

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority – Delivery of the Change Programme

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Summary report

Focus of the review

- 1 Governance is the system by which public bodies in Wales are directed and controlled. It is concerned with structure and processes for decision making, accountability, control and behaviour of an organisation. Governance influences how an organisation's objectives are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and addressed and how performance is optimised. Good governance is therefore fundamental to creating a high performing organisation that uses resources wisely and has a motivated and effective workforce.
- 2 Governance has a central role in providing constructive challenges to members and senior managers as they make difficult decisions around what services are offered, to whom and the resources to support them. Good governance practices can also play a leading role in helping members and senior managers to create the right culture for an organisation to be successful.
- 3 Weaknesses in governance, including poor executive leadership, can often expose organisations to make poor decisions which can be detrimental to their work and can have a negative impact on their partners, stakeholders, staff and the general public. Poor governance can also result in weak arrangements for using resources, managing performance, ineffective internal controls and result in heightened legal, regulatory and reputational risk.
- 4 Good governance is especially important when organisations are embarking on transformation. Done well, effective decision making, challenge and oversight will help smooth such changes, reduce uncertainty and provide assurance that change is delivering what was envisaged. Given the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (the 'Authority') has embarked on a Change Programme, we have undertaken this review to provide assurance that governance arrangements are working effectively and supporting the programme of change. We undertook the review during the period November 2020 to January 2021. Our methodology is set out at **Appendix 1**.

What we found

- 5 The Change Programme was introduced to better align the Authority's work to the Wellbeing for Future Generations and Environment Acts by creating a National Park which is in better environmental condition than at present, and one whose communities can adapt to climate change and transition to a low carbon economy. The Change Programme is also seen as essential by Authority members and senior managers in helping to address long standing weaknesses and risks. In particular, setting clear strategic priorities, revising management structures, improving team working and communication, reducing red tape, encouraging flexibility, innovation and empowering staff.
- 6 The delivery of the Change Programme was beset by problems from the moment it was launched. Whilst the rationale for the Change Programme was clear, its delivery was not supported by decisive and active leadership which has inhibited progress. The ambitious timescale for change was also compromised by a lack of detail in the initial proposals and mixed messaging which created uncertainty for staff.

- 7 The impact of the pandemic resulted in the Change Programme being paused which added further uncertainty. It is acknowledged that the rapid shift to home working and the pressure on staff as the park re-opened was considerable. The Change Programme was rebooted in September 2020, but its relaunch was not handled well.
- 8 At the time of our work the Change Programme restructuring had yet to be concluded but it continues to have an unsettling and a significantly negative impact on the Authority, its members and staff. It has not delivered the desired improvements; rather it has resulted in huge uncertainties and exposed some fundamental weaknesses in decision making, governance and staff management.
- 9 The Chief Executive of the Authority has resigned and will leave the Authority on 31 March 2021, five of the six new senior management team posts are vacant, staff morale has fallen, systems in some key areas are not effective and weaknesses in governance behaviours and decision-making have been exposed. Failure to progress significant aspects of the Change Programme has seen a blurring of officer and member responsibilities. The Authority is now taking some tough decisions and has started to urgently address these critical risks to rebuild confidence and move forward.
- 10 Overall, we have concluded that **weaknesses in leadership and governance were highlighted by poor management and delivery of the major change programme initiated by the Authority in October 2019.**

Recommendations

- 11 Our recommendations to the Authority are set out below. In our opinion, the Authority should consider these recommendations in accordance with the requirements of section 25 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. Section 25 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires the Authority to consider the recommendations made in this report at a full meeting of the Authority within one month of the date of issue of the report.
- 12 At the meeting, the Authority will need to decide:
- whether the recommendations in the report are to be accepted; and
 - what action (if any) to take in response to the recommendations.
- 13 The Authority will then need to prepare a written response and agree the wording of that response with us before publishing its response.

