

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2021

REFERENCE FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE: 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2020

“277 WALES AUDIT OFFICE– WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW – VALE OF GLAMORGAN (REF) –

The Operational Manager (Neighbourhood Services and Transport) presented the report which had been referred from the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

The report outlined the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' examination of the Vale of Glamorgan's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets which also included the Council's response.

Overall, it was regarded that the report findings were generally positive and concluded that the Council was making significant changes to household recycling collections and was on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but would need to develop a long-term Waste Management Strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

The key findings from the review were as follows:

- The Council was following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals;
- The Council had significantly improved its recycling performance but would need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning; and
- The Council had engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needed to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

The report identified four proposals for improvement:

- P1: The Council should ensure that its forthcoming Waste Management Strategy was sufficiently long-term, reflected wider social, economic and environmental goals, and addressed the financial risks to the service going forward.
- P2: The Council should consider whether it had the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.
- P3: The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the population in relation to significant service changes.

- P4: The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes

In response to the report findings, the Operational Manager had developed an action plan which was contained at Appendix 2 and would now be progressed by the Council.

The Operational Manager also advised that the Council had been successful in three financial bids submitted to Welsh Government. The first was for a grant of £500k for new waste sorting equipment for the new transfer site located in the Atlantic Trading Estate. The second was for £250k for new recycling bins for residents living in flats and apartments. The third bid was for £358k to set up its own reuse shop which would be linked to the existing Household Waste Recycling Centre.

In addition, the Operational Manager highlighted that recent bench marking figures from Natural Resources Wales had shown that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was one of only three Councils which had hit the 75% recycling rate.

Councillor M.R. Wilson referred to difficulties associated with flats and stated that it was important for recycling facilities at flats to be well maintained. Councillor Wilson also referred to the importance of consultation with residents and community groups prior to the roll out of new recycling and waste collection arrangements. In reply, the Operational Manager advised that flats had been recognised as the most challenging area with bespoke arrangements devised as not all flat complexes were the same. Arrangements would therefore be tailored and may include dedicated vehicles or increased collections if there was a rise in demand. Prior consultation with Members and communities was key to a successful rollout to ensure that residents were on board.

The Committee noted that initially the Wales Audit Office had identified 5 improvement proposals. Subsequently, one of the improvements had been removed, but this was not reflected in the numbering sequence of the proposals within the action plan.

Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson queried the development of the draft 10-year Waste Strategy and how this correlated to the Council's Climate Emergency Policy and the need to be more socially and environmentally aware. Councillor Dr. Johnson also asked for further information regarding the operational work with WRAP. In response, the Operational Manager outlined that the new Waste Strategy document had been completed and was due to be sent to Cabinet for approval in the new year. It was felt that as the financial consequences from a 10-year strategy could be challenging, particularly considering the rise in costs to collect waste, it was important to expand on the business case to ensure that the strategy was affordable and to reflect the resources required. Therefore, both the strategy and the business case would be considered together by Cabinet.

In terms of social and environmental issues, the Operational Manager stated that there was agreement with the Audit outcome proposal relating to Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). Prior the review, the Council had one EIA which was kept as a live and open document, but Audit Wales concluded that it would be more useful for

the Council to conduct individual EIAs for each new roll out or each time there was a change in service. Therefore, the Council would be better able to pick up social and environmental issues.

With regard to the operational work around WRAP, the Operational Manager advised that the Council was concentrating on the development of infrastructure, so a planning application had been submitted for the waste transfer facility at the Atlantic Trading Estate, for which a construction company had been selected following a tendering process. If planning was successful, then the new facility would take 9 months to construct during which, the Council would also have to apply for an environmental permit prior to commissioning. Once complete, the Vale of Glamorgan would have the facilities to manage all the recycling from within its area. In addition, the Council was working on the Re-use shop for which there was a commitment to submit planning by the end of March 2021. Finally, the Council was also looking to construct a new Transfer facility in the rural Vale. With regards to further roll outs of new recycling arrangements, the Operational Manager stated that this could not include Penarth until the new Transfer facility was up and running, as the current site in Cowbridge was too far for the recycling vehicles to travel.

