

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
14TH NOVEMBER, 2018

REFERENCE FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE: 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2018

“305 AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES: VALE OF GLAMORGAN ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2018 (MD) –

Ms. Sara-Jane Byrne, of the Wales Audit Office (WAO), presented the report which summarised the audit work undertaken during the period 2017/18 and covered all work undertaken by other inspection and regulatory bodies such as Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). This was attached at Appendix 1.

The WAO report findings were generally positive and concluded that overall the Council was meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement. Key highlights were:

- The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources;
- The WAO was satisfied that the Council had appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources;
- The Council complied with its statutory improvement and reporting duties.

Seven proposals for improvement were made specifically focusing on strengthening scrutiny arrangements within the Council to enable it to respond to future challenges and have greater impact. Further strengthening our arrangements for Scrutiny remained a priority for the Council as identified in the Council's Annual Self-Assessment and work was already underway with the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group to develop an action plan to address these proposals. The action plan would be reported to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee in due course and incorporated within the Insight Board's Tracker, which monitored progress on a monthly basis.

The Annual Improvement Report (AIR) also outlined a number of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the WAO, since publication of the last AIR. These had been reviewed and relevant actions incorporated within the Council's Insight Tracker for monitoring and would be reported to Scrutiny Committees and Audit Committee as work to address the proposals progressed.

In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, Members of the Audit Committee would continue to be informed of progress against all regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals via a six monthly (half-year) update report and this would be supplemented with the annual review of progress via the Council's Annual Self-Assessment. Progress against these recommendations/

proposals for improvement would be monitored by the Council's Insight Board and reported to Scrutiny Committees prior to reporting to the Audit Committee for final oversight.

It was recommended that the Audit Committee consider the content of the AIR and refer this report to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet along with any comments of the Committee.

With regard to the report on the Scrutiny function, Ms. Byrne advised that she and her WAO colleagues had just come from a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group. This, she said, had been very positive which involved healthy discussion on how Scrutiny would operate in the future.

The Chairman, in commenting on the WAO report on Scrutiny, stated that he was confident that the Council's response would be positive, but one of the key considerations going forward was around the use of technology. He stated that Welsh Government had encouraged Local Authorities to use modern technology to enhance the democratic process and to increase transparency. The Chairman added that technology allowed the Council to consider more innovative forms of scrutiny, such as Doodle Polls that would improve public engagement. In response Ms. Byrne stated that this was exactly the sort of discussion that had taken place with the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group, which had highlighted the pilot project around joint scrutiny of the Car Parking Strategy. The other considerations would be to ensure that Scrutiny was considering Council priorities alongside discussions on the best methods of scrutiny. A key element of this was not just around social media but also about engaging with all interested parties. She advised that there was a lot around this within the Council's response.

A Committee Member commented on holding the Cabinet Members to account, stating that not all Cabinet Members attended Scrutiny Committee meetings. The Member stated that he felt strongly that Cabinet Members should regularly attend Scrutiny, not just to be held to account, but also to be fully aware of the depth of feeling of Members of the Committees. In reply, Ms. Byrne stated that this was one of the key findings from the WAO review, with there being a varied picture between the five Scrutiny Committees. She also advised that it was not just about having the same blanket approach and that Cabinet Members should only attend where they were required and where they could add value could. For example, Ms. Byrne highlighted that Cabinet Members and not officers should be presenting performance reports. There had, once again, been healthy discussion at the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group meeting.

The Chairman then raised a point around how reports were written, stating that more thought was needed around how accessible reports were and the use of plain language. The Chairman felt that Welsh Government should introduce a "house style" across the whole of Wales which outlined the type of language that should be used. In addition, reports needed to be more "neutral" and written from the third person's perspective, with consideration of both sides, for and against. This would help Scrutiny to consider the pros and cons and to look at possible options. These views were echoed by a Committee Member who commented that reports should be written more for the lay person as it was not always easy to identify the relevant

report sections. He added that reports needed to avoid the use of jargon, with the more detailed parts of the report included in an appendix. In reply to these comments, the Head of Performance and Development stated that a new style of report was currently being considered, which would include an executive summary and which needed to reflect the five ways of working. This would lead to officers thinking differently about how reports were written.