Recommendations

Drive forward the Change Programme

R1 We recommend that the Authority should:

- develop and agree an action plan with clear milestones for delivering the Change Programme;
- vest scrutiny of delivery of the Action Plan in the Audit and Scrutiny Committee;

Recommendations

- regularly monitor the implementation of the action plan (at least monthly) to ensure actions are progressed and the Change Programme concluded;
 - regularly update and communicate progress on delivering the Change Programme to all members and officers; and
 - address poor morale amongst staff by ensuring officers have sufficient line manager and wider organisational support.
-

Strengthen governance

R2 We recommend that to ensure effective working arrangement between members and Officers, the Authority:

- reviews and clarifies roles and responsibilities of members and officers to ensure standards for conduct and required behaviour are clear and unambiguous, including what to do if things are not working;
 - develops a programme of training and support to ensure all members and officers understand their responsibilities and their expected behaviours;
 - ensures that all key policies for standards of conduct and required behaviours are strictly adhered to; and
 - review how changes to members and officers responsibilities and roles are working in practice within the next 12 months.
-

Strengthen decision making

R3 We recommend that the Authority improves decision making by:

- reviewing the role of the Park Policy Forum, how it works in practice and in relation to the constitution and the proper decision making of the executive (Authority); and
- ensuring all relevant papers to Authority meetings are written in plain, simple and clear language that explains technical terms, avoids 'jargon' and clearly sets out the rationale for recommendations.

14 We intend to monitor and evaluate progress in addressing these recommendations through our ongoing programme of audit work. We will also discuss the findings of this review with Welsh Government.

Detailed report

Background and introduction

- 15 The Authority covers parts of seven unitary authority areas. The Authority is the statutory planning authority for its area and has two statutory purposes and a statutory duty – **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1: the statutory purpose and duty of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

The purposes and duty form the basis of all the work undertaken by the Authority and is the starting point for the plans and strategies it develops.

Statutory Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.• to promote opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the National Park.
Statutory Duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to foster the economic and social well-being of communities living within the National Park.

Source: [1995 Environment Act](#)

- 16 Under Schedule 2 of the National Parks Authorities (Wales) Order 1995, two thirds of the 18 members of the Authority are appointed by councils. The Authority has six elected members from Powys County Council, and one elected member from each of Blaenau Gwent, Carmarthenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen councils. The other six members are appointed by Welsh Ministers.
- 17 Public appointments made by Welsh Government follow the Cabinet Office [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). Council members are appointed to the National Park Authority by their home authority. The Welsh Local Government Association, along with the three National Park Authorities in Wales, has developed draft guidance¹ to assist councils in making appointments. The draft guidance notes that appointments should be based on achieving a political balance and it is desirable for those selected to represent wards wholly or partly situated within the Park.
- 18 The Authority has developed a range of systems, processes and policies to support effective governance of the Authority. These were most recently reviewed in 2018-19 and a new governance model was created – **Exhibit 2**.

¹<https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=996>

Exhibit 2: the structure for governance of the National Park Authority

The Authority has created a comprehensive governance framework.



Source: Audit Wales

19 To assist members and officers in delivering good governance, the Authority has also adopted a series of policies and statements to help create an environment that supports the effective conduct of business, sound decision making and appropriate behaviours. Taken together, these provide a framework for proper conduct in public office.

They include:

- a [Code of Corporate Governance](#);
- an [Annual Governance Statement](#);
- a [Member Code of Conduct](#);
- a [Roles and Responsibilities policy](#) for members;
- a [Member Officer Protocol](#);
- a [Terms of Reference and a Scheme of delegation](#); and

- a revised Terms of Reference for the Appointments Committee to include the regular performance appraisal of the Chief Executive.
- 20 The Governance framework for the Authority was most recently reviewed in 2018-19 and new arrangements put in place. The Terms of Reference and a Scheme of Delegation clarify who is responsible for decisions, and core documents such as the annual governance statement and code of conduct comply with accepted standards – for example, CIPFA and SOLACE. Broadly, they contain all the elements you would expect to see and are similar to the other Welsh National Park Authorities.
- 21 At the time of our review the Authority had 104 members of staff under the leadership of a Chief Executive. These were split into three broad areas of activity with specialist teams and officers within each:
- 13 members of staff in Chief Executive (Corporate) services;
 - 22 members of staff in Planning and Development Control; and
 - 66 members of staff in Countryside, Land Management and Communities.

