



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

Regulatory Programme for Performance Audit 2012-13

Powys County Council

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Regulatory Programme

Performance audit work at Powys County Council

1. This programme outlines work to be delivered by and on behalf of the Auditor General under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), the Local Government Act 1999 and Parts 2 and 3A of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.
2. [Appendix 1](#) summarises the planned activity for the year. The range of performance audit work that the Auditor General and relevant regulators will carry out will be set out in more detail in a Work Plan and Timetable (WP&T) which will be reviewed every quarter.
3. [Appendices 2](#) and [3](#) set out the roles and responsibilities of relevant Wales Audit Office staff together with contact details.
4. Fees for the Auditor General's performance audit work are set out in [Appendix 4](#).
5. Where the Auditor General identifies an issue of such importance that he considers a special inspection to be an appropriate response, he will charge an additional fee to conduct such an inspection.

The Improvement Assessment

6. The Auditor General must carry out an annual Improvement Assessment to determine whether Powys County Council (the Council) is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Measure. This involves:
 - a review of the Council arrangements to secure continuous improvement;
 - improvement studies of areas which may hinder improvement or transformation or give rise to inefficiencies;
 - bespoke pieces of work related to the Council improvement objectives and arrangements; and
 - audits of the Council published improvement plans and its self-assessment of performance.
- a) [The Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement](#)
7. The Auditor General will carry out a full assessment of the Council's arrangements once every four years, unless he has significant concerns that suggest he should review those arrangements more frequently. This year we will not be carrying out a full assessment at the Council, but instead will be following up proposals for improvement set out in our previous assessments. These are:

Exhibit 1: Recommendations

R1 The Council should establish more rigour and consistency in its arrangements to profile Human Resource (HR) requirements to ensure that it has sufficient capacity and capability to deliver its improvement objectives.

R2 **Adult Services operational improvement plan**

The service should, with the support of the Programme Office, design and implement an Adult Services operational improvement plan that:

- critically assesses and robustly evaluates current performance;
- identifies priorities for improving operational service delivery, linking these with strategic improvement priorities;
- identifies and evaluates the risks to delivering improvement and sets out how they are to be mitigated;
- sets out the actions to be taken, allocates responsibility for those actions, and details the deadlines and key milestones to be met in their completion;
- identifies the resources, financial and people (skills and capacity), required to deliver the improvement actions and how those resources are to be sourced;
- identifies the measures to be used to monitor and evaluate service improvement in the identified priority areas; and
- sets clear and unambiguous improvement targets for those measures.

R3 **Arrangements for monitoring Adult Services improvement**

The Council should design and implement approval and monitoring arrangements at service, corporate and political levels to ensure that:

- the Adult Services operational improvement plan meets each of the requirements set out in R2, and that the scale and pace of planned improvement are both appropriately stretching and deliverable with the resources made available; and
- those responsible for improvement actions are regularly held to account for their performance, so that any deviation from planned improvement (in relation to actions/measures/targets/milestones) is identified and rectified quickly.

In addition to the specific recommendations above, the following proposals for improvement are made to the Council to support improvement.

Exhibit 2: Proposals for improvement

P1 Review the terminology of improvement objectives and activities, and selected measures of success to ensure that they are both clearly expressed and capable of allowing local citizens to monitor the difference the Council is making to their lives.

P2 Develop a more co-ordinated corporate approach to public engagement to improve the extent to which engagement activity is consistently implemented and evaluated to ensure it is effective in improving services and outcomes for citizens.

P3 The leadership of the Council, political and managerial, should promote and secure a culture which requires an appropriately open and balanced self-assessment of corporate and service performance, and is more evaluative and realistic regarding the Council's progress in delivering its improvement objectives.

P4 In assessing and reporting Council performance, ensure that there is sufficient appropriate data which demonstrates not only what and how much the Council does, but also the difference the Council is making in terms of outcomes for its citizens. Review the timing, audience and content of progress and performance reports to facilitate better informed decision making and robust challenge of service performance.

b) Improvement studies

8. In his letter of 13 March 2012, the Auditor General set out his proposals for this year's improvement studies. These are:
- key themes from improvement authorities' assessments of their performance;
 - the effectiveness of scrutiny; and
 - authorities' reviews of governance and preparation of Annual Governance Statements.

c) Bespoke work

9. Our proposals for this year's local work are set out in **Exhibit 3**.

Exhibit 3

Name of study	Rationale
Progress in implementing Statutory Recommendations	Risks emerging from previous Corporate Assessment work and/or proposals for improvement/recommendations
School Budget Deficits	Auditor General Correspondence

d) **Audits of the 'Improvement Plan' and the 'Assessment of Performance'**

10. The Measure requires the Auditor General to undertake audits of whether the Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning and the publication of improvement information, and has acted in accordance with Welsh Ministers' guidance.
11. Improvement authorities are under a duty to publish an Improvement Plan as soon as practicable after the start of the financial year. The Measure requires the Auditor General to carry out an audit of this plan and to state whether he believes that the Council has discharged its duties and acted in accordance with statutory guidance.
12. Improvement authorities must also undertake an 'Assessment of Performance' and publish improvement information by the end of October each year. The Auditor General is required to carry out an audit of the assessment and publication, and state whether he believes that the Council has discharged its duties and acted in accordance with statutory guidance.

