

Section 1. Summary of External Regulations and Inspections – 2022/23

Audit Wales

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
April 2022	Direct Payments for Adult Social Care	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Direct-payments-Eng-update-sept-2022.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 Review public information in discussion with service users and carers to ensure it is clear, concise and fully explains what they need to know about Direct Payments.</p> <p>R2 Undertake additional promotional work to encourage take up of Direct Payments.</p> <p>R3 Ensure advocacy services are considered at the first point of contact to provide independent advice on Direct Payments to service users and carers.</p> <p>R4 Ensure information about Direct payments is available at the front door to social care and are included in the initial discussion on the available care options for service users and carers.</p> <p>R5 Provide training to social workers on Direct Payments to ensure they fully understand their potential and feel confident promoting it to service users and carers.</p> <p>R6 Work together to develop a joint Recruitment and Retention Plan for Personal Assistants.</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	April 23 April 23 June 23 (TBC)	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>We recognise the importance of timely accessible information. The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service has coproduced, with citizens a range of information booklets, factsheets and other resources to help broader understanding of direct payments. We also recognize that regardless of the quality of written information it is often necessary to adopt flexible and bespoke approaches to enabling full understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities and have tried to facilitate an approach that recognises this. We broadly agree that promotion of direct payments as a genuine option for people ties in with social work practice, social work understanding, team culture, Social Work training and leadership. To give context to these recommendations we feel that providing examples of good quality resources such as available information, training approaches etc., details of what is currently available and what is missing in Wales would have been helpful and constructive in supporting progress in these areas.</p> <p>With regards to R3, we are slightly confused that the report suggests that independent advice about direct payments should be provided from first contact. This appears to be contradictory to the report's findings detailed in exhibit 3 and paragraph 2.11 that citizens' receiving support from direct payments services provided by local authorities have a more positive overall experience than those using a commissioned service. The report's findings also suggest that 96% of direct payments recipients received initial information from local authority practitioners.</p>

