

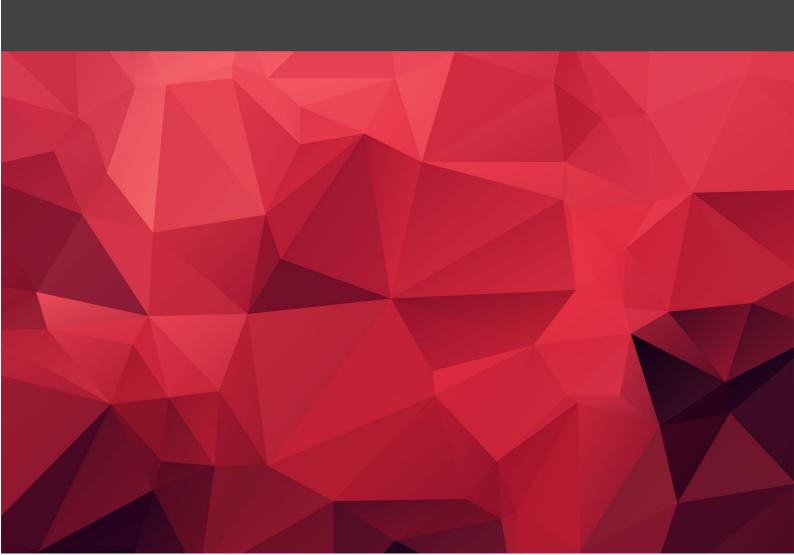
Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru Auditor General for Wales

2019 Audit Plan – Newport City Council & Newport City Council Group

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This document has been prepared as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

Further information on this is provided in Appendix 1.

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2019 Audit Plan

Summary

- As your external auditor, my objective is to carry out an audit which discharges my statutory duties as Auditor General and fulfils my obligations under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Local Government Act 1999, and the Code of Audit Practice, namely to:
 - examine and certify whether your financial statements are 'true and fair';
 - assess whether you have made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources;
 - audit and assess whether you have discharged the duties and met requirements of the Measure; and
 - undertake studies to enable me to make recommendations for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness or for improving financial or other management arrangements.
- The purpose of this plan is to set out my proposed work, when it will be undertaken, how much it will cost and who will undertake it.
- 3 There have been no limitations imposed on me in planning the scope of this audit.
- 4 My responsibilities, along with those of management and those charged with governance, are set out in Appendix 1.

Audit of accounts

- It is my responsibility to issue a certificate and report on the financial statements which includes an opinion on their 'truth and fairness'. Our audit work covers the accounts of Newport City Council (the Council) and those of Newport City Council Group (the Group) which incorporates Newport Transport Ltd. This provides assurance that the accounts of the Council and the Group:
 - are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error;
 - comply with statutory and other applicable requirements; and
 - comply with all relevant requirements for accounting presentation and disclosure.
- I also consider whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and report by exception if the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with requirements.
- 7 Appendix 1 sets out my responsibilities in full.
- The audit work I undertake to fulfil my responsibilities responds to my assessment of risks. This understanding allows me to develop an audit approach which focuses on addressing specific risks whilst providing assurance for the financial statements as a whole. My audit approach consists of three phases as set out in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: my audit approach

Planning:

Enquiry,
observation and
inspection to
understand the
entity and its
internal controls in
order to identify
and assess risks



Execution:

Testing of controls, transactions, balances and disclosures in response to those risks



Concluding and reporting:

Evaluation of evidence obtained to conclude and report appropriately

The risks of material misstatement which I consider to be significant and which therefore require special audit consideration, are set out in Exhibit 2 along with the work I intend to undertake to address them. Also included are other key areas of audit attention my team will be focusing on.

Exhibit 2: financial audit risks

Financial audit risk

Proposed audit response

Significant risks

Risk of management override

The risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is viewed as a significant risk [ISA 240.31-33].

My audit team will:

- test the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements;
- review accounting estimates for biases; and
- evaluate the rationale for any significant transactions outside the normal course of business.

Other areas of audit attention

Group accounts

As in prior years, the Council's 2018-19 financial statements will include consolidated financial statements including the accounts of Newport Transport Ltd.

My audit team will:

- perform early audit work to confirm the consolidation process for the 2018-19 financial statements; and
- review any disclosures made by the Council in detail to ensure that they are in line with Code requirements.

