Archwilio Cymru
Audit Wales

Springing Forward: Lessons from our work on workforce and assets in local government

September 2023

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◀ **Detailed report**

What we did and why

1   All councils went through a period of rapid change in how and where their staff worked during the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift was characterised by a mass move to remote working, which happened virtually overnight. Now, those organisations are in a new phase, where the legacy of that time has had a lasting effect on working patterns and places. So, what is that new normal for councils, what does it mean for how and where they deliver and what are the opportunities for the future?

2   Between 2021 and 2023 we undertook work on asset management and workforce planning across all 22 councils. It looked at how they were using their experiences from the pandemic to strengthen their ability to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services, including those delivered in partnership with key stakeholders and communities. We titled this work 'springing forward'.

3   This review had three main aims:

  • to gain assurance that councils are putting in place arrangements to transform, adapt and maintain the delivery of services;

  • to explain the actions that councils are taking both individually and collectively to strengthen their arrangements; and

  • to inspire councils and other organisations to further strengthen their arrangements through capturing and sharing notable practice examples and learning and making appropriate recommendations.

4   We designed this work to consider both the effectiveness of councils' arrangements and the extent to which they were applying the sustainable development principle (as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) in their approaches to workforce and assets.

Responding to change

5   The pandemic brought about a real-time experiment in how and where people worked. The extent to which these changes will remain and in what precise form is still emerging, but we can assume there will be broad-ranging implications for councils' staff, services and estate.

6   For some councils, the pandemic accelerated progress they were already looking to make and acted as 'proof of concept' for changes in location, flexible working and the technology to support it. This reflects the fact there were already a range of trends that were re-shaping the thinking on workplaces and patterns before the pandemic. The section below sets out some of these key trends, how they have changed over and since the pandemic, along with some of the implications for the future.

7   The list of trends set out here is not exhaustive and they are not explored comprehensively in this report. They simply aim to highlight some of the wider factors that have, and will continue to, influence councils' thinking on how and where their staff work.

Trend 1: Capacity pressures and skills gaps

8   Clearly, public services had been experiencing pressures on their capacity before the pandemic. Over the decade before, staffing numbers in councils fell and skills deficits emerged. Office for National Statistics data shows that the headcount in local government in Wales reduced by 19% from March 2010 to March 2020.[1]

9   We have previously reported that staffing reductions mean councils do not have adequate numbers of staff with expertise in some key areas. We have identified gaps in cross-cutting policy and planning areas and highlighted that planning authorities lack staff with specialist skills, such as in design and infrastructure. Through Springing Forward, we heard about pressures in areas including social care, planning and environmental health, though the challenges are not limited to these areas. The impact of the pandemic is also likely to have exacerbated pressures in specific services. This is due to some staff being temporarily redeployed, the impact of restrictions on productivity and backlogs that may have emerged due to the reduction or temporary cessation of certain activities.[2]

1   Auditor General for Wales, A Picture of Public Services, September 2021
2   See also Auditor General, A Picture of Public Services (2021) for further information.

10   Councils across the UK have been experiencing longstanding difficulties
      in recruiting and retaining key staff and competition from the private sector
      in certain occupations, especially on pay.[3] Competition for skilled staff also
      exists in the public sector and between councils. Notably, we heard reference
      to this in the field of social care.

11   These pressures are likely to continue growing. Wales' population is
      expected to increase and changes in demand are likely to result in additional
      cost and capacity pressures. Across the UK, there are concerns that
      increases in labour supply will not keep pace with increasing demand for
      services. This suggests that recruiting additional staff will not, on its own,
      be sufficient to address the challenges.[4]