A Member of the Committee stated that there was tension between the accessibility of reports and the amount of detail that was needed for Councillors to fully understand the relevant issues. He added that an executive summary would not work if it did not provide the right information.

Having considered the Annual Improvement Report 2018, it was

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the report be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with any recommendations for such comments of the Audit Committee.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) To provide for scrutiny and review of the Auditor General's Annual Improvement Report."

Attached as Appendix - Report to Audit Committee: 19th September, 2018

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Audit Committee: 19th September 2018

Report of the Managing Director

Auditor General for Wales: Vale of Glamorgan Annual Improvement Report 2018

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Members of results of the assessment by the Auditor General for Wales of the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

Recommendations

1. That Members note the content of the report.
2. That the report be referred to Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with any recommendations/comments of the Audit Committee.

Reason for the Recommendations

- 1&2 To provide for scrutiny and review of the Auditor General's Annual Improvement Report.

Background

2. The Auditor General for Wales has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009) to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities have a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions'.
3. The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The report discharges the Auditor General's duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

4. The 'Annual Improvement Report (AIR)' summaries the audit work undertaken during the period 2017 to 2018 and covers all work undertaken by other inspection and regulatory bodies such as Estyn (Her Majesty's inspectorate for schools in Wales) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).

Relevant Issues and Options

5. **Appendix 1** contains the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Improvement Report for the period 2017-18.
6. The WAO report findings were generally positive and concluded that overall the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement. Key highlights were:
 - The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources;
 - The WAO is satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
 - The Council complied with its statutory improvement and reporting duties.
7. Seven proposals for improvement were made specifically focusing on strengthening scrutiny arrangements within the Council to enable us to respond to future challenges and have greater impact. Further strengthening our arrangements for Scrutiny remains a priority for the Council as identified in the Council's Annual Self-Assessment and work is already underway with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Group to develop an action plan to address these proposals. The action plan will be reported to the Corporate Performance Resources Scrutiny Committee in due course and incorporated within the Insight Board's Tracker, which monitors progress on a monthly basis.
8. The AIR also outlines a number of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the Wales Audit Office, since publication of the last AIR. These have been reviewed and relevant actions incorporated within the Council's Insight Tracker for monitoring and will be reported to Scrutiny Committees and Audit Committee as work to address the proposals progresses.
9. In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, Members of this Committee will continue to be informed of progress against all regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals via a 6 monthly (half-year) update report and this will be supplemented with the annual review of progress via the Council's Annual Self-Assessment. Progress against these recommendations/ proposals for improvement will be monitored by the Council's Insight Board and reported to Scrutiny Committees prior to reporting to the Audit Committee for final oversight.
10. It is recommended that the Audit Committee considers the content of the AIR and refers this report to the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet along with any comments of this committee.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

11. Audit and inspection fees for the Council are met from existing budgets.

12. There are no additional budgetary implications arising from this report, although underperformance in some areas may have a negative impact on external assessments of the Council and could put certain funding opportunities at risk.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

13. None directly from this report.
14. The Corporate Plan 2016-20 emphasises the Council's commitment to promoting sustainable development and our understanding of our duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The many different aspects of sustainability (environment, economy, culture and social) are reflected within planned activities as outlined in the plan and demonstrate how the Council will maximise its contribution to the national Well-being Goals.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

15. The Auditor General for Wales has a duty under sections 15, 17, 18, 19 and 24 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to assess and report the outputs from corporate and improvement Assessments of all improvement authorities in Wales.
16. 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.
17. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to set Well-being Objectives by April each year that maximise its contribution to achieving the Well-being goals for Wales and report its progress annually.