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
		<p>R7 Clarify policy expectations in plain accessible language and set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what Direct Payments can pay for; • how application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes work; • how monitoring individual payments and the paperwork required to verify payments will work; • how unused monies are to be treated and whether they can be banked; and • how to administer and manage pooled budgets. <p>Public information should be reviewed regularly (at least every two years) to ensure they are working effectively and remain relevant.</p> <p>R9 Work together to establish a system to fully evaluate Direct Payments that captures all elements of the process – information, promotion, assessing, managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence.</p> <p>R10 Annually publish performance information for all elements of Direct Payments to enable a whole system view of delivery and impact to support improvement</p>			<p>Direct Payments & CHC Funding – We welcome the Welsh Labor Governments Manifesto pledge to improve the interface between direct payments and CHC. We are currently involved in moving this agenda forward via stakeholder and focus groups. However, we are of the opinion that to enable people in receipt of CHC funding to benefit from the same rights to exercise choice and control over their arrangements as other direct payments recipients will require changes to primary legislation.</p> <p>Systems to evaluate Direct Payments – The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service have developed core data sets and are using intelligent information to inform future priorities and practice. We are striving to align such data with the known impacts of direct payments solutions to provide a 360-degree evaluation process. We have also embedded citizen feedback into our work and are using this to shape and confirm the effectiveness’ of our services. Inclusion of such examples within the report and/or proactive suggestions to help local authorities build more robust systems would have been welcomed.</p> <p>Recruitment & Retention – Personal Assistants are employed directly by recipients who are empowered and supported to become good employers, meet their responsibilities and retain workers. We cannot see how a joint recruitment and retention plan could be adopted and implemented without undermining the autonomy enjoyed by direct payments employers. We would rather focus on providing high quality support services that helps direct payments recipients become high quality employers.</p> <p>Clarify Policy Expectations – We believe that the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 and Part 4 Code of Practice provides the information, guidance and framework to enable local authorities to deliver on this recommendation.</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
					<p>We would also be concerned that a recommendation suggesting that what direct payments can pay for are defined could stifle innovation and lead to a more prescribed process focused approach.</p> <p>There are already light touch, user friendly systems in place within Wales to reduce bureaucracy, paperwork and manual auditing enabling people to focus on what matters to them. Examples of good systems would have helped demonstrate the options.</p> <p>Unused Funding – In Flintshire we promote the flexible use of direct payments, enabling people to change the way they meet their needs and outcomes and adapt to changing circumstances. However, where funding is no longer needed to meet assessed needs and outcomes, we strive to work in partnership with individuals to reuse money that is no longer needed. Funding is returned to the local authority to be used with other people. We do, however disregard the equivalent of eight weeks funding to support the flexibility inherent within the scheme.</p> <p>Personal Assistants - We acknowledge that Personal Assistants are an important source of support for many people, and often enable a very personal, flexible relationship which has major benefits. The Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service has designed, developed internally and implemented some highly innovative resources that support and recognize the roles that Personal Assistants play locally. These innovations are the first of their kind in Wales and we were disappointed that they were not referenced within the report. Such approaches are often the catalyst for discussion, challenge and improvement and in this regard, we feel that the decision not to reference this and other work being undertaken across Wales was another missed opportunity.</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
					<p>We don't fully agree with the statement <i>“Personal Assistants are essential to people making the most of Direct Payments, but service users struggle to recruit them”</i>. As stated, Personal Assistants can be the best solution for many people, particularly those in need of physical care and support, however we feel that this emphasis on Personal Assistants is unhelpful and demonstrates a very limited perspective. Certainly, the focus of direct payments in Flintshire is on helping people achieve their personal outcomes, so solutions should not be limited. Further to this we could have provided a range of creative examples.</p> <p>Good Quality and accessible Information - We welcome the finding that the vast majority of recipients involved in your survey found out about direct payments from a local authority officer. We were also encouraged that all local authorities are striving to provide quality information about direct payments. From a Flintshire perspective the team have worked with citizens and I.T partners to completely reinvent our web-based resources. This has resulted in an 800% increase in activity over the past 12 months. Additionally, we have facilitated forums, publish a quarterly newsletter, have an on-line news page, have developed Facebook and Twitter feeds, have written direct payments related articles, produced high quality promotional videos accessible via the Flintshire YouTube channel, addressed elected members, developed a catalogue of examples of innovative use of direct payments and have supported innovative solutions particularly during the pandemic to help people resolve personal challenges. We strongly feel that sharing such practice would have helped balance the report and supported other local authorities to develop their resources and approaches.</p> <p>Average spend per Direct Payment recipient - We don't understand fully the value of this comparison. Is the report</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
					<p>suggesting some correlation between direct payments funding per person and needs met, or outcomes achieved? If so, it would be helpful to have included examples to better explain. From our experience some of the lowest cost, innovative solutions can enable the achievement of individual outcomes whose benefit is hugely disproportionate to the financial cost.</p>
July 2022	Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Public_Sector_Readiness_for_Net_Zero_Carbon_by_2030.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: Given the high-level nature of the review, no specific recommendations were identified however, they encourage public bodies to consider the five messages within the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen your leadership and demonstrate your collective responsibility through effective collaboration - Clarify your strategic direction and increase your pace of implementation - Get to grips with the finances needed - Know your skills gaps and increase your capacity - Improve data quality and monitoring to support your decision making. 	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	23 Feb 23 07 Feb 23 25 Jan 23	<p>RAG Status: Amber</p> <p>As a Council we have strengthened our leadership through a committed Cabinet Member for Climate Change, a formalised Climate Change Committee, and cross-departmental Officer working groups to demonstrate collective responsibility through collaboration. We are working with our public sector partners to better understand the finances associated with decarbonisation, and to share best practice with improved data quality. The Council must continue to increase the pace of implementation of carbon reduction projects and increased capacity where skills gaps exist by providing the necessary investment.</p> <p>In July 2022 Welsh Government also published their 'Decarbonising Social Care in Wales's report which highlights key actions needed by the public sector to better understand the carbon emissions from social care services and to ensure actions to decarbonise are included in strategic plans. The Council's Climate Change Strategy already encompasses many aspects associated with social care; however, this will be reviewed as part of the strategy review in 2024/25. Within this review content and detail will be compared to the 'Social Care route map' to ensure this service area is effectively represented. Future carbon emission submissions to Welsh Government will require a separate analysis of emissions from social care.</p> <p>The methodology for the 2021/22 carbon emission data submission to Welsh Government was modified to</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
					<p>incorporate the addition of new measures around Homeworking. The methodology used for calculating these emissions has a very high Relative Standard of Deviation due to necessary data being difficult to determine. In order to make this data meaningful and a true reflection of the carbon impacts from home working, we need to better understand the quantity of time our employees work from home. This data collection could be tied into the wider 'employee commuting' survey. Due to the disparity of data, and emissions from Homeworking not being included in our baseline figures, we have not included this in scope for our 2021/22 carbon emission data report.</p> <p>With the addition of Homeworking emissions in 2021/22, and social care in 2022/23, the moving of reporting goalposts has potential to adversely affect the progress made in reducing our carbon emissions. It should be decided if any changes in methodology are to be included in future internal reporting or if the original baseline figures should be maintained.</p> <p>In December 2021, the Welsh Government committed to the development of regional energy strategies and Local Area Energy Plans in its approach to create a national energy plan by 2024. This exercise maps out future energy demand and supply for all parts of Wales to identify gaps and enable future planning.</p> <p>The North Wales Energy Strategy & Action Plan has now been developed through a public sector working group and has been approved by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. The strategy and action plan now needs to be endorsed by each Council, and implementation of this will be led by Ambition North Wales.</p> <p>Ambition North Wales are also leading on the development of the Local Area Energy Plans and work with each Council will commence in 2023. The Planning is being funded by Welsh Government and the resulting Local Area</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
					Energy Plan will inform both local and national investment and decisions on future requirements for energy across all sectors.
September 2022	Equality Impact Assessments: More than a Tick Box Exercise?	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Equality_impact_assessment-english_0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: There were four recommendations identified but only one was in relation to public bodies.</p> <p>Reviewing public bodies' current approach for conducting EIAs R4 While there are examples of good practice related to distinct stages of the EIA process, all public bodies have lessons to learn about their overall approach. Public bodies should review their overall approach to EIAs considering the findings of this report and the detailed guidance available from the EHRC and the Practice Hub. We recognise that developments in response to our other recommendations and the Welsh Government's review of the PSED Wales Specific regulations may have implications for current guidance in due course.</p>	Cabinet: CROSC: G&AC:	April 23 April 23 June 23	<p>RAG Status: Amber</p> <p>Agree with the four recommendations detailed within the report however three of these are related to Welsh Government (WG).</p> <p>The three recommendations related to WG will provide greater clarity for public bodies on what is to be assessed, and what an integrated impact assessment should look like and will ensure partnership arrangements are included in the updated regulations.</p> <p>R4 - Agree with the recommendation. Discussions are taking place with another organisation and opportunities to adopt their approach to Impact Assessments. An action plan to implement the findings of Audit Wales has been developed.</p> <p>EHRC guidance was followed in developing the Equality Impact Assessment, a North Wales model has been adopted and this was sent to the EHRC for their approval.</p> <p>The Practice Hub is available on the Council intranet/Infonet as a resource.</p> <p>Provisional reporting dates have been provided however; these may change.</p>
October 2022	Welsh Language Report 2021-22	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Welsh_Language_Report_2021-22.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: None</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	N/A