The Head of Finance added that the report had been referred to the Audit Committee in order to provide oversight and a level of assurance around how the improvement proposals would be managed. An action plan was attached to the report which would be monitored by the Waste Project Board and regularly by the Insight Board. In addition, a 6-monthly report on progress of all Audit recommendations would be presented to the Committee. Mr. A. Veale (Audit Wales) then wished to reinforce the comments made by the Head of Finance, stating that it was good to have seen the report first considered by Scrutiny and then referred onto the Audit Committee to provide overall assurance.

In reply to a query from the Chairman, Councillor Carroll, regarding community engagement, the Operational Manager stated that lessons had been learnt from the first roll out in the rural Vale, which was why the roll out in Barry had gone well. For the roll out in the rural Vale, the Council had used WRAP guidance which had not worked as well as anticipated. Therefore, for Barry, changes had been made to literature and close examination of the concerns of residents had taken place. Roll out meetings with communities had been planned but these could not take place due to COVID. As a result, the Council chose to employ more Waste Wardens in order to monitor compliance. The Wardens were initially deployed on all waste vehicles which enabled the Council to log and identify issues and provide feedback and assistance to residents. The Operational Manager added that hopefully, the Council would be able to do more community engagement post COVID.

Having considered the report, it was

**RESOLVED –**

(1) T H A T the key findings arising from the Wales Audit Office's review of Council's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets (Appendix A) and the Council's response to the review and the Wales Audit Office's proposals for improvement (Appendix B) be noted.

(2) T H A T the reference from the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and the report, be referred to Cabinet for endorsement of the proposed actions to address the proposals for improvement.

Reasons for decisions

(1) Following scrutiny and review of the findings of the Wales Audit Office's review of the Council's waste management arrangements and the Council's response.

(2) To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by the Wales Audit Office.”

Attached as Appendix – Reference and Report from Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee: 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 to Audit Committee: 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE: 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2020

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE: 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2020

“148 WALES AUDIT OFFICE: WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW – VALE OF  
GLAMORGAN (DEH) –

The Operational Manager (Neighbourhood Services and Transport), presented the report which advised Members of the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' examination of the Vale of Glamorgan's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets alongside the Council's response to its findings.

The Wales Audit Office review had focused on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements in reducing waste and meeting national statutory recycling targets.

Overall, it was regarded that the report findings were generally positive and concluded that the Council was making significant changes to household recycling collections and was on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but would need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

The key findings from the review were as follows:

- The Council was following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals;
- The Council had significantly improved its recycling performance but would need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning; and
- The Council had engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needed to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

The report identifies four proposals for improvement:

- P1: The Council should ensure that its forthcoming waste management strategy was sufficiently long-term, reflected wider social, economic and environmental goals, and addressed the financial risks to the service going forward.
- P2: The Council should consider whether it had the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.

- P3: The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the population in relation to significant service changes.
- P4: The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes

In response to the report findings, the Operational Manager had developed an action plan which was contained at Appendix 2 and would now be progressed by the Council.

The Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services and Transport also advised the Committee, that the Council had been successful in three financial bids submitted to Welsh Government. The first was for a grant of £500k for new waste sorting equipment for the new transfer site located in the Atlantic Trading Estate. The second was for £250k for new recycling bins for residents living in flats and apartments. The third bid was for £358k to set up its own reuse shop which would be linked to the existing Household Waste Recycling Centre. It was noted that the Committee was keen to see the reuse shop project developed as they had previously shown support for a facility following a site visit to Swansea Council's reuse shop and noting the community benefits.

In addition, the Operational Manager highlighted that recent bench marking figures had shown that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had the lowest costs for collecting refuse waste in Wales. Furthermore, Natural Resources Wales had indicated that the Vale had already hit its 2025, 70% recycling rate, 5 years ahead of schedule.