Exhibit 1: Wales population projections: Change in age groups from 2023 - 2043
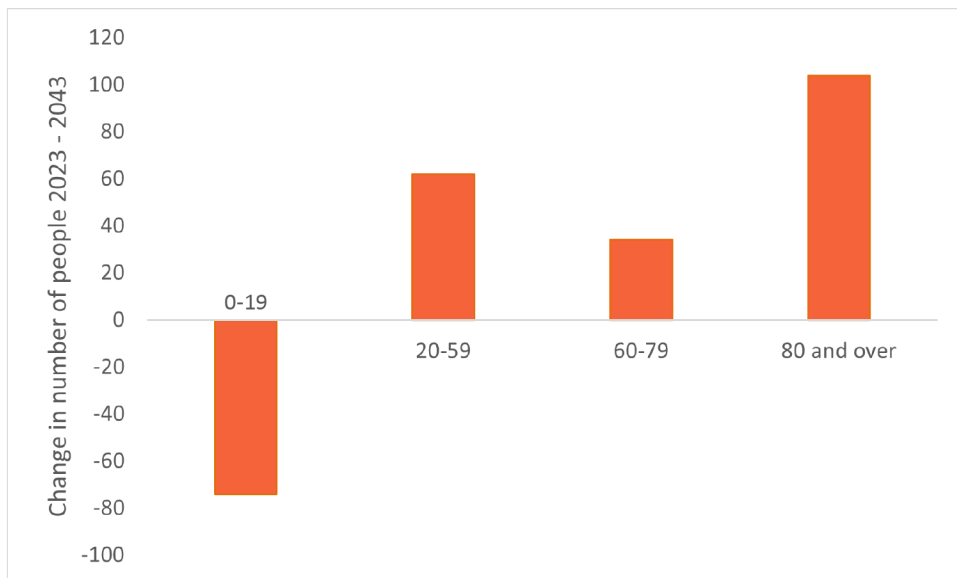
Source: ONS 2020-based Interim National Population Projections (update 2022)

3   Local Government Information Unit, Local government workforce and capability planning - LGiU
4   House of Lords Public Services Committee, Fit for the future? Rethinking the public services
    workforce, December 2022

Trend 2: Hybrid Working

12   Hybrid working is a form of flexible working where workers divide their time between working remotely (usually, but not necessarily, from home) and being in the employer's workspace. It is not new, but the percentage of the Welsh workforce working from home has increased considerably since the start of the pandemic. Work undertaken for the Senedd's Economy Infrastructure and Skills Committee highlighted that just 4% of the Welsh workforce worked exclusively at home at the start of 2020, but that this rose to 37% in April 2020 and was at 25% in November 2020.[5]

13   While hybrid working is now a significant consideration for employers, the figures showed that, even during a national lockdown, it was still a minority who worked remotely. It has been estimated that 56% of Welsh workers are unable to work at home, which is much higher than anywhere else in the UK. This is a result the different sectors people are in employed in, with comparatively fewer people employed in banking and finance where there has been a significant shift.[6] Clearly, council employees cover a wide range of diverse roles and the extent to which they will be able to access hybrid working will vary. Councils will need to consider how this applies across their workforce and how the benefits of new ways of working can be distributed.

14   Importantly, hybrid is more than just the number of days in an office. It's about ways of working, organisational culture and technology. Organisations have the opportunity to define what hybrid means for them and how they want it to work for the longer term. This could, for example, mean hybrid with a balance towards either on-site or off-site, and it could mean different applications for different categories of staff.

15   Organisations will also need to understand the relationship between their hybrid model and productivity. Despite what many employers might have feared, the early days of enforced homeworking did not necessarily have a significant effect on productivity.[7] The impact that hybrid working is having on productivity is likely to vary between sectors and roles. This underlines the importance of organisations continuing to monitor, review and adapt their arrangements and make sure it works for different parts of the business.

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5   Remote working – the new normal? (senedd.wales)
6   Ibid
7   Professor Alan Felstead, 'Outlining the contours of the 'great homeworking Experiment' and its implications for Wales', January 2021

16   Hybrid working is likely to widen recruitment pools, which would help councils to attract staff from further afield and help manage skills gaps. However, this will not apply to all roles and could also potentially result in increased competition for staff.

Trend 3: Flexibility in working patterns

17   Hybrid working has introduced flexibility in where work gets done, but staff also value flexibility in when work gets done and, potentially, to a greater extent.[8] Councils may have offered some forms of flexible working before the pandemic, for example 'flexitime', compressed hours, reduced hours or job sharing. However, staff are likely to have been offered a higher degree of flexibility during the pandemic. This, in combination with hybrid (or homeworking when required during that time), will inevitably have impacted staff perceptions and expectations.

18   The Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) report that many organisations state that they will be more likely to grant requests for flexible working, besides working from home, compared with before the pandemic. They also believe that it is important to provide flexible working as an option when advertising jobs.[9] As well as attracting staff, flexibility might also be helpful in retaining staff. For example, more flexible forms of working could be used to retain staff approaching retirement.[10]

19   The four-day working week is increasingly part of the debate on the future of work.[11,12] A likely benefit for employees is increased work-life balance, but organisations could also benefit from productivity gains, lower running costs, a smaller carbon footprint and the ability to attract and keep top talent.[13] While this model is typically considered in days, it can be adapted to reflect different roles and business requirements.

