

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**Scrutiny Chairs – 4th November 2021
Democratic Services Committee – 4th November 2021
Governance and Audit Committee – 5th November 2021**

REPORT AUTHOR: Clive Pinney, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

REPORT TITLE: Audit Wales Follow Up Review of Scrutiny Arrangements 2021

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 The report outlines the findings of the Audit Wales Review of Scrutiny in 2021 and requests the approval of an action plan to address the review findings.

2. Background

2.1 In 2018 Audit Wales undertook a review of the Council's Scrutiny arrangements and concluded that the Council had been slow to develop its scrutiny arrangements and that there were areas which needed addressing.

2.2 In 2021 Audit Wales undertook a follow up review and concluded that there had been limited progress by the Council in addressing the issues raised in 2018 in part due to the pandemic, and also raised a number of other areas which required addressing. A copy of the Audit Wales report is attached as Appendix A to the report.

3. The Scrutiny Report

Audit Wales made 10 recommendations across 6 Areas of concern and these are summarised as follows:

3.1 The Council has made limited progress in addressing the issues raised by Audit Wales in their 2018 report on the effectiveness of its scrutiny function, in part due to the COVID pandemic, and there is consensus across members and officers that scrutiny is not working as effectively as it could. The Council had reviewed its scrutiny function and amended its scrutiny structure in 2019 to include working groups to develop members' subject-specific knowledge and had introduced a formal process for feeding back Cabinet decisions.

More recently, the Council has been working to develop scrutiny's role in monitoring its service improvement and performance. And during the pandemic was able to reintroduce normal democratic arrangements via online meeting technology. As such Scrutiny was able to meet more frequently over in 2020/21 and with increased attendance. Audit Wales recognised that 2020 was a

challenging year due to COVID, especially with the Council operating on a business continuity model between May 2020 and May 2021.

Nevertheless, Audit Wales concluded that progress since their report in 2018 has been limited and most of the proposals for improvement in their report were yet to be fully addressed. Audit Wales recommended that the Council revisit the recommendations made in their 2018 scrutiny effectiveness report.

Recommendation 1: Revisit the PFIs set out in our 2018 scrutiny effectiveness report and fully address them.

- 3.2. Audit Wales found that many of the other issues hindering the Council's scrutiny function from operating effectively stemmed from lack of clarity and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of members, officers and cabinet members. In particular they had concerns about the makeup of the Finance Panel and recommended that there should be a clearer definition and understanding of the role and purpose of the Finance Panel, as well as the respective roles of scrutiny members and executive members

Recommendation 2 The Council should clarify the role of the finance panel and assure itself that it is lawfully constituted

- 3.3. Audit Wales raises concerns with scrutiny planning and in particular the lack of evidence of Council members leading and initiating their own scrutiny work programme or agenda items and the role of the Co-ordinating Committee in setting the work programme for each scrutiny committee. Audit Wales recognised that the pandemic had slowed progress in this area with scrutiny was able to consider reports that had already been produced for Cabinet or Council.

Recommendation 3 Reconsider the function, role and composition of the Coordinating Committee in order to ensure that the Council has a means of coordinating its scrutiny work that is distinct from the scrutiny committees' role in setting their own work programmes.

Recommendation 4 Clarify the process by which scrutiny members and chairs can propose topics to be included on the scrutiny work programme and considered by scrutiny.

Recommendation 5 Develop a methodology that will allow its scrutiny committees to plan their work programme over a longer time frame, eg for a year, whilst retaining enough flexibility to respond to additional issues should they arise unexpectedly.

Recommendation 6 Allow Scrutiny members more time to plan their activity properly.

Recommendation 7 Ensure that scrutiny considers what outcomes it wishes to achieve before it decides what and how it will undertake any scrutiny activity, and then plan its activity to ensure it aligns with the outcome it is seeking.