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
October 2022	National Fraud Initiative 20-21	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/The National Fraud Initiative in Wales 2020 21 English 0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: None</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	N/A
November 2022	Time for change – Poverty in Wales	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Time for %20Change %20Poverty English.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: R2 In Paragraphs 2.13 – 2.23 and Paragraphs 3.33 – 3.35. we highlight that councils and partners have prioritised work on poverty, but the mix of approaches and a complicated delivery landscape mean that ambitions, focus, actions and prioritisation vary widely. We highlight that evaluating activity and reporting performance are also variable with many gaps. We recommend that the councils use their Wellbeing Plans to provide a comprehensive focus on tackling poverty to co-ordinate their efforts, meet local needs and support the revised national plan targets and actions. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include SMART local actions with a greater emphasis on prevention. • include a detailed resourcing plan for the length of the strategy. • be developed with involvement from other public sector partners, the third sector, and those with experience of poverty. • include a robust set of consistent outcome indicators and measures to increase understanding of poverty locally; and 	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	TBC TBC TBC	We are aware of the report, our response is in preparation and will go via the governance process in due course.

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be subject to annual public reporting to enable a whole system view of poverty locally to help improve delivery and support <p>Leadership on the poverty agenda R3 In Paragraph 2.23 we note that just over a third of councils have lead members and lead officers for addressing poverty. Given the importance of effective leadership in driving the poverty agenda forward and breaking silos within councils and between public bodies, we recommend that each council designate a cabinet member as the council’s poverty champion and designate a senior officer to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda.</p> <p>Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty R5 In Paragraphs 3.2 – 3.6 we highlight that people in poverty are often in crisis, dealing with extremely personal and stressful issues, but they often find it difficult to access help from councils because of the way services are designed and delivered. We recommend that councils improve their understanding of their residents’ ‘lived experience’ through meaningful involvement in decision-making using ‘experience mapping’ and/or ‘Poverty Truth Commissions’ to review and improve accessibility to and use of council services.</p> <p>Single web landing page for people seeking help R6 In Paragraph 3.14 we highlight the difficulties people in poverty face accessing online and digital services. To ensure people are able to get the information and advice</p>			