8   Top Ten HR Trends For The 2023 Workplace (forbes.com)
9   CIPD, An Update on Flexible and Hybrid Working Practices, April 2022
10   House of Lords Public Services Committee, Fit for the future? Rethinking the public services workforce, December 2022
11   Senedd Research, The four-day week – a part of future Welsh working life? 2023
12   ICAEW, Four-day week: what happens after a successful trial? 2023
13   CIPD The compensation revolution: incentives to motivate and retain future talent 2023

The UK's four days week pilot

The largest four-day week pilot study took place in the UK between June 2022 and December 2022. It involved 61 organisations and around 2900 employees. Each organisation tailored the four-day weeks to their needs, covering typical 'Friday off' models through to annualised hours. The trial was a 'resounding success'; with 92% of the organisations continuing with the model and 18 committing to a permanent change. There were clear benefits for employees, including improvements in mental and physical health and a balancing work with family and social commitments. The number of staff leaving dropped significantly during the period. Indeed, '15% of employees said that no amount of money would induce them to accept a five-day schedule over the four-day week to which they were now accustomed'. There were also improvements in key business metrics, including increases in revenue.[14]

20   Councils will need to consider how different forms of flexible working could strengthen their ability to attract and retain the staff they need to meet their prevailing pressures. They may also want to consider the wider impacts that these changes could bring about, for population health and gender equality, for example.

21   However, councils will also need to consider how they balance these benefits and respond to changing employee expectations while also meeting their business needs. This is particularly pertinent, given the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 will grant employees further flexibility.[15]

14 Autonomy 'The results are in: The UK's four day week pilot' February 2023
15 The Employee Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 introduces new protections for workers, including requirements for employers to consult with the employee before rejecting their flexible working request and giving them permission to make two statutory requests in any 12-month period (rather than the current one request).

Trend 4: Culture and well-being

22   It has been suggested that employee priorities have shifted more towards health and well-being, with some research placing it above financial remuneration. There are also suggestions that this is becoming increasingly important for younger generations entering the workforce.[16]

23   As described above, hybrid and flexible working are important tools that councils can use to advance employee well-being. There is evidence that employees who have flexibility in their working arrangements are more likely to be satisfied at work.[17] These gains in employee well-being can translate into improved productivity and competitiveness in the labour market. However, councils will also need to be mindful of the potential negative impacts that home and hybrid working can have on mental health and relationships with colleagues.[18]

24   Employee values, and their expectations of how employers create positive cultures, promote equality and build sustainable operating environments has also been identified as a growing trend. Once again, hybrid and flexible working are a means for employers to deliver on this. For example, these opportunities could promote diversity and inclusion by enabling people with health conditions or disabilities to work in ways that best suit them and making it easier for individuals to manage caring responsibilities.

25   However, there are risks that these new models could have some negative impacts or worsen inequality.[19] For example, less time in the office could mean reduced visibility, which could in turn impact career progression. This may have a disproportionate on those who are already disadvantaged or are more likely to work from home, such as disabled people. Similarly, younger staff may miss out on development opportunities.[20] For parents and those with caring responsibilities, there is a risk that hybrid working can make it difficult to balance different demands.[21] Councils would need to ensure they have a clear approach and supporting policies, consistent understanding and application by managers and an appropriate learning and development offer to mitigate these risks.

16 World Economic Forum, How to energize workforce by focusing on employee wellbeing, 2022
17 CIPD, An Update on Flexible and Hybrid Working Practices, April 2022
18 Ibid
19 Senedd Research, Remote working – the new normal? 2021
20 Lancaster University, Making hybrid inclusive- Key priorities for policy-makers October 2021
21 Ibid

Trend 5: Technology

26   Use of technology will be key to addressing some of the identified challenges and realising the benefits described above. It is necessary to support the continuation of hybrid working and will be critical to decisions on the size and set-up of council buildings.

27   The pandemic accelerated councils' use of technology, both by supporting their staff to work remotely and shifting to digital service delivery. Developments in technology have the potential to continue transforming how services are delivered to the public and to reduce workloads and improve efficiency, including through automation. In this way, technology is likely to change the nature of certain jobs and future skills requirements.

28   We are conducting further 'Springing Forward' work on council's approaches to digital transformation and will report on this in due course.
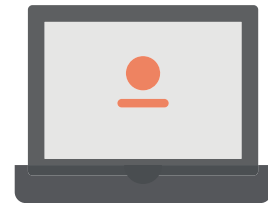
Applying the sustainable development principle

29   The Well-being of Future Generations Act places a well-being duty on public bodies in Wales. As part of this, they must act in accordance with the sustainable development principle. Acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle means 'acting in a manner that seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. To do this, public bodies must apply the five ways of working: long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement.