Crime and Disorder Implications

18. None directly from this report.
19. Activities to improve community safety are included in the Corporate Plan and one of the Well-being Outcomes is 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale' with a supporting objective 'providing decent homes and safe communities'. The Council's Performance Management Framework supports the delivery of actions associated with these objectives.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

20. None directly from this report.
21. 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale' is one of the Well-being Outcomes in the Corporate Plan with a supporting objective 'reducing poverty and social exclusion'. There is also a Well-being Outcome 'An Aspirational and culturally vibrant Vale' with a supporting action 'valuing culture and diversity'. The Council's Performance Management Framework supports the delivery of actions associated with these objectives.

Corporate/Service Objectives

22. The Corporate Plan 2016-20 reflects the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and identifies 4 Well-being Outcomes and 8 Objectives for the Council. These promote improvements in the economic, social and cultural well-being of residents in the Vale of Glamorgan which in turn will contribute to achieving the Well-being goals for Wales.

23. The Council's Performance Management Framework supports the delivery of all of the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes and Objectives.

Policy Framework and Budget

24. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

25. N/A

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

26. Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The Vale of Glamorgan Annual Report for 2018-19 incorporates the findings of the Annual Improvement Report and this is being reported to all Scrutiny Committees in September (11-20th).

Background Papers

N/A

Contact Officer

Huw Isaac, Head of Performance & Development

Officers Consulted

Corporate Management Team
Tom Bowring, Operational Manager Performance and Policy

Responsible Officer:

Rob Thomas, Managing Director



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report: 2017-18 – Vale of Glamorgan Council

Issued: August 2018

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This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Ian Phillips and Sara-Jane Byrne under the direction of Huw Rees.

**Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
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The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office Board, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the National Assembly.

The Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Summary report

2017-18 performance audit work

- 1 In determining the breadth of work undertaken during the year, we considered the extent of accumulated audit and inspection knowledge as well as other available sources of information including the Vale of Glamorgan Council's (the Council) own mechanisms for review and evaluation. For 2017-18, we undertook improvement assessment work at all councils. We also undertook work at all councils in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, a service-user-perspective themed review and a review of overview and scrutiny arrangements. At some councils, we supplemented this work with local risk-based audits, identified in the Audit Plan for 2017-18.
- 2 The work carried out since the last Annual Improvement Report (AIR), including that of the relevant regulators, is set out in [Exhibit 2](#).

The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement

- 3 Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2018-19.

Recommendations and proposals for improvement

- 4 Given the wide range of services provided by the Council and the challenges it is facing, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
 - make proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, we would expect it to do something about them and we will follow up what happens;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
 - conduct a special inspection, and publish a report and make recommendations; and
 - recommend to ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.
- 5 During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations. However, we have made a number of proposals for improvement and these are repeated in this report. We will monitor progress against them and relevant recommendations made in our national reports ([Appendix 3](#)) as part of our improvement assessment work.

Audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2017-18

Exhibit 1: audit, regulatory and inspection work reported during 2017-18

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

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
July 2018	<p>'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review</p> <p>Review of how well placed Councils' overview and scrutiny functions are to respond to current and future challenges.</p>	<p>The Council has changed its scrutiny arrangements but should consider opportunities for its scrutiny function to work differently to respond to current and future challenges and have greater impact. We came to this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of scrutiny in council governance is clearly defined, but in practice scrutiny committees do not routinely hold the Cabinet to account as effectively as they could and there is scope to review the type of scrutiny support; Scrutiny committee meetings are generally well-run, but the focus of scrutiny activity and methods used could be strengthened to make more effective use of resources; and the Council monitors and reports on the work of its scrutiny function, but evaluation is not fully focussed on the impact and value that it can add. 	<p>P1 Skills and Development: The Council should further consider the skills and training that scrutiny members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges and develop and deliver an appropriate training programme.</p> <p>P2 Form and Governance: The Council's scrutiny committees should ensure that where appropriate Cabinet members rather than council officers are held to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions in accordance with statutory guidance.</p> <p>P3 Function: The Council should review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to current and future challenges.</p> <p>P4 Function: The Council should explore different and more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity.</p> <p>P5 Function: The Council should consider how its scrutiny activity can focus on those areas where it would have most value.</p> <p>P6 Function: The Council should be more innovative in how it engages the public in its scrutiny activity.</p> <p>P7 Evaluation: The Council should strengthen its evaluation of the impact and outcomes of its scrutiny activity and learn from this in order to shape the future work of its scrutiny function.</p>