A Committee Member referred to improvement proposal 3, and the need for a more structured approach to involve the diversity of the population and changes to service. He commented that he was aware of a resident who did not know of the new waste collecting arrangements and also of views expressed that there were too many containers. Audit Wales had raised concern regarding better engagement, so he asked Officers to expand upon this point. In reply, the Operational Manager advised that a team of staff was on hand to support residents through the new changes to waste collections. Recent changes had affected over 20,000 residents, of which 1 or 2 may have been missed and their concerns would have been responded to. In terms of assisting vulnerable people, the Council had introduced a new type of container, which had 4 individual compartments that was easier to use and removed the need for multiple containers.

The Member in coming back to the Officers response, stated that new collection arrangements in Barry had been in place for a week now, and so there should have been learning from how the scheme had been rolled out in the western parts of the Vale. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that this was still only day two, and the process in Barry had been managed differently to the roll out in the western Vale, so there had been learning which had meant less calls from the public. For example, Wardens had been present on all rounds to monitor compliance and there had been more communication with residents. Wardens would provide a debrief which would be cross referenced with calls from the public. Overall, he believed that yesterday the Council received 22 calls for 4000 homes, which could be considered as a good performance. He added that complaints and concerns would be looked into.

In reply to a query regarding staffing levels and turnover, the Operational Manager stated that the number of staff collecting waste had improved, but this had resulted in budget pressures. This had been highlighted by Audit Wales. One area that had been challenging was the back-office staff, so it had been recognised to look at this function in order to deliver strategic objectives.

There being no further comments or queries, the Committee

**RECOMMENDED –**

(1) T H A T the key findings arising from the Wales Audit Office's review of Council's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets (Appendix A) and the Council's response to the review and the Wales Audit Office's proposals for improvement (Appendix B) be noted.

(2) T H A T the report be referred to Audit Committee and thereon Cabinet for endorsement of the proposed actions to address the proposals for improvement.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Following scrutiny and review of the findings the Wales Audit Office's review of the Council's waste management arrangements and the Council's response.

(2) To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by the Wales Audit Office. To update Members on progress made on the scheme.”

Attached as Appendix – Report to Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee: 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2020

Meeting of:	<b>Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Tuesday, 20 October 2020</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Wales Audit Office: Waste Management Review - Vale of Glamorgan
Purpose of Report:	To advise Members of the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' examination of the Vale of Glamorgan's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets alongside the Council's response to its findings.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter, Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Rob Thomas, Managing Director.
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Regulatory reports apply to the whole authority. Progress in relation to areas for improvement arising from the Annual Regulatory Plan is reported to relevant Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and Audit Committee for final oversight. The Insight Board's Tracker monitors progress on all regulatory recommendations/proposals for improvement on a monthly basis and reports to Corporate Management Team.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Wales Audit Office review focused on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements in reducing waste and meeting national statutory recycling targets.</li> <li>• Overall, the report findings were generally positive and concluded that that the Council is making significant changes to household recycling collections and is on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but will need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.</li> <li>• The key findings from the review were as follows:</li> <li>• The Council is following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals;</li> </ul>	



- The Council has significantly improved its recycling performance but will need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning; and
- The Council has engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needs to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.
- The report identifies four Proposals for Improvement:
- **P1:** The Council should ensure that its forthcoming waste management strategy is sufficiently long-term, reflects wider social, economic and environmental goals, and addresses the financial risks to the service going forward.
- **P2:** The Council should consider whether it has the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.
- **P3:** The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the population in relation to significant service changes.
- **P4:** The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes
- In response to the report findings, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport has developed an action plan which will now be progressed by the Council.

## Recommendations

1. That the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee consider the key findings arising from the Wales Audit Office's review of Council's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets (**Appendix A**) and the Council's response to the review and the Wales Audit Office's proposals for improvement (**Appendix B**).
2. That, subject to recommendation one, this report be referred to Audit Committee and thereon Cabinet for endorsement of the proposed actions to address the proposals for improvement.