30   The Act's accompanying statutory guidance describes seven corporate functions where public bodies should apply this thinking to promote wider changes in how they deliver. Assets and workforce planning are included in the list. By applying the sustainable development principle in these areas, organisations can help advance their overall implementation of the Act.

31   We consider that applying the sustainable development principle is a feature of having proper arrangements in place to secure value for money. It can help councils deliver value for money, both now and over the longer term, and should be seen as a useful means of working through uncertainty and balancing competing demands. On that basis, it is should be a tool that can help councils as they bring forward changes to how and where their staff work.

32 We expect that, eight years since the Act was passed, that public bodies understand what they need to do under this legislation. We expect their understanding to have matured and for them to be able to demonstrate that the Act is genuinely shaping what they do.[22] These expectations are reflected in our findings and recommendations to each council.

33 We hope that our work at each council has provided some insight by highlighting the relevance and opportunity of applying the sustainable development principle. The next section of this report is designed to help inform that thinking further.

34 We have also developed a set of 'positive indicators' for both workforce and assets to show what good application of the sustainable development principle would look like. It sets out some characteristics that are relevant to different stages of planning and delivering work in these areas. We hope they are useful in developing a consistent and practical understanding, particularly those councils who are currently reshaping work in these areas. We will use them to inform any future work we undertake in this area.[23]

What we found

What we saw and what we recommended

35 When we undertook our work, we found that most councils were working through what their 'new normal' should look like. They were considering what they had learned from the pandemic and what that meant for their workforce and assets in combination. Some told us the pandemic had rapidly accelerated an existing direction of travel.

36 As a result, many councils had reviewed or were in the process of reviewing their key strategic documents. This included HR Strategies, workforce plans, smarter working policies and corporate asset management plans. Others had not yet begun that work, but recognised they would need to in the short to medium term.

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22 The Act's Well-being Duty will be extended to additional public bodies from April 2024. Experience and understanding will therefore vary across bodies and this will be reflected in our examinations.
23 In developing these positive indicators we have sought the advice of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (the Commissioner) and considered guidance they have issued. This includes the recently published 'maturity matrix'.

37 For this reason, many recommendations across our work focused on the development of councils' strategic approaches to workforce and assets. We recommended to all those councils that were revising or developing their strategies that they should use the sustainable development principle to shape their thinking and build on their experience of the pandemic.

38 We also made recommendations focused on improving delivery and monitoring arrangements. We found some weaknesses in supporting delivery arrangements, such as inconsistent workforce and asset planning across services and lack of integration between corporate and service planning processes. We identified opportunities to improve monitoring and oversight and the need to undertake benchmarking.

39 Councils are at a critical point. They have the opportunity to use this accelerated period of learning to set a new strategic direction. However, underlying weaknesses in their supporting arrangements could hamper their ability to develop and deliver effective strategies that help them meet current and future challenges.

40 We recognise that the pandemic has impacted councils' capacity to plan for the future and that, when we undertook this work, councils were still working through uncertainty. However, councils will probably now be better placed to define and deliver their plans for the future.

41 Through our work, we found that many councils had not yet considered how they could use the sustainable development principle to help them develop their approaches to workforce and assets. We have not carried out equivalent work across other corporate functions (though some is underway, and further is planned). However, we anticipate that councils may be less likely to consider applying the sustainable development principle to their various corporate functions than to their corporate planning and service delivery.

Using the sustainable development principle to spring forward

42   Councils will need to set a clear direction for their workforce and assets, informed by their learning from the pandemic and shaped by the sustainable development principle. Our work identified some key areas where councils need to develop their thinking and arrangements so that are able to do this. We found that councils needed to:

- develop their intelligence to manage key workforce and asset risks in the here and now so that they can plan for the long term;

- identify how they can get maximum value from their approaches to assets and workforce;

- involve their staff and work with partners; and

- continue to review, learn and innovate.

43   We cover each of the bullet points above in more detail below. We also include some examples to show what practical application could look like.

Councils should develop their intelligence to manage risk in the here and now so that they can plan for the long term

44   Councils will need a good understanding of their current circumstances to inform their plans. For workforce, this is likely to include resource and skills requirements, where there are risks to these and how that might impact on delivery. For assets, this is likely to include the quality, condition and use of their buildings. We found some examples where councils do not have a good overview of relevant information and risk, which is likely to limit their ability to effectively manage their workforce and assets and plan for the future.