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
		<p>they need, we recommend that councils optimise their digital services by creating a single landing page on their website that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is directly accessible on the home page • provides links to all services provided by the council • that relate to poverty; and • provides information on the work of partners that can assist people in poverty. <p>Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty</p> <p>R7 In Paragraphs 3.15 and 3.16 we note that no council has created a single gateway into services. As a result, people have to complete multiple application forms that often record the same information when applying for similar services. We highlight that whilst it is important that councils comply with relevant data protection legislation, they also need to share data to ensure citizens receive efficient and effective services. We recommend that councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data; • undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests • create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services • undertake a data audit to provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and • review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities 			

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response & RAG (If applicable)
		<p>Complying with the socio-economic duty</p> <p>R8 In Paragraphs 3.27 to 3.32 we set out that while all councils undertake some form of assessment to determine the likely socio-economic impact of policy choices and decisions, approaches vary and are not always effective. We recommend that councils review their integrated impact assessments or equivalent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that they draw on relevant, comprehensive and current data (nothing over 12 months old) to support analysis. • ensure integrated impact assessments capture information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ involvement activity setting out those the service has engaged with in determining its strategic policy such as partners, service users and those it is coproducing with. ○ the cumulative impact/mitigation to ensure the assessment considers issues in the round and how it links across services provided across the council; ○ how the council will monitor and evaluate impact and will take corrective action; and ○ an action plan setting out the activities the Council will take as a result of the Integrated Impact Assessment. 			
December 2022	'A missed opportunity' – Social Enterprises (National Report)	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/A_missed_opportunity_Social_Enterprises_English_0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1. To get the best from their work with and funding of Social Enterprises, local authorities</p>	O&SC: Cabinet: G&AC:	May 23 May 23 June 23	We are aware of the report, our response is in preparation and will go via the governance process in due course. Provisional reporting dates provided.

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	Response & RAG (If applicable)
		<p>need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authority officers use the checklist in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current Social Enterprise engagement, • management, performance and practice. • identify opportunities to improve joint working; and • jointly draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation. <p>R2 To drive improvement we recommend that the local authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally approve the completed Action Plan • regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and • revise actions and targets in light of the authority’s evaluation and assessment of its performance. <p>R3 To ensure the local authority delivers its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises we recommend that it reports on current activity and future priorities following the evaluation of its Action Plan including the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services.</p>		
December 2022	A Picture of Flood Risk Management	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/A_Picture_of_Flood_Risk_Management_English_0.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: None</p>	<p>Cabinet: N/A O&SC: N/A G&AC: N/A</p>	<p>RAG Status: Amber</p> <p>We are aware of the report. There are no specific recommendations identified for Local authorities and Audit Wales did not expect local authorities to provide a formal response to the flooding report, or to table the report for a committee meeting. They are hoping it will</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	Response & RAG (If applicable)
				<p>provide useful context to inform scrutiny of flood risk management. The report does raise a number of questions that need to be considered further by the Council, as the expectations being placed on Councils by Welsh Government in relation to flood risk management do not match the reality of the ability of Councils to resource and respond to this significant challenge. The questions to be considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's approach to reviewing its flood risk management strategy and creating a realistic and achievable action plan that prioritises Flintshire's most vulnerable flood risk areas, • The amount and distribution of Welsh Government funding, • The Council-wide approach to flood risk management, • The collation of a complete picture of the Council's responsibilities for flood risk management assets, • The lack of experience and professional capability in the flood risk sector and an inability to recruit and retain flood risk management expertise, • The added burden placed on Councils to act as SuDS Approving Bodies which often draws from the same internal resource that exist for flood risk management, if indeed this resource does exist, • The ability of Welsh Government to provide professional and technical direction and support to Councils in a flood risk sense, rather than simply acting as grant administrators, and • The degree of co-ordination and collaboration between the Council and other flood risk management bodies including Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales. <p>These and other considerations will be picked up in future reports to the Council.</p>

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	Response & RAG (If applicable)
January 2023	'Together we can' – Community resilience and self-reliance (National Report)	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Together we can Community resilience and self reliance English 2.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 To strengthen community resilience and support people to be more self-reliant, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authorities use the evaluation tool in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current engagement, management, performance and practice; • identify where improvement is needed; and • draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified in completing the evaluation tool. <p>R2 To help local authorities address the gaps they identify following their self-evaluation, we recommend that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally approve the completed Action Plan arising from the evaluation exercise; • regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and • revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance. 	<p>Cabinet: July 2023 O&SC: July 2023 G&AC: Sept 2023</p>	<p>We are aware of the report but given that the report covers such a cross cutting area (and is not very well defined), an officer has been agreed as the nominated lead for this, but input will be required from a number of service areas.</p> <p>A response will be prepared and will go via the governance process in due course. Provisional reporting dates provided.</p>

Care in Wales (CIW)

There have not been any inspection reports from CIW regarding Flintshire as an authority in the last year for 2022/23.

