

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 9 September 2020
Report Subject	External Regulation Assurance Report
Report Author	Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council receives reports from our external regulators and inspectors. Under its Terms of Reference the Audit Committee is to ensure that effective processes are in place for setting and monitoring actions arising from these reports.

This report covers the work conducted by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) – now called Audit Wales (AW) - as part of their National Study Programme and locally.

No studies were undertaken by either the Care Inspectorate Wales or Estyn during the period of this report 2018/19.

This summary report provides assurance to the Audit Committee that the reports have been considered, and actions taken in response to the recommendations received.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To be assured over the Council's response to pieces of external regulation work.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE EXTERNAL REGULATORS AND INSPECTIONS REPORT
1.01	<p>The Local Government (Wales) Measure contains provisions for the work of audit committees. Statutory guidance made under Section 85 of the Measure, issued in June 2012, says that audit committees should receive and consider reports from external auditors, regulators and inspectors. This arrangement has been in place for a number of years within this Council.</p>
1.02	<p>Since 2014 arrangements have been made that all local reports issued by external auditors, regulators and inspectors are tracked and reported. We have been making an annual tracking report to this Audit Committee. Our locally adopted reporting protocol separates out executive and non-executive roles as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet – makes the executive response• Overview and Scrutiny – scrutinises the executive response• Audit Committee – assures the above arrangements <p>The protocol is attached at Appendix 2.</p>
1.03	<p>Where reports by an external auditor, other regulator or inspector contains recommendations specifically for the Council, it is important that they receive proper consideration by both officers and members and are responded to.</p> <p>The responses will, on occasion, require an action plan to implement changes and appropriate procedures need to be in place to oversee their implementation.</p> <p>It should be noted that there is no requirement to report or respond to recommendations within the WAO/AW national study reports. However the Council undertakes this as a matter of good practice as part of our protocol.</p>
1.04	<p>It is part of the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee to ensure that effective processes are in place for setting and monitoring proportionate and effective action plans. The Audit Committee has the specific responsibility for ensuring all audit report recommendations issued by external auditors are implemented.</p>
1.05	<p>Appendix 1 shows the reports received from the Wales Audit Office during 2018/19 and the summary findings and responses from the Council including the current status of any actions, marked as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green – on track / completed• Amber – on track, but within acceptable limits• Red – limited progress.

1.06	No studies were undertaken by either the Care Inspectorate Wales or Estyn during the period of this report.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no direct resource implications related to this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	External reports are considered by Chief Officers and senior managers to determine the actions needed. Where appropriate, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny committees review the findings of reports and the Council's responses.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>The work of the external regulators, and the actions in response to their reports provide assurance to the Council that adequate and effective controls are in place to mitigate risks.</p> <p>The Council's protocol in relation to reporting of external assurance reports is attached at Appendix 2</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1: External Audit Report Summary</p> <p>Appendix 2: External Assurance reports protocol</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report 2018/19</p> <p>Contact Officer: Jay Davies, Strategic Performance Advisor Telephone: 01352 702744 E-mail: jay.davies@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Wales Audit Office: works to support the Auditor General as the public sector watchdog for Wales. They aim to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes.

Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW): The powers and functions of CIW are enabled through legislation. CIW has the powers to review Local Authority social services at a local and national level, to inform the public whether services are up to standard, to promote improvement of services and to help safeguard the interests of vulnerable people who use services and their carers. They provide professional advice to Welsh Ministers and policy makers.

Estyn: Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting primary and secondary schools and nursery schools maintained by, or receiving funding from, local authorities.