## Reasons for Recommendations

1. To provide for scrutiny and review of the findings the Wales Audit Office's review of the Council's waste management arrangements and the Council's response.
2. To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by the Wales Audit Office.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 In line with the Council's Regulatory Plan for 2019, the Wales Audit Office undertook a review of the Council's waste management arrangements. The review, which took place during the period June to September 2019, examined the Council's approach and plans to reduce waste and improve and sustain its recycling performance to meet national future targets.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government has set long-term targets for recycling of municipal waste and there is potential for financial penalties to be levied on councils that do not achieve the targets. The targets are:
  - 58% by 2015-16
  - 64% by 2019-20
  - 70% by 2024-25
- 1.3 The Council's re-use/recycling performance in 2017-18 was 63.2%, against the Council's own target of 65%, slightly down from its performance in 2016-17, which was 65.3%. This reflects a dip in the recycling rate across Wales for 2017-18, which was partly due to an improvement in the quality of reporting.
- 1.4 The Council is in the process of changing the waste management service it provides to households in line with the Welsh Government's Collections Blueprint<sup>2</sup> which relies on collection of separate dry recycling materials from households. The Blueprint also advocates the restriction of residual waste (black bag) collection to help drive higher participation in household recycling.
- 1.5 The Council introduced a two bag per fortnight limit on residual waste in the Autumn 2018 and plans to introduce a weekly separate dry recycling collection service starting in October 2019. These changes are designed to enable the Council to meet national recycling targets and help make its waste management service more financially sustainable in the long term.

## 2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** **Appendix A** contains the Wales Audit Office's report outlining the key findings of the review of the Council's waste management arrangements.
- 2.2** Overall, the report findings were generally positive and concluded that that the Council is making significant changes to household recycling collections and is on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but will need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.
- 2.3** The Wales Audit Office reached this conclusion based on the following:
- The Council is following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals;
  - The Council has significantly improved its recycling performance but will need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning; and
  - The Council has engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needs to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.
- 2.4** The report identifies four Proposals for Improvement:
- 2.5** **P1:** The Council should ensure that its forthcoming waste management strategy is sufficiently long-term, reflects wider social, economic and environmental goals, and addresses the financial risks to the service going forward.
- 2.6** **P2:** The Council should consider whether it has the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.
- 2.7** **P3:** The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the population in relation to significant service changes.
- 2.8** **P4:** The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes
- 2.9** In response the report findings the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport has developed an action plan (**Appendix B**) which will now be progressed by the Council.
- 2.10** In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, the key areas for improvement identified will be incorporated within the Insight Board's Tracker, which monitors progress monthly. Members of this Committee will continue to be informed of progress against all regulatory improvement areas via a half-year update report and this will be supplemented with the annual review of progress, which will be reported to Scrutiny Committees prior to reporting to the Audit Committee for final oversight.
- 2.11** It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee considers the content of the report including the Council's response (in the form of the action plan). The Auditors who undertook this assessment will be in attendance at Committee and will be available to respond to Members' questions. Thereafter, it is

recommended that committee refers this to Audit Committee and then onto Cabinet for their consideration incorporating any recommendations/comments of the Scrutiny Committees and that of the Audit Committee.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Performance Management is an intrinsic part of corporate governance and integrated business planning which underpins the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and its Well-being Outcomes. Our Corporate Plan has been structured around the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, through the development of four Well-being Outcomes and eight Well-being Objectives. By aligning our Well-being Outcomes in the Corporate Plan with the Well-being Goals of the Act, this will enable us to better evidence our contribution to the Goals.
- 3.2** External Regulation is an important vehicle for driving continuous improvement across our services. Progressing the improvement areas identified by our regulators not only enables us to demonstrate our commitment to continuous service improvement, but also contributes to further strengthening our impact on the national well-being goals through the achievement of our well-being objectives.
- 3.3** The areas of improvement identified by our external regulator and the associated action plan produced by officers has been developed with the five ways of working mind. The focus of these is on developing innovative ways of working that better integrate services, whilst enabling us to work more collaboratively with our partners and citizens to involve them in improving service delivery. These improvement actions also focus on preventative actions that will enable us to sustain and future proof our services into the longer term.