The rationale for the Change Programme is clear

- 22 In October 2019 the Chief Executive and Delivery Director presented a report to the National Park Authority outlining its planned Change Programme. The objective of the Change Programme was to better align the Authority's work to the Wellbeing for Future Generations and Environment Acts by creating a National Park which is in better environmental condition than at present, and one whose communities can adapt to climate change and transition to a low carbon economy. The most recent [State of the Park Report](#) shows that the environment, ecology and biodiversity of the National Park are in decline and makes clear that drastic action is required to change this.
- 23 The Change Programme is also seen as essential by Authority members and senior managers in helping to address weaknesses and risks they identified. Namely:
- a lack of clear strategic priorities and focus on purpose;
 - a lack of coherent response to multiple and conflicting external expectations;
 - a top-heavy management structure;
 - ineffective team working and communication;
 - burdensome and bureaucratic processes;
 - a lack of flexibility, innovation and adaptability within the Authority; and
 - empowering people within the Authority to make decisions.
- 24 The Authority also has an ambition to deliver with more impact and achieve longer lasting outcomes than in the past. In particular, members want to sharpen their focus on fewer priorities; transform the culture of the Authority; and strengthen leadership and accountability at all levels. Consequently, the Change Programme represents a substantial change in the way the Authority is organised and delivers against its Purposes and Duty.
- 25 Critically, the Change Programme also included a detailed restructuring of services, teams and posts. Nineteen members of staff in Planning and Development Control and Countryside, Land Management and Communities were placed at risk of redundancy,

although 8 new posts had also been created which it was anticipated staff would be recruited to. Despite the threat of redundancy and significant organisational uncertainty, staff we interviewed, and who responded to our survey, acknowledge that transformation of the Authority is needed and was long overdue.

- 26 The initial paper considered by the Authority in October 2019 proposed a 30-day consultation with a final set of proposals for members to consider and sign off in February 2020. Authority members approved the Change Programme and vested responsibility for delivery in the Chief Executive and Delivery Director. An initial consultation process started on 11 November 2019 and concluded on 11 December 2019. This was supplemented by a second consultation in March 2020.

Translating the Change Programme into practice was undermined by poor communication and indecisive leadership

- 27 We have concluded that critical thinking on how to translate the broad-brush vision into practice was underdeveloped and key building blocks for the Change Programme were not in place.

Consultation and communication on the Change Programme was handled badly

- 28 Genuine, open consultation can lead to creative solutions and build an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. Being transparent is therefore crucial in these situations. However, senior officer communication and engagement landed badly with staff and was a lost opportunity to raise the level of employee involvement. Despite senior colleagues seeking to provide advice to the Chief Executive during this process, we found that:
- the reaction of employees to the Change Programme was not handled well by senior managers. Communication and messaging on the change programme was poor and inconsistent. Staff received different messages from different senior managers on the planned changes and what it meant for individuals. This caused frustration, suspicion and uncertainty for employees.
 - the consultation documents talk about change in the broadest sense but lack substance on key issues. No job descriptions for the new posts were included in the initial consultation, nor how skills and knowledge would be retained, maintained and developed. Staff noted that when questions were raised with senior managers on how the new structure would work in practice, they were mostly left unaddressed.
 - senior managers did not seek to gather alternative ideas or suggestions from staff and focused on pushing through the proposed changes. Whilst 59 responses were provided to the initial consultation, many staff noted to us that they did not provide comprehensive feedback because they did not feel engaged or involved in the process and would not be listened to. Change was simply seen as happening to them irrespectively.
 - consultation documents had some key gaps. The Equality Impact Assessment is only partially completed and does not provide any clear assurance that proposals

are not adversely impacting on people with protected characteristics or the Welsh language for instance.

- 29 We have concluded that more could, and should, have been done to deliver an effective and meaningful consultation with staff.

Poor management and indecisive leadership resulted in the Change Programme going off course