- 3.4. Audit Wales found that the Council does not have a formal mechanism for the public to get involved in its scrutiny activity and that Scrutiny activity was mainly focused on traditional committee scrutiny of written reports. Audit Wales acknowledged that the pandemic would have had an impact on scrutiny's ability to

consider and act on alternative or innovative methods of exploring topics, but they felt that the Council has resources and expertise available to it across the organisation. Scrutiny is not currently drawing upon that wide ranging expertise to inform and support their work by, for example, asking officers to provide additional data or research

Recommendation 8 The Council's scrutiny function should consider a range of methodologies for conducting scrutiny, beyond the traditional committee approach, and select the most appropriate methodology for the subject matter at hand

- 3.5. Audit Wales considered that Members need more support and guidance on the role and function of scrutiny, and the most effective way they contribute to making it effective and to have a clear and common understanding of scrutiny's role. In particular, Audit Wales felt that Scrutiny Members needed broader support with, understanding their role in contributing to scrutiny, what is good/bad practice, and in selecting and deciding on topics, wider evidence, or additional research/ data or information. Scrutiny Members service-specific training in order to help them build up their knowledge of a particular subject matter, but required a similar level of scrutiny-specific training and development on how to best scrutinise such key issues

Recommendation 9 Provide further training for all members and relevant officers on the roles and responsibilities involved in an effective scrutiny function, including specific training for scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, and for those officers who provide support for scrutiny

- 3.6. Audit Wales found that the Council did not have a system in place specifically for evaluating the impact of its scrutiny work. The Council does collect quantitative data on the number of recommendations made to Cabinet and the number of recommendations accepted by Cabinet. However, Audit Wales felt that this data does not tell the Council anything about the quality of the recommendations made, how the Cabinet acted on them, or whether any improvements to the effectiveness of the Council's services and policies were achieved as a result

Recommendation 10 Review the nature and scope of the support available to the scrutiny function to ensure that members receive support to inform the planning and undertaking of their work programmes, as well as committee administration support.

4 Advice

- 4.1 A draft action plan has been developed and implementation has already commenced to address the issues raised, prior to the final review report being published.
- 4.2 A copy of the Action Plan is attached to the report as Appendix B, which the Cabinet is asked to approve for submission to Audit Wales as the Council's response to the review.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 The Council sought assistance from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in developing and implementing the action plan. As a result, some of the training identified in the action plan has been procured and paid for by the WLGA, for which the Council is very grateful. Assistance is also being provided by the WLGA in respect of the delivery of some elements of the training and the development of the current Scrutiny Chairs. The remaining training costs can be covered by the Member Development Budget.
- 5.2 The dates of the development sessions are in the process of being identified and integrated into the overall Member Development Programme.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view
- 6.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

7. Data Protection

- 7.1 The proposal does not involve the processing of any personal data.

8. Comment from local member(s)

Not applicable

9. Impact Assessment

- 9.1 An Impact Assessment is not required as the proposal does not relate to a new or amended policy or operational service change.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1 RECOMMENDED that the draft action plan be approved for submission to Audit Wales as the Council's response to the review.**

Contact Officer:	Wyn Richards, Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services
Tel:	01597-826375
Email:	wyn.richards@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Clive Pinney, Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
Corporate Director:	Dr Caroline Turner, Chief Executive.

Appendix A



Follow-up Review of Scrutiny Arrangements – Powys County Council

Audit year: 2020-21

Date issued: September 2021

Document reference: 2474A2021-22

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

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Summary report

Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 In 2018, Audit Wales undertook a review of scrutiny arrangements at Powys County Council (the Council). We concluded that the Council had been slow to develop its scrutiny arrangements and there were fundamental areas it needed to address if scrutiny was to operate effectively and have impact. We made a series of proposals for improvement:
 - be specific in the reports presented to overview and scrutiny why the committee is receiving the information and how this relates to the role of the scrutiny committee;
 - provide more training specifically for Chairs and Vice Chairs of overview and scrutiny committees to enable them to be more effective in their role;
 - make arrangements for further training for scrutiny committee members on the Well-Being of Future Generations (WFG) Act in order to help embed WFG considerations into the Council's decision-making processes;
 - strengthen arrangements for public and other stakeholder engagement in overview and scrutiny;
 - clarify the arrangements for feeding back overview and scrutiny committees' views to Cabinet and for Cabinet to respond to recommendations made; and
 - put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.
- 2 In following up our previous work, we mainly focused on five key areas:
 - Role and aim of scrutiny
 - Planning
 - Scrutiny methods
 - Support arrangements
 - Evaluation
- 3 The five areas broadly reflect the themes set out in our 2019 discussion paper [Six themes to help make scrutiny 'Fit for the Future'](#), with some adjustments to reflect local priorities.
- 4 We undertook our review during the period February 2021 to May 2021.

