

Follow up review of Waste Services – Carmarthenshire County Council

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Summary report

Why we did this audit

Our audit duties

- 1 The Council has to put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and the Auditor General has to be satisfied that it has done this.
- 2 We undertook this audit to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. It may also inform a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act, and/or an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

Our objectives for this audit

- 3 This report is a follow up review of the action that the Council has taken in response to the recommendations we issued in our 2021 report - [Review of Waste Services in Carmarthenshire County Council](#).

Our audit methods and when we undertook the audit

- 4 Our findings are based on document reviews and interview with the relevant service manager. The evidence we have used to inform our findings is limited to these sources. We undertook this work during March to October 2024.

What we found

- 5 We found that the Council has met all the recommendations we made in our 2021 report. The eight recommendations in the report covered arrangements in the following areas: the garden waste service, CWM Environmental Ltd (CWM)¹, fly-tipping, and the Council's waste strategy. We have set out our detailed findings in Exhibit 1.
- 6 We have not issued any further recommendations in this report.

¹ The company the Council uses for its waste disposal.

Exhibit 1: findings from this follow up review

Recommendations from our 2021 report and our findings from this follow-up review

Recommendation 1 – The Council should identify performance measures for its garden waste service and ensure effective oversight of performance in this area by senior officers and Members.

Finding – recommendation met

- The Council has identified performance measures and created an operational dashboard for the garden waste service. This strengthens managers' oversight of the service's performance.
 - The new divisional measures are included on the Council's performance information management system (PIMS). Both officers and Elected Members have access to this system.
 - The Council has improved the performance measures it uses to ensure more effective oversight of its garden waste service.
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Recommendation 2 – The Council should ensure that there is a risk register for CWM.

Finding – recommendation met

- A risk register for CWM now exists. The risk register is presented to the CWM Shareholder Board and the CWM Company Board annually.
- Since June 2024, there is now a set procedure for reporting significant changes in risk ratings. The Managing Director of CWM must notify the Company Board and the Shareholder Board immediately. The Shareholder Board will consider the impact of the change and decide which of the following actions to take; calling a special meeting of the Shareholder Board, reporting to Cabinet, or reporting to full Council.
- There are now improved arrangements for documenting and managing risks at CWM.

Recommendations from our 2021 report and our findings from this follow-up review

Recommendation 3 – The Council should ensure that it undertakes effective oversight of CWM’s performance and associated risks, including at relevant committees such as overview and scrutiny.

Finding – recommendation met

- CWM’s Managing Director presents the CWM Business Plan and Progress Report to the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually. The Committee consider this as a restricted item.
 - The CWM Business Plan 2023-26 went to Pre-Cabinet on 11th September 2023. The Plan is due to go to Pre-Cabinet again in October 2024.
 - The risk register was not presented to Cabinet, but the Business Plan contains sections called ‘Key Issues and Challenges’ and ‘Opportunities’. Both sections list issues and identified potential impacts and proposed responses. This means that Cabinet Members can see the potential risks and issues that have been identified by CWM.
 - Arrangements for oversight of CWM’s activities by the Council have improved.
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Recommendation 4 – The Council should develop a contingency plan for dealing with any consequences in the event CWM becomes financially unviable.

Finding – recommendation met

- CWM is a Teckal-compliant company². This means it is controlled by the Council and receives at least 80% of its income derived from services provided to the Council.

² CIPFA, [Teckal – The Basics Explained](#), June 2016

Recommendations from our 2021 report and our findings from this follow-up review

- The Council does not have a written contingency plan if CWM become financially unviable. As a shareholder, however, the Council has considered its options and could provide short-term financial support; replace or augment the management of the company; step in and deliver the services directly; or subject the service to competition.
 - The Council has considered the issue of CWM becoming financially unviable and understands the actions it might need to take if this situation arose.
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Recommendation 5 – The Council should develop and implement an agreed plan to sustainably address the high number of fly-tipping incidents.

