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Gwent Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable for Gwent Police

Joint Audit Committee 9 September 2021 – Audit Update Paper

2020-21 financial statements

Financial Statements Audit

We completed our audit work by the end of July and were able to present our ISA260 Report, alongside the audited financial statements, to the Joint Audit Committee meeting on 28 July. Both the Commissioner and the Chief Constable were able to approve the audited financial statements on the 28 July, which enabled the Auditor General for Wales to sign the audit opinions by the required statutory deadline of 31 July. We also issued the Audit Completion letters on 30 July 2021.

Whilst there was a significant improvement in the quality of the draft accounts and the working papers this year, we have agreed to arrange a post project learning (PPL) session for 4 October 2021 between the Finance Team and the audit team to reflect on the 2020-21 audit, and to put in place agreed actions to further improve next year's closedown and audit experience.

Following the PPL, we will issue a draft management letter to management, and once actions have been agreed, the management letter will be shared with Joint Audit Committee members at a future meeting. The management letter will also include follow up of previous year's recommendations and therefore we have not included them within this Audit Update.

Annual Audit Letter

We plan to present our Annual Audit Letter to the December Joint Audit Committee meeting.

Other matters for consideration

Audit Wales review of Shared Resource Service (SRS)

This review seeks to consider whether the SRS collaboration is sustainably delivering an effective, efficient, and economic provision within this dynamic environment, for now and for the future, for its partners both individually and collectively.

All three workshops have now taken place and the common themes from each of the workshops have been analysed. A summary document is currently being prepared and will be shared with all workshop attendees so that it can be used by them to inform the next steps for the SRS partnership. We would recommend that this summary is shared with Joint Audit Committee members once available.

Audit Wales review of collaboration of emergency services in Wales

This review will evaluate how well emergency services are collaborating and integrating their response and operational delivery to ensure they remain resilient and sustainable by focusing on a real-time snapshot of their work looking at:

- How well emergency services currently work together?
- How well emergency services are performing?
- What do emergency services need to change to improve their resilience through greater collaboration and integration?

We have completed all fieldwork and have one interview outstanding. We have also completed a review of key documentation focussing on the work of the Strategic Collaboration Board set up by the Joint Emergency Services Group. We are currently analysing all the information collected and plan to report by the end of January 2022.

Audit Wales publications

Our publications can be accessed via <https://www.audit.wales/publications>. Below are some that have been added since our last Audit Update dated February 2021:

- **Test, Trace, Protect in Wales: An Overview of Progress to Date (March 2021)**

The Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) programme has successfully brought together different parts of the Welsh public sector to quickly build a system of testing and contact tracing mostly from scratch and at a fast pace.

Although the programme struggled to cope with earlier peaks of the spread of the virus, it rapidly learnt and evolved to the challenges it faced.

This report sets out the main findings of how public services are responding to the delivery of TTP services in Wales.

- **In-sourcing the Welsh Government's ICT service (March 2021)**

Our review looked at whether the transition to an in-house service was well managed and on track to deliver the intended benefits.

Our report focused on in-sourcing the Welsh Government's ICT service after years of out-sourcing. We concluded that the in-sourcing project has been managed well and delivered on time. Some benefits are being achieved, but the full benefits have not yet been realised.

- **Rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Wales (June 2021)**

The vaccination programme in Wales has been delivered at significant pace with local, national and UK partners working together to vaccinate a significant proportion of the Welsh population.

We looked at the shape of the programme, how it is performing, the factors that have affected rollout to date, and future challenges and opportunities.

At the time of reporting, vaccination rates in Wales were the highest of the four UK nations, and some of the highest in the world.

- **COVID learning**

Our full suite of blog material is now embedded on our website rather than in a separate location. Among other things, COVID-learning related articles / blogs since our previous update include:

- The role of communities during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Crisis Governance
- Dynamic Strategy
- The impact of COVID-19 on the workforce
- Communication and engagement

Good Practice Exchange (GPX)

We continue to seek opportunities for finding and sharing good practice from all-Wales audit work through our forward planning, programme design and good practice research.

Over the last 12 months we have held a number of GPX events including:

- **Cyber resilience in Wales (October 2020)**

At this webinar, we shared our emerging findings from our national study, items of good practice and discussed the future of cyber resilience in Wales.

- **Mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19 (December 2020)**

During this webinar we heard how public services have adapted the services they provide during the pandemic as well as their successes and challenges.

In particular we focused on:

- Community based services working together to provide mental health support
- Supporting staff health and wellbeing
- How technology can be harnessed to overcome loneliness and social isolation
- What it's like to lead organisations through a pandemic
- Different approaches to providing mental health support

As well as this we also heard from We are Platform, who shared key messages from their 'Lessons from Lockdown' and provided a picture of mental health and wellbeing in Wales.

- **Making sense of a crisis: Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic (March 2021)**

Since the first UK lockdown, staff across Audit Wales had been recording novel and innovative practice emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. We collected a wealth of data ranging from moving services online to volunteering in the community. We shared this information through blogs, Twitter threads, online webinars and fortnightly Digests. One year on, we decided to run a week-long learning event across a number of themes, to share some further insights. During the course of the week, we heard from public services across Wales and learnt how they have responded to the various challenges COVID has presented as well as looking to the future and how the pandemic could change how services are delivered going forward.

- **Dynamic Strategy (March 2021)**

As part of our online learning week 'Making sense of a crisis: Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic' we held a live webinar on Dynamic Strategy. We were joined by Professor Dave Snowden, Creator of the Cynefin Framework, who discussed the four-stage approach proposed in the handbook through which we can;

- assess the type of crisis and initiate a response; -
- adapt to the new pace and start building sensing networks to inform decisions; -
- repurpose existing structures and working methods to generate radical innovation; -
- transcend the crisis, formalise lessons learnt and increase resilience.

Professor Snowden was joined by leaders from across the public sector in Wales to share their experiences over the past year, and what this all means in practice.

- **Your Town, Your Future - Town Centre Regeneration Part 1 (May 2021)**

Town centres have been at the heart of Welsh society for a long time. Town centres have and continue to give communities worth. They've created jobs. They have been places to visit, work and socialise, a reference point and forms part of our sense of identity. But what will the future look like?

This event shared initial findings from Audit Wales' ongoing review of town centre regeneration, as well as sharing examples of practice from Wales and beyond. We discussed the challenges facing our towns now, the impact of COVID-19 and the growth of digital remote working and online shopping. It makes clear how important regeneration is. Not just the physical regeneration; but also the social, environmental, cultural, health and economic wellbeing of communities who live and visit these towns. We saw this review as a chance to 'think big' and be aspirational about the future of our towns.

- **Your Town, Your Future - Town Centre Regeneration Part 2 (September 2021)**

Following the event held in May, this event shared the findings and recommendations from the final report of Audit Wales' study on Town Centre Regeneration, as well as suggested some ideas on ways to assist towns to analyse their present and forge their futures.

Professor Karel Williams of Manchester University, an economist who has researched the foundational economy shared the findings of his recent review of three towns in Wales. Ian Williams of the Welsh Government also returned to share his perspective and response to the study report.

Details of future events are available on the GPX website <https://www.audit.wales/our-work/good-practice> .

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1 September 2021