

Meeting of:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 16 December 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Q2 Update: Audit Wales Work Programme 2024 - Vale of Glamorgan Council
Purpose of Report:	To present to Members the Q2 update of Audit Wales's work programme as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2024
Report Owner:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	No specific ward member consultation has been undertaken. The Annual Regulatory Audit Plan and progress updates apply to the whole authority.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>Appendix A outlines Q2 progress on Audit Wales's work programme and timetable as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2024.</p> <p>Governance and Audit Committee members are requested to review and note the progress made on the Vale of Glamorgan Audit Work Programme at Q2 and upon consideration, to refer the report to Cabinet for their oversight.</p>	

Recommendations

1. That members review and note the content of this report.
2. That, subject to recommendation one, the report be referred to Cabinet for their oversight.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To facilitate monitoring of the audit function.
2. To enable Cabinet's oversight of the audit programme.

1. Background

- 1.1 As the external auditor, the objective of Audit Wales is to carry out an audit which discharges the statutory duties of Auditor General, which include:
 - Audit of Financial Statements
 - Value for Money
 - Continuous Improvement
 - Sustainable Development principle.
- 1.2 The Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2024 details the work planned by Audit Wales to meet the duties outlined above. The outputs of the Audit Plan are reported regularly to the Council to inform its self-assessment and areas for improvement.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 **Appendix A** outlines Q2 progress on Audit Wales's work programme and timetable as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Plan 2024.
- 2.2 Key highlights in relation to the Audit Work Programme are as follows.
- 2.3 The Council's Annual Audit Summary was issued in May 2024.
- 2.4 In relation to financial audit work, the Council's statement of accounts were submitted prior to the 30th of June deadline and the audit is well advanced and on track to be completed as per audit timetable.
- 2.5 All audit certification of grant claims and returns for 2022/23 have been completed apart from the Housing Benefits subsidy claim which as of quarter 2 was on track to be completed by the end of October 2024. Audit certification of grant claims for 2023/24 have commenced. Work has commenced on the Joint Committee Accounts hosted by the Council and is on track for completion by 31st December 2024. The independent examination of the Council's 2023/24 Welsh Church Act Fund accounts in on track to be completed by the end of January 2025.

- 2.6** In relation to 2023/24 performance audit work, the thematic review of commissioning is underway, and the reviews of the Planning Service’s Governance arrangements and the Council’s Financial Sustainability have been issued. Assurance and Risk Assessment work for 2024/25 is underway with the local review of well-being objectives setting. The review of complaints has not yet started.
- 2.7** A number of local government national studies are planned for 2024/45 and fieldwork is underway on the review of temporary accommodation. Scoping work has commenced on the review of capital planning in local government. Work has yet to commence on the review of financial constraints/discretionary local government services.
- 2.8** Additionally, Audit Wales national reports have been published on themes including active travel, affordable housing, Digital by Design - lessons from digital strategy reviews across Councils in Wales, Councils use of performance information - service user perspectives and outcomes, planning for sustainable development – Brownfield regeneration and Corporate Joint Committees.
- 2.9** In relation to other regulatory work, Estyn will be undertaking field work in a sample of local authorities to learn about their approaches to promoting positive behaviour in secondary schools and evaluating their support for mathematics and numeracy area of learning and experience (AOLE) in their schools.
- 2.10** As part of its 2023-25 planned work programme, Care Inspectorate Wales is progressing an annual programme of joint work focusing on Community Learning Disability Teams (CLDT) and Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT). Work to review the Care Inspectorate Wales Code of practice for inspection of local authority activity is completed and due to be published at the end of October 2024.
- 2.11** Governance and Audit Committee members are requested to review and note the progress made on the Vale of Glamorgan Audit Work Programme at Q2 and upon consideration, to refer the report to Cabinet for their oversight.

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** Associated action plans in response to regulatory review findings are developed with the five ways of working in mind. The focus 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. Our improvement actions will also focus on preventative actions that will enable us to sustain and future proof our services into the longer term.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no implications directly arising from this report, although failure to respond to our regulatory recommendations could have a negative impact on any future external regulatory assessments and could result in a special inspection by the Auditor General for Wales if deemed that the Council is not meeting the performance requirements.
- 4.2** The climate change and nature implications in respect of our regulatory recommendations will be considered as part of the development of our response (action plan) and will identify mitigating actions required to minimise any adverse consequences.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There is an annual audit fee aligned with the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Audit Work Programme. Any proposed changes to this will be discussed with the Section 151 Officer prior to implementation.