### **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1** There are no additional budgetary implications arising directly from this report, although poor performance against the improvement areas as outlined in the Wales Audit Office's report could have a negative impact on any future external regulatory assessments of the Council which could in turn put funding opportunities at risk.
- 4.2** The financial sustainability of the service will be considered as part of the development of the waste strategy.

#### **Employment**

- 4.3** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report. However, there are a number of issues contained within the report that if not effectively managed have the potential to impact on our staff establishment and performance overall. This may in turn impact adversely on delivery of

environmental health services and achievement of key outcomes associated with the Corporate Plan.

- 4.4** The resources required to support the delivery of an effective waste service will form a part of the development of the waste strategy.

#### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.5** The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires that the Council secure continuous improvement across the full range of local services for which it is responsible.
- 4.6** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to set and publish annual Well-being Objectives that maximise its contribution to achieving the Well-being goals for Wales and report its progress in meeting these.
- 4.7** The Auditor General for Wales is statutorily required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them.

#### **5. Background Papers**

None



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

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Auditor General for Wales

# Waste management review – **Vale of Glamorgan Council**

Audit year: 2019-20

Date issued: December 2019

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This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Ian Phillips, Sian Davies and Sara-Jane Byrne under the direction of Huw Rees.

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The Council has significantly improved its recycling performance but will need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning 7

The Council has engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needs to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population 9



# Summary report

## Summary

### What we reviewed and why

- 1 We reviewed the Council's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets. Waste management is an important and complex issue, with a range of environmental and financial implications. It is important that the Council has robust arrangements in place to manage waste and meet its current and long-term environmental obligations.
- 2 The Welsh Government has set long-term targets for recycling of municipal waste and there is potential for financial penalties to be levied on Councils that do not achieve the targets. The targets are:
  - 58% by 2015-16
  - 64% by 2019-20
  - 70% by 2024-25
- 3 The Council's re-use/recycling performance in 2017-18 was 63.2%, against the Council's own target of 65%, slightly down from its performance in 2016-17, which was 65.3%. This reflects a dip in the recycling rate across Wales for 2017-18, which was partly due to an improvement in the quality of reporting<sup>1</sup>.
- 4 The Vale of Glamorgan Council (the Council) has operated a 'co-mingled' household recycling service since 2011 where recyclable waste (for example, glass, paper, metal, plastic) is collected and sold on as mixed materials.
- 5 The Council is in the process of changing the waste management service it provides to households. In July 2018, Cabinet agreed to implement the Welsh Government's Collections Blueprint<sup>2</sup> which relies on collection of separate dry recycling materials from households. The Blueprint also advocates the restriction of residual waste (black bag) collection to help drive higher participation in household recycling.
- 6 The Council introduced a two bag per fortnight limit on residual waste in the Autumn 2018, and plans to introduce a weekly separate dry recycling collection service starting in October 2019.
- 7 We undertook the review during the period June to September 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Official waste statistics for 2017-18. See this [link](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Collections Blueprint sets out the Welsh Government's recommended service profile for the collection of waste from households. The Blueprint relies on the collection of recyclable resources that are presented part-segregated by residents. Those resources are then further sorted by operatives as they are collected. The Collections Blueprint provides councils with one way of complying with the legislation on kerbside collection. Welsh Government. Municipal Sector Plan Part 1 Collections Blueprint. March 2011.

## What we found

- 8 Our review sought to answer the question: Does the Council have robust plans to reduce waste and achieve the national recycling/re-use targets?
- 9 Overall, we found that the Council is making significant changes to household recycling collections and is on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but will need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.
- 10 We reached this conclusion because:
- the Council is following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals;
  - the Council has significantly improved its recycling performance but will need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning; and
  - the Council has engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needs to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

## Proposals for Improvement

### Exhibit 1: Proposals for Improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement that we have identified following this review.

Proposals for improvement	
P1	The Council should ensure that its forthcoming waste management strategy is sufficiently long-term, reflects wider social, economic and environmental goals, and addresses the financial risks to the service going forward.
P2	The Council should consider whether it has the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.
P3	The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the population in relation to significant service changes.
P4	The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes.

