

Implementing Audit Wales recommendations to improve the Council's digital approach

Monmouthshire County Council

February 2026

About us

We have prepared and published this report to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act).

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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 In June 2024, we issued a report to Monmouthshire County Council (the Council) following an audit on its digital strategy. We made four recommendations. In June 2024, the Council's Governance and Audit Committee received this report and the Council's management response to address the recommendations (see **Appendix 2**). This audit looked at whether the Council is addressing them.
- 2 We also looked at how the Council tracks and reports its progress on external audit recommendations, using the digital strategy recommendations to assess its arrangements.
- 3 We undertook this audit in November 2025.

Why this is important

- 4 External audit reports give an independent view on the Council's arrangements. Our reports include recommendations for the Council when we identify gaps or weaknesses in its arrangements. Acting on these recommendations can help ongoing improvement. That is why it is important for the Council to have effective arrangements to monitor and challenge progress against them.

What we have found

- 5 The Council has made good progress in addressing the digital strategy recommendations and its longstanding arrangements support oversight of external audit recommendations.

What we recommend

- 6 We made no recommendations.

Our findings

The Council has made good progress in addressing the digital strategy recommendations

- 7 The Council approved its new Digital and Data Strategy 2024–2027 (the Strategy) by its set deadline of July 2024. It is one of several enabling strategies designed to help the Council deliver its Community and Corporate Plan. The Strategy and its supporting integrated impact assessment show the Council has considered the sustainable development principle.
- 8 The Council has put in place robust arrangements to monitor and review the delivery of the Strategy. For example, it recently set up a Digital, Data and Technology Board and Steering Group to provide regular oversight. The Council is also embedding a new annual performance review process for its enabling strategies. This gives scrutiny members the opportunity to understand and challenge progress against the delivery plan that underpins the Strategy. Although the delivery plan includes outcomes, the Council recognises it needs to better measure the impact and value for money of its digital projects and is developing a framework to help with this.
- 9 The Council engaged with a range of internal stakeholders when developing the Strategy. It also continues to involve staff through established boards and networks. Although the Council didn't engage directly with citizens on the Strategy, it plans to consult them on upcoming digital projects. Its new 'Let's Talk Monmouthshire' platform aims to ensure more people can have their say.

- 10 The Council is actively pursuing collaborative opportunities. The Council agreed in May 2025 to extend its existing Shared Resource Service¹ collaboration, that provides technology services and network capability, to establish collaborative digital, data and technology capability to deliver and support its digital and data needs.
- 11 Overall, the Council has made good progress in responding to our digital strategy recommendations.

The Council has appropriate arrangements supporting senior officer and member oversight of external audit recommendations

- 12 The Council has longstanding arrangements to oversee external audit recommendations. The relevant Chief Officer and Head of Service receive external audit reports and oversee completion of the Council's management response form (MRF). Reports and MRFs aren't routinely considered by the whole senior leadership team (SLT). However, the Deputy Chief Executive receives all reports and, together with the Council's performance team, can share them more widely as appropriate. This is important as audit findings and recommendations are sometimes relevant to multiple directorates.
- 13 Performance officers are responsible for tracking progress against audit recommendations. They collate and challenge updates from responsible officers, including decisions to close recommendations. They then use the information to produce six-monthly update reports. The full SLT doesn't routinely monitor or challenge progress against external audit recommendations. But the Deputy Chief Executive receives the six-monthly update reports, providing senior oversight and the opportunity to raise any concerns.

¹ [About Us | Shared Resource Service](#)

- 14 The Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) plays a key role in monitoring and scrutinising the Council's response to recommendations. It receives all external audit reports and the relevant MRFs. It can also refer reports to other committees for further scrutiny if needed. This ensures that members are aware of external audit findings and that they agree on the actions to address recommendations before these are put in place.
- 15 The GAC also receives six-monthly progress updates which describe actions taken and explain why some recommendations have been closed. They give members regular opportunities to review and challenge progress and officers' decisions to close recommendations.

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

This audit looked at whether the Council addressed the recommendations in the Digital Strategy Review report we issued in 2024. We also looked at the Council's arrangements to oversee and report progress in addressing external audit recommendations. We used the Digital Strategy recommendations to assess these arrangements.

Audit questions and criteria

Questions

This audit answered the following questions:

- Has the Council addressed the recommendations contained in the Digital Strategy Review report dated June 2024?
- Does the Council have arrangements to oversee how it addresses external audit recommendations?

Criteria

We assessed whether:

- the Council's strategic approach to digital aligns with the sustainable development principle;
- the Council improved how it monitors and reviews its digital strategy;
- the Council improved its engagement to involve those who have an interest in the delivery of its approach to digital;
- the Council has collaborated to improve results and value for money;
- members and senior officers receive external regulator reports;

- there is a central log of external recommendations;
- members and senior officers receive updates and provide challenge;
- members and senior officers decide when the Council has addressed external audit recommendations; and
- the impact of addressing external audit recommendations is understood.

Methods

We read documents and interviewed officers and members.

2 Digital Strategy – Organisational Response Form 2024

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	<p>Strengthening the Council's strategic approach to digital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the Council makes the best use of digital technology to secure value for money in the use of its resources the Council should develop and clearly articulate a strategic approach to digital. In developing its approach it should act in accordance with the sustainable development principle. 	<p>The development of a digital strategy had been in train upon the commencement of the audit review and had been discussed ahead of and through the audit process. This work remains ongoing and as part of a wider development of enabling strategies and the opportunities to better align and prioritise efforts that allows the Council's ambitions to be met in so far as digital and data are concerned.</p> <p>Develop an updated Digital and Data Strategy for the Council.</p>	July 2024	Deputy Chief Executive
R2	<p>Arrangements for monitoring and review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure it better understand the impact of its digital strategy and progress in delivering it over the short, medium, and long-term the Council should strengthen its arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the delivery of the strategy. 	<p>Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes will be important to the strategy. At an operational level this is already in place and with respect to existing digital projects that feature within the already well-established digital roadmap and forward plan.</p> <p>Develop an updated Digital and Data Strategy for the Council, including the arrangements for monitoring and review.</p>	July 2024	Deputy Chief Executive

R3	<p>Strengthening engagement opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help ensure that its resources are effectively targeted the Council should strengthen engagement with the full diversity of those with an interest in the delivery of its strategic approach to digital. 	<p>The user centred design principles are embedded into the project methodology and approach already in place. This ensures that customers and user engagement and feedback is factored into individual digital project delivery.</p> <p>Complete engagement with key stakeholders to inform the development of the digital and data strategy.</p>	July 2024	Deputy Chief Executive
R4	<p>Working Collaboratively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help ensure that the Council identifies all opportunities to improve value for money in its strategic approach to digital strategy the Council should map out all potential collaborative opportunities to deliver its next digital strategy. 	<p>In developing and delivering our digital and data strategy we will continue to ensure that strategic intent and programmes of work are suitably aligned to meet our digital and data needs, including potential collaborative opportunities.</p> <p>The Council already works collaboratively through the long-standing arrangements with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) and its partnering local authorities. Embedded within the SRS governance arrangements is a Business & Collaboration Board that allows for collaborative opportunities to be identified and taken forward. Furthermore already well established arrangements are in place to work collaboratively through the WLGA and Welsh Government's CDPS (Centre for Digital Public Services) along with wider networks that allow for collaboration and sharing of best and next practice (e.g. SOCITM).</p>	<p>July 2024 – development of strategy</p> <p>Review of collaborative opportunities as part of delivery of the strategy.</p>	Deputy Chief Executive

About us

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