Employment

- 5.2** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** The statutory duties of the Auditor General are contained within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, the Local Government Act 1999 and the Code of Audit Practice.

6. Background Papers

[Audit Wales VoG Outline Audit Plan](#)

[VOG Audit Plan 2024](#)

Audit Wales Work Programme and Timetable – Vale of Glamorgan County Council

Quarterly Update: 30 September 2024

Annual Audit Summary

Description	Timetable	Status
A report summarising completed audit work since the last Annual Audit Summary, which was issued in May 2024	June 2025	Not yet started

Financial Audit work

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
Audit of the Council's 2023-24 statement of accounts	We are required to issue a certificate and report on your financial statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness' and an assessment as to whether the Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement is prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance and is consistent with your financial statements and my knowledge of the Authority.	30 November 2024	The draft accounts were received prior to the 30 June deadline. Our audit is well progressed and we are on track to complete the audit per the timetable. There are no issues to report to GAC at this stage of the audit.

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>Certification of the Council's grant claims and returns</p>	<p>2022-23 Claims & Returns We are required to review and certify four of the Council's annual returns and subsidy claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-domestic rates return; • Teachers pension return; • Social Care Workforce Development grant; and • Housing Benefits subsidy <p>2023-24 Claims & Returns We are required to review and certify five annual returns and subsidy claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-domestic rates return; • Teachers pension return; • Social Care Workforce Development grant; • A flood and coastal grant; and Housing Benefits subsidy 	<p>Various</p>	<p>2022-23 All the returns have been certified apart from the HB subsidy return. We expect to complete the subsidy audit by the end of October 2024.</p> <p>2023-24 Our audit work on the NDR and Teachers Pensions return has commenced and we expect to certify these shortly. The remaining grants work will commence later this year following the completion of our accounts audit work.</p>
<p>Audit of the 2023-24 Joint Committee accounts hosted by the Council</p>	<p>We are required to audit the financial statements of the two Joint Committee bodies hosted by the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Shared Regulatory Service; and • the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative. 	<p>31 December 2024</p>	<p>Ongoing. Our audit work has commenced and we are on track to complete our work in accordance with the timetable.</p>

Description	Scope	Timetable	Status
The independent examination of the Council's 2022-24 Welsh Church Act Fund accounts.	Our Independent Examination involves the performance of a limited set of procedures, as set out in Charity Commission directions, requiring less detailed work than under a full audit.	31 January 2025	We expect to complete this work per the agreed timetable.

Performance Audit work

2023-24 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	Ongoing	Complete
Thematic review – commissioning	A review focusing on how councils' arrangements for commissioning, apply value for money considerations and the sustainable development principle.	March 2024– March 2025	Underway
Thematic review – Financial Sustainability	A review of councils' financial sustainability including a focus on the actions, plans and arrangements to bridge funding gaps and address financial pressures over the medium term. National Summary Report indicative publication date:	March – July 2024	Final report issued 11 th September 2024 November 2024

2023-24 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Review of the Planning Service's Governance arrangements	A review of the planning service's governance arrangements to include the planning policy team; the extent the planning service is supporting the Council in the delivery of its overall objectives and the extent it is delivering its own service objectives, and how the planning service reviews and monitors its governance arrangements. We are not reviewing the performance of the planning service.	July 2023 – November 2023	Final report issued 23 rd November 2023

2024-25 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.	On-going	Underway
Local project work – review of complaints	Potential areas of work may be a review of the Council's complaints arrangements and a review of the Council's arrangements for working with schools to help address schools' balances.	Feb/March 2025	Not yet started

2024-25 Performance Audit work	Scope	Timetable	Status
Local project work - Setting of Well-being objectives	A review to assess the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives as part of its development of its new corporate plan.	April 2024- March 2025	Ongoing

Local government national studies planned/in progress

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Vale of Glamorgan Council
Temporary Accommodation	Examining the costs, demand and how services are working together to progress the response to temporary accommodation.	Report publication planned for early 2025	Fieldwork underway	Fieldwork interviews being undertaken at : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conwy County Council • Pembrokeshire County Council • Cardiff City Council • Wrexham County Borough Council Surveys will also be issued to Heads of Housing and Section 151 Officers at each principal council.
Capital Planning in Local Government	Examining whether capital investment in the asset base in local government is able to keep pace with demand	tbc	Scoping	Tbc

Study	Scope	Timetable	Status	Fieldwork planned at Vale of Glamorgan Council
Financial constraints / discretionary local government services	Examining the potential impacts and councils' decision making processes in the context of the sustainable development principle.	tbc	Not started	tbc

Estyn

We inspected Caerphilly and Ceredigion local government education services (LGES) during the summer term. The reports were published in early September. We identified strong practice in both local authorities.

