

Report to	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of meeting	08 March 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Barry Mellor (Lead Member for Environment and Transport)/ Gary Williams (Corporate Director – Governance and Business & Climate and Ecological Change Programme Senior Responsible Owner)
Report author	Helen Vaughan-Evans (Climate Change Programme Manager)
Title	Audit Wales Report – Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report summarises the Audit Wales (AW) Report of Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 (appendix 1) and provides Officers' responses to the five Calls for Action (appendix 2).

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To ensure Elected Members are kept informed of and able to scrutinise observations and actions following an external audit relevant to Denbighshire County Council.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That Members consider the report, the associated five calls to action, the identified need for organisations to be bold and innovative and the statement that the Auditor General will not criticise organisations for taking well-managed risks to address this unprecedented challenge.

3.2 That Members consider officers' responses to the five calls to action, providing feedback as appropriate.

3.3 That Members advice on how they wish these findings to be disseminated wider.

4. Report details

4.1. In November 2021, AW issued a call for evidence to 48 public bodies in Wales, including Denbighshire County Council, asking questions about their baseline position in achieving the 2030 collective ambition for the public sector of becoming Net Carbon Zero. Most public bodies responded, including Denbighshire County Council, in the period December 2021 to January 2022.

4.2. Whilst AW did not undertake a detailed review at each of the public bodies for the purposes of this report, AW did undertake an in depth review of Denbighshire County Council in December 2020 to June 2021 on this topic, specifically its ability to deliver on its environmental ambitions. The final report was issued in October 2021 and reached the conclusion that the Council is making excellent progress in embedding its environmental ambitions. This committee reflected on that audit and the management response on the recommendations at their meeting held 26 January 2022. Meeting papers include minutes can be found here.

4.3. Although AW do not make specific recommendations in their Report of Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 given the high-level nature of their review, the report does offer five Calls for Actions for organisations to consider as follows:

1. Strengthen your leadership and demonstrate your collective responsibility through effective collaboration
2. Clarify your strategic direction and increase your pace of implementation
3. Get to grips with the finances you need
4. Know your skills gaps and increase your capacity
5. Improve data quality and monitoring to support your decision making

4.4. AW encourage Denbighshire County Council to consider the messages in this report, and through their internal governance structures, set out publicly how they intend to respond to the calls for action. Appendix 2 provides the five Calls for Action and officers' initial response including what is proposed to be done in response.

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

5.1 Achieving the 2030 collective ambition for the public sector of becoming Net Carbon Zero will make a direct contribution to delivering upon part of the Council's Climate

Change and Ecological Emergency declaration which committed the Council to become Net Carbon Zero by 2030 along with improving biodiversity in Denbighshire. It will also make a direct contribution to delivering upon part of the subsequently adopted Climate and Ecological Change Strategy 2021-2030, by supporting the reduction in carbon emissions and increase in carbon sequestration so that the Council can achieve its 2030 goals of Net Carbon Zero and 35% reduction in supply chain emissions.

5.2 Delivering on the Council's Environmental Ambitions will support the Council in making its contribution to the Welsh Government policy for the public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030 and for Wales to meet its legally binding target of reducing emissions to Net Zero by 2050.

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

6.1. There are no costs arising directly 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 for this report.

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

8.1 At this time, report findings have been shared with the Chief Auditor and the Climate and Ecological Change Programme Senior Responsible Owner, prior to taking the report to Governance and Audit committee for consideration and advice on disseminating wider.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 Not required.

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

10.1. There are no additional risks arising from this report.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 No decision is required.