45   We identified that councils could do more to consider what future trends might mean for their workforce and assets. The trends we have identified in this report are relevant, as well as more specific and local trends relating to future skills needs and gaps, developments in technology and service changes. These could all have implications for choices councils make in the short to medium term.

Practice example

We reported that Ceredigion Council had a good understanding of key workforce risks. Notably, the council has implemented its 'Through Age Well-being Model', shifting to a more preventative approach to delivering adult and social care and is seeking to transform its workforce in these areas. However, it has identified high vacancy rates and has taken steps to mitigate this risk.

This included:

- working with Aberystwyth University to develop training for social care;

- increasing the number of social care apprenticeships it provides; and

- changing to job descriptions to allow greater flexibility for staff to move between roles.[24]

This is a good example of a council taking a long-term view of how it needs to change a service and workforce, while also using its management information to mitigate current risks.

46   Councils also need to draw on performance information to help them learn and improve. We highlighted some weaknesses in performance and outcome measures that often did not reflect councils' ambitions for its workforce and assets, along with opportunities to strengthen corporate and elected member oversight.

47   We also found that there is a widespread lack of benchmarking for these functions. Without benchmarking councils will not be able to assure themselves that they are delivering effectively and achieving value for money. We appreciate that obtaining this information can be a challenge. However, comparative information should help councils assess the effectiveness of their approaches and inform their planning, decision-making and scrutiny.

24 Audit Wales, Ceredigion County Council – Springing Forward – Strategic Workforce Management 2022

Councils should identify how they can derive maximum value from their approaches to assets and workforce

48   Clearly, councils will need to consider how and where their staff work in combination. This means ensuring there is alignment between their workforce and asset management strategies, as well as other supporting strategies and policies relating to digital, hybrid or smarter working. Ultimately, workforce and assets need to support a council's vision and well-being objectives.

49   Councils could also consider the wider benefits to recruitment, retention, equality and diversity. As outlined earlier in this report, hybrid and flexible working options expand recruitment pools. This could enable councils to attract staff from outside typical catchment areas, which could in turn help to meet skills gaps and increase diversity in the workforce. Such policies can also promote well-being and equality in the workplace, with consequent impacts on resilience, staff well-being, recruitment and retention.

50   We saw some examples of councils considering how their approaches to assets and workforce could contribute to their environmental objectives. For example, helping to make progress towards net zero targets by reducing office accommodation and journeys to and from work.

51   We also saw some councils making the connection between their assets, workforce and digital agendas. Clearly, councils need to have the right digital infrastructure to support hybrid working models, but they also need to consider the longer term impacts that artificial intelligence (AI) and automation will have on service delivery.

Practice example

'Maximising digital capability' is a key feature of Cardiff Council's corporate plan and is vital to the continued modernisation of its estate and workforce. The Council has appointed consultants to identify further systems and processes that it could automate as part of its Digital First 'Automation and Artificial Intelligence' programme.[25]

25 Audit Wales, Springing Forward combined report Workforce and Assets - Cardiff Council, 2022

52   We also saw that some councils are considering how they can meet economic objectives, including moving forward with plans to dispose of main office buildings as part of wider regeneration plans.

Practice example

Carmarthenshire Council is looking to reduce its corporate office space in the region of 50%. Managers have considered how they can use their assets in a way that reflects how services operate post-pandemic. Within the context of this rationalisation, the Council continues to look for opportunities to support its economic regeneration agenda with the focus on sustaining town centres.[26]

53   We found that some councils do not have a clear connection between their workforce and asset management strategies and their service planning arrangements. Having effective links between the two can help ensure that strategic ambitions translate into practice. It is also a key mechanism for gathering intelligence, identifying and aggregating risk across services. Furthermore, it can help organisations take a more integrated approach to delivering their priorities.

Practice example

At Newport Council, every directorate produces an annual service plan to support delivery of the council's corporate strategies. There is a dedicated section on workforce planning in each. The plans include specific activities the directorates will undertake to support staff recruitment and retention. Activities relate to succession planning, training and developing previously flat structures to provide clearer career pathways.[27]

26 Audit Wales, Carmarthenshire County Council – Springing Forward Asset Management | Audit Wales 2022
27 Audit Wales, Springing Forward – Workforce – Newport City Council 2022

Councils should involve their staff and work with partners

54   Most councils had sought the views of their staff to understand the impact of home and hybrid working and their preferences at some point since making the transition. We emphasised the importance of staff engagement and recommended that councils ensure they draw on staff views to inform the ongoing development of their approaches to workforce and assets. It will be important for them to consider this information alongside performance information, to give a rounded view of the impact of changes.

