

Joint Chief Executive Officers
Centre for Digital Public Services
Tŷ Derw, Lime Tree Court
Cardiff Gate Business Park
Cardiff
CF23 8AB

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1 Cwr y Ddinas / 1 Capital Quarter
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF10 4BZ
Tel / Ffôn: 029 2032 0500
Fax / Ffacs: 029 2032 0600
Textphone / Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660
info@audit.wales / post@archwilio.cymru
www.audit.wales / www.archwilio.cymru

Dear Myra and Harriet,

Setting of well-being objectives at the Centre for Digital Public Services

What we must do

Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) and certain other public bodies must set 'well-being objectives' to help create a better Wales, both now and in the future.

In setting objectives, the CDPS must take a longer-term view and apply the 'sustainable development principle'. The Act defines this as 'seeking to act in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

I am required to assess how the CDPS applied the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives. I have set out further details of our audit approach in **Appendix 1**.

Circumstances at CDPS

The CDPS came under the Act in June 2024 and was required to set its first well-being objectives by 31 March 2025. It published the objectives on 30 March 2025, in its 'well-being statement'. My auditors began our examination shortly after, gathering

evidence between August and October 2025. This was a relatively high-level review. Our main focus was on the process leading up to the publication of the objectives.

In September 2025, just after we finished our fieldwork interviews, the Welsh Government issued a written statement relevant to the future of the CDPS. It stated that it would seek to align CDPS' skills and resources with its new Office for AI, meaning CDPS' functions would be integrated into the Welsh Government by April 2026. As a result, the CDPS will no longer be a separate entity and will not exist to deliver its well-being objectives.

Had my auditors known this before starting the examination, they would likely not have proceeded. Given they had largely completed their work by this time, it has required little additional resource to bring the examination to a close. However, we have decided to conclude by reporting our findings in this short letter rather than a fuller report.

What we have found

Overall, we found that the CDPS has considered the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives, conducting broad staff involvement and considering future trends.

However, it could have gone much further, for example, by involving external stakeholders. Critically, the CDPS did not put its well-being objectives at the heart of the organisation, and it was not clear how it planned to resource delivery or monitor progress and impact.

We would have made recommendations in these areas, were the CDPS to have continued existing as a named body under the Act. The paragraphs below set out key strengths and areas for improvement, as they relate to our audit questions and criteria.

Strengths

The CDPS reviewed some key data sources to help it understand current challenges and future trends and their implications for the organisation. The sources are listed out in the well-being statement.

Positively, the CDPS involved staff across the organisation in exploring future trends. It held workshops that were open to all and used the feedback to help shape its well-being objectives. This exploration of future trends comes through in the well-being

statement, which describes the impact the objectives were intended to have on various trends.

The CDPS further involved staff by setting up an Employee Forum. This included representatives from across its departments. The Forum provided views on the objectives at key points in their development. It was set up for this purpose, and to discharge the requirements of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, in the absence of any recognised trade unions. Staff described the forum to us in very positive terms. We note that, given its success, the CDPS continued using it to involve staff on organisation-wide matters.

The CDPS also considered the national well-being goals in developing its well-being objectives. Alongside future trends, the well-being statement described the impact the objectives were intended to have on the goals.

Areas for improvement

Beyond staff, there were important stakeholders that the CDPS did not involve. Its Board was not involved at any point and did not approve the final objectives. Not involving the Board was a significant omission, given the terms of reference described its role in 'strategic and significant issues affecting the operations of the CDPS in delivering its aims and objectives'.

The CDPS discussed opportunities for collaboration with Digital Health and Care Wales. However, it did not involve the full range of partners it works with. Nor did it involve the public. More extensive involvement could have given the CDPS useful insight into the type of support it should offer to public bodies, and how it should provide it.

Similarly, while the CDPS reviewed Public Services Boards' well-being plans to understand their objectives, it did not look more widely at other public bodies' well-being objectives. This could have identified shared areas of interest and opportunities to collaborate.

The CDPS chose to set well-being objectives separate from its main strategic priorities. Public bodies have freedom to decide how they set their well-being objectives. However, it is best practice for them to be the main corporate priorities. This can help drive action across the organisation and avoid unnecessary complexity across plans and objectives.

We appreciate that bringing things together was not straightforward, given that the timing of the new requirement to set well-being objectives did not align with CDPS'

existing planning cycle. Its existing strategic priorities, set out in the Business and Operational Plan, cover 2023 to 2026 (this document is not publicly available, although the strategic priorities are included on its [website](#)).

Instead, the well-being objectives have added to the number of priorities that do not appear to come together in a coherent planning framework. In addition to the Business and Operational Plan 2023 to 2026, there is an Operational Plan 2025-26. The latter sets out three themes that reflect updated Welsh Government remit letter priorities. While there are parallels, these themes are different from the strategic priorities in the Business and Operational Plan 2023-2026.

Furthermore, while the CDPS identified steps it planned to take to deliver the well-being objectives, they are not explicitly included in the Operational Plan 2025-26. Therefore, it is not clear how the CDPS would have taken these steps forward as part of its operational delivery.

Overall, the CDPS did not appear to have considered the resources needed to deliver the objectives. We heard it was considering developing a three or five-year financial plan, but work had not started. Such a plan may have been helpful in providing a medium-term view of resource pressures and the implications for delivering the well-being objectives.

The CDPS had not developed performance measures for the well-being objectives or monitoring arrangements at the time we were carrying out our work. We heard that the CDPS had been developing a corporate performance management framework. It recognised the need to build in assessment of progress towards the well-being objectives but had not determined how it would do that. We were also told that CDPS was developing a way for projects to report progress against the objectives, which would have been a positive step.

We also note the well-being statement does not include all the required information. For example, it does not set out how the CDPS proposed to govern itself or ensure resources were allocated annually for the purposes of taking steps to meet the objectives.

Wider considerations

During our work, we received some information that prompted us to ask further questions about how the CDPS takes account of equality impacts. We requested information, but we have not been provided with any and the approach remains

unclear. This will continue to be relevant to how the CDPS delivers its functions in the time before it is integrated with the Welsh Government and for the future.

Final remarks

Although the CDPS' functions will be integrated with the Welsh Government at the end of 2025-26, I hope my letter provides useful reflection points.

Having completed this examination, I will draw on the findings as part of my overall analysis in my next statutory report under the Act. That report is due to be published by early May 2029.

Yours sincerely,

ADRIAN CROMPTON
Auditor General for Wales

Appendix 1: About our work

Audit questions and criteria

Questions

In carrying out this work, we explored the following:

- Was the process the CDPS put in place to set its well-being objectives underpinned by the sustainable development principle?
- Has the CDPS considered how it will make sure it can deliver its well-being objectives in line with the sustainable development principle?
- Has the CDPS put in place arrangements to monitor progress, learn, and continue improving how it applies the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives?

Criteria

We used audit criteria to inform our assessment. The audit criteria describe what good looks like and cover each of the sustainable development principle's five ways of working. They are based on the positive indicators we have previously used in our sustainable development principle examinations. We developed these indicators through engagement with public bodies and informed by advice and guidance from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

Methods

We reviewed a range of documents, including the CDPS well-being statement, other key plans, evidence that has informed its thinking on the well-being objectives, and notes of key meetings.

We also interviewed staff who had led the process of developing the well-being objectives and a sample of senior staff.