# Detailed report

The Council is making significant changes to household recycling collections and is on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets, but will need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population

The Council is following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals

11 In reaching this conclusion we identified the following strengths:

- The Council is following the Welsh Government recommended approach to waste management and recycling by fully adopting the Collections Blueprint and working with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). Moving towards a source separated system for collecting recycling would ensure greater traceability of recycled materials to end destinations in the UK.
- Residual waste is being managed through the Project Gwyrdd Energy from Waste plant in Cardiff Bay under a 25-year contract.
- Food waste is managed by anaerobic digestion<sup>3</sup> under a joint venture with Cardiff Council under a 15-year contract. Garden waste goes to a compost facility in Cardiff Bay.
- The Council is in the process of changing its household waste recycling collections to a source separated system that should yield high quality material for onward reuse. Residual waste restriction has already been rolled out across the whole Council area.
- These changes are designed to enable the Council to meet national recycling targets and help make its waste management service more financially sustainable in the long term.

<sup>3</sup> **Anaerobic digestion** is the process by which **organic** matter such as **food waste** is broken down to produce biogas and biofertiliser. This process happens in the absence of oxygen in a sealed, oxygen-free tank called an **anaerobic digester**.

12 We identified the following areas for development:

- The waste service changes were comprehensively set out in two reports to Cabinet in 2018, but there is no overall waste management strategy, apart from one dating from 2004 which has essentially been superseded by the July 2018 report to Cabinet. The Council intends to produce a new waste management strategy in 2020. Welsh Government statutory guidance on the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) states an expectation that public bodies look at least ten years ahead. The Council is making significant changes to its waste management services for the long term and would benefit from having an overall strategy to help it do this and to reflect wider social, economic and environmental (including carbon reduction and waste prevention) goals.
- The management of the service changes and the development of a new transfer station are being overseen by two officers. Concentrating knowledge and experience in such a small team represents a significant risk in delivering the service changes. The Council needs to consider whether it has the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.

### The Council has significantly improved its recycling performance but will need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning

13 In reaching this conclusion we identified the following strengths:

- The Council has received support from WRAP through the Collaborative Change Programme to review its existing recycling and waste services to look at how aspects of the service can be improved in the future.
- As part of this support, WRAP undertook a modelling exercise on behalf of the Council on the cost effectiveness of a variety of different recycling and waste kerbside collection systems. This work concluded that the Collections Blueprint was the most cost-effective system.
- The Council has secured funding from the Welsh Government for the necessary infrastructure and has rolled out changes to black bag collections. The Council has agreed to introduce separate household recycling collections in the rural Vale in October 2019, in Barry in Spring 2020 and in Penarth in summer 2020.
- The Council is confident that recent changes have already had a positive impact on its recycling performance, and figures for 2018-19 show that it has improved its recycling rate to 67.1%. The Council is on track to exceed the statutory recycling target of 64% by 2019-20. The quarter 1 performance report that went to the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in November 2019 reported a recycling rate of 74.34%. Welsh Government has expressed confidence in the Council's ability to meet recycling targets in the coming years.

- When compared with other local authorities in Wales on a per household basis, the Council's waste management service has a track record of being one of the lowest cost.<sup>4</sup>
- The Council has sought to learn from other councils in Wales that have adopted the Collections Blueprint.
- Officers are planning a new waste transfer station adjacent to an existing Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in Barry that will receive the bulk of the separate recycling from the Vale of Glamorgan area. The timetable is for the transfer station to be operational by October 2020. Having the HWRC and the Waste Transfer station on one site offers the potential for cost and operational efficiencies.
- The Council has secured limited temporary capacity to take the separate recycling collections from the rural Vale at a facility in Cowbridge. The two systems (co-mingled recycling and separate recycling) will run in parallel for at least a year while the new transfer station is built.
- Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales have not raised any specific concerns about existing waste services or the services changes being planned.