What we found

- 5 Our review sought to answer the question: Has the Council acted on Audit Wales' previous proposals for improvement and identified further opportunities for improvement?

- 6 Overall, we found that: The Council has made limited progress in addressing the issues we raised in our 2018 report on the effectiveness of its scrutiny function, in part due to the COVID pandemic, and there is consensus across members and officers that scrutiny is not working as effectively as it could. We reached this conclusion because:
- the Council's progress since our report in 2018 has been limited, in part due to the COVID pandemic, and most of our 2018 proposals for improvement are yet to be fully addressed;
 - a continued lack of clarity and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of members, officers and cabinet members is the key issue hindering effective scrutiny;
 - there continues to be significant scope to improve scrutiny planning;
 - scrutiny committees do not always consider the most appropriate and effective way to undertake scrutiny work;
 - the Council has not yet put in place effective arrangements to support its scrutiny function; and
 - the Council has not yet put in place arrangements to fully assess the impact of its scrutiny activity.

Recommendations

Exhibit 1: recommendations

The table below sets out the recommendations that we have identified following this review.

Recommendations	
2018 Proposals for improvement	
The Council should prioritise the following:	
R1	Revisit the PFIs set out in our 2018 scrutiny effectiveness report and fully address them.

Recommendations

To help the Council fully address our 2018 proposals for improvement, we have set out below some additional recommendations for it to address:

Roles and Responsibilities

- R2** The Council should clarify the role of the finance panel and assure itself that it is lawfully constituted.
-

Planning scrutiny activity

The Council should:

- R3** Reconsider the function, role and composition of the Coordinating Committee in order to ensure that the Council has a means of coordinating its scrutiny work that is distinct from the scrutiny committees' role in setting their own work programmes.
- R4** Clarify the process by which scrutiny members and chairs can propose topics to be included on the scrutiny work programme and considered by scrutiny.
- R5** Develop a methodology that will allow its scrutiny committees to plan their work programme over a longer time frame, eg for a year, whilst retaining enough flexibility to respond to additional issues should they arise unexpectedly.
- R6** Allow Scrutiny members more time to plan their activity properly.
- R7** Ensure that scrutiny considers what outcomes it wishes to achieve before it decides what and how it will undertake any scrutiny activity, and then plan its activity to ensure it aligns with the outcome it is seeking.
-

Scrutiny methods

- R8** The Council's scrutiny function should consider a range of methodologies for conducting scrutiny, beyond the traditional committee approach, and select the most appropriate methodology for the subject matter at hand.
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Support for scrutiny

The Council should:

- R9** Provide further training for all members and relevant officers on the roles and responsibilities involved in an effective scrutiny function, including specific training for scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, and for those officers who provide support for scrutiny.

Recommendations

R10 Review the nature and scope of the support available to the scrutiny function to ensure that members receive support to inform the planning and undertaking of their work programmes, as well as committee administration support.