Estyn

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
May 2022	Adult Community Learning Provision (Jointly provided with Wrexham)	<p>Report Link: Inspection report Wrexham and Flintshire ALC Partnership 2022 (gov.wales)</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 Increase opportunities for adult learning in the community bilingually and through the medium of Welsh</p> <p>R2 Track, monitor and evaluate learners' long-term progress through the partnership's provision</p> <p>R3 Develop a partnership approach to self-evaluation and improvement of learning and teaching across all the partnership's provision</p> <p>R4 Improve opportunities for learners to receive advice and guidance about joining the partnership's provision</p>	Cabinet: O&SC:	Sept 22 Oct 22	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>The four recommendations from the inspection are being delivered through the ACL Quality Improvement Plan which is overseen by the ACL Partnership Board. A future report to Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be presented in twelve months outlining the progress made.</p> <p>Also, the ACL Partnership was asked to produce two best-practice case studies for Estyn. They can be found:</p> <p>Establishing a new adult learning in the community partnership in Wrexham and Flintshire: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/establishing-new-adult-learning-community-partnership-wrexham-and-flintshire</p> <p>Family Learning: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/family-learning</p>

Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information		Response and RAG
July 2022	Information Commissioner’s Annual Report 2021-22	<p>Report Link: https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/documents/4021039/ico-annual-report-2021-22.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement: None</p>	Cabinet: O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	N/A

Section 2. Summary of External Regulations and Inspections – 2021/22 – PROGRESS UPDATES