55   We highlighted opportunities for councils to engage partners in discussions about the future of their workforce and assets. This could help them identify opportunities to meet service delivery objectives and achieve financial savings through shared posts or co-location, for example. We also reported that councils should seek to understand how, where and when users want to access services post-pandemic to help inform their thinking.

56   Councils could explore more opportunities to collaborate with each other to tackle common workforce risks. We heard about common risks in areas such as social care, environmental health and planning. In West Wales, councils are working together on the Joint Learning and Training Working Group under the West Wales Care Partnership. We also heard how Powys was working with partners to deliver its workforce plan (see below). There would appear to be further opportunities for councils across Wales to work together to manage strategic workforce risks, particularly where they are competing to recruit certain specialisms. The Public Services Boards and the associated plans could provide a mechanism for exploring these risks across a range of key partner organisations.

Practice example

In our report to Powys Council, we noted that collaboration was a clear feature of its 'strategic workforce plan'. Specifically, the council collaborates to deliver key elements of training, including:

- its apprenticeship programme, which it delivers in partnership with external training providers and funders, the Department of Work and Pensions and Neath Port Talbot College.

- the Health and Social Care Academy based in partnership with Powys Teaching Health Board and the University of Wales offering specialised training.

We reported that the council's approach means staff are being trained to fill future service gaps.

Councils should continue to review, learn and innovate

57 Things have moved on since the pandemic. Councils face ongoing challenges but should now be better placed to plan for the future. However, it is not possible to fully predict the impact that widespread changes will have on ways of working. This means it will be important to continue to monitor and review the impact on individuals, organisations and service delivery.

58 As part of this, it will be important to continue drawing on the views of staff, as well as benchmarking and horizon scanning. Benchmarking can involve comparison in the broadest sense, including comparing service delivery models and structures, and sharing practice. Such information will help them continue to strengthen their approaches.

59 Councils are experiencing similar workforce and asset management challenges. They are all in the process of developing new ways of working. Given this, there would be value in them sharing their approaches and learning points as they continue this process.

What have we learned?

60 This report draws out themes from across the reports to each council. Clearly each council is different, and these messages will apply differently across the 22 organisations. The points below provide a general summary of the key learning points from across this work:

- Councils do not appear to fully appreciate that the sustainable development principle is relevant to the design and delivery of assets and workforce. There are significant gains that could be made by applying this thinking when revising their strategies and delivery arrangements. This prompts a question as to whether this is common across corporate services and functions. Councils should reflect on this and take relevant opportunities to apply the framework set out in the Act. We will continue to test the application of the sustainable development principle through our audit work.

- Councils aren't effectively drawing on the breadth of intelligence that could help them manage the present or plan for the future. Some councils did not have a good understanding of current risks across their workforce, others did but could strengthen their understanding of the medium- and longer-term challenges that would impact them. Benchmarking appears to be seldom undertaken in these areas, meaning councils are not able to compare and really understand the extent to which they are achieving value for money. More generally, there are perhaps more opportunities for them to learn from each other as they develop new ways of working.

- Councils recognise the benefit of linking their assets and workforce with the delivery of wider corporate objectives. There are likely to be opportunities to take this further and systematically consider the full breadth of benefits that could be achieved. This will help councils maximise the value of work in these areas. Applying the sustainable development principle will help them achieve this. They also appear to be missing the opportunity to work together to address common challenges, particularly relating to workforce.

- Weaknesses or gaps in arrangements are likely to hamper progress towards strategic ambitions. Having sound core arrangement- such as a well-defined strategy, supporting service planning arrangements, and effective monitoring arrangements – provide a foundation for transformation. Without these arrangements it will be difficult for councils to apply the sustainable development principle. Where they are filling gaps or refreshing elements of these arrangements, councils should use the sustainable development principle to help them.

Appendices

1 Sustainable development principle positive indicators: Asset management

The table below sets out some positive indicators to help illustrate what good application of the sustainable development principle could look in relation to asset management. Councils could use these indicators to help them develop their strategic approach to assets, but it could also be helpful in relation to decisions on specific assets. They have been adapted from those we have previously used to inform our sustainable development principle examinations. This list is not designed to be used a checklist and is designed to be interpreted to fit with organisational arrangements and contexts. This is not an exhaustive list but covers elements that would help a council ensure it is applying the sustainable development principle. In developing these indicators, we have sought the advice of the Future Generations Commissioner and taken account of the 'Maturity Matrix for the Implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act'.