During the autumn term we will be inspecting Newport LGES. We have also scheduled a standalone inspection of the local authority’s youth work a few weeks prior to the LGES inspection. Although these are two separate pieces of work, the findings of the youth inspection will inform the LGES inspection. We piloted this arrangement in the Vale of Glamorgan last spring, and our evaluation of this arrangement indicates that stream-lining the inspection process works well and adds value to our work overall.

Our link inspectors are continuing to work with Torfaen as part of our follow-up process for an authority causing significant concern. We will be carrying out a monitoring visit in Torfaen in October to consider their progress against the recommendations from their core inspection.

We will also carry out an enhanced link visit to Denbighshire in October, with the focus being on specific aspects of attendance and additional learning needs. The outcome letter from this visit will be published on our website.

We will be carrying out field work in a sample of local authorities to support two thematic reports. We will be visiting 10 LAs to learn about their approaches to promoting positive behaviour in secondary schools; and another five LAs to evaluate their support for mathematics and numeracy AOLE in their schools.

In early September, we trained a new cohort of peer inspectors who will be deployed on our inspection teams as well as running an update session for our current peer inspectors.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
<p>Thematic reviews</p> <p>Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT)</p>	<p>Working jointly with HIW we completed an assurance check inspection in Rhondda Cynon Taff focusing on Community Learning Disability Teams (CLDT). RCT CLDT Joint inspection</p>	<p>2024-25</p>	<p>Published April 2024</p>

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
	<p>A second single agency assurance check inspection in Blaenau Gwent</p> <p>We will continue an annual programme of joint work focusing on CLDT and Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)</p>	March 2024	Published
<p>Joint Inspection Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA)</p>	<p>Overview report for Joint Inspections of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) 2019 – 2024 Overview report for Joint Inspections of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) 2019 – 2024 Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (hiw.org.uk).</p> <p>The findings from Bridgend County Borough Council - Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Bridgend 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>Our findings from the Cardiff County Council Cardiff Joint Inspection Report</p> <p>The findings from Denbighshire County Council Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Denbighshire 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</p> <p>The findings from Powys County Council - Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA): Powys 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales</p>	<p>September 2024</p> <p>June 2024</p> <p>7 May 2024</p> <p>Feb 2024</p> <p>October 2023</p>	<p>Published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p>

CIW planned work 2023-25	Scope	Timetable	Status
Performance review of Local Authorities	<p><u>We continue to inspect Local Authorities in line with our updated Code of Practice for our local authority inspection activity Care Inspectorate Wales</u> <u>How we inspect local authority services and CAFCASS Cymru</u></p> <p><u>We are currently reviewing our Code of Practice and will be publishing shortly.</u></p> <p><u>Inspection of Flintshire County Council children and adult services in February 2024 - Inspection report for Flintshire County Council's adults and children's services published Care Inspectorate Wales</u></p> <p><u>We published Monmouthshire County Council children's services Inspection report PEI Care Inspectorate Wales</u></p> <p><u>We published Pembrokeshire - Improvement check inspection Improvement-check Pembrokeshire-county-council-adult services</u></p> <p><u>We published Swansea adult service PEI 240711-swanea-pei-report-en.pdf (careinspectorate.wales)</u></p>	<p>October 2024</p> <p>22 Feb 2024</p> <p>2 May 2024</p> <p>13 June 2024</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>Due to be published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p> <p>Published</p>
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation – Youth Offending Inspection	<p><u>We supported the delivery of HMIP's Youth Offending Services Inspection in Denbighshire and Conwy. A joint inspection of youth justice services in Conwy & Denbighshire (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)</u></p>	<p>8 May 2024</p>	<p>Published</p>

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs published since September 2023

Report title	Publication date and link to report
Active travel (report and data tool)	September 2024
Governance of Fire and Rescue Authorities	September 2024
Affordable housing	September 2024
NHS finances – and data tool update to 31 March 2024	August 2024
Digital by design? - Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales	August 2024
Councils use of performance information: service user perspective and outcomes - A summary of findings from our review at Welsh councils	July 2024
The Welsh Government's support for TVR Automotive Ltd	July 2024
A465 Section 2 – update	June 2024
Community Pharmacy data matching pilot	May 2024
Governance of National Park Authorities	April 2024
Supporting Ukrainians in Wales	March 2024
From firefighting to future-proofing – the challenge for Welsh public services	February 2024

