

Report



Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 16 December 2020

Subject **Audit Wales – Audit of Newport City Council’s Assessment of 2019-20 performance (Certificate of Compliance 2)**

Purpose To present Cabinet with the Audit Wales second Assessment of Performance Certificate on the 2019/20 assessment of performance. The certificate confirms that the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(2), (3), (8) and (9) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

This report also provides a summary of audits completed in 2019/20 and their work programme for 2020/21 in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Author Head of People and Business Change

Ward All

Summary As part of the programme of regulatory activity in accordance with the Local Government Measure 2009, the Auditor General is required to issue two Certificates of Compliance to demonstrate that Council is discharging its duties under the Measure. This is the second certificate following the publication of the Council’s Annual Report 2019/20 before the 31st October.

In 2019/20 and 2020/21, Audit Wales has been providing assurance across a broad range of Council services as well as All-Wales (National) reviews. The report includes a summary of the work completed and also their response to Covid-19 crisis sharing best practice and self-reflection work.

Proposal Cabinet is requested to note the positive outcome of the Certificate of Compliance in relation to meeting its statutory duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Action by Cabinet

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Audit Wales

Signed

Background

As part of the programme of regulatory activity in accordance with the Local Government Measure 2009, the Auditor General is required to issue two Certificates of Compliance to demonstrate that Council is discharging its duties under the Measure.

As part of the second certificate of compliance, the Council is required to publish its Annual Report of performance for 2019/20 before the 31st October in accordance with sections 15(2), (3), (8) and (9) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. At the Cabinet meeting dated 14th October, the Council's Annual Report was approved and subsequently published on the [Council's website](#) on 29th October 2020.

As a result of this action completed by the Council, Audit Wales has published its second Certificate of Compliance (Appendix 1), with the Auditor General for Wales certifying that:

Certify that I have audited Newport City Council's (the Council) assessment of its performance in 2019-20 in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) and my Code of Audit Practice.

As a result of my audit, I believe that the Council has discharged its duties under sections 15(2), (3), (8) and (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.

Certificate

The certificate is attached as Appendix A (English) and Appendix B (Welsh) to this report.

Audit Wales Work Programme 2019/20 and 2020/21

Audit Wales work programme includes local reviews of services delivered by Newport City Council and as well as All-Wales (National) reviews for the Council to consider. Publication of Audit Wales reports can be found on their website here. Below is a list of the performance reviews that have been completed in 2019/20:

- Children Services Budget Pressures (Local)
- Corporate Safeguarding arrangements for Children (Local)
- Environmental Health Follow Up (Local)
- Tackling Anti-social Behaviour, Well-being Review (Local)
- Finance Sustainability Review (National / Local)
- Effectiveness of local planning authorities in Wales (National)
- Front Door to Adult Social Care (National)
- Tackling Domestic Violence (National)
- Public Services Board (National)

From the outbreak of Covid-19, Audit Wales recognised the pressures being faced by local authorities and suspended its planned work programme. In its place Audit Wales has been collating the responses of public services to the crisis identifying and sharing areas of innovative and good practice to support continuous learning and self-reflection. In addition to this Audit Wales has continued to publish All-Wales (National) reviews which are listed below as well as its statutory duties. The reports that have been published and are ongoing include:

- Rough Sleeping in Wales – Everyone's Problem, No one's responsibility (National) / published;
- Providing Free School Meals during Lockdown (National) / Published;
- Commercialisation in Local Government (National) / Published;
- Regenerating Welsh Towns (National) / field work ongoing;
- Assurance and Risk Assessment / field work ongoing.

In addition to the performance reviews, Audit Wales also complete audits of the Council's financial statements to ensure public money being properly accounted for. This work continued throughout the pandemic and are reported to the Council's Audit Committee.

Financial Summary

There are no direct financial impacts in relation to this report. Where proposals for improvement have been made in individual Audit Wales reports these will be actioned through business as usual activities by the Council.

Risks

There are no direct impacts of this report to the risks identified in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Continuous improvement is central to the Council's ambitions for itself, organisationally, and in terms of its role in advancing the City's reputation and the quality of life for its citizens. A range of core priorities and programmes are influenced by this agenda, including:

- The Corporate Plan 2017-22
- Newport Public Services Board 'One Newport' Well-being Plan.
- Annual reporting arrangements

Options Available and considered

Cabinet are asked to:

- (a) Consider and accept the conclusion contained in the Auditor General's Certificate of Compliance Report; or
- (b) Disregard the findings of the report.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is (a) as the Certificate of Compliance is positive and confirms that the council has discharged its duties under the Local Government Measure 2009 with regards to Improvement Planning.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial impact in presenting the Audit Wales Certificate to Cabinet. Any improvement actions included within the Corporate Plan are reported as part of the on-going medium term financial planning and budget monitoring processes and in that respect, clear responsibility and accountability for delivering the projects and managing resources is key.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The Council has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 ("the Measure") to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services and to publish an assessment of its performance. The Assessment of Performance Certificate issued by the Audit Wales confirms that the Council has discharged its duties in accordance with section 15 of the Measure and statutory guidance.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The certificate verifies that the Council has met its obligation of publishing its Annual Report 2019/20 under the Local Government Measure 2009. This is an on-going aim for the council and this also contributes to the Council's adherence to the Sustainable Development Principle of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. There are no direct staffing implications contained in this report.

Comments of Cabinet Member

The Leader of the Council is briefed on all aspects of performance monitoring and management within the Council and related Audit Wales monitoring work.

Local issues

Not Applicable.

Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny Committees receive information on Audit Wales review outcomes as appropriate to the Committee responsibilities, and also received and commented on the Annual Report.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

Not Applicable.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Not Applicable.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Auditor General helps to ensure that public bodies are held to account for their performance in relation to the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government Measure (2009). Audit Wales consider the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in the planning and implementation of their work. The issue of the Certificate of Compliance demonstrates that the council is meeting its obligations under both Acts.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

Not Applicable

Background Papers

Newport City Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22

Audit Wales Assessment of Performance Certificate

Audit Wales Assessment of Performance Certificate (Welsh)

Cabinet Minutes 14th October 2020

Annual Report 2019/20

Dated: 26th November 2020