Archwilio Cymru
Audit Wales

Environment and Public Protection Service Review

Newport City Council

November 2025

About us

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Mae’r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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1 We looked at whether the Council has arrangements to secure value for money when delivering its Environment and Public Protection Service. The focus of the review was not to make recommendations on specific areas or outcomes within the service but to look at the overall arrangements the service has in place. This included strategic planning, performance management, use of resources and collaboration.

Why this is important

2 The Council's Environment and Public Protection service delivers a range of important functions including air quality, food safety and pest control. Having arrangements in place to secure value for money is important to ensure that the Council delivers the service effectively and uses its resources well.

What we have found

3 The Council has clear arrangements to manage the service, but these could be strengthened by better defining service outcomes and objectives.

What we recommend

4 We make three recommendations aimed at improving the Council's approach to setting and delivering the service's outcomes and objectives.

Key facts and figures

- The Council's Environment and Public Protection Service is made up of four departments. These are Climate Change, Public Protection, Environment and Leisure, and Waste and Cleansing.

- In 2009-10, the Council's net expenditure on environmental health services was £2.568 million. In 2023-24, the Council's net expenditure was £1.182 million[1] (not adjusted for inflation).

- The proportion of total service expenditure the Council spends on environmental health has decreased from 0.8% in 2009-10 to 0.3% in 2023-24.

- In 2023-24, the Council's environmental health net revenue expenditure was £7.22 per resident compared to a Wales average of £16.89 per resident.

[1] Source: Welsh Government, StatsWales, Revenue outturn expenditure summary, by authority (£ thousand).

Our findings

The Council has clear arrangements to manage the service, but these could be strengthened by better defining service outcomes and objectives

5 The Council has arrangements for reporting the performance of its Environment and Public Protection service. This includes the use of performance indicators, service plan updates, reports to external regulators, regular updates to senior management and cabinet members. The Council draws on financial, workforce and risk information to inform monitoring reports. Having clear arrangements for reporting service performance supports transparency.

6 The Council also has arrangements for identifying, escalating and managing risks. This includes the use of risk management software, service plan updates and quarterly corporate risk register updates to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee. These arrangements have supported the service to reduce the potential impact of significant risks, such as risks associated with ash dieback.

7 The Council has an annual service plan setting out five objectives for the service. These objectives are:

- Green and blue Infrastructure for community and environmental resilience
- Continuous improvement of recycling performance and move towards a circular economy
- To deliver interventions with the purpose of improving public health and community wellbeing
- To deliver interventions with the purpose of supporting businesses, tackling crime and rogue trading, and safeguarding vulnerable individuals
- Climate Change Plan 2022-27 Delivery

8 The service plan includes an outcome, short-term actions and links to the Council's corporate plan and other key strategic plans for each objective. However, the outcomes and objectives are not specific, measurable, or time-bound. Without clearly defined outcomes for the service, it is difficult for the Council to:

- understand the impact it expects to achieve at the time of planning;
- understand the results it is delivering;
- understand if the service is meeting community needs;
- measure and monitor the right indicators;
- identify when goals have been achieved;
- effectively communicate progress to members and the public; and
- identify whether value for money is being secured.

9 Defining clear outcomes and objectives is an important element of strategic planning. Clearly setting out what the service is trying to achieve enables a range of delivery options to be considered and impact to be measured effectively.

10 Pursuing digital solutions can help to increase efficiency and improve service performance. The Council has explored and implemented digital solutions across a range of teams within the service. This includes the procurement of new software to assist with cemetery management and waste collection route optimisation.

11 Regular meetings between officers from the service and Human Resources have enabled a proactive approach to addressing recruitment, retention and sickness challenges. For example, recruitment processes have been streamlined to reduce barriers for applicants. This joined-up approach supports the service to proactively address workforce pressures.

12 The Council collaborates with a range of partners to deliver activities. For example, the Council is part of the Newport Local Nature Partnership and collaborates with Newport City Homes Housing Association to prevent environmental crime such as littering and fly-tipping. The Council puts governance arrangements in place to monitor the performance of partnership agreements.

13 There is a clear process for monitoring and challenging the service's budget. This includes monthly forecasts, regular meetings with the finance department and quarterly reports to Cabinet. Officers also give regular presentations to the Executive Board comparing the service's costs and performance measures with other councils. These arrangements support the Council to plan and manage the service.

14 The service is facing budgetary pressures and the data included in the Key Facts and Figures section demonstrates that the Council's spending on environmental health has reduced over time. The Council has developed outcomes and objectives that are less specific to accommodate the uncertainty with future budgets.

15 However, not having specific outcomes and objectives means that the Council cannot clearly demonstrate that value for money has been secured. For example, meeting an objective to 'deliver interventions' does not make it clear whether the money spent has delivered an effective service or improvements for the community and environment in Newport. Setting clear outcomes and objectives enables the Council to plan the budget, staff and other resources required to achieve them. It also facilitates a clearer understanding of resource and value for money implications should service goals need to be changed.

Recommendations

R1	The Council should ensure that the outcomes and objectives for the Environment and Public Protection service are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

R2	The Council should develop appropriate indicators to monitor progress towards achieving the outcomes and objectives for the Environment and Public Protection service.

R3	The Council should clearly set out how the outcomes and objectives for the Environment and Public Protection service will be assessed to demonstrate that value for money has been achieved.

Appendix

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

We looked at whether the Council has arrangements to secure value for money when delivering its Environment and Public Protection Service. The focus of the review was not to make recommendations on specific areas or outcomes within the service but to look at the overall arrangements the service has in place. This included strategic planning, performance management, use of resources and collaboration.

Audit questions and criteria

The audit sought to answer the following questions:

- Does the Council have arrangements to secure value for money in delivering its Environment and Public Protection service?
- Does the Council have arrangements to strategically plan its Environment and Public Protection service?
- Does the Council have arrangements to manage the risks in delivering its Environment and Public Protection service?
- Does the Council look to work with other organisations to deliver its Environment and Public Protection service?
- Does the Council have arrangements to plan and manage the resources of its Environment and Public Protection service?

We used our cumulative audit knowledge to develop the audit criteria that support the audit questions.

Methods

We reviewed documents relating to the service and interviewed key officers and elected members with responsibility for the service.

About us

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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.