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
November 2017	<p>Annual Audit Letter 2016-17</p> <p>Letter summarising the key messages arising from the Auditor General's statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and his reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. The Annual Audit Letter is in Appendix 2 of this report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources. We are satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the financial statements or key financial systems. 	None.

Improvement planning and reporting

May 2017	<p>Wales Audit Office annual improvement plan audit</p> <p>Review of the Council's published plans for delivering on improvement objectives.</p>	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement planning duties.	None.
November 2017	<p>Wales Audit Office annual assessment of performance audit</p> <p>Review of the Council's published performance assessment.</p>	The Council has complied with its statutory improvement reporting duties.	None.

Issue date	Brief description	Conclusions	Proposals for improvement
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Reviews by inspection and regulation bodies

No reviews by inspection and regulation bodies have taken place during the time period covered in this report.

Appendix 1

Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake a forward-looking annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. Improvement authorities (defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities) have a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'.

The annual improvement assessment considers the likelihood that an authority will comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The assessment is also the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. Staff of the Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Auditor General, produce the annual improvement report. The report discharges the Auditor General's duties under section 24 of the Measure, by summarising his audit and assessment work in a published annual improvement report for each authority. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether (as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17) he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

The Auditor General may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the authority and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). An important ancillary activity for the Auditor General is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

Appendix 2

Annual Audit Letter

Councillor John Thomas – Leader / Mr Rob Thomas – Managing Director
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 4RU

Reference: 278A2017-18

Date issued: 28 November 2017

Dear John and Rob

Annual Audit Letter – Vale of Glamorgan Council 2016-17

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources

It is the Council's responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements;
and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This Code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards.

On 28 September 2017, I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the 2016-17 financial statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts. The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members of the Audit Committee and Full Council in my 'Audit of Financial Statements report' on 20 and 27 September 2017 respectively.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 28 September 2017.

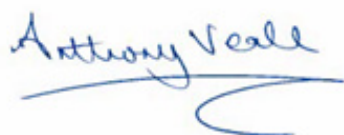
I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

My consideration of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts as well as placing reliance on the work completed under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Auditor General highlighted areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made in his Annual Improvement Report 2016-17.

My work to date on certification of grant claims and returns has not identified significant issues that would impact on the financial statements or key financial systems.

My ongoing work on the certification of grant claims and returns has not identified any significant issues to date in relation to the accounts or the Council's key financial systems. A more detailed report on my grant certification work will follow early in 2018 once this year's programme of certification work is complete.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anthony Veale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Anthony Veale