Financial audit risk Proposed audit response City Deal The Council is participating in the Cardiff My audit team will liaise with the auditors Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD). of the Regional Cabinet Joint Committee accounts and the Council to confirm that City deals are arrangements negotiated its proposed accounting treatment of its with government that give greater share of the assets / liabilities of the accountability for actions in return for new CCRCD is appropriate. powers to help encourage growth and jobs. The CCRCD involves ten local authorities. The City Deal was ratified by all participating authorities on 1 March 2017. The authorities have established a joint committee (the Regional Cabinet) to oversee delivery of a range of programmes designed to increase connectivity and to improve physical and digital infrastructure over the course of 20 years. This significant programme will have financial, governance and delivery risks that need to be managed. There will be numerous accounting issues to address, including consolidation of joint committee accounts.

Friars Walk - revenue subsidy

The sale of the Friars Walk shopping centre was completed in July 2017. As part of the sale, the Council remains potentially liable for an ongoing revenue subsidy which is set at a maximum of £0.5 million per year, for 13 more years as at 31 March 2019.

The Council will need to estimate this potential liability appropriately and account for it in the 2018-19 financial statements. This estimate could vary over time due to changing circumstances and developments.

My audit team will review the Council's calculation of the revenue subsidy, to ensure that it is reasonable and considers all relevant factors.

Financial audit risk Proposed audit response New accounting standards IFRS 9 financial instruments applies from My audit team will assess the likely 1 April 2018 and brings in a new principlesimpacts of the new IFRSs and undertake based approach for the classification and work to respond to any identified risks of measurement of financial assets. It also material misstatement. introduces a new impairment methodology for financial assets based on expected losses rather than incurred losses. This will result in earlier recognition of expected credit losses and will impact on how the bad debt provision is calculated. IFRS 15 revenue from contracts with customers introduces a principles-based five-step model for recognising revenue arising from contracts with customers. It is based on a core principle requiring revenue recognition to depict the transfer of promised goods or services to the customer in an amount that reflects the consideration a body expects to be entitled to, in exchange for those goods or services. It will

I do not seek to obtain absolute assurance on the truth and fairness of the financial statements and related notes but adopt a concept of materiality. My aim is to identify material misstatements, that is, those that might result in a reader of the accounts being misled. For audit planning purposes, we have adopted a materiality level of £4.6 million, being 1% of gross expenditure in the 2017-18 accounts. We will update this level on receipt of the draft 2018-19 accounts, and will report it to the Audit Committee prior to completion of the audit.

also require more extensive disclosures

than are currently required.

- 11 We also set separate, lower levels of materiality for certain areas of the financial statements that are deemed sensitive in nature. For this audit, a lower materiality level will be set for the audit of related party disclosures and senior officer remuneration tables.
- For reporting purposes, I will treat any misstatements below a 'trivial' level (that is, 5% of materiality) as not requiring consideration by those charged with governance and therefore I will not report them.
- 13 My fees and planned timescales for completion of the audit are based on the following assumptions:
 - the financial statements are provided in accordance with the agreed timescales, to the quality expected and have been subject to a robust quality assurance review;

- information provided to support the financial statements is timely, to the quality expected and has been subject to quality assurance review;
- appropriate accommodation and facilities are provided to enable my audit team to deliver the audit in an efficient manner;
- all appropriate officials will be available during the audit;
- you have all the necessary controls and checks in place to enable the Responsible Financial Officer to provide all the assurances that I require in the Letter of Representation addressed to me; and
- Internal Audit's planned programme of work is complete and management has responded to issues that may have affected the financial statements.
- In addition to my responsibilities in respect of the audit of the Council's and the Group's statutory financial statements set out above, I am also required to certify a return to the Welsh Government which provides information about Newport City Council to support preparation of Whole of Government Accounts.
- In addition to the audit of the accounts, I have statutory responsibilities to receive questions and objections to the accounts from local electors. These responsibilities are set out in the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004:
 - Section 30 Inspection of documents and questions at audit; and
 - Section 31 Right to make objections at audit.
- Addit fees will be chargeable for work undertaken in dealing with electors' questions and objections. Because audit work will depend upon the number and nature of any questions and objections, it is not possible to estimate an audit fee for this work.
- 17 If I do receive questions or objections, I will discuss potential audit fees at the time.

Other financial audit work

- 18 I am also responsible for the examination of the Greater Gwent Crematorium Joint Committee Annual Return. This work involves an independent examination rather than a full audit. My team will undertake the examination of these accounts on my behalf in accordance with the timescales agreed with the Council.
- 19 My audit fee for this work is set out in Exhibit 4.