Reporting

13. We will write to the Council to formally report our follow-up review of the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement. In that letter we will also report the findings of the audit of the Council's Improvement Plan, and comment on the robustness of the plans that the Council has put in place.
14. We will issue the Council with a report on each Improvement Study. A national summary of each Improvement Study will also be published.
15. We will write to the Council following our audit of the Council's self-assessment to formally report the findings of the audit, including a commentary on the robustness and validity of the Council's own assessment.
16. We will publish an Annual Improvement Report that summarises and reports all the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office as well as that carried out by relevant regulators. We will aim to publish the Council's Annual Improvement Report in March 2013.

Local government studies

17. The Auditor General also has a duty to undertake studies of local authorities under sections 41 and 42 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. During 2012-13, the Auditor General will conduct a study of services provided to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS).

Other work the Auditor General uses to inform his performance audit work at Powys County Council

18. The Auditor General may draw upon other work in reaching his conclusions in relation to the Council. This work includes:
- the financial audit work of the Appointed Auditor;
 - the work of relevant regulators, particularly the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), Estyn, and the Welsh Language Commissioner;
 - the Auditor General's programme of local performance audit work at individual NHS bodies;
 - the Auditor General's programme of value for money studies examining the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related bodies use their resources to discharge their functions; and
 - work that may have been commissioned by the Council.

The financial audit work of the Appointed Auditor

19. The Auditor General appoints auditors under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 to audit and report on the accounts of local authorities. Audit reports include an opinion on:
- whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of, or present fairly, the state of affairs of the body;
 - whether the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with relevant legislation, directions and applicable accounting standards; and
 - the regularity of the transactions, at bodies where this is required.
20. Auditors will also examine the Council's governance statement or statement on internal control and report if it is not in accordance with relevant requirements or where it may be misleading or inconsistent with other information of which they are aware.
21. The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 also requires Appointed Auditors to satisfy themselves that an audited body has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Auditors will apply criteria specified by the Auditor General and will place reliance on the Improvement Assessment and other work carried out by the Auditor General or relevant regulators.

The work of relevant regulators

22. Estyn and the CSSIW also undertake work in relation to councils in Wales. The nature of that work and the legislative functions supporting it are described in [Appendix 2](#). [Exhibit 4](#) sets out the planned regulatory activity of Estyn and the CSSIW. This and other work that may arise will be included in updates of the WP&T.

Exhibit 4: Other planned regulatory activity

Estyn	
Estyn work is based on short notice inspections and this programme will be updated as and when work is agreed.	TBC
CSSIW	
CSSIW is changing its structure and this programme will be updated as and when work is agreed.	April – September 2012
Annual Performance Management Report	October 2012

23. The Welsh Language Commissioner (the Commissioner) monitors councils progress in delivering services to the public in Welsh. The Commissioner works with councils to help them develop their statutory Welsh Language Schemes that outline the way in which they provide services to the public in Welsh.

The Auditor General's programme of local performance audit work at individual NHS bodies

24. As the external auditor of the NHS in Wales, the Auditor General also has a programme of financial audit and performance audit work in relation to individual local health bodies. As collaboration in health and social care becomes more prevalent, this work will have increasing relevance to his Improvement Assessment work.

The Auditor General's programme of value-for-money studies

25. Reports arising from the Auditor General's programme of value-for-money studies are usually laid before the National Assembly for consideration by its Public Accounts Committee. As many of these studies cut across the boundaries between different parts of the Welsh public sector, they will often be relevant to his work in local government. Although subject to change throughout the year, [Appendix 5](#) lists the value-for-money studies that the Auditor General is currently committed to. As indicated in [paragraph 18](#), the Auditor General's studies in local government can form part of a wider value-for-money study.

Work that may have been commissioned by the Council

26. Under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Government of Wales Act 2006, the Council may commission work from the Auditor General. The Council should discuss this in the first instance with the Wales Audit Office.