Audit Wales

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
May 2021	Flintshire County Council – Rental Income	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/flintshire_council_rental_income_english.pdf</p> <p>Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>P1 - To better understand the overall income and rent arrears performance, the Council needs to collect and report additional performance indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total rent collected during the year from former and current tenants; and the amount written off during the financial year. <p>P2 - To inform the delivery of the service, through a better understanding of the needs and experiences of tenants, the Council should collect a more comprehensive range of data including information on equalities</p>	<p>Cabinet: 19 Oct 21 CRO&SC: 11 Nov 21 G&AC: 17 Nov 21</p>	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>P1 – Two additional indicators adopted by Cabinet were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total rent collected during the year from both former and current tenants the amount written off during the financial year in unpaid rents 	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>P1 - We now provide Cabinet and Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee with additional information and statistics in relation to the collection and levels of debt for former tenant arrears. We also provide oversight on write off levels. The additional indicators were included in the latest report that was discussed by Scrutiny on 11th January 2023.</p>
				<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>P2 - The collection of more comprehensive datasets including strengthening integrated tenant engagement arrangements to better understand the needs and experiences of tenants and to inform future housing service delivery</p>	<p>RAG Status: Amber</p> <p>P2 – A full census survey of all our tenants in 2022 was completed, the results of which will be used to improve our service delivery and to shape our customer involvement strategy. The results and our draft aims and objectives are currently going through our political governance process. We are hoping to have our draft strategy ready in the Autumn.</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
Sept 2021	Regenerating Town Centres in Wales	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/town-centre-regeneration-eng.pdf</p> <p>Recommendation/Proposals for improvement:</p> <p>R1 - Non-domestic rates have not been reviewed in recent years, and the levels charged do not reflect the current rents being achieved in many town centres. We recommend that the Welsh Government review Nondomestic Rates to ensure the system better reflects towncentre conditions when the payments holiday ends in March 2022.</p> <p>R2 - Many town-centre businesses are impacted adversely by charging for car parking, access to public transport and poor transport infrastructure. We recommend that the Welsh Government work with local authorities to review transport challenges facing town centres and agree how best to address these.</p> <p>R3 - The Welsh Government has directly provided and levered in just under £900 million through 13 funding schemes to help regenerate town centres. However, some aspects of the Welsh Government’s management of the funding are considered problematic. To ensure local authorities are able to maximise the impact of funding and tackle the more difficult and longstanding problems that would help transform their town centres, we recommend that the Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consolidate funding to reduce bureaucracy by streamlining processes and grant conditions and keeping requests for 	<p>Cabinet: 16 Nov 21 EE O&SC: 09 Nov 21 G&AC: 17 Nov 21</p>	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>R1 – Although the Council has not been asked to respond on this recommendation business rates are a frequent area for concern raised by businesses in town centres and the review process has been highlighted as needing action by Welsh Government.</p> <p>R2 – Parking has been free in Flintshire County Council operated car parks since March 2020 to support the local economy during the response to the pandemic. The normal charges remained suspended to help local businesses as they came out of lockdown last summer until recently. Now that the country is at Alert Level 0 and following the reopening of all town centre businesses and hospitality venues, parking charges were reintroduced from 1st October. As both Governments promote economic recovery and are bringing to a close national emergency funds on which public bodies have relied, councils can no longer continue to offset a resumption to some “normality”.</p> <p>Charging for designated public car parks is adopted Council policy. The rationale for the original policy covers easing potential congestion and ensuring fair access to parking spaces in the short-stay car parks through a local traffic control system that includes charging. Our charges remain very</p>	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>R1 - The wider review of the business rates system, along with the frequency of the national revaluation, rests with Welsh Government.</p> <p>In relation to the national revaluation which currently takes places every 5 years, all non-domestic properties, including town centre businesses, are subject to the latest revaluation with takes effect from April 2023 and this ensures rateable values are based on more up to date market values and economic conditions as of April 2021. To support retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, Welsh Government have also extended the relief scheme and the level of discount has been uplifted from the current 50% to 75% from April 2023, capped at £110,000 of relief per business across Wales. This scheme is in addition to other reliefs such as the existing Small Business Rates Relief scheme.</p> <p>For businesses who are negatively impacted by the</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
		<p>information and supporting materials to a minimum;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move away from annual bidding cycles to multi-year allocations; and • rebalance investment from capital to revenue to help local authorities address staff capacity and skills shortages. <p>R4 - The Welsh Government has provided all 22 local authorities with training on how best to use existing enforcement, financial assistance and debt recovery powers, but they are not being consistently nor effectively utilised to support regeneration. We recommend that local authorities take appropriate action, using these existing powers and resources available to achieve the best possible outcome for town centres by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using alternative methods of enforcement before using Compulsory Purchase Orders as a last resort; • integrating enforcement strategies with wider departmental strategies across housing, environmental health, planning and regeneration teams to make more effective use of existing skills and resources; and • ensuring there is capacity and the right expertise to use the full range of powers, working in collaboration with other councils to achieve good outcomes <p>R5 - The Welsh Government's 'Town Centres First' approach looks to put the health of town centres at the heart of the decisions taken by the Welsh Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities. This requires a high degree of integration between</p>		<p>competitive and we will consider options of special seasonal arrangements e.g. pre-Christmas. We are also open to working in partnership with Town Councils on local options where they are workable.</p> <p>In Flintshire, we have been instrumental over the last four years in leading on North Wales Metro projects and promoting Active Travel across the County with successful bids made to the Welsh Government each year to deliver transport schemes across the county. We have our own countywide Integrated Transport Strategy for Flintshire, which forms a key element of the North East Wales Metro proposals which are supported and promoted by Welsh Government (WG). We recognise that, in order to provide a long-term sustainable transport solution, it is essential that all modes of transport are successfully integrated, whilst maintaining and promoting at its heart, a sustainable, affordable and environmentally friendly public transport service, with links to all of Flintshire and the wider region.</p> <p>Active travel and sustainable travel options is a priority for us in the Council Plan and we will be looking to provide opportunities for increasing levels of walking and cycling and enable access to other alternative and sustainable methods of travel. Additionally, ensuring effective transport connectivity and that the network</p>	<p>national revaluation exercise, a transitional relief scheme is being implemented by Welsh Government. It will limit increases in NDR bills, as a result of the revaluation on 1 April 2023. An eligible ratepayer will pay 33% of their additional liability in the first year (2023-24) and 66% in the second year (2024-25), before reaching their full liability in the third year (2025-26).</p> <p>In the longer term, following a recent WG consultation, Ministers are committed to introducing more frequent revaluations to ensure that valuations more accurately reflect up-to-date market conditions, The proposals will be incorporated within the planned Local Government Finance Bill.</p> <p>R2 – Update outstanding</p> <p>R3 - Welsh Government have made some changes to regeneration funding and have provided a small amount of revenue funding to support town centre activity. This is provided on an annual basis though and</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