Performance audit

- I need to balance my existing, new and proposed statutory duties with the need to continue to undertake meaningful, risk-based and proportionate audits and assessments. In discharging my responsibilities, I will continue to seek to strike the most appropriate balance and add value by:
 - providing assurance on the governance and stewardship of public money and assets;

- offering insight on the extent to which resources are used wisely in meeting people's needs; and
- identifying and promoting ways by which the provision of public services may be improved.
- As it is likely that the anticipated Local Government Wales Bill will propose that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 no longer applies to councils, I will continue to minimise work that focuses on the process of improvement planning.
- In my audit plan for 2018 I explained that in previous years I had placed reliance on my work under the Measure to help discharge my duty under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 to satisfy myself that councils have made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money) in the use of resources. Given that in the future it is likely that I will be unable to rely on my work under the Measure, in 2019-20, and subsequent years, the focus of my local performance audit programmes will continue to be more clearly aligned to discharging my Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 duty.
- In 2018-19 I undertook an examination of the extent to which you are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet your well-being objectives. During 2019-20 I will undertake a further examination to assess the extent to which you are applying the sustainable development principle when taking steps towards meeting your well-being objectives. This will be the final piece of work I will undertake to discharge my duties under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act at the Council prior to laying my first cyclical report with the National Assembly in 2020. During 2019-20 I will also be considering how to discharge my duties under the Act over the period 2020 to 2024 and I will seek to engage with local authorities as well as other stakeholders in developing my approach.
- The Wales Audit Office also undertakes a programme of local government studies. This work is included within the Wales Audit Office estimates for funding from the Welsh Consolidated Fund and not local fees. These studies primarily lead to a national report augmented by good practice and shared learning outputs rather than by local reports. Local findings, where relevant, will be captured in improvement assessment work and reported in annual improvement reports depending on the timing and the focus of conclusions.
- 25 Taking all these factors into consideration, my 2019-20 programme of work will comprise:

Exhibit 3: performance audit programme

Performance audit programme	Brief description
Improvement audit and assessment work including improvement planning and reporting audit	Audit of discharge of duty to publish an improvement plan, and to publish an assessment of performance.
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations	Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.
Assurance and Risk Assessment	Project to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources.
Financial Sustainability	A project common to all local councils that will assess financial sustainability in light of current and anticipated future challenges.
Follow up review of the Shared Resource Service (SRS)	This review will follow up on the recommendations made by the Auditor General in his 2015 report reviewing the SRS. The review will be carried out across the four local councils that are members of the SRS.
Embedding the Council's Corporate and Well-being Plans	We will undertake work in relation to supporting the Council to embed its new Corporate Plan and Well-being Plan and the underpinning boards.
2019-20 Local Government Studies	(Funded by the Welsh Consolidated Fund) The Auditor General has recently completed his consultation on his forward work programme and new local government studies to commence in 2019-20 will be confirmed shortly.

The four performance audit projects included in last year's Audit Plan, which are either still underway or which have been substituted for alternative projects in agreement with you, are set out in Appendix 2.

Certification of grant claims and returns

- I have been requested to undertake certification work on Newport City Council's grant claims and returns. A separate report, Certification of Grants and Returns 2017-18, summarises the more significant and/or recurring issues I identified when undertaking grant certification work in 2017-18.
- As was the case last year, the Welsh Government will not require me to provide any report of factual findings related to any activity levels or outcomes.
- 29 My audit fee for this work is set out in Exhibit 4.

Fee, audit team and timetable

Fee

Your estimated fee for 2019 is set out in Exhibit 4. There have been some small changes to my fee rates for 2019, however. my audit teams will continue to drive efficiency in their audits to ensure any resulting increases will not be passed to you. This estimate represents a 1% decrease compared to your actual 2018 fee.

Exhibit 4: audit fee

Audit area	Proposed fee (£) ¹	Actual fee last year (£)
Audit of accounts ²	191,900	191,900
Performance audit work ³	104,815	104,776
Grant certification work ⁴	70,000	73,705
Other financial audit work ⁵	1,244	1,244
Total fee	367,959	371,625

- Planning will be ongoing, and changes to my programme of audit work and therefore my fee, may be required if any key new risks emerge. I shall make no changes without first discussing them with the Council.
- 32 Further information on my fee scales and fee setting can be found on our website.

Audit team

¹ The fees shown in this document are exclusive of VAT, which is not charged to you.