Appendix 1

Wales Audit Office performance work planned for 2012-13

Local Government all-Wales study 2012-13 – Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS)

Audit of Improvement Plan

Audit of assessment of performance publication, including testing and validation of the authority's assessment of performance

Performance Indicator audit

Risk assessment of housing and council tax benefit

Improvement Study – key themes from assessments of performance

Improvement Study – effectiveness of scrutiny

Improvement Study – authorities' reviews of governance and preparation of Annual Governance Statements

Progress in implementing Statutory Recommendations

School Budgets Deficit – Auditor General Correspondence

** Each year's work programme and fee cover one cycle of Improvement Assessment work. However, this work may not fit neatly within a period starting on 1 April and ending on 31 March. The delivery of our annual work programme may therefore overlap financial years.*

Appendix 2

Roles and responsibilities

The Wales Audit Office comprises the Auditor General and his staff. The Auditor General's main functions are set out in the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006, the Local Government Act 1999, the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Performance Group Director

The Performance Group Director is directly accountable to the Auditor General for overseeing the delivery of all performance audit work at Powys County Council.

Manager local government region

The Manager reports to the Group Director and is the primary point of contact for the Improvement Assessment work at a senior officer and political level in local government bodies. The Manager will present reports of the Improvement Assessment to the Council.

Performance Audit Lead

The Performance Audit Lead plans and co-ordinates inputs to the Improvement Assessment at each Council.

Appointed Auditors

The Auditor appointed by the Auditor General must carry out audits that discharge the statutory duties placed upon them by the 1999 and 2004 Acts. The Auditor General publishes a Code that prescribes the way in which auditors are to carry out their functions.

Relevant regulators

The principal functions of the CSSIW are contained in Chapter 6 of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.

Estyn conducts inspections of Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. These inspections form part of a three-year cycle that began in 2010-11. Estyn will also conduct follow-up inspections as necessary.

Estyn also has powers under the Education Act 2005 and Section 86 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Other Estyn inspections that may involve council provision are carried out under the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 and an agreement between Estyn and Jobcentre Plus. The period of notice for all Estyn inspections has been established by agreement between Estyn and the service providers in each sector. As this period is often quite short (normally three months), it is not possible to publish at the beginning of the financial year details of any inspections for which the provider has not received notification. In these cases, as soon as the provider is notified of the inspection, the details will be made available to the Wales Audit Office, to update the WP&T.

The Welsh Language Commissioner is an independent statutory body established by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. Its main function is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language.

Appendix 3

Wales Audit Office performance audit team

Name	Role	Phone	E-mail
Jane Holownia	Group Director	029 20 320565	jane.holownia@wao.gov.uk
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Justine Morgan	Performance Audit Lead	029 20 320567 or 07799 476 570	justine.morgan@wao.gov.uk

Appendix 4

Fees

The proposed fee for April 2012 to March 2013 is £159,771 plus VAT and will be charged in equal instalments between April 2012 and March 2013. Our fee is set out below.

The Wales Audit Office receives a grant from the Welsh Government for delivering the Wales Programme for Improvement. Part of this grant is used to subsidise fees for Improvement Assessment work. This year the subsidy has been allocated on an equal basis across the 22 unitary authorities.

The fee

	Fee April 2012 to March 2013* (£)
Total fee for Improvement Assessment and audits	183,314
Less WPI subsidy	-35,000
Plus Indicative Fee for additional work*	11,457
Fee charged to the authority**	159,771

* *This additional performance audit work is required over and above the core Improvement Assessment and audits to:*

- *monitor and evaluate the Council's progress in addressing Statutory WAO Recommendations, and*
- *investigate and respond to issues raised in AGW correspondence in relation to School Budget Deficits.*

This is a minimum estimate of the extra work required. Should more work be necessary we will notify and invoice the Council accordingly.

** *The fee is for performance audit only and does not cover the financial audit work of the Appointed Auditor.*

Appendix 5

The Auditor General's programme of value-for-money studies

Work in progress

2007-13 EU structural funding

Informing healthcare

NHS consultant contract benefits realisation

Sale of the (former) River Lodge Hotel, Llangollen

Healthcare across the UK (in collaboration with the National Audit Office, Audit Scotland and the Northern Ireland Audit Office)

National Fraud Initiative 2010-11

The Welsh Government's relationship with the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association

Continuing healthcare

Emergency planning – civil contingencies

Education of looked after children

Picture of public services – health finances

Welsh Government location strategy

Public procurement of consultancy services

Child and adolescent mental health services – follow-up work

Forestry Commission Wales – follow-up work

Planned studies that are yet to start

Welsh Government arrangements for working with the third sector

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS)

Medicines management

Financial planning and management in higher education

Supply teachers (possibly in collaboration with Estyn)

Public sector workforce planning/managing workforce reduction

Grants to farmers (possibly focusing on the Glastir agri-environment scheme)

Note: In addition to this list, it is likely that the Auditor General will decide to publish a national summary report(s) following recent local NHS performance audit work on unscheduled care and the management of chronic conditions.



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