		<p>crosscutting policy frameworks and decision making to promote town centres above much else. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out how it plans to deliver this in practice, its expectations of partners and the practical steps it will take to make this ambition a reality.</p> <p>R6 - Town centres are changing, and local authorities need to be receptive to these changes and plan to manage these shifts. We recommend that local authorities use our regeneration tool to self-assess their current</p>		<p>facilitates and supports recovery and growth is a priority in the Council Plan.</p> <p>R3 – Although the Council has not been asked to respond on this recommendation the current system of funding for regeneration is in need of review. Annual bidding cycles considerably reduce the ability of the Council to plan long term regeneration work programmes and the delivery of capital projects within the structure of inflexible financial years hampers delivery and increases costs. In the absence of longer-term revenue funding from Welsh Government local government capacity to develop and deliver regeneration projects is limited and forms a significant constraint to progress.</p> <p>R4 – The Council already uses a range of regulatory powers to tackle empty and problem properties. However, use of these powers can be extremely time consuming and can ultimately place considerable financial burdens on the Council which cannot always be recouped. The Welsh Government support is therefore welcomed. This approach is featured within the Council’s agreed strategic approach to town centre regeneration adopted in March 2020 and included in the current Council Plan.</p> <p>Following the training provided by Welsh Government earlier in the year,</p>	<p>not on the multi-year basis suggested by Audit Wales. The regeneration capital programme has been agreed internally by Welsh Government on a multi-year basis and Welsh Government, as a result, has been able to allow a small amount of extra flexibility in dealing with projects spanning multiple financial years.</p> <p>R4 - The Council continues to work with owners of empty properties to deliver actions as outlined in its empty property action plan, the criteria and approach for which was reviewed by Cabinet at its October 2022 meeting, as a tool to support the ongoing regeneration of town centres across Flintshire. This work continues to be overseen by the panel of internal officers who work collaboratively and report to the Council’s ‘Places Group’ – part of the Economic Recovery Group governance structure in place within Flintshire. Information about empty properties and deliverability of the action plan in place is</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
				<p>the Council has developed a panel of officers from the different regulatory and regeneration services to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a shared list of vacant or problem properties is maintained and reviewed regularly; • action by the Council is co-ordinated effectively across the different teams; • owners of properties are offered effective support and encouragement before enforcement action is commenced; and • limited resources are managed through the careful prioritization of enforcement action based on the length of time properties have been vacant and the scale of problems they are causing to neighbours and communities. <p>R5 – Although the Council has not been asked to respond on this recommendation the further clarity recommended by Audit Wales would be welcomed. The principle of “Town Centres First” is fully supported by the Council but a clear delivery plan and resources are needed to underpin the policy.</p> <p>R6 - The Council has undertaken the self-assessment recommended by Audit Wales and has identified a number of areas for further development. Some of these are</p>	<p>reported periodically to Welsh Government. In December 2022, the Council participated in an Empty Properties and Enforcement Questionnaire being overseen by Welsh Government. Information was provided including examples of issues being faced in Flintshire, and this has been used by Welsh Government to help inform future policy direction and how local authorities can best be supported.</p> <p>In February 2023, Welsh Government’s Regeneration colleagues met with officers of the Council in February 2023 regarding the empty property data gathering practice completed annually in Flintshire, an outcome of which was a desire to share information about the approach and good practice undertaken with other local authorities.</p> <p>R5 - To date, Welsh Government has not provided a practical plan or guidance on how the Town Centres First ambition will be delivered.</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
				<p>already in hand but not yet fully realised. Extra staff capacity to deliver these has been agreed by Cabinet and recruitment is underway. Particular areas for further development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further work is required to engage stakeholders in the individual towns and translate the County level strategic approach into local delivery plans. • Continue work on data gathering for town centres to improve Council, partner and business decision-making. 	<p>R6 - Over the past 12-months, the Council has recruited additional resource and expertise to take forward Town Centre Place Making/ Regeneration activity. Four new staff have been recruited into the Regeneration team which is responsible for delivery of the current Town Centre Regeneration Work Programme and also leading the development of new Place Making Plans for 7 towns across Flintshire and coordination of Council services via it's Places Group in collaboration with a range of Council service areas including housing, transport, highways, assets and estates, regeneration, planning, children and youth, social care.</p> <p>In October 2022, Cabinet approved the order in which Place Making work would be delivered, starting with 3 towns under Tranche 1: Buckley, Holywell and Shotton. Over recent months, a considerable amount of stakeholder engagement and consultation has been undertaken in these 3 towns.</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
					<p>An online consultation was completed in February 2023, which gathered 4401 responses from local residents and businesses in relation to their perceptions of the towns. The qualitative and quantitative information gathered from local people is being used along with a range of baseline data sets to inform the development of the Place Making Plans for these towns. Face-to-face public consultation events are being delivered in February and March 2023 across these towns to engage further with local people, businesses and other key stakeholders (public, private and community sectors).</p> <p>The Place Making Plan development work for Buckley, Holywell and Shotton will continue until the end of 2023 and involves internal and external stakeholders to map out current strategic and operational priorities in addition to using the wealth of information and data gathered to shape future vision, priorities and deliverable action plans</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
					<p>(short, medium and long-term) for each town centre. Progress with this work is being overseen by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales.</p> <p>In early 2024, Tranche 2 of Place Making Plan development activity will commence for Connah's Quay and Queensferry and at the end of 2024/ early 2025, Tranche 3 commenced relating to the towns of Flint and Mold.</p>
Sept 2021	Financial Sustainability of Local Government	<p>Report Link: https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/Financial%20Sustainability%20of%20Local%20Government%20-%20English_1.pdf</p> <p>Four steps to help improve councils' financial sustainability:</p> <p>S1 – Financial Strategies - Understand short, medium and long-term challenges and clearly set out the overall priorities for the council's finances</p> <p>S2 – Reserves - Plan your approach to, and use of, reserves to ensure that it supports longer-term financial sustainability</p> <p>S3 – Performance against budget - Know what's realistic for services to achieve and then understand and act on areas of consistent overspends</p>	<p>Cabinet N/A O&SC: N/A G&AC: N/A</p>	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>Work is currently being undertaken in conjunction with the introduction of the CIPFA financial management code which will assist in identifying any improvements required to current financial management practices</p>	<p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>An Initial Assessment of compliance with the CIPFA financial management code for Flintshire County Council was undertaken in March 2022.</p> <p>This considered each section within the code, assessed our current position and identified any actions which needed to be addressed.</p> <p>A summary of the assessment was included within the Annual Governance Statement and stated the opinion of the Section 151 officer that we</p>

