

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023

“ VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL – THE APPLICATION OF THE  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE IN SERVICE AREAS (DCR) –

The report was presented by Ian Phillips, Audit Wales, the purpose of which was to present the findings of Audit Wales’s review of the Council’s arrangements for ensuring service areas were applying the Sustainable Development Principle, for Members’ consideration.

During 2021/22, Audit Wales raised concerns regarding the Council’s approach to addressing a proposal for improvement arising from the review of Outsourced Leisure Services. This related to strengthening the application of the sustainable development principle in the renewal of the Council’s leisure contract. Whilst considerable assurance was taken from the Council’s subsequent actions in response to the concerns raised, further assurance was sought by Audit Wales to ensure the learning was being embedded across the Council’s services.

A review was subsequently undertaken by Audit Wales in the latter half of 2022 to gain further assurance that the Council was strengthening its arrangements for ensuring service areas were applying the Sustainable Development Principle.

The report (attached at Appendix A to the report) outlined the key findings of this work. The review findings were positive and concluded that, ‘the Council’s arrangements for ensuring service areas apply the sustainable development principle are largely effective, although there is scope to further develop some elements.’ Key findings included:

- The Council’s senior officers, supported by a corporate framework, were helping to drive a positive culture that supported services to apply the Sustainable Development Principle, but this was not fully incorporated in its project management toolkit;
- There was effective corporate support to help service areas to apply the Sustainable Development Principle, but there was an opportunity for the Council to strengthen its learning and development offer; and
- The Council had mechanisms in place that helped it to assess whether service areas were effectively applying the Sustainable Development Principle and was applying learning to strengthen its arrangements.

Two recommendations were made:

- R1: The Council should develop its project management toolkit to ensure that those documents helped officers to apply the Sustainable Development Principle from the outset.
- R2: The Council should develop its learning and development offer to help to ensure that staff across the organisation understood the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and were able to apply the Sustainable Development Principle as needed in their roles.

In response to the above recommendations, the Director of Corporate Resources developed an action plan (attached at Appendix B to the report) which would be progressed by the Council. In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, progress against regulatory improvement areas would be monitored via the Insight Tracker.

Following the presentation of the report, the Chair stated the importance of embedding within the Council's culture and practices the principles around the 'circular economy' and the need to remove waste. This should be included in the Council's learning and development. The Chair also asked if commissioning was included when the report referred to the project management toolkit. The Director of Corporate Resources explained that due to the procurement policy and strategy being refreshed recently, they explicitly referenced those Five Ways of Working, and in terms of how that process for commissioning works. The findings that Audit Wales found with regard to the project management toolkit was that because it had not been looked at for a number of years, whilst some of the ways of working were reflected, these were not as explicit as they should be in order to prompt Council officers to consider things more holistically. Therefore, there was a need to now review and improve on these areas.

Councillor Carroll referred to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the Five Ways of Working and was surprised that there was a need to 'prompt' Council officers considering the Five Ways of Working as part of project management. It was explained that overall, the Council's culture in this respect was healthy, with cross-cutting boards in areas such as Project Zero, other cross cutting ways of working and good challenge from senior officers. It was felt that this could be supplemented with additional prompts in the accompanying documentation when undertaking work in order that opportunities were not missed.

Councillor Haines echoed Councillor Carroll's point on why there was need to have 'prompts' in place for officers in terms of work that fell into their role, when this could be achieved by more informal means by management. It was explained that these prompts had been put in just to help put the principles and duties at the forefront of officers' minds.

The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources added that sustainable development was a balance between social, economic and environmental factors, also citing the success, and some ongoing challenges with, separated recycling within the Vale and that the report offered constructive criticism and 'nudges' for the Council, which was essentially going in the right direction in terms of sustainable development.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

**RECOMMENDED –**

(1) T H A T the findings arising from the review of the Council's Application of the Sustainable Development Principle in Service Areas (Appendix A to the report) and the Council's response to the review findings and Audit Wales's recommendations (Appendix B to the report) be noted and endorsed.

(2) T H A T the report be referred to Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter to Cabinet for their oversight and endorsement of the proposed Council actions (Appendix B to the report) to address the recommendations.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(2) For the consideration of the report by Governance and Audit committee and thereafter to Cabinet in order to ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by Audit Wales.”