

Report to	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of meeting	27 th July 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance & Strategic Assets and Cllr Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities / Nicola Stubbins, Corporate Director, Communities, Modernisation and Well-being
Report author	Shannon Richardson, Strategic Planning and Performance Officer
Title	Audit Wales Springing Forward Review 2021 to 2022

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To give an overview of the Audit Wales Springing Forward report and subsequent management response. This cover report provides highlights from the review, including its scope and key outcomes.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To detail the review conducted by Audit Wales on the council's arrangements for managing its assets and workforce.
- 2.2. To detail the management response that responds to the recommendations made by Audit Wales.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee confirms it has read, understood and taken account of the content and recommendations in the Audit Wales Springing Forward report (Appendix 1).

3.2. That the Committee notes the agreed actions in the management response (Appendix 2).

4. Report details

4.1. During December 2021 to February 2022, Audit Wales undertook a review of the way Denbighshire County Council manages its assets and workforce. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the review looked at how the council is strengthening its ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services, including those delivered in partnership with key stakeholders and communities.

4.2. For assets, the primary focus was on office accommodation and buildings that the council uses to deliver services to its residents; and for the workforce aspect, the focus has been on the challenges highlighted during the pandemic that have exacerbated some long-standing workforce issues.

4.3. Overall, the report found that the council is actively developing its New Ways of Working Project, which will impact on both its building assets and its workforce, integrating this activity with wider strategies. Looking further ahead will strengthen the council's consideration of the sustainable development principle.

4.4. A number of key conclusions were reached in the report, as follows:

- The council continues to develop its New Ways of Working strategy, but has not yet incorporated its plans into a corporate asset management plan that sets out the future for its building assets.
- Officers, supported by councillors are proactive in the management of assets, although there are opportunities to improve processes and consistency of asset management across the council.
- Throughout the pandemic, senior managers and Cabinet members carefully monitored the impact of Covid-19 on the council's building assets.
- The council has workforce planning arrangements in place and will need to further develop these as it shapes its vision for its future workforce.
- The council's actions in respect of workforce planning are largely focussed in the 'now'. Until it has properly identified its future workforce needs it is not able to take actions to deliver them.

- The council is focussed on dealing with the current day-to-day challenges and has not yet set out its longer-term actions to address its ongoing workforce challenges.

4.5. Following those conclusions, the report made four recommendations that required a management response:

R1 - **Post-pandemic learning** - Consider learning and areas for improvement from the pandemic to help inform future use of assets and workforce, where the pandemic has highlighted such opportunities.

R2 - **Vision** - Clarify the council's vision for the shape and size of its building assets and workforce in the short, medium, and long term

R3 - **Strategies and delivery plans** - Develop asset and workforce strategies and delivery plans that build on learning from the council's experience of the Covid-19 pandemic and deliver the council's vision in these areas.

R4 - **Strategies and delivery plans** - Identify the costs of delivering these plans and incorporate these into the medium-term financial plan.

4.6. In response to the report, the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance and Property services gave a combined response with input by relevant officers (Appendix 2). The response detailed that a lot of work is already underway to address the recommendations e.g. Assets Strategy, New Ways of Work project, Corporate Workforce Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. Completion dates for these recommendations range from October 2022 to July 2023.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1. The Audit Wales report doesn't have a direct impact upon the current Corporate Plan priorities for 2017 to 2022. When implementing the recommendations from the report, consideration will need to be given to the next Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027, which is currently in development. In addition to this, Assets and Workforce are two of our key functions that we monitor quarterly under our Corporate Health outcome that ensures the council is efficient, well-managed and environmentally sustainable.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. There is no financial or resource implications arising from this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being impact assessment is not required as this report is providing an update on an Audit Wales report – no change or decision is required at this stage.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. The review has been undertaken with the relevant officers and lead members across the council's assets and workforce services. Likewise, the report and management response has been developed with those officers and lead members, and feedback has been sought on the report's content before its final publication.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. Not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. There is a risk that proposed completion dates cannot be met, which could impact service delivery. However, work has already begun on many of these actions, with timetables in place to mitigate this risk.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. There is no decision required.