- 30 The Change Programme is about more than a restructuring. Members we spoke to see it as a long overdue refresh of the Authority's culture. They recognise that the Authority will not fundamentally change unless the behaviours of the people within it change. And to deliver successful change requires strong and active leadership from senior managers to set the right tone. Leadership of the change programme was poor.
- 31 The Delivery Director left the authority in December 2019 and this post has remained vacant ever since. The Delivery Director was integral to making the Change Programme happen. Since his departure there has been slow or no progress, with little drive by senior managers to get things done. The Authority lacked decisive and energetic leadership at the time it was most needed, despite members challenging the Chief Executive to progress the Change Programme.
- 32 Those we have spoken to note that a critical outcome of this poor senior management and leadership of the Change Programme is that decisions have at best been delayed and at worst avoided. For example, the Delivery Director post was never filled, despite the Chief Executive requesting an interim appointment to the post in January 2020. The failure to fill the Delivery Director post, even temporarily, had a huge impact on the Authority's ability to progress the Change Programme. Similarly, staff were not robustly consulted during the development of the Programme, nor were their ongoing concerns adequately addressed. For staff posts which were at risk, it was not communicated clearly to staff how the loss of their expertise would be negated. Similarly, ongoing capacity challenges were raised but not addressed through temporary appointments until December 2020, even though there was broad agreement to address these risks.
- 33 This has added greatly to the decline in staff morale and resulted in uncertainty for both officers and members. And despite recognising there is a positive case for change, poor management left staff feeling insufficiently engaged, involved and motivated to make it a success.
- 34 Overwhelmingly, staff responding to our survey noted their concerns and anxieties with the management and handling of the Change Programme. The Authority's staff have a huge emotional investment in maintaining and promoting the National Park, but overwhelmingly employees we have spoken to and surveyed do not feel they are being heard, despite remaining loyal and committed to the Authority and its work. The threat of redundancy hanging over people, as well as the difficult working environment, has seen morale and performance fall.

The Change Programme was paused due to the pandemic but its relaunch in September 2020 was not handled well and created further problems

- 35 When Wales went into lockdown in March 2020, public bodies had to respond to a fast-changing situation to help protect their staff, visitors, residents and vital public services like the NHS. In particular, the three National Park Authorities had to shut important sites at the end of March following an influx of tourists who risked spreading coronavirus.
- 36 In response, Authority rose to the challenge of the pandemic shifting to home working and tailoring services to effectively manage visitors to the National Park and reduce the potential impact on key public services in Wales. The pandemic also resulted in the authority taking the decision to halt the Change Programme to allow staff to have the space and time to focus on responding to coronavirus on the ground.
- 37 However, suspending the Change Programme also resulted in continuing uncertainty for staff, especially those who were at risk of redundancy. Unsurprisingly employee morale continued to plummet. Staff we spoke to highlighted that having to shift to home working in a rapidly changing environment against a backdrop of an uncertain future created significant personal pressure and anxiety.
- 38 Recognising the leadership problem, members initiated a performance improvement process for the Chief Executive. The Appointments Committee provides oversight and agreed targets with the Chief Executive for the resumption of the Change Programme and delivery of the restructuring. At the beginning of the performance cycle, which lasted for three months, learning, development and support was offered to the Chief Executive. However, targets continued to be missed and a further formal review of performance was undertaken.
- 39 In discussions with members, the Chief Executive introduced a revised programme in September 2020 building on the outcome of earlier consultations. The key changes were the creation of a new Corporate Leadership Team, reporting to the Chief Executive, made up of six new Heads of Service. Some of these roles replace existing posts within the structure, whilst others have been created through an amalgamation of manager jobs.
- 40 The relaunch of the programme by the Chief Executive was not handled well. The new structure and roles were presented to staff with little pre-engagement and a number of officers only learnt of potential changes to their jobs and line management responsibilities when the revised structures were first made available to the whole workforce. Staff we spoke to noted that already low morale plummeted further because of the added uncertainty of these new changes. Rather than helping to create a positive and empowering culture, the poor handling of the relaunch resulted in, as one person we interviewed described, 'a more toxic environment'.
- 41 As a consequence, several employees have chosen to leave the Authority or accept lower graded positions within the organisation. People electing to leave the Authority, coupled with a reduction in the scope of the restructuring, has resulted in only three redundancies and most staff have been accommodated within the new structure.
- 42 However, it has reduced resilience in key areas – ICT, information management and compliance for example – but also resulted in some management processes being

weakened. For example, because of reduced capacity, staff are both signing off and approving some project payments to ensure the Authority draws down grant funding. By January 2021 roughly 20% of staff (22 people) will have no direct line manager. During the current remote working period, with many working in isolation from their colleagues, this presents a risk to staff well-being and is something the authority is urgently seeking to address.