Appendix A

Date	Title	Recommendations / observations	Reporting Information	2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
		S4 – Savings delivery - Understand what is realistic for services to deliver on savings or cost reductions and act on areas that do not consistently deliver planned savings			were compliant with the code in the majority of areas. Compliance with the code is subject to annual review as part of the annual governance process which is due to be undertaken in April 2023

Care in Wales (CIW)

Date	Title	Recommendation	Reporting Information		2021-22 Response & RAG	Progress Update & RAG
Apr 2021	Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Local Authority Assurance Check April 2021: Social Services	Actions arising from Assurance Check – Adult Services: None	Cabinet O&SC: G&AC:	N/A N/A N/A	N/A	N/A
		Actions arising from Assurance Check – Children’s Services: The following actions were identified as a result of the Assurance Check April 2021: C1. Promote and encourage the rights of children to be offered formal advocacy C2. Strengthen the recording of the evidence of front door decision making and analysis on PARIS C3. Review of how we conduct our safeguarding enquiries, ensuring children	Cabinet: S&HC O&SC: G&AC:	13 July 21 9 Sept 21 July 2022	RAG Status: Green C1 – Actions on track: Improve staff awareness of the independent advocacy provision and referral pathways; Systems in place to monitor and understand take up/decline C2 – Actions on track: Map front door recording processes to ensure that we are demonstrating	RAG Status: Green C1 - Action complete: Advocacy Provider has met with managers and teams to promote advocacy service. Information on advocacy is included in social work induction. A review of data identifies that children prefer to access advocacy when there is a

		<p>are seen and seen alone within the enquiry period and that core groups for children on the child protection register are consistently conducted in line with statutory requirements.</p>			<p>the child’s journey and the associated decision making.</p> <p>Finalise and implement ‘Family Support Framework’ to ensure consistency of threshold decision making and the associated recording requirements</p> <p>C3 – Actions on track: Facilitated event with Team Managers and Senior Practitioners to review existing practice and approaches, any barriers to compliance and to re-process our approach as part of the wider Vanguard review, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements.</p> <p>A Practice Directive issued to staff to ensure that core groups are held within statutory timeframes Redistribute capacity to our front door to ensure timely processing of reports (referrals) on our IT system</p>	<p>specific issues as opposed to a general open offer.</p> <p>C2 - Action complete: Front door work has been mapped and processes refined in line with Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Family Support framework has been finalised and was launched with managers in February 2023.</p> <p>C3 - We have a work programme of continuous development and refinement. Additional capacity in terms of Deputy Team Manager and TAF Officer capacity has been aligned to the front door. However, demand and complexity remain a challenge and we are building further process resilience through a defined project which will be overseen by our Programme Board arrangements. Further action is now built into our existing programme of service development.</p>
--	--	---	--	--	--	---