² Payable November 2018 to October 2019.

³ Payable April 2019 to March 2020.

⁴ Payable as work is undertaken.

⁵ Payable as work is undertaken on the Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee.

The main members of my team, together with their contact details, are summarised in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5: my audit team

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Anthony Veale	Engagement Director and Engagement Lead – Financial Audit	029 2032 0585	anthony.veale@audit.wales
Huw Rees	Engagement Lead – Performance Audit	029 2032 0599	huw.rees@audit.wales
Gareth Lucey	Financial Audit Manager	029 2082 9398	gareth.lucey@audit.wales
Ramim Khan	Financial Audit Team Leader	029 2032 0632	ramim.khan@audit.wales
Non Jenkins	Performance Audit Manager	029 2032 0595	non.jenkins@audit.wales
Gareth Jones	Performance Audit Lead	029 2032 0548	gareth.jones@audit.wales

I can confirm that that my team members are all independent of Newport City Council and your officers. In addition, I am not aware of any potential conflicts of interest that I need to bring to your attention.

Timetable

I will provide reports, or other outputs as agreed, to Newport City Council covering the areas of work identified in this document. My key milestones are set out in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6: timetable

Planned output	Work undertaken	Report finalised
2019 Audit Plan	December 2018 to January 2019	March 2019
Financial accounts work:		
Audit of Financial Statements Report	January to August 2019	September 2019
Opinion on Financial Statements		September 2019
Financial Accounts Memorandum		November 2019
Performance work:		
Improvement Plan Audit	June 2019	June 2019*
WFG Act Examination	April - September 2019	September 2019*
Assessment of Performance Audit	October- November 2019	November 2019
Assurance and Risk Assessment	October – November 2019	December 2019*
Financial Sustainability	tbc	tbc
SRS Review	tbc	tbc
Embedding the Corporate and Well-being Plans	tbc	tbc
Annual Improvement Report	April 2019 – May 2020	June 2020*
2020 Audit Plan	October to December 2019	January 2020*

^{*} Estimated

Future developments to my audit work

Details of other future developments including forthcoming changes to key International Financial Reporting Standards, the Wales Audit Office's Good Practice Exchange (GPX) seminars and my planned work on the readiness of the Welsh public sector for Brexit, are set out in Appendix 3.

Appendix 1

Respective responsibilities

Audit of accounts

As amended by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013, the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 sets out my powers and duties to undertake your financial audit. It is my responsibility to issue a certificate and report on the financial statements which includes an opinion on:

- their 'truth and fairness', providing assurance that they:
 - are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error;
 - comply with the statutory and other applicable requirements; and
 - comply with all relevant requirements for accounting presentation and disclosure.
- the consistency of information in the Annual Report with the financial statements.

I must also state by exception if the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with requirements, if proper accounting records have not been kept, if disclosures required for remuneration and other transactions have not been made or if I have not received all the information and explanations I require.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to assess whether Newport City Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. To achieve this, I consider:

- the results of the audit work undertaken on the financial statements;
- Newport City Council's system of internal control, as reported in the Annual Governance Statement and my report thereon;
- the results of other work carried out including work carried out under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), certification of claims and returns, and data-matching exercises;
- the results of the work of other external review bodies where relevant to my responsibilities; and
- any other work that addresses matters not covered by the above, and which I
 consider necessary to discharge my responsibilities.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 sets out the rights of the public and electors to inspect Newport City Council's financial statements and related documents, to ask me, as the Appointed Auditor questions about the accounts and, where appropriate, to challenge items in the accounts. I must also consider whether in the public interest, I should make a report on any matter which comes to my notice in the course of the audit.

My audit work does not relieve management and those charged with governance of their responsibilities which include:

 the preparation of the financial statements and Annual Report in accordance with applicable accounting standards and guidance;

- the keeping of proper accounting records;
- ensuring the regularity of financial transactions; and
- securing value for money in the use of resources.

Management agrees to provide me with:

- access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- additional information that I may request from management for the purpose of the audit; and
- unrestricted access to persons within Newport City Council from whom I determine it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

Management will need to provide me with written representations to confirm:

- that it has fulfilled its responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements;
- that all transactions have been recorded and are reflected in the financial statements;
- the completeness of the information provided to me for the purposes of the audit;
- to support other audit evidence relevant to the financial statements or specific assertions in the financial statements if I deem it necessary or if required by ISAs.