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council used a range of information to develop a thorough understanding of its asset base and requirements, and how they are likely to change over time. This could, for example, relate to:	Long term, prevention, collaboration, involvement

- How its assets base is being used (including where its staff are located, which service users and partners use the assets) and the extent to which it is achieving value for money.

- The quality, value and risks across its assets

- How asset requirements could be impacted over the short, medium and longer term. This could include:

  - Changes in working practices, culture, staff expectations and preferences.

  - Future staffing and skills requirements.

  - Service changes

  - Technological changes that could influence how and where staff work or services are delivered

  - Financial pressures over the short and medium term.

- How its assets could be used in the future, including market value and commercial opportunities

The council may have used tools such as PESTLE analysis, horizon scanning or scenario planning to do this, involving relevant people from across and outside the council as appropriate.

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council considered how its assets can deliver wider organisational priorities (linked to its well-being objectives and the national well-being goals) and **have a broader impact**. This could include preventative benefits and relate to, for example: • How its approach to assets could help deliver wider environmental objectives, such as decarbonisation and air quality. • How its approach to assets could deliver its economic and regeneration objectives. • How its approach to assets could deliver social and cultural objectives, related to equality and diversity objectives, health, well-being, community cohesion or the Welsh Language. • How service changes could impact on asset requirements, including through changes in staff levels and skills requirements • How its approach to assets could help deliver and mitigate the impact of financial savings. • How developments in other parts of the business, such as the council's approach to digital, could impact on workforce. As part of this, the Council is likely to have involved colleagues from across the organisation to develop a shared understanding of priorities, pressures and opportunities. The council may have used tools such as an 'Integrated Impact Assessment' (if it has one) to explore the interconnections between objectives, priorities, issues and impacts.	Integration, prevention

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council identified who it needed to involve in developing and delivering its approach to assets and it applied good practice when carrying out involvement. As part of this, it: • Provided genuine opportunities for people to influence the development and delivery of its strategic approach and individual decisions from an early stage. • Sought the views of the full diversity of the population and ensured they were able to participate. This included seeking the views of different generations. • Considered how representative its involvement activity was and where there might be gaps. (see also 'the council is seeking to learn and improve' below). • Uses the results of involvement to shape planning and delivery.	Involvement
The council identified the partners it needed to work with to deliver its approach to assets (including the range of preventive/ wider benefits described above, such as service improvement, decarbonisation, economic regeneration) and how it would do so, it: • Understands the challenges they face, their objectives/ priorities and the shared opportunities. • Developed good relationships with relevant partners, by for example, investing time in partnership working and sharing information in an open and transparent way. • Developed appropriate arrangements to support partnership working, as necessary (e.g. programme/ project governance, plans and project documentation, funding arrangements, performance measures).	Collaboration, integration

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
Drawing on this information, **the council developed a vision and approach, that is informed by short term and longer-term considerations, and supported by appropriate delivery arrangements**. The approach:	Long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement

- Identified clear actions over the short and medium term, while also taking account of longer term aims/ considerations.

- Took account of the benefits of investing in long-term, preventative approaches and the cost (both financial and in terms of outcomes) of not doing so. This could include how it might prevent future problems, such as rising costs, carbon emissions, or reductions in service quality or staff well-being.

- Was designed to support delivery of its corporate plan and well-being objectives, as well as other key organisational strategies and priorities.

- Was supported by related strategies and appropriate delivery arrangements. There is alignment between strategic and service-based arrangements.

- Set out the resources required to deliver in the short to medium term and the longer-term risks and how these could be managed, as appropriate. This is reflected in the council's medium term financial planning.

- Identified short term measures and milestones/ progression steps where outcomes will be delivered over the medium or longer term.

- Considered how to minimise waste/ negative impact on resources throughout delivery, e.g. for capital projects in the use of materials, impact on the environment etc.

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council learns and improves how it applies the sustainable development principle to its work on assets. This could include: • Reviewing and strengthening how it involves and collaborates with stakeholders • Reviewing and strengthening how it uses data to inform decision-making and value for money • Responding to recommendations from Audit Wales, as well as relevant recommendations and advice of the Future Generations Commissioner, as appropriate. • Learning from peers.	Long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement

2 Sustainable development principle positive indicators: Workforce planning

The table below sets out some positive indicators to help illustrate what a good application of the sustainable development principle could look like in relation to workforce planning. Councils could use these indicators to help them develop their strategic approach to workforce, pr specific elements of it. They have been adapted from those we have previously used to inform our sustainable development principle examinations. This list is not designed to be used a checklist and is designed to be interpreted to fit with organisational arrangements and contexts.This is not an exhaustive list but covers elements that would help a council ensure it is applying the sustainable development principle. In developing these indicators, we have sought the advice of the Future Generations Commissioner and taken account of the 'Maturity Matrix for the Implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act'.