Detailed report

The Council has made limited progress in addressing the issues we raised in our 2018 report on the effectiveness of its scrutiny function, in part due to the COVID pandemic, and there is consensus across members and officers that scrutiny is not working as effectively as it could

The Council's progress since our report in 2018 has been limited, in part due to the COVID pandemic, and most of our 2018 proposals for improvement are yet to be fully addressed

- 7 In 2018, we issued our report [Powys County Council – Overview and Scrutiny – Fit For the Future?](#) and made a series of proposals for improvement.
- 8 In 2019, the Council reviewed its scrutiny function with the help of external consultants. It made changes to its scrutiny structure in 2019, including establishing:
 - working groups to develop members' subject-specific knowledge; and
 - a formal process for feeding back Cabinet decisions.
- 9 More recently, the Council has been working to develop scrutiny's role in monitoring its service improvement and performance.
- 10 During the pandemic in 2020, Powys was quick to reintroduce normal democratic arrangements via online meeting technology, as set out in our July 2020 summary note on digital democracy at the Council. Scrutiny has therefore been able to meet more frequently over the last year, and we understand that attendance has also increased as a result of remote meetings.
- 11 We fully recognise that 2020 was a challenging year due to COVID and we accept that some elements of scrutiny development have slowed or stopped as a result. For example, between March 2020 and May 2021, the Council was operating on a business continuity model. This meant that during this time, scrutiny committees were not able to commission their own reports from officers and were restricted to considering reports that had already been produced for Cabinet.
- 12 Even when taking into account the added challenges caused by the pandemic, progress since our report in 2018 has been limited and most of the proposals for improvement in our report are yet to be fully addressed.

A continued lack of clarity and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of members, officers and cabinet members is the key issue hindering effective scrutiny

- 13 We found that there is no clear or shared understanding about the role of scrutiny across the Council, amongst officers or members, although the roles and responsibilities of scrutiny and cabinet members is set out in the arrangements. This fundamental issue is the root cause of many of the other issues hindering the Council's scrutiny function from operating effectively.
- 14 The role and composition of the Council's Finance Panel is also unclear. We understand that the way in which the Finance Panel operates has changed over time. This has resulted in a situation where the Panel is widely considered to be a tool for scrutiny, and is included in the Council's constitution in the same section as other scrutiny arrangements, yet it also has a Cabinet Member as a member of the Panel. The Local Government Act 2000 states that a council's scrutiny committee or sub-committee may not include any member of the authority's executive (Cabinet). A clearer definition and understanding of the role and purpose of the Panel, as well as the respective roles of scrutiny members and executive members, would help to assure the Council that the Panel is constituted lawfully, and ensure that the role and function it wishes such a Panel to contribute to the Council's scrutiny arrangements are clearer and more effective.
- 15 There is also limited understanding amongst members and officers of scrutiny's role and potential within the Council's wider governance arrangements. This includes the role of scrutiny in relation to the Council's internal improvement service boards, which is also unclear.
- 16 The Council has prepared written guidance for scrutiny members, as part of a report to Council on 30 July 2020 on its arrangements to replace the external Improvement and Assurance Boards, but the lack of common understanding of the role of scrutiny shows that it is not helping to provide clarity about how roles and responsibilities should best work in practice.

There continues to be significant scope to improve scrutiny planning

- 17 Evidence of Council members leading and initiating their own scrutiny work programme or agenda items is limited. We acknowledge that the pandemic has played a part in slowing progress in this area. For example, from March 2020 to May 2021, the Council was operating on a 'business critical' footing, which meant that scrutiny was able to consider reports that had already been produced for Cabinet or Council, but was not able to independently commission work of its own from officers.
- 18 As part of its scrutiny arrangements, the Council has put in place a Coordinating Committee, made up of scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs, the chair and vice chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, senior officers and two Cabinet Members.

We found that there is broad consensus across the Council that the Coordinating Committee is not working effectively.

- 19 There is a lack of clarity about the role of the Coordinating Committee. The Council's constitution says that the Coordinating Committee is responsible for setting the work programme for each scrutiny committee. During our fieldwork, the Coordinating Committee's role was described to us as sharing information and preventing duplication. If the role of the Coordinating Committee is in fact to set the work programme of each scrutiny committee, the role and function of the senior officers and Cabinet Members who sit on the Coordinating Committee need to be clarified, in order to prevent the perception that they are having an undue influence on the scrutiny committees' work. The role of each scrutiny committee in setting its own work programme, and the arrangements by which members can add items to the scrutiny committees' agendas also need to be clarified.
- 20 The [2006 statutory guidance on executive and alternative arrangements](#) states that, generally, the Chair of the committee should take the lead in planning the work programme, although they will need to take into account what plans the executive may have that will require input from scrutiny. The guidance also states that the Chair needs to take into account the views of other members of the committee in determining the work programme. [The Local Government Act 2000](#) states that the Council should have arrangements in place for any member of a scrutiny committee to refer to the committee any matter that is relevant to the functions of the committee. The arrangements should enable the Council to ensure that the matter is included in the agenda for, and discussed at, a meeting of the committee or sub-committee. It is not clear that the Council's present arrangements provide a reliable means of satisfying the requirements of the legislation and statutory guidance.
- 21 The Council has published a scrutiny work programme on the Council's website, but at the time of our fieldwork this was out of date. [The statutory guidance for the 2011 Local Government Measure](#) says that councils should publish this information. Not doing so also raises questions about how well the Council plans its scrutiny activity, as well as its transparency and public engagement arrangements.

Scrutiny Committees do not always consider the most appropriate and effective way to undertake scrutiny work

- 22 The Council does not have a formal mechanism for the public to get involved in its scrutiny activity, and there are limited examples of how scrutiny has involved the public. [The Local Government Wales Measure 2011](#) states that councils must make arrangements that enable all persons who live or work in the area to bring to the attention of the relevant scrutiny committee their views on any matter under consideration by the committee. It is not clear how a person would do this under the Council's current arrangements.

- 23 Scrutiny activity at the Council is mainly focused on traditional committee scrutiny of written reports. Whilst formal committee meetings and reports have an important role to play, there are many additional ways of undertaking scrutiny activity to make scrutiny more effective. We acknowledge that the pandemic will have had an impact on scrutiny's ability to consider and act on alternative or innovative methods of exploring topics. However, we did not find evidence of innovative scrutiny practices at the Council prior to the pandemic.
- 24 The Council has resources and expertise available to it across the organisation. Scrutiny is not currently drawing upon that wide ranging expertise to inform and support their work by, for example, asking officers to provide additional data or research. We acknowledge that the pandemic will have limited the opportunities to develop this style of working, due to the increased demands on officers' time, but we also note that this was an issue for the Council prior to the pandemic.

The Council has not yet put in place effective arrangements to support its scrutiny function

- 25 The Council's Members need more support and guidance on the role and function of scrutiny, and the most effective way they contribute to making it effective. As set out earlier in the report, members (and officers) do not currently have a clear and common understanding of scrutiny's role, and this is preventing the scrutiny function from working effectively. The support that members currently receive can be characterised as traditional clerking and committee administrative support. We did not find that members receive broader support with, for example, understanding their role in contributing to scrutiny, what is good/bad practice, and in selecting and deciding on topics, wider evidence, or additional research.
- 26 Linked to our earlier point about support from the wider organisation, scrutiny members do not always know what additional data or information could be available to them if they were to request it.
- 27 There is an opportunity for the Council to look again at the training and development it provides to members. Members and officers told us about the service-specific training members have received, in order to help them build up their knowledge of a particular subject matter, but we did not hear that they had received a similar level of scrutiny-specific training and development on how to best scrutinise such key issues. Members receive some training on scrutiny early on in the electoral cycle, but this is typically received alongside a lot of other information, at a time when Members may have limited experience of scrutiny in practice. Chairs of scrutiny committees told us that they had not received training specific to their role. If the Council were to undertake ongoing scrutiny-specific training and coaching, the service-specific training they are receiving would rest on a firmer foundation. It would also address some of the issues regarding helping to clarify roles and responsibilities.

The Council has not yet put in place arrangements to fully assess the impact of its scrutiny activity

- 28 The Council has done work to review the scrutiny function more broadly and make some changes to the way it works, but at the time of our fieldwork, the Council did not have a system in place specifically for evaluating the impact of its scrutiny work, which hinders its learning and improvement.
- 29 Scrutiny members also told us that they are not always clear about the impact of their work.
- 30 The Council collects some quantitative data such the number of recommendations made to Cabinet and the number of recommendations accepted by Cabinet, but the picture this provides about what impact it achieves is limited. For example, this data does not tell the Council anything about the quality of the recommendations made, how the Cabinet acted on them, or whether any improvements to the effectiveness of the Council's services and policies were achieved as a result.