Report title	Publication date and link to report
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board – board effectiveness follow up	February 2024
Local Government Financial Sustainability Data tool update uses data from the draft 2022-23 accounts	January 2024
Planning for sustainable development – Brownfield regeneration	January 2024
Corporate Joint Committees – commentary on their progress	November 2023
Governance arrangements relating to an employment dispute at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales	November 2023
Failures in financial management and governance and losses incurred – Harlech Community Council	November 2023
Putting out the false alarms: Fire and Rescue Authorities’ responses to Unwanted Fire Signals	October 2023
Covering teachers’ absence – follow-up (letter to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee)	October 2023

Audit Wales national reports and other outputs (work in progress / planned)^{1, 2}

¹ We will continue to keep our plans under constant review, taking account of the evolving external environment, our audit priorities, the context of our own resourcing and the capacity of audited bodies to engage with us. Follow up work could also lead to other outputs, as may other local audit work where we consider there is merit in a national summary output of some kind.

² Our [Annual Plan 2024-25](#) also lists work in progress, some of which has since been published, or work planned to start during 2024-25. [Our work programme for 2023-2026](#) –

Title	Indicative publication date
National Fraud Initiative – bi-ennial report	October 2024
Cancer services	November 2024
Local Government Financial Sustainability Data tool update uses data from the draft 2023-24 accounts	November 2024
Findings from GP registration data matching pilot	November / December 2024
Unscheduled care (national messages – patient flow in hospital and delayed discharge)	November / December 2024
Financial management and governance in town and community councils	November / December 2024
NHS workforce planning (national messages)	November / December 2024
Addressing biodiversity decline (pan-public sector and at Natural Resources Wales)	Pan-public sector review – November / December 2024 NRW to be confirmed (scoping)
Welsh Government capital and infrastructure investment	December 2024 / January 2025
Challenges for the cultural sector	By end of 2024 (for most local reporting – any national messaging in early 2025)

also provides some additional detail about certain topics and will continue to inform our work programme planning for 2025-26.

Title	Indicative publication date
New Velindre Cancer Centre	Early 2025
Further and higher education funding and oversight – Commission for Tertiary Education and Research	By March 2025 (for initial phase of work on setting of well-being objectives)
Findings from sustainable development examinations (statutory report under the WFG Act)	By early May 2025
The senior public service	Scoping underway, delivery planned early summer
Rebalancing care and support	To be confirmed (scoping)
Tackling NHS waiting lists (local audit work at health boards)	To be confirmed (local work at each Health Board started in May 2024)
Access to education for children with Additional Learning Needs	To be confirmed (scoping)
Support for business	To be confirmed (starting in 2024-25)
Support for bus and rail services	To be confirmed (starting in 2024-25)
Progress with investment in school and college buildings through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme	To be confirmed (starting in 2024-25)
NHS bodies' approaches to digital transformation (local audit work)	To be confirmed (local audit work rolling out from October 2024)

Title	Indicative publication date
NHS bodies' cost savings arrangements	To be confirmed (local audit reporting nearing completion)

Good Practice Exchange events and resources

Title	Link to resource
<p>Audit Committees: Effective practices and a positive impact</p> <p>Good governance arrangements are a critical part of how public service organisations function effectively and deliver value for money services for the citizens and communities of Wales. Audit Committees are one of the foundation stones that support good governance. With significant current and future pressures on public sector finances, there is an increasing need for effective practices and a positive impact. Audit Committees play a vital role in this. This event provides an opportunity to share experiences, learn, and network with peers across the public sector in Wales.</p>	<p>9th October 2024, 10:30 – 15:30 Conwy Business Centre</p> <p>The resources from our event in Cardiff on 22 May are available here.</p>
<p>GPX Blog: 100 Stories Project</p>	<p>https://www.audit.wales/blog/gpx/2024/7/11/good-practice-exchange-100-stories-project</p>
<p>GPX Blog: A multiagency approach to falls</p>	<p>https://www.audit.wales/blog/gpx/2024/8/19/good-practice-exchange-multi-agency-approach-falls</p>
<p>GPX Blog: The councillors and care research project</p>	<p>https://www.audit.wales/blog/gpx/2024/9/11/good-practice-exchange-councillors-and-care-research-project</p>