For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales

Appendix 3

National report recommendations 2017-18

Exhibit 2: national report recommendations 2017-18

Summary of proposals for improvement relevant to local government, included in national reports published by the Wales Audit Office, since publication of the last AIR.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
June 2017	<u>Savings Planning in Councils in Wales</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement, although proposals for improvement were included in local reports issued to each Council.
October 2017	<u>Public Procurement in Wales</u>	The report contained seven recommendations. Six of the recommendations were for the Welsh Government, one of the recommendations was for public bodies: R3 It was clear from our sampling that some procurement strategies are out of date and there has also been a mixed response to new policy and legislation, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We recommend that public bodies review their procurement strategies and policies during 2017-18 and on an annual basis thereafter to ensure that they reflect wider policy and legislative changes and support continuous improvement.
October 2017	<u>Good governance when determining significant service changes – National Summary</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement, although proposals for improvement were included in local reports issued to each Council. The report was designed primarily to provide insight, share existing practice and prompt further conversations and discussions between councils and other organisations. R1 Develop strategic frameworks for introducing and reviewing charges, linking them firmly with the MTFP.
December 2017	<u>Local Government Financial Reporting 2016-17</u>	The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2018	How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness	<p>R1 Implementing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to develop services which are focussed on preventing homelessness and reducing demand. These are very different to traditional casework led homelessness services, and prevention work requires new skills and early interaction with users and potential users. We found local authorities' progress in revising and strengthening services is variable (paragraphs 1.12 to 1.20). We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure their staff are sufficiently skilled to deal with the new demands of mediating, problem solving, negotiating and influencing with homeless people; and • review and reconfigure their services to engage more effectively with homeless and potentially homeless people to prevent homelessness. <p>R2 The Welsh Government provided funding to support local authorities to implement the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and this funding has been critical in enabling new preventative services to be developed. The funding is in place until 2019-20 but authorities need to ensure they use headspace provided by these resources to revise their services to deliver their responsibilities in the future (paragraphs 1.21 to 1.28). We recommend that local authorities review their funding of homelessness services to ensure that they can continue to provide the widest possible preventative approach needed. Reviews should consider use of Supporting People as well as General Council fund monies to support delivery of the authority's homelessness duties.</p> <p>R3 How services are configured and managed at the first point of contact can significantly influence how effective local authorities are in managing and reducing demand. Easy to access services which maximise usage, avoid gate keeping and focus on early solutions can significantly improve the prospects for successful homelessness prevention. We found that some authority point of entry systems are poorly designed which reduces the authority's prospects for early intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring (paragraphs 2.4 to 2.11). We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design services to ensure there is early contact with service users; • use 'triage' approaches to identify and filter individuals seeking help to determine the most appropriate response to address their needs; and • test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2018	How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness	<p>R4 Establishing clear standards of service that set out what the authority provides and is responsible for is critical to ensuring people know what they are entitled to receive and what they need to resolve themselves. We found that authorities are not always providing clear, concise and good quality information to help guide people to find the right advice quickly and efficiently (paragraphs 2.12 to 2.17). We recommend that local authorities publish service standards that clearly set out what their responsibilities are and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive and what they must do for themselves. Service standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be written in plain accessible language. • be precise about what applicants can and cannot expect, and when they can expect resolution. • clearly set out the applicant's role in the process and how they can help the process go more smoothly and quickly. • be produced collaboratively with subject experts and include the involvement of people who use the service(s). • effectively integrate with the single assessment process. • offer viable alternatives to the authority's services. • set out the appeals and complaints processes. These should be based on fairness and equity for all involved and available to all. <p>R5 Local authorities need to design services to engage with service users effectively and efficiently, but current standards are too variable to ensure service users are getting access to the advice they need (paragraphs 2.18 to 2.24). To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out in Appendix 5; • increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information; making better use of online applications; and • linking more effectively to information from specialist providers and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice. <p>R6 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduces a new duty on social services and housing associations to collaborate with local authority homelessness services in preventing homelessness. We found that these arrangements are not operating effectively and service responses to prevent homelessness and assist homeless people are not always being provided, nor are they consistently effective (paragraphs 3.13 to 3.25). We recommend that local authorities set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
January 2018	How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness	<p>R7 Local authorities monitoring systems and evaluation approaches to ensure compliance with their responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty are not working as well as they should (paragraph 3.35 to 3.39). We recommend that local authorities address weaknesses in their equalities monitoring, and ensure that their homelessness service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards.</p> <p>R8 Managing demand can be challenging for local authorities. There are some clear lessons to be learnt with regard to the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and homelessness prevention duties that can be applied to managing demand in other services (paragraphs 4.24 to 4.27). We recommend that local authorities use the checklist set out in Appendix 10 to undertake a self-assessment on services, to help identify options to improve how they can help manage demand.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>The report contained nine recommendations. One of the recommendations was for the Welsh Government, eight of the recommendations were for local authorities and/or delivery organisations:</p> <p>R1 There are many sources of funding and policies for adaptations, which results in disabled and older people receiving very different standards of service (paragraphs 1.5 to 1.9). To address these discrepancies we recommend that the Welsh Government set standards for all adaptations to ensure disabled and older people receive the same standard of service irrespective of where they live, who their landlord is and whether they own their own home.</p> <p>R2 Most public bodies are clear on how their work on adaptations can positively impact on disabled and older people, and have set suitable aims that provide focus for action. For adaptations, having the right strategic goals also establishes a clear basis for decision-making on who should be prioritised for services and how and where to use resources. However, we found that current policy arrangements have a number of deficiencies and public bodies are not maximising the benefit of their investment (paragraphs 3.8 to 3.15). We recommend that local authorities work with partner agencies (health bodies, housing associations and Care and Repair) to strengthen their strategic focus for the provision of adaptations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting appropriate strategic objectives for adaptations that focus on wellbeing and independence; • improving the quality of information on the demand for adaptations by using a wide range of data to assess need including drawing on and using information from partners who work in the local-authority area; and • linking the system for managing and delivering adaptations with adapted housing policies and registers to make best use of already adapted homes. <p>R3 Ensuring that all those who might need an adaptation have all the information they need in order to apply for and receive an adaptation is important. Good-quality and accessible information is therefore essential for delivery organisations to demonstrate fair access and transparency. However, we identified weaknesses in the quality and coverage of public information relating to housing adaptations (paragraphs 2.6 to 2.15). We recommend that delivery organisations provide information on housing adaptations in both Welsh and English, and accessible formats including braille, large fonts, audio versions and other languages. Information should be promoted widely via a range of media including social media, websites and published information, and also through key partners. Preferably, information should be produced jointly and policies aligned between delivery bodies to improve coverage and usage.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R4 Given the wide number of routes into services, delivery organisations need to ensure they have robust systems to deal effectively and quickly with applications. However, we found that the processes used by delivery organisations vary widely and often create difficulties for disabled and older people seeking assistance (paragraphs 2.16 to 2.19). We recommend that delivery organisations streamline applications by creating single comprehensive application forms covering all organisations within a local-authority area that are available via partners and online.</p> <p>R5 Delivery of adaptations can be delayed by a variety of factors (paragraphs 2.20 to 2.33). To improve timeliness in delivery we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Welsh Government reviews whether local authorities should continue to use the means test for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs); • local authorities provide or use home improvement agency services to support disabled and older people to progress their DFG applications efficiently; • delivery organisations work with planning authorities to fast track and streamline adaptations that require approvals; • delivery organisations use Trusted Assessors to undertake less complex adaptation assessments; and • the Welsh Government streamlines its approval processes for Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs).

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R6 Most local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies have established processes to appoint, oversee and manage builder and/or contractor performance. However, we found wide variations in how delivery organisations arrange, contract and deliver building works (paragraphs 2.37 to 2.44). We recommend that delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce formal systems for accrediting contractors to undertake adaptations. These should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – standards of customer care such as keeping to appointments, keeping the site tidy, controlling noise etc; – vetting of financial standing, tax and VAT status; – promoting good health and safety practices; – requiring the use of warranty schemes; – ensuring that adequate insurance is held; and – requiring references. • use framework agreements and partnered contracts to deliver adaptations; • address weaknesses in the contracting of adaptations, updating Schedule of Rates used to tender work and undertaking competitive tendering to support value for money in contracting; • develop effective systems to manage and evaluate contractor performance by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – setting an appropriate range of information to judge performance and delivery of works covering timeliness of work; quality of work; applicant/tenant feedback; cost of work (including variations); health and safety record; and customer feedback; – regularly reporting and evaluating performance to identify opportunities to improve services; and – providing formal feedback to contractors on their performance covering key issues such as client satisfaction, level and acceptability of variations, right first-time work, post-inspection assessment and completion within budget and on time.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	Housing Adaptations	<p>R7 Maximising impact and value for money in provision of adaptations requires effective joint working between housing organisations and health and social care services to ensure the needs of often very vulnerable people can be met, and their quality of life improved. However, our findings highlight that delivery organisations continue to have a limited strategic focus on adaptations, concentrating on organisational specific responses rather than how best collectively to meet the needs of disabled or older people (paragraphs 3.16 to 3.21). We recommend that local authorities work with partner agencies (health bodies, housing associations and Care and Repair) to develop and improve joint working to maximise both take-up and the benefits of adaptations in supporting independence by pooling of resources, co-locating staff and creating integrated delivery teams</p> <p>R8 Most public bodies recognise the value of adaptations in reducing the risk of falls, preventing hospital admissions and speeding up discharge from hospital. However, the importance of adaptations is not always reflected in local partnership arrangements and outside of Occupational Therapists, health professionals noted that the different local-authority and housing-association systems for administering, approving and delivering adaptations are difficult to navigate (paragraphs 3.22 to 3.24). To enhance take-up and usage of adaptations with health bodies we recommend that delivery organisations jointly agree and publish joint service standards for delivery of adaptations within each local-authority area. The service standards should clearly set out how each agency approaches delivery of adaptations and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive. Service Standards should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be written in plain accessible language; • be precise about what people can and cannot expect to receive; • be produced collaboratively to cover all adaptations services within an area; • set out the eligibility for the different funding streams, application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes; and • offer the viable options and alternatives for adaptations including linking with adapted housing registers to maximise use of already adapted homes.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
February 2018	<u>Housing Adaptations</u>	<p>R9 Having the right performance indicators and regularly reporting performance against these are important for public bodies to manage operational performance, identify areas of improvement and evaluating the positive impact of services. We found that the current range of performance indicator data is extremely limited and not sufficient to enable a full evaluation of performance (paragraphs 4.5 to 4.20). To effectively manage performance and be able to judge the impact of adaptations, we recommend that the Welsh Government and delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set appropriate measures to judge both the effectiveness and efficiency of the different systems for delivering adaptations and the impact on wellbeing and independence of those who receive adaptations; • ensure delivery organisations report against their responsibilities in respect of the Equalities Act 2010; • ensure performance information captures the work of all delivery organisations – local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies; and • annually publish performance for all delivery organisations to enable a whole systems view of delivery and impact to support improvement to be taken.
April 2018	<u>Speak my language: Overcoming language and communication barriers in public services</u>	<p>Ensuring that people who face language and communication barriers can access public services</p> <p>R1 Public bodies are required to ensure that people can access the services they need. To take account of the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and other legislation, we recommend that public bodies regularly review the accessibility of their services to people who do not speak English or Welsh as a main language including Deaf people who use sign language. This assessment can include using our checklist.</p> <p>Developing interpretation and translation services in Wales</p> <p>R2 Our work with public bodies, interpretation and translation service providers and service users has identified some challenges for interpretation and translation services. We recommend that the Welsh Government work with public bodies, representative groups and other interested parties to make sure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the supply of interpreters is sufficient especially for languages in high demand such as BSL and Arabic; • interpreters with specialist training are available to work in mental health services and with people who have experienced trauma or violence; and • quality assurance and safeguarding procedures are in place.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2018	<u>Reflecting on Year One: How Have Public Bodies Responded to the Well-being of Future Generations</u>	<p>The report did not include any recommendations or proposals for improvement.</p>
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R1 People with a learning disability have a right to live independently. The last 50 years have seen significant changes in the provision of accommodation and support. Service provision has moved to a model that enables people to live in the community in ordinary houses throughout Wales (paragraphs 1.3 to 1.10). We recommend that local authorities continue to focus on preventing people becoming dependent on more expensive placements in care homes by providing effective support at home and a range of step up accommodation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the evaluation of prevention activity so local authorities understand what works well and why. • utilising the mapping of prevention services under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 that covers other agencies and service providers. • improving the signposting of additional help so carers and support networks can be more resilient and self-reliant. This should include encouraging carers to make long-term plans for care to maintain and protect their dependants' wellbeing. • sharing risk analysis and long-term planning data with other local authorities, service providers, and partners to agree a shared understanding of the range of options. <p>R2 Population projections show that the number of people with a learning disability will increase in the future, and those aged over 65 and those with a moderate or severe learning disability will rise significantly (paragraphs 1.3 to 1.10). We recommend that local authorities improve their approach to planning services for people with learning disabilities by building on the Regional Partnership Boards' population assessments for people with learning disabilities and agreeing future priorities.</p>