- 43 To compound matters, in September 2020 the Authority suffered a cyber-attack which resulted in no IT services for several days. E-mail communication was returned relatively quickly, and the website, which was initially inaccessible, has been restored and gaps in public information are progressively being addressed. The results of the attack however required the Authority to cancel several committee meetings and a significant staff resource was needed to get core systems back up and running safely. Building back after the cyber-attack has been draining and challenging.
- 44 In mid-December 2020, the Chief Executive resigned. He is currently working his notice period and is due to finish with the Authority on 31 March 2021. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority have defined his priorities for the next three months and are providing ongoing support and direction.

The Change Programme has exposed some weaknesses in governance systems and behaviours

- 45 The approach, style, expectations and behaviour of members and officers is critical to healthy governance and sound decision making. When this is not working an organisation suffers. Despite refreshing governance arrangements in 2018-19, we noted some significant and growing disconnects which have come to the fore and have been clearly exposed in the Authority's handling of the Change Programme.
- 46 We found that the lines of responsibility and accountability have not been followed consistently. For instance, the Member Officer protocol clearly sets out that 'Both members and officers should take care not to give the impression that their distinct roles have become blurred in some way'. However, in practice, some members, particularly those who have roles as Chairs of Committees where work programmes are demanding, or who are asked to lead on matters of substance, have been more hands on than they should be, and are getting involved in day-to-day issues, including drafting and signing off reports.
- 47 Notionally, appointed members are expected to work roughly 35-40 days a year on National Park business. Appointed members we spoke to, however, estimated that they were spending over 100 days of their time annually on the Authority. This is partly because they act as if they are in operational roles within the Authority. But it is also a reflection of their experience, capabilities, and a desire to want to do more.
- 48 Officers responding to our survey noted that some members often go directly to middle managers and more junior staff for information and to discuss issues, by-passing senior managers. In a small organisation this can often be how people work. However, staff noted that over time this style of working has increased, and senior officers are often unsighted on what staff are working on and why. This can detract from them doing the 'day job' but has also exacerbated a blurring of responsibilities.

- 49 One particular area for concern for many staff, and some members, is the growing role and agenda of the Park Policy Forum (PPF). This body replaced the Future Direction Forum which used to meet annually to consider the big external challenges facing the National Park. In comparison, the PPF meets monthly, requires considerable support and is stretching already limited capacity further.
- 50 Some officers and members perceive the PPF is acting as an unofficial 'National Park Board', driving the agenda and strategy of the National Park Authority but conducting much of its business in private because PPF agendas, reports and minutes are not published². Whilst recommendations from the PPF are considered at subsequent full Authority meetings, some members and officers we spoke to raised concerns about its role. They feel that Authority policy is essentially being made by the PPF and only by a few members, with alternative options not being presented to the full Authority and with limited engagement in decision making.
- 51 The potential governance strength of the National Park Authority is that it blends the skills of local democratically elected and accountable members with the technical expertise and knowledge of appointed members. When the two parts work in sync it can help create a high performing organisation. However, when the two parts are not aligned, or do not work well together, it can cause friction and hinder progress.
- 52 In the last 18 months the Authority member group has not acted as one and there has been some disconnect between members. For example, some members acknowledge that others are experts who are confident to lead and drive the agenda. In comparison, many members we spoke to and surveyed feel reluctant to fully contribute to debates because they do not possess the technical knowledge or expertise to compete with, or offer sound alternatives to, those members perceived as experts. Other members voice concerns that many members do not contribute as much as they could and should and are worried that they are perceived as driving the agenda.
- 53 Some of this has been most keenly felt in the differences of opinion between some members on the direction of the Authority. There is a difference of views on who the National Park is for (residents, the people of Wales or the UK and wider), and the Authority's relative priorities for land management and farming as opposed to biodiversity, habitat protection, conservation and addressing climate change. On several occasions these tensions have boiled over resulting in a few complaints between members regarding inappropriate behaviours.
- 54 There are also some governance issues for the Welsh Government to consider, as some of the problems emanate from a lack of ongoing engagement with all appointees. The appointment process is undoubtedly rigorous and helps secure highly qualified and very experienced appointees. But once an appointment is made to a National Park Authority, there is little ongoing support provided by Welsh Government. This can leave members exposed, especially when they are faced with significant challenges as they have been in the last 12 months in the Authority.

² Local authorities, including National Park Authorities, are required to make publicly available the agendas and minutes of their meetings. Schedule 3 of the National Park Authorities (Wales) Order 1995/2803 as amended.

