meet its statutory obligations for environmental health services with reduced resources and we found that the Council is changing the way it delivers its environmental health services to make better use of the resources available but performance management arrangements for the service need strengthening.</b></p>	<p><b>Business planning</b></p> <p>P1 Strengthen business planning by ensuring that the impact of and response to increased demand on resource requirements is clearly set out in the business plan.</p> <p><b>Performance management</b></p> <p>P2 The Council needs to strengthen performance management by:</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing the information it is using to assess the performance of its environmental health services to ensure it supports a full and accurate assessment of performance to drive improvement; and</li> <li>- Having a mechanism in place for assuring itself that it is delivering its statutory environmental health services.</li> </ul>
<b>Improvement planning and reporting</b>			
May 2018	<b>Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit</b> Review of the Council's published plans for delivering on improvement objectives.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement planning duties.	None.
November 2018	<b>Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit</b> Review of the Council's published performance assessment.	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None.
<b>Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies</b>			
No reviews by Estyn have taken place during the time period covered in this report.			
June 2019	<b>Care Inspectorate Wales:</b> <a href="#">Inspection of Older Adults at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.</a>		
2018/19	<b>Care Inspectorate Wales:</b> <a href="#">Local authority annual performance review letter 2018/19</a>		

# 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

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Please contact us in Welsh or English.  
Cysylltwch â ni'n Gymraeg neu'n Saesneg.

Steven Phillips  
Chief Executive  
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council  
Civil Centre  
Port Talbot  
SA13 1PJ

**Reference:** 949A2018-19

**Date issued:** 30 November 2018

Dear Mr Phillips

### Annual Audit Letter – Neath Port Talbot 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 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's (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.
- The draft financial statements were shared with us on 23 May 2018, a week earlier than in 2016-17 and five weeks earlier than the statutory deadline. Despite the shorter timescale, the draft financial statements were generally prepared to a good standard and were supported by comprehensive and timely working papers. The key matters arising from the audit of the financial statements were reported to members of the Audit Committee in my Audit of Financial Statements report on 25 July 2018.

On 30 July 2018, I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. I also issued the certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts had been completed on the same day.

### **I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources**

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. The Auditor General published his Annual Improvement Report in September 2018 and concluded that the Council was meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement.

### **My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the 2018-19 accounts or key financial systems**

My ongoing work on the certification of grants claims and returns has not identified any significant issues to date in relation to the accounts or the Council's key financial systems. I will report any key issues to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services once this year's programme of certification work is complete.

### **The Council has a track record of managing its finances but the financial challenge will continue over the medium term**

Austerity funding remains the most significant challenge facing local government bodies in Wales and these financial pressures are likely to continue for the medium term. The recent provisional local government funding settlement will see the Council's settlement increase by 0.2%.

In 2017-18, the Council's underspent its net revenue budget by £1.6 million and increased its useable reserves by £8 million. As at 31 March 2018, the Council had useable reserves of £58.6 million, £20 million in the General Fund reserve and a further £38.6 million in earmarked reserves.

In setting its 2018-19 budget, the Council identified the need to make savings of £6.79 million. As at October 2018, the Council was projecting a year end overspend of £1.65 million. Work is currently ongoing to minimise overspends and identify additional savings to reduce the projected overspend and the adverse impact on reserves, the level of which the Council projects will be maintained at 31 March 2019.

Since 2010, the Council has delivered £83 million of savings but further savings will be required in the future. The Council's latest forward financial plan projects a revenue funding shortfall of £64.6 million across the period 2019-20 to 2022-23. The Council is currently out to consultation on its draft Budget and how it proposes to balance the 2019-20 budget with cuts and income generating proposals totalling £8 million, but the majority of the projected shortfall (£55 million) is yet to be identified. The Council is proposing to utilise £3.5 million of its general fund reserve to support its net revenue budget in 2019-20.

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



**Derwyn Owen**  
**Engagement Director**  
**For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales**

cc: Councillor Rob G. Jones, Leader  
Hywel Jenkins, Director of Finance and Corporate Services

# 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. <b>We recommend that the Welsh Government:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>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</b></li><li>• <b>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.</b></li></ul>

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. <b>We recommend that the Welsh Government continue its oversight of projects during the operational phase by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>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;</b></li> <li>• <b>setting out its expectations of councils regarding contract management;</b></li> <li>• <b>ensuring partnerships revisit their waste projections and associated risks periodically, for example to reflect updated population projections or economic forecasts; and</b></li> <li>• <b>obtaining from partnerships basic management information on gate fees paid, amount of waste sent to facilities and quality of contractor service.</b></li> </ul>



Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
November 2018	<u><a href="#">Local Government Services to Rural Communities</a></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. <b>We recommend that Welsh Government support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refreshing rural grant programmes to create sustainable financial structures, with multi-year allocations; and</li> <li>• helping people and businesses make the most of digital connectivity through targeted and more effective business and adult education support programmes.</li> </ul> <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). <b>We recommend that PSB public services partners respond more effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• ensuring the Local Well-Being Plan sets out a more optimistic and ambitious vision for ‘place’</li> </ul>

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

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancing and recognising the role of town and community councils by capitalising on their local knowledge and supporting them to do more;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• improving community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.</li> </ul>
November 2018	<u><a href="#">Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling</a></u>	<p>R1 Benchmarking work has found that the cost of certain waste management services show surprising variation (paragraphs 1.31-1.39). <b>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.</b></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). <b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>explores how the cost of collecting dry recyclables may affect the overall cost of providing kerbside waste management services to households; and</b></li> <li>• <b>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.</b></li> </ul> <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). <b>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.</b></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). <b>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.</b></p>
November 2018	<p><u><a href="#">Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer</a></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. <b>In addition, we recommend that local authorities monitor and publish CAT numbers and measure the social impact of CATs.</b></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. <b>We conclude that there is considerable scope to improve the business planning, preparation, and aftercare for community asset transfer. We recommend that local authorities:</b></p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify community assets transfer's role in establishing community hubs, networks of expertise and clusters of advice and prevention services;</li> <li>• work with town and community councils to develop their ability to take on more CATs;</li> <li>• identify which assets are suitable to transfer, and clarify what the authority needs to do to enable their transfer;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• support community-based leadership by developing networks of interest, training and coaching, and encouraging volunteering.</li> </ul>
December 2018	<u><a href="#">The maturity of local government in use of data</a></u>	<p><b>R1</b> 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"> <li>• have a clear vision that treats data as a key resource;</li> <li>• establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data;</li> <li>• undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests; and</li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services.</li> </ul> <p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and</li> <li>• review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify staff who have a role in analysing and managing data to remove duplication and free up</li> </ul>

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"> <li>• invest and support the development of staff data analytical, mining and segmentation skills.</li> </ul> <p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set data reporting standards to ensure minimum data standards underpin decision making; and</li> <li>• make more open data available.</li> </ul>
March 2019	<p><b><u>Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste</u></b></p>	<p><b>R1 Increasing the focus on waste prevention to reflect the overall aims of Towards Zero Waste</b></p> <p>Available data on the amount of waste produced suggests mixed progress to deliver the Welsh Government’s waste prevention targets. We recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) revisits the relative priority it gives to recycling and waste prevention as part of its review of Towards Zero Waste;</li> <li>b) sets out clearly the expectations on different organisations and sectors for waste prevention; and</li> <li>c) 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 in the context of current projections about waste arising through to 2050.</li> </ol>



Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<p><b>R2 Improving data on commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste</b></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>
June 2019	<p><b><u>The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales</u></b></p>	<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"> <li>• local planning authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– test current engagement and involvement practices and consider the full range of other options available to ensure involvement activities are fit for purpose;</li> <li>– use ‘Place Plans’ as a vehicle to engage and involve communities and citizens in planning choices and decision making; and</li> <li>– 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.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– review the Development Management Procedure Order 2012 and update the engagement and involvement standards for local planning authorities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>R2 Part 2 of the report highlights that local planning authorities have been subject to significant reductions in funding and struggle to deliver their statutory responsibilities. To improve resilience, we recommend that local planning authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• improve capacity by working regionally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– integrate services to address specialism gaps;</li> <li>– develop joint supplementary planning guidance; and</li> <li>– develop future local development plans regionally and in partnership with other local planning authorities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <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"> <li>• reviews development control fees to ensure the levels set better reflect the actual cost of providing these services; and</li> <li>• consider how to use the powers in the Planning (Wales) Act to support and improve local planning authority capacity and resilience.</li> </ul>

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

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