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R3 The Welsh Government produced guidance to local authorities, entitled 'developing a commissioning strategy for people with a learning disability' to support authorities in producing strategic plans for the commissioning of learning disability services. In conjunction with codes of practice developed following the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Welsh Government requires local authorities to develop integrated commissioning options with Local Health Board services. The aim is to provide a joined-up and cost-effective approach to the commissioning of services but our review highlighted weaknesses in current arrangements (paragraph 2.4 to 2.12). We recommend that local authorities do more to integrate commissioning arrangements with partners and providers and take account of the work of the National Commissioning Board by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the barriers that exist in stopping or hindering further integration; • improving the quality of joint strategic plans for learning disability services (see also paragraphs 3.11 to 3.14); • establishing investment models and sustainable financial structures, joint workforce planning and multi-year budgeting; and • developing appropriate governance and data sharing frameworks with key local partners that include a clear process for managing risk and failure. <p>R4 Local authorities' engagement with people with learning disabilities and their carers is variable. Whilst many authority services have positive relationships with advocacy groups, some are less successful in involving these groups and carers in evaluating the quality of services (paragraph 2.18 to 2.20). We recommend that local authorities do more to involve people with learning disabilities and their carers in care planning and agreeing pathways to further independence by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistently including people with learning disabilities and their carers in the writing, monitoring and development of care plans; • systematically involving carers and advocacy groups in evaluating the quality of services; • involving people with learning disabilities in procurement processes; and • ensuring communications are written in accessible and appropriate language to improve the understanding and impact of guidance and information.