- 55 Working relations between some members and officers have also broken-down. This has manifested itself in some inappropriate behaviour which has adversely impacted some staff to the extent that they no longer feel confident in their work and their ability to interact with members. Officers we engaged with accept that they need to be accountable for their work and open to challenge and scrutiny. However, some staff we spoke to and surveyed feel that some members are overstepping the line of what constitutes acceptable behaviour.
- 56 Unfortunately, examples of poor member behaviour are damaging working relations and staff confidence. It has also resulted in more junior staff being exposed to difficult behaviour from some appointed members. It is reasonable to expect more senior officers to manage these situations and raise patterns of poor behaviour with members. However, whilst the Authority has sought to tackle such behaviour, it has continued to occur. Some officers noted that they have little confidence in how the organisation will deal with any complaints and concerns they raise.

The Authority has to address some critical risks and rebuild confidence, systems and governance to move forward

- 57 In the short term, the Authority has some major challenges to overcome. In particular:
- recruiting new staff to five of the six vacant senior management posts – only the Head of Planning is filled at this time;
 - drive forward the Change Programme and starting to rebuild staff morale;
 - renewing governance systems – in particular, refreshing and clarifying roles and responsibilities of staff and members, setting clear standards for appropriate behaviour and conduct, and ensuring these are adhered to;
 - putting in place the building blocks to create a new organisational culture;
 - delivering on its vision and ambitions of creating a National Park which is in better environmental condition than at present and one whose communities can adapt to climate change and transition to a low carbon economy; and
 - renewing the standing of the Authority – many members and staff we spoke to believe the reputation of the Authority is damaged and much work is required to rebuild confidence and trust in the Authority.
- 58 These are big risks for the Authority and need to be handled sensitively but at pace to ensure the current problems do not continue to fester and further undermine the organisation. With this in mind, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority took a paper to the Authority meeting of 15 December 2020 setting out how they intend to move forward and manage these risks. The key decisions agreed by members include:
- a revised Chief Executive portfolio of work to focus on key strategic issues around recruitment with an aim of having the new senior leadership team in place by June 2021.
 - addressing capacity and management gaps by buying in contractors, appointing temporary staff, introducing temporary cover and acting up arrangements and outsourcing some activities under SLA to other public bodies to deliver for the Authority.

- holding more regular meetings with staff to ensure members are 'tapped into pulse of the organisation' and can flex how they respond to address issues in real time.
- focussing on addressing and improving member behaviour through the Governance and Member Development Working Group. The Board Effectiveness Review, and Survey for members, is planned for the New Year which should help in addressing behaviour issues (although the survey could be strengthened by asking relevant staff as well as members on how well they think current processes and relationships work).

59 These decisions show the commitment of the Chair and Deputy Chair to deal with the fallout of the Change Programme and the governance risks that the Authority now faces. Members and officers we have spoken to have confidence in the Chair and Deputy Chair, and believe they have the drive and determination to get the Authority back on track.

60 We have seen signs of the key issues starting to be tackled and tough decisions being made. For example, since the announcement of the Chief Executives resignation the Chair and Deputy Chair have held two all staff meetings to take and answer questions and on a rolling basis are meeting with staff in team meetings. However, given the level of risk facing the authority, poor progress to date, the challenges presented by the pandemic and low levels of morale and high levels of anxiety amongst staff, it is reasonable to conclude that the Authority has an uncomfortable and difficult journey ahead.

Appendix 1

Review methodology

We undertook the review during the period November 2020 to January 2021. Our key lines of enquiry focused on assessing management and implementation of the Change Programme and the authority's response to COVID-19.

- We completed a survey of all Authority staff and members to assess the sustainability and resilience of the workforce and the effectiveness of the Authority response to COVID-19. The survey was launched in October 2020 and closed at the end of November 2020. Roughly 60% of officers and 50% of members responded.
- We discussed the emerging findings of the survey with the Chief Executive and Democratic Services Manager and used this information to help shape the focus of our detailed fieldwork.
- We reviewed committee papers from the last 18 months, key data, and documents and information on the Authority website.
- We interviewed a range of authority members including the Chair, Deputy Chair, Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee and members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- We interviewed a range of senior officers, middle managers, and frontline staff.
- We held two focus groups with officers.
- We interviewed officers from the Welsh Government.
- We liaised with our financial audit staff who completed the audit of the Authority accounts and considered information they hold.



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