Performance audit

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me, by examination of the accounts or otherwise, to satisfy myself that the body has made proper arrangements for:

- securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- that the body, if required to publish information in pursuance of a direction under section 47 (performance information) has made such arrangements for collecting and recording the information and for publishing it as are required for the performance of its duties under that section.

The Measure places a general duty on improvement authorities to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'. It also places specific requirements on authorities to set improvement objectives, and to publish annual improvement plans and assessments of performance. Improvement authorities are defined as county and county borough councils, national park authorities, and fire and rescue authorities.

The Measure also requires me to carry out an improvement assessment for each improvement authority every year, to determine whether the authority is likely to comply with its general duty and requirements of the Measure. I must also carry out an audit of whether the authority has discharged its improvement planning and reporting duties.

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), in respect of which he will provide a report to the relevant authorities

and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). The Auditor General will summarise audit and assessment reports in his published Annual Improvement Report (under section 24). This will also summarise any reports of special inspections.

Section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 requires me to carry out examinations of public bodies for the purposes of assessing the extent to which it has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:

- (a) setting well-being objectives; and
- (b) taking steps to meet those objectives.

I must carry out such an examination of each public body at least once during a five-year period. Before the end of the period I must report on the results of those examinations to the National Assembly.

Appendix 2

Performance work in last year's audit outline still in progress

Exhibit 7: performance work in last year's audit outline still in progress

Four pieces of performance audit work included in last year's audit plan remain outstanding.

Performance audit project	Status	Comment
Environmental Health Review of the arrangements the council has put in place to deliver environmental health services building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.	Scoping	We are conducting a short follow up of the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the Auditor General's national study. We aim to conclude this work by early Autumn 2019.
Leisure Services Review of the arrangements the council has put in place to deliver leisure services building on the 'study previously undertaken by the Auditor General as part of the 'delivering with less' themed studies.	Scoping	We are conducting a short follow up of the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the Auditor General's national study. We aim to conclude this work by early Autumn 2019.
Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements Review of the effectiveness of corporate safeguarding arrangements building on the study previously undertaken by the Auditor General in this area.	Scoping	We are conducting a short follow up of the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the Auditor General's national study. We aim to conclude this work by early Autumn 2019.
Out of County Placements	Scoping	Agreed area of focus is on out of county placements for looked after children. The audit was delayed to allow the Council to implement changes to its residential care provision in early 2019.

Appendix 3

Other future developments

A. Forthcoming key IFRS changes

Exhibit 8: changes to IFRS standards

Standard	Effective date	Further details
IFRS 16 leases	Expected in 2020-21	IFRS 16 will replace the current leases standard IAS 17. The key change is that it largely removes the distinction between operating and finance leases for lessees by introducing a single lessee accounting model that requires a lessee to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months, unless the underlying asset is of low value. It will lead to all leases being recognised on balance sheet as an asset based on a right of use principle with a corresponding liability for future rentals. This is a significant change in lessee accounting.

B. Good Practice Exchange

The Wales Audit Office's GPX helps public services improve by sharing knowledge and practices that work. Events are held where knowledge can be exchanged face to face and resources shared on line. The main areas of work are regarding financial management, public-sector staff and governance.

<u>Further information, including details of forthcoming GPX events and outputs from past seminars</u>.

C. Brexit: preparations for the United Kingdom's departure from membership of the European Union

In accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty of Rome, on 29 March 2019 the United Kingdom will cease to be a member of the European Union. Negotiations are continuing, and it currently remains unclear whether agreement will be reached on a transition period to 31 December 2020, or whether a 'no deal' immediate exit will take place next March.

The Auditor General has commenced a programme of work looking at the arrangements that the devolved public sector in Wales, including all NHS bodies, is putting in place to prepare for, and respond to, Britain's exit from the European Union. This will take the form of a high-level overview to establish what is being put in place across the Welsh public sector, and what the key issues are from the perspectives of different parts of the Welsh public service.

The Auditor General intends to carry out this initial work in two tranches. In autumn 2018, he issued a call for evidence to compile a baseline summary of arrangements being put in place. On 19 February, the Auditor General issued a report⁶ on preparations in Wales for a 'no deal' Brexit. This will be followed up by further audit fieldwork during the rest of 2019.

⁶ http://www.audit.wales/publication/preparations-wales-no-deal-brexit

Wales Audit Office 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

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru 24 Heol y Gadeirlan Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500 Ffacs: 029 2032 0600 Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: post@archwilio.cymru
Gwefan: www.archwilio.cymru