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council uses a range of information to develop a thorough understanding of its workforce, the risks and requirements, and how they are likely to change over time. This could, for example, relate to:	Long term, prevention, involvement

- The make-up of its workforce, including where there are skills and capacity gaps and how this is impacting delivery and value for money.

- How and where staff work

- Staff well-being

- Internal and external factors that could impact its workforce over the short, medium and longer term. This could include:

  - Changes in working practices, culture, staff expectations and preferences.

  - Future staffing and skills requirements.

  - Emerging/ continuing skills gaps in specialist areas

  - Technological changes that could influence how and where staff work or services are delivered

  - Financial pressures over the short and medium term.

The council may use tools such as PESTLE analysis, horizon scanning or scenario planning to do this, involving relevant people from across and outside the council as appropriate.

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council considered how its approach to workforce planning could deliver wider organisational priorities (linked to its well-being objectives and the national well-being goals) and **have a broader impact**. This could include preventative benefits and relate to, for example; • How its approach to workforce planning could impact on how and where staff work, which could in turn help deliver it asset management objectives and associated economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits (see positive indicators 'asset management'). • How service changes could impact on staff levels and skills requirements and how the approach to workforce planning could help manage this successfully • How the approach to workforce planning could help achieve equality and diversity objectives, the Welsh language and improve staff well-being • How its approach to workforce could help deliver and mitigate the impact of financial savings. • How developments in other parts of the business, such as the council's approach to digital, could impact on workforce. As part of this, the council is likely to have involved colleagues from across the organisation to develop a shared understanding of priorities, pressures and opportunities. The council may have used tools such as an 'Integrated Impact Assessment' (if it has one) to explore the interconnections between objectives, priorities, issues and impacts.	Integration, prevention

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The Council involved staff and their representatives in developing and delivering its approach to workforce and applied good practice when carrying out involvement. As part of this, it: • Provided genuine opportunities for people to influence its approach/ individual decisions from an early stage. • Sought the views of the full diversity of its staff and took steps to ensure they were able to participate. This included seeking the views of different generations. • Considered how representative its involvement activity was and where there might be gaps. (see also 'the council is seeking to learn and improve' below). • It then used the results of involvement to shape its planning and ongoing delivery.	Involvement
The Council identified the partners it needed to work with to deliver its approach to workforce (including preventive/ wider benefits described above, service improvement, equality and diversity), it: • Understands the challenges they face, their objectives/ priorities and the shared opportunities. • Developed good relationships with relevant partners, by for example, investing time in partnership working and sharing information in an open and transparent way. • Developed appropriate arrangements to support partnership working as appropriate. (e.g. programme/ project governance, plans and project documentation, funding arrangements, performance measures).	Collaboration, integration

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
Drawing on this information, **the council developed a vision and approach, that is informed by short term and longer-term considerations, and supported by appropriate delivery arrangements**. The approach: • Identified clear actions over the short and medium term, while also taking account of longer term aims/ considerations. • Took account of the benefits of investing in long-term, preventative approaches and the cost (both financial and in terms of outcomes) of not doing so. This could include how it might prevent future problems, such as rising costs, carbon emissions, or reductions in service quality or staff well-being. • Was designed to support delivery of its corporate plan and well-being objectives, as well as other key organisational strategies and priorities. • Is supported by related strategies and appropriate delivery arrangements. There is alignment between strategic and service-based arrangements. • Set out the resources required to deliver in the short to medium term and longer-term risks and how these could be managed, as appropriate. This is reflected in the council's medium term financial planning. • Identified short term measures and milestones/ progression steps where outcomes will be delivered over the medium or longer term.	Long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement

Positive indicator	Ways of working this relates to
The council is seeking to learn and improve how it applies the sustainable development principle to its workforce planning. This could include: • Reviewing and strengthening how it involves and collaborates with stakeholders. • Reviewing and strengthening how it uses data to inform decision-making and value for money. • Responding to recommendations from Audit Wales, as well as relevant recommendations and advice of the Future Generations Commissioner, as appropriate. • Learning from peers.	Long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement