

**CITY OF CARDIFF COUNCIL
CYNGOR DINAS CAERDYDD**

AUDIT COMMITTEE:

22 MARCH 2016

**WALES AUDIT OFFICE REPORT ON DELIVERING WITH LESS –
LEISURE SERVICES (NATIONAL STUDY)**

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR RESOURCES

AGENDA ITEM: 6.1(a)

Reason for this Report

1. To present to the Audit Committee the Wales Audit Office (WAO) National Report on Delivering with Less – Leisure Services.

Background

2. The Auditor General for Wales undertakes national studies across a range of functions and activities of local government. The report on delivering with less in leisure services is a report published on 3rd December 2015 which seeks to identify not only the current position but some indicators of good practice.
3. As a result of the WAO's work the Auditor General found that although public sector ownership and management of leisure provision is starting to change with the transfer of some services and assets to other models of operation, such as private sector trusts, strategic decisions on whether to transfer or continue with in-house provision of leisure services have not always been based on robust information or a consideration of all of the options open to councils.

WAO's Comments and Recommendations

- R1** Public sector ownership and management of leisure provision is changing with the transfer of services and assets to other models of operation, however, decisions have not always been based on robust information
- Councils are exploring different ways to provide leisure services but decisions are not always set within a clear strategic framework.
 - Not all of the options open to councils have been reviewed when councils have considered changing their leisure services operating model.
 - There are weaknesses in how effective councils are at engaging with citizens when planning changes in leisure provision.

R2 Despite a reduction in facilities, budgets, staff numbers and council subsidy for leisure services, the continued impact of austerity presents a risk to the continued provision of services

- The amount councils spend on sports and recreation services is falling. Since 2011-12 the number of council staff delivering leisure services has fallen by 14.2 per cent, although some of them have transferred with services to other providers.
- Although councils' income from facilities is being sustained and the level of subsidy required to provide leisure services has fallen significantly, the continued impact of austerity presents a risk to the sustainability of these services.

R3 Councils are meeting rising demand for leisure services, but scrutiny and oversight of performance is not always effective

- The number of people using council leisure services increased by 3.4 per cent between 2009-10 and 2014-15, although there is a mixed picture between authorities as to how well leisure services are performing.
 - Councils do not always have the right data available to support effective decision-making and are not well placed to monitor and evaluate their approaches to leisure provision to target improvement and ensure that services are sustainable.
 - There is a wide variation in citizens' views on the quality, cost and availability of leisure services
4. The Auditor General for Wales concluded that council approaches to delivering leisure services focus on addressing immediate financial challenges rather than taking a longer-term strategic approach to future provision.

City of Cardiff Council Response

5. Members of the Audit Committee will be aware of the significant challenges that the Council faces in terms of budget reductions and an increasing demand for services. Members will also be aware of the Council's approach to Alternative Models of Delivery and specifically the work in respect of the Leisure Service.
6. The specific recommendations arising from the WAO Report will be reviewed to ensure that where appropriate the current processes are revised. This ensures that the Council has had due regard to recommendations arising from regulatory and audit reports.

Reason for Report

7. To present the Auditor General's findings and set out the process for providing assurance that the Council is having due regard to the output of regulatory activity

Legal Implications

8. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report

Financial Implications

9. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. To note the work of the Auditor General and identify any issues which the Audit Committee consider relevant to their work programme.

CHRISTINE SALTER
CORPORATE DIRECTOR RESOURCES
18th January 2016

The following appendix is attached

Appendix 1: Wales Audit Office (WAO) Report on Delivering with Less - Leisure