Audit Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500
Fax: 029 2032 0600
Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

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Council Response Form

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

Council: Powys County Council
Report title: Scrutiny Follow Up
Issue date: September 2021
Document reference: 2474A2021-22

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
	2018 Proposals for improvement			
R1	The Council should prioritise the following: Revisit the PFIs set out in our 2018 scrutiny effectiveness report and fully address them.			
	2018 Proposals for Improvement			
a)	Be specific in the reports presented to	Pro-forma created and circulated to all Heads of	Completed	Scrutiny Manager

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
	overview and scrutiny why the committee is receiving the information.	Service for completion and inclusion with reports being submitted to scrutiny. Pro-forma to be evaluated	30-06-2021 31-12-2021	
b)	Provide more training specifically for Chairs and Vice Chairs to enable them to be more effective in their role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External training provider engaged and date set. External provider (WLGA) engaged to undertake one to one sessions with chairs and provide feedback as well as observing meetings. Once these sessions are completed peer support for chairs to be considered as recommended by the WLGA. 	4th November 2021 Commenced July 2021 – ongoing. Q3 / 2021.	Scrutiny Manager
c)	Make arrangements for further training for scrutiny committee members on the Well-Being of Future Generations Act .	Dr Alan Netherwood, Cardiff University engaged and provided training to Scrutiny and other members.	Completed 03-09-2021	Scrutiny Manager
d)	Strengthen arrangements for public and other stakeholder engagement in scrutiny.	Forms created by ICT and made available on the Council's website – for suggestion of items for consideration by scrutiny and for comment on a forthcoming scrutiny item https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/11578/Scrutiny-Committees---Comment-on-an-agenda-item	Completed 30-08-2021	Scrutiny Manager

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
		https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/11579/Scrutiny-Committees---Suggest-a-discussion-topic		
e)	Clarify the arrangements for feeding back overview and scrutiny committees' views to Cabinet and for Cabinet to respond to recommendations made.	Template report provided for observations and recommendations of scrutiny to be reported to Cabinet. Also contains response boxes from Cabinet to scrutiny on whether recommendations accepted or rejected.	Completed – Being used prior to AW review in 2021.	Scrutiny Manager
f)	Put in place arrangements for assessing the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blaenau Gwent Council presented to Co-ordinating Committee its approach to evaluation of scrutiny Committees undertaking a self-reflection exercise at the end of each meeting. More formal self-assessment measures to be established including an annual self-assessment by Chairs for their own scrutiny committees to feed into the Council's self-assessment. Evaluation pro-forma to be created for use by Chairs and Vice-Chairs following meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 19-07-2021 Commenced August 2021 Q4 / 2021 Developed October, 2021 – been tested with ERC Committee. 	Scrutiny Manager

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
	Other 2021 Recommendations			
R2	<p>Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>The Council should clarify the role of the finance panel and assure itself that it is lawfully constituted.</p>	Report taken to Council 23-09-2021 and role reviewed and Constitution Amended	Completed 23-09-2021	Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services
R3	<p>Planning scrutiny activity</p> <p>The Council should:</p> <p>Reconsider the function, role and composition of the Coordinating Committee in order to ensure that the Council has a means of coordinating its scrutiny work that is distinct from the scrutiny committees' role in setting their own work programmes.</p>	Report taken to Council 15-07-2021 and Co-ordinating Committee removed from Constitution	Completed 15-07-2021	Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services
R4	Clarify the process by which scrutiny members and chairs can propose topics to be included on the scrutiny work programme and considered by scrutiny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the abolition of the Co-ordinating Committee, Members are clear that they should raise any topics for consideration at scrutiny with the Chair. Members also have the opportunity to raise any topics when the work programme is discussed during a meeting with future work programmes published on each scrutiny committee agenda. 	<p>Commenced September 2021 – ongoing</p> <p>Commenced September 2021 - ongoing</p>	Scrutiny Manager

