

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT:

Proposals for the Wales Audit Office 2013-14 Performance Audit Work

Introduction

On 2nd April, we received a letter from the Auditor General for Wales, outlining “Proposals for the Wales Audit Office 2013-14 Performance Audit Work”. A copy of the letter is included as Annex A.

The letter requested a response by 17th April. A response was sent by this deadline. See Annex B. However, this response highlighted that the timescale for consultation did not enable consultation with Members of the Authority, therefore we reserved the right to provide further comment following discussion with the Corporate and Audit Performance Review Committee.

Members are invited to provide further comment.

Financial Considerations

There will be an impact on the Authority in two ways. The Authority pays for work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office and there is also an indirect cost of staff time to prepare for visits and audits. In both cases, the more work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office the more it is likely to cost the Authority.

Risk considerations

A failure to comply with audit requirements is one of the identified risks of the Authority, therefore an opportunity to input into the process is beneficial.

Compliance

It is unlikely that any of the proposals identified in the letter will have a negative impact on compliance and may assist with the preparation of our Annual Governance Statement.

Human Rights / Equality Issues

With the exception of the possibility of a specific review on the delivery of our Single Equality Scheme it is unlikely that there will be an impact on Human Rights or Equality Issues.

Biodiversity implications / Sustainability appraisal

No specific issues

Welsh Language Statement

Both the Authority and the Wales Audit Office will need to comply with their respective schemes.

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the original response sent by the Chief Executive and, if see fit, to provide further comment.

(For further information contact Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive)

Consultees:

Richard Griffiths, Finance Manager and S.151 Officer

Alan Hare, Business and Performance Manager.



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To National Park Authority Chief Executives

Our reference HVT1853
Date 3 April 2013
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Dear Colleague

Proposals for 2013-14 Performance Audit Work

In my letter of 29 March 2012 I explained that in addition to my annual programme of improvement studies and the audit of authorities' approach to improvement planning and reporting, I proposed to introduce a cyclical programme of in-depth corporate assessments based on a four year cycle. This cycle of corporate assessments is commencing for unitary authorities during 2013-14 and will involve a change in the way I use the Welsh Government WPI Grant to support my work at those bodies.

I have not yet confirmed how or when to conduct in-depth corporate assessments at the national park authorities but I can advise you that none will be undertaken during 2013-14. I have therefore decided that the Welsh Government fee subsidy arrangements should remain unchanged for national park authorities in 2013-14. I will continue to use the subsidy to support the delivery of the audits of national park authorities' approach to improvement planning and reporting that I am required to undertake under the Local Government Measure.

I am also proposing that in future, for national park authorities, I dispense with the need for a second Improvement Assessment Letter during the year and instead include the issues addressed in that letter within the Annual Improvement Report. I feel that this approach will be less onerous for national park authorities, without affecting the ability of the Wales Audit Office to comment appropriately on their responsibilities to deliver improvement. This would also have the advantage of publishing the Annual Improvement Report earlier than was the case this year. I would welcome your views on that proposal.

I would also encourage you to send me your views on the potential local government studies set out below, which I believe are relevant to national park authorities. In doing so it would be useful if you could indicate relative priorities or preference and also whether in your view they are suited to an improvement study or a local government national study. Improvement studies will involve work at most improvement authorities and result in local feedback and a national summary report, whilst a national study may involve work at selected authorities and other public sector bodies and result in a detailed national report.

I would also welcome any additional suggestions for study topics. I may choose to undertake a study across the local government sector as a whole or to undertake a different study at national park authorities.

Potential study topics	
1. Collaboration and partnerships	Focussed on authorities' duty to consider collaboration under the Measure and examining particular collaborations or partnerships Or The effectiveness of the LSB
2. Equalities	How well Strategic Equality Plans and objectives are being implemented
3. Delivering with less – the impact on services and citizens	Selecting specific service areas to examine impacts and/or future implications
4. Workforce planning	Approaches to deal with the impact of staffing cuts, skills shortages, succession planning etc.

I welcome your observations and look forward to receiving your comments, ideally before Wednesday 17 April 2013.

Yours sincerely



Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales

16th April 2013

Mr Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
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CF11 9LJ

Dear Mr Thomas

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the "Proposals for 2013-14 Performance Audit Work".

The very short timescale for responding has made it difficult for us to consult with Members of the National Park Authority. Therefore I will present these initial thoughts and reserve the right to provide further comment once your letter has been discussed by our appropriate Committee on 15th May 2013. In future I hope that the Wales Audit Office will provide sufficient time to allow proper consultation with Members.

I have no issue with the proposal to "dispense with the Second Improvement Assessment letter" and will welcome an earlier publication of the Annual Improvement Report.

In relation to the proposed studies I would prioritise the following:

3. Delivering with less – the impact on services and citizens;
4. Workforce planning

I can also see merit in a study on Collaboration and Partnership, although we note that the Authority is not represented on the Pembrokeshire Local Service Board.

Thank you for an opportunity of having an input into your future work.

Yours sincerely



Tegryn Jones
Chief Executive



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*Croesawn ohebiaeth
yn Gymraeg a Saesneg
We welcome correspondence
in English and Welsh*



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