14 We identified the following areas for development:

- The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan sets out a predicted revenue cost pressure of £630,000 for Waste and Recycling Services in 2019-20. The service has experienced unforeseen financial demands and reserves of £757,044 were used in 2018-19 in relation to the co-mingled recycling contract. This was due to the Council receiving reduced income as a result of the global downturn in prices for co-mingled recycled waste. The service overspent by £235,000 in 2017-18 and by £1.4 million in 2018-19. The latest Corporate Risk Register sets out that the waste service continues to be under significant budgetary pressures and the waste risk score has been increased to medium/high. A key part of the forthcoming waste strategy will be the need to demonstrate how the service will address these financial risks going forward.
- The change to separate household recycling collections is dependent on the relatively rapid development of a waste transfer station in Barry. A risk assessment and an appropriate contingency plan should be in place to allow for any delays.

<sup>4</sup> WLGA benchmarking on waste management costs for 2016-17 sets out when compared with the other local authorities in Wales on a per household basis, Vale of Glamorgan Council were ranked as having the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest cost. For 2017-18 the Council were ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest cost.

## The Council has engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service, but needs to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population

15 In reaching this conclusion we identified the following strengths:

- The Council worked with WRAP to develop a bespoke communications plan ahead of the roll-out of the service changes. This brought in expertise and lessons learnt from other part of Wales.
- Residents were encouraged to complete an online survey during April and May 2018 ahead of any service changes. This survey sought to raise awareness of the changes coming and to gather information from residents on how they could best introduce the changes, for example on barriers to recycling and preferences on containers. The Council received over 6,000 responses to the survey, which represents over 10% of households in the Council area. The responses to the consultation can be seen to have influenced the way in which the subsequent arrangements for the new service were designed. An example of this is the introduction of a 'quad sack', a single sack with four compartments, thus avoiding the need for four separate containers. This was introduced for residents who advised that they either had limited storage or relatively small amounts of recycling.
- The Council used a variety of mechanisms to engage with residents while introducing the black bag limit. This included direct communications, social media posts, newspaper adverts, roadshows, a waste helpline, presentations to community groups and the use of waste wardens, who were temporarily employed to assist residents.

16 We identified the following areas for development:

- Welsh Government statutory guidance on the WFG Act (Shared Purpose: Shared Future) states an expectation that public bodies will involve a diversity of people and communities in decisions which may change the services provided to them. The Council has demonstrated a wide-ranging consultation exercise. However, this would benefit from being complemented with a more structured and documented approach to engaging with, and responding to, the diversity of the population (such as disabled groups, older people, people from different socio-economic groups) on waste management matters. Officials have not talked specifically to any representative groups other than those residents who attended roadshows.
- The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out ahead of the introduction of the two black bag limit (dated March 2018) is incomplete. It sets out what the proposed service changes are and who the proposal will affect, but the actual assessment of impact was not completed. The July 2018 Cabinet report relating to the Blueprint and the restricted residual waste changes indicated that an EIA would be required as there would be significant service change, but there wasn't an EIA provided to Cabinet alongside the July 2018

report, although the need to address any equality impacts associated with the service changes was noted in the recommendations to the report. The absence of a complete EIA hampers the ability of the Council to demonstrate that it has fully considered the needs of the diversity of the population. When a decision clearly affects a considerable number of people, public bodies must give careful consideration to their Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. A thorough EIA with analysis and evidence, setting actions for monitoring impact is an opportunity to demonstrate such consideration.





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](mailto:info@audit.wales)

Website: [www.audit.wales](http://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](mailto:post@archwilio.cymru)

Gwefan: [www.archwilio.cymru](http://www.archwilio.cymru)