Finding – recommendation met

- The Council's Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a task and finish group to review the management of fly-tipping in Carmarthenshire. The group's purpose was to identify potential improvements in the management of fly-tipping. The Group met nine times between December 2022 and June 2023. The group reported its findings to the main Overview of Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2023 and Cabinet on 16 October 2023. The group's report made seven recommendations for Cabinet to consider. These included developing a strategy and improving the current reporting and recording of fly-tipping. Cabinet endorsed all these recommendations. The task and finish group is due to provide an update to the Scrutiny Committee on progress on 20 November 2024.
 - The Council's use of a scrutiny task and finish group to look into improving the management of fly-tipping is a positive response to our recommendation.
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Recommendation 6 – The Council should report corporately on a fuller set of performance measures for fly-tipping, including the number of incidents, to enable senior officers and Members to have more effective oversight of the problem and to drive improvement.

Finding – recommendation met

- The Council has developed a fuller set of fly-tipping performance measures for its Divisional Delivery Plan 2024-25. These measures include reducing the number of fly-tipping incidents by 25% by March 2025.
- The Council is changing the digital platform for recording its fly tipping information. The Council is trying to improve the accuracy of the recorded data.

Recommendations from our 2021 report and our findings from this follow-up review

- The Council is collaborating with Keep Wales Tidy through a project entitled Caru Sir Gar. Caru Sir Gar is focussed on the effects of littering and fly-tipping. The actions from Caru Sir Gar are reported through to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - The Council has better oversight of the issues around fly-tipping.
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Recommendation 7 – In finalising the waste strategy, the Council should ensure that:

- all elements of the ‘waste hierarchy’ are considered, including prevention.
 - it integrates the strategy with its other related projects and plans e.g. regeneration, enforcement, fly-tipping;
 - it has clear and sustainable plans for financing the strategy (including contingency plans if Welsh Government funding is not available);
 - it devotes sufficient time to consult the public on its proposed changes to waste collection arrangements; and
 - it develops and implements an engagement strategy focussing on the behavioural change required for the successful launch and adoption by the public of its new strategy (the Welsh Government Blueprint collection model).
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Finding – recommendation met

- The Council’s Waste Strategy includes reference to the circular economy and the need to think beyond a 70% recycling target. The Strategy recognises the need to move to zero waste by 2050 and move materials further up the waste hierarchy. It includes examples of where the Council has worked in partnership and is supporting community networks to deliver circular economy projects. The Strategy also now links to the Council’s other waste-related plans.
- The Council has secured Welsh Government funding to support its move to the Blueprint Waste Collection model. The Council has developed costings for this model and took its proposals to Cabinet on 29 July 2024. The Council has secured Sustainable Communities Funding and Shared Prosperity Funding. The Council will use the funding to develop training, awareness and projects related to sustainable waste and the circular economy.
- The Waste Strategy identifies the need to focus on significant public behavioural change. The Council implemented a thorough communications plan for its January 2023 waste service changes. It intends to follow a similar plan for the change to the full Blueprint model.

Recommendations from our 2021 report and our findings from this follow-up review

- The Council's Waste Strategy is now more comprehensive and provides a clearer strategic approach to the longer-term management of its waste hierarchy.
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Recommendation 8 - The Council should review its Environment Department Business plan to ensure:

- it sets out clear accountable actions for its waste service which are specific, measurable and timebound; and
 - it includes performance measures that are linked to the actions, and which have clear targets and success criteria.
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Finding – recommendation met

- The Environmental Infrastructure Division held three workshops with its business managers at the end of 2023. The aim of these workshops was to shape the Divisional Delivery Plan 2024-25.
- The third workshop focused on reviewing the current performance measures, identifying new measures, and agreeing actions.
- The Divisional Delivery Plan 2024-25 sets out the strategic actions and measures the Division will use to deliver against its Well-being Objectives, thematic priorities, and service priorities.
- The Divisional Delivery Plan 2024-25 contains an extensive list of actions and measures. Each of which has an identified owner, a named responsible officer, and a target end date. Measures are highlighted within the list and contain targets for 2024-25 (e.g., recycling contamination of less than 25% by 31 March 2025; delivering recycling performance of 67.5% by 2023-24 and 70% by 2024-25; and aim to reduce fly-tipping incidents across the county by 25% by 31 March 2025).
- The Council has reviewed and strengthened its Environmental Infrastructure Divisional Delivery Plan which will assist it in delivering its objectives for 2024-25.



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