

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Governance and Audit Committee
DATE:	9th March 2023
LOCATION:	Remotely by Video Conference
TITLE:	Ceredigion County Council Responses to Regulator & Inspectorate Reports
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To provide the Governance and Audit Committee with the Council's responses to Regulator and Inspectorate Reports
For:	Decision
Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:	Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Legal and Governance, Housing, People and Organisation and Public Protection

Introduction

This Report sets out the Council's responses regarding Regulator and Inspectorate Reports and progress made regarding proposals and recommendations.

This Report has 2 parts:

- a) Council tracker of Regulator/Inspectorate proposals for improvement and recommendations; and*
- b) Other Council related matters.*

Current Position

a) Council tracker of Regulator/Inspectorate proposals for improvement and recommendations

- Council Management Response Forms 2022-2023 Update:
 - MRF – Audit Wales – The National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2020-21 (**Appendix 1**)
 - MRF - Audit Wales – Assurance and Risk Assessment Update – Carbon Reduction (**Appendix 2**)
 - MRF - Audit Wales – Equality Impact Assessments: More than a tick box exercise? (**Appendix 3**)
 - Audit Wales – Time for Change – Poverty in Wales – MRF to follow
 - Audit Wales – A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises – MRF to follow

b) Other Council related matters

RECOMMENDATIONS:	To consider the Council's responses to Regulator and Inspectorate Reports
Reasons for Recommendation	To keep the Governance and Audit Committee informed of reports, proposals and work being undertaken
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1 MRF – Audit Wales – The National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2020-21</p> <p>Appendix 2 MRF – Audit Wales – Ceredigion Assurance and Risk Assessment Update – Carbon Reduction</p> <p>Appendix 3 MRF – Audit Wales – Equality Impact Assessments: more than a tick box exercise?</p>
Contact Name:	Elin Prysor
Designation:	Corporate Lead Officer: Legal & Governance & Monitoring Officer
Date of Report:	09/03/2023

AW National Report Summary and Proposals for Improvement

Regulatory Authority: Audit Wales

Report title: The National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2020-21

Issue date: 20 October 2022

Governance and Audit Committee: 17 January 2023

Document reference: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/The_National_Fraud_Initiative_in_Wales_2020_21_English_0.pdf

Report Summary

This Audit Wales National Report summarises the results from the National Fraud Initiative Exercise 2020-21.

Recommendations

Ref	Proposal for Improvement / Recommendation	Council Response
R1	All participants in the NFI exercise should ensure that they maximise the benefits of their participation. They should consider whether it is possible to work more efficiently on the NFI matches by reviewing the guidance section within the NFI secure web application.	The NFI exercise is co-ordinated by the Audit Manager. All reports are run in conjunction with IT & results are sent to the appropriate services for processing. Report matches are produced in order of risk and sample testing is undertaken based on the risk priority. All participants are encouraged to read the guidance and undertake the training within the NFI secure web application prior to each exercise.
R2	Audit committees, or equivalent, and officers leading the NFI should review <u>the NFI self-appraisal checklist</u> . This will ensure they are fully informed of their organisation's planning and progress in the 2022-23 NFI exercise.	The NFI self-appraisal checklist was reported to Governance and Audit Committee in January 2022. The NFI exercise is also reported upon in the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit's annual Counter Fraud Report to Governance & Audit Committee.
R3	Where local auditors recommend improving the timeliness and rigour with which NFI matches are reviewed, NFI participants should take appropriate action.	See R1 above - the NFI exercise is co-ordinated by the Audit Manager. All reports are run in conjunction with IT & results are sent to the appropriate services for processing. All recommended matches are required to be completed by end of May; all matches to be finalised by end of September. Each service decides on the appropriate methodology for progressing their individual matches.

Council Response Form

Council action planned in response to the recommendations issued by Audit Wales

Council: Ceredigion County Council

Output: Assurance and Risk Assessment Progress Update – Carbon Reduction

Issue date: November 2022

Document reference:

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to the recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
R1	In order to meet its net zero ambition the Council needs to fully cost its action plan and ensure that it is aligned with its Medium Term Financial Plan.	<p>The Council has a good track record of delivering carbon reduction, with well embedded arrangements in place to deliver its Net Zero ambitions. However, it is recognised that improvements can be made by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and develop clear costings for the delivery of different components of the Action Plan • To consider these as a 10 year capital programme is delivered. • Review staff resources to help co-ordinate and deliver the Plan. 	It is intended that we develop interim costings by the end of March 2024. Some aspects of work will however take longer, as additional guidance emerges, or new technologies are developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Rees, Corporate Director • Russell Hughes Pickering, CLO – Economy & Regeneration • Rhodri Llwyd, CLO Highways, Environmental Services • <i>Carbon Management</i>

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		<p>This will involve a more detailed analysis of options and costings for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore further emission reduction opportunities across the Council's operational property portfolio • Further efficiencies within the Council's fleet • Council or community owned large scale renewable schemes • Review of procurement policies • Developing data and monitoring systems • Development of Local Area Energy Plans • Improving staff capacity and support to help delivery plans 		<i>and Climate Change Group</i>

Council Response Form

Council action planned in response to the recommendations issued by Audit Wales

Council: Ceredigion County Council

Report title: Equality Impact Assessments: more than a tick box exercise?

Issue date: September 2022

Document reference:

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
R1	<p>Clarifying the scope of the duty to impact assess policies and practices</p> <p>There is scope for confusion about which type of policies and practices must be subject to an assessment for their impact on the public sector equality duty. The Welsh Government should clarify its interpretation of the duty, including whether and how it expects public bodies to apply any</p>	Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.		

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
	test of proportionality and relevance.			
R2	<p>Building a picture of what good integrated impact assessment looks like</p> <p>Many public bodies carry out integrated impact assessments that include consideration of the PSED alongside other duties. But practice is inconsistent and often involved collating multiple assessments in one place, rather than being truly integrated, to help maximise the intended benefits of integrated impact assessments, the Welsh Government should work with key stakeholders with an interest in the areas commonly covered by integrated impact assessments and those with lived experiences, to share learning and work towards a shared understanding of what good looks like for an integrated impact assessment.</p>	Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.		

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R3	<p>Applying the equality duties to collaborative public bodies and partnerships</p> <p>The public sector landscape has changed since the introduction of the PSED and the Welsh specific duties, with an increasing focus on collaborative planning and delivery. The Welsh Government should review whether it needs to update the Wales specific regulations to cover a wider range of collaborative and partnership arrangements. These include public services boards, regional partnership boards and other service specific partnerships.</p>	Not applicable as this recommendation is for Welsh Government, not the Local Authority.		
R4	<p>Reviewing public bodies' current approach for conducting EIAs</p> <p>While there are examples of good practice related to distinct stages of the EIA process, all public bodies have lessons to learn about their overall approach. Public bodies</p>	<p>Our current IIA template is structured around the seven National Well-being goals. The equalities section is completed as part of the goal to create a 'more equal Wales'.</p> <p>We are in the process of reviewing our IIA tool and guidance and intend to continue with this structure for the future.</p>	March 2024	Alun Williams

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	<p>should review their overall approach to EIAs considering the findings of this report and the detailed guidance available from the EHRC and the Practice Hub. We recognise that developments in response to our other recommendations and the Welsh Government's review of the PSED Wales specific regulations may have implications for current guidance in due course.</p>	<p>We will use the findings from the Audit Wales report and Welsh Government's review of their guidance to inform the process.</p> <p>Ceredigion County Council has joined the Equality and Human Rights Exchange network and refers regularly to the Practice Hub to ensure continued improvement of our practice.</p>		