**Vale of Glamorgan Council  
Environment and Housing Directorate**

**Waste Management Review Action Plan – Wales Audit Report December 2019 (Ref: 1520A2019-20)**

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Council Action	Update of Actions (September 2020)
P1	The Council should ensure that its forthcoming waste management strategy is sufficiently long-term and reflects wider social, economic and environmental goals.	Develop a Waste Strategy to incorporate wider social, economic and environmental goals as well as current and proposed recycling targets. The strategy will be effective from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2030.	A draft 10-year Waste Strategy 2020-30 with a draft supporting action plan has been developed and will be finalised shortly. Once finalised, both documents will be presented to Council's Cabinet in November 2020 for approval. The supporting action plan will allow regular monitoring and be updated accordingly.
P2	The Council should consider whether it has the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.	<p>Form a project implementation team will early in 2020, incorporating officers from WRAP and the Council, to plan and deliver the next phases of the Waste Collections Blueprint, ensuring that there is sufficient resilience to deliver these service changes.</p> <p>Review the initial phase of the Council's Reshaping services programme for Neighbourhood Services, prior to April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 to ensure that the service has sufficient staff resources to effectively deliver the 10 year Waste Strategy.</p>	<p>A governance structure is currently in place for 'The Future Collection Arrangements for Waste &amp; Recycling'.</p> <p>The core Project Board is required to report progress and key decisions to the Waste Management Strategy. The Director of Environment and Housing Services acts as Project Sponsor.</p> <p>The project is being managed by the Operational Manager of Neighbourhood Services: Operations (Project Manager), with support from the Waste Project Officer.</p> <p>The Project Board consists of the following members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor Neil Moore – Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</li> <li>- Councillor Lis Burnett - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration</li> <li>- Councillor Peter King- Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport</li> <li>- Rob Thomas - Managing Director</li> </ul>

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Council Action	Update of Actions (September 2020)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Miles Punter - Director of Environment &amp; Housing Services</li> <li>- Emma Reed – Head of Neighbourhood Services</li> <li>- Carys Lord – Head of Finance</li> <li>- Colin Smith – Neighbourhood Services; Operations</li> <li>- Bethan Thomas – Waste Project Officer</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the Project Board smaller Project Teams have established with officers from the Council and WRAP Cymru.</p> <p>Project Team(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Colin Smith - Operational Manager of Neighbourhood Services; Operations</li> <li>- Bethan Thomas –Waste Project Officer</li> <li>- Craig Howells – Construction and Design Manager</li> <li>- Rob Jones - Communications Manager</li> <li>- James Webber – Team Leader, Performance and Commercial Opportunities</li> <li>- Amy Bowen - Recycling and Collections Advisor – WRAP</li> <li>- Lisa Chilcott - Operations Manager – WRAP</li> <li>- Debbie Palfrey - Materials Marketing &amp; Compliance Advisor - WRAP</li> </ul> <p>A risk and roles register has been created to ensure that there are sufficient resources and resilience to delivery the second phase of the roll out in Barry during October 2020.</p> <p>The second phase of the roll out will be supported full time by the Waste Project Officer, a temporary Senior Waste Warden, and 7 Waste Wardens. Furthermore, staff will also be seconded from other sections of Neighbourhood Service to assist with the roll out.</p>
P4	The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the	Council officers to engage with with groups and individuals representing the protected characteristics early in to	Prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, officers met with community groups with protected characteristics to talk them through the planned waste changes. This gave both

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Council Action	Update of Actions (September 2020)
	population in relation to significant service changes.	ensure that proper consideration is given to the diversity of the population, ensuring that such diversity is evidenced within the Equality Impact Assessment and effectively supported throughout the service changes planned within the Strategy.	Council officers and members of the community groups an opportunity to discuss any problems or barriers they felt they may face with the changes and find a solution to successfully overcome them.
P5	The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes.	Complete the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and publish on the Vale of Glamorgan Council website in February 2020. The published EIA to have systematically identified the impact of the Council's policy change on its residents and staff and any findings reported fully within the document. The authority will also continue to monitor the impact of any service changes after the EIA is published.	<p>On the recommendations from the Welsh Audit Office report, the Equality Impact Assessment has been concluded and now finalised for the first phase of the service change roll out. Attached within that document is a draft Equality Impact Assessment for the second phase of the roll out throughout Barry.</p> <p>Both Equality Impact Assessments will be added to the Council's website and included as part of the Communications Plan.</p> <p>A separate Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared and finalised for third phase of the roll out throughout Penarth late 2021.</p>