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
R5	Develop a methodology that will allow its scrutiny committees to plan their work programme over a longer time frame, e.g. for a year, whilst retaining enough flexibility to respond to additional issues should they arise unexpectedly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Torfaen Council attended meeting of Co-ordinating Committee to present their approach to work planning. Scrutiny Chairs have assumed the responsibility for planning and co-ordinating the Committee's work programme. This is currently short term as the Council nears the end of its current term and some services continue to be in business continuity. 	<p>Completed 19-07-2021</p> <p>Commenced September 2021 - ongoing</p>	Scrutiny Manager
R6	Allow Scrutiny members more time to plan their activity properly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing Meetings before Committee being used to consider reports and determine questioning strategies. <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair of L&S scrutiny committee emails Members prior to the meeting outlining possible lines of questioning and also format for meeting. 	<p>Commenced July 2021 – ERC Committee.</p> <p>Commenced June 2021 – LS Committee</p>	Scrutiny Manager
R7	Ensure that scrutiny considers what outcomes it wishes to achieve before it decides what and how it will undertake any scrutiny activity, and then plan its activity to ensure it aligns with the outcome it is seeking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing Meetings before Committee being used to consider reports and determine questioning strategies. <p>Or</p>	Commenced July 2021 – ERC Committee.	Scrutiny Manager

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair of L&S scrutiny committee emails Members prior to the meeting outlining possible lines of questioning and also format for meeting. 	Commenced June 2021 – LS Committee	
R8	<p>Scrutiny Methods</p> <p>The Council's scrutiny function should consider a range of methodologies for conducting scrutiny, beyond the traditional committee approach, and select the most appropriate methodology for the subject matter at hand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committees have established Working Groups to consider issues in detail e.g. HOWPS, Childrens Services, Adults Services. In addition, Committees have tried to utilise other methods of undertaking scrutiny such as using Microsoft Teams channels, with limited success. Research and Analytics Officers working with scrutiny to identify items where established research and information can be used to assist the committee in considering specific matters e.g. ERC Scrutiny Committee and report on child poverty. 	<p>Commenced prior to AW review of scrutiny.</p> <p>Commenced September 2021</p>	Scrutiny Manager
R9	<p>Support for scrutiny</p> <p>The Council should:</p> <p>Provide further training for all members and relevant officers on the roles and responsibilities involved in an effective scrutiny function, including specific training for scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, and for those officers who provide support for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop arranged for scrutiny Members, Cabinet and senior officers about the contribution of scrutiny to corporate governance, to be facilitated by the WLGA. (Arranged date cancelled due to IT issues) External facilitator engaged to provide training to scrutiny Members on effective questioning 	<p>Q3 / 2021</p> <p>Q3 / 2021</p>	Scrutiny Manager

Ref	Recommendation	Council action planned in response to recommendation issued by Audit Wales	Target date for completion of actions	Responsible officer
	scrutiny.	<p>skills to be facilitated by the WLGA (Date cancelled due to clash of other meetings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific training arranged with external facilitator for Chairs and Vice Chairs as set out in R1 above. • Section 7 of the Constitution (Scrutiny Committees) to be reviewed and clarified where required. • Training to be provided for Members on the scrutiny of finance and performance. Undertaken with ERC committee and finance crib sheet developed for members • Member Development sessions identified to support scrutiny knowledge e.g. Treasury management; Economy and Recovery ; Education 	<p>4th November 2021</p> <p>Q3 / 2021</p> <p>Commenced October 2021 – ongoing</p> <p>Commenced October 2021 and continuing</p>	
R10	Review the nature and scope of the support available to the scrutiny function to ensure that members receive support to inform the planning and undertaking of their work programmes, as well as committee administration support.	Review of the structure for the Democratic and Scrutiny Service being undertaken by the Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services.	Q4 / 2021	Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services