Date of report	Title of review	Recommendation
May 2018	<u>Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</u>	<p>R5 Local Authorities could do more to involve service providers in commissioning and make the tendering process more effective by making it easier to navigate and more outcome focused. However, providers are not as effectively engaged as they should be (paragraphs 2.28 to 2.38). We recommend that local authorities collaborate with providers, the third sector and suppliers in understanding challenges, sharing data, and pooling expertise by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the quality, range, and accessibility of tendering information; and • working with providers to shape local markets by coming to a common understanding of the opportunities, risks, and future priorities in providing learning disabilities services. <p>R6 Most local authorities do not have effective arrangements to monitor and evaluate their commissioning of learning disability services (paragraphs 3.3 to 3.15). We recommend that local authorities develop a more appropriate set of performance indicators and measures of success that make it easier to monitor and demonstrate the impact of service activity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-designing measures, service and contract performance indicators with service providers, people with learning disabilities and their carers; • ensure commissioners have sufficient cost and qualitative information on the full range of placement and care options available; • equipping commissioners with data to demonstrate the long-term financial benefits of commissioning choices, this includes having the right systems and technology; • integrating the outcomes and learning from reviews of care plans into performance measures; • evaluating and then learning from different types of interventions and placements; and • including learning disability services in local authority scrutiny reviews to challenge performance and identify improvements.

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