

# Delivering with less – the impact on Environmental Health Services and citizens

## Vale of Glamorgan Council

**Audit year:** 2014-15

**Issued:** December 2014

**Document reference:** 609A2014

# Status of report

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The Wales Audit Office study team Project Manager was Nick Selwyn and comprised of Simon Pippard, Charlotte Owen and Martin Gibson and colleagues from PwC, KPMG and Grant Thornton.

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# Summary

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1. Local government plays a pivotal role in shaping and supporting their local communities and providing community leadership and democratic representation. Councils also provide a range of vital front-line services and have statutory responsibilities for many things that affect people's lives. These services include school education, planning and transport; environmental health; social services; housing; waste management; and promoting equality and sustainable development.
2. Environmental health services cover the assessment, control and prevention of factors in the environment that can adversely affect human health. They cover a range of issues that are of particular public concern, such as food safety, pest control, dog fouling and noise pollution. Council responsibilities include: assessing the quality of the homes where people live; assessing the safety of places where people work; checking the hygiene of places where people eat and where food is produced; reducing the causes and effects of air pollution; dealing with problems arising from noise and anti-social behaviour; and pest and dog control.
3. As set out in the Auditor General's recent report '*Meeting the Financial challenges facing Local Government in Wales*'<sup>1</sup>, the UK is going through an unprecedented period of fiscal austerity with significant implications for public spending in Wales. As a result of the spending reviews there have been major cuts in Welsh Government budgets. Between 2010-11 and 2013-14, the Welsh Government's revenue budget reduced by around £1 billion (seven per cent) in real terms (at 2010-11 prices). By the end of 2016, the Welsh Local Government Association expects the local government shortfall will be £460 million. Councils are therefore under increasing pressure to reduce costs whilst still having a duty to deliver many statutory services as well as make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.
4. Councils are being tested in how they respond to this challenge. The scale of cost reduction required means that councils will have to look beyond immediate short-term savings and think more radically about how to reduce costs and how to sustain this in the longer term whilst still improving services. Cutting spending effectively requires councils to take a strategic overview to avoid an erosion of service quality in priority delivery areas. Councils should clearly prioritise which services matter most, based on an accurate, realistic assessment of the costs, benefits and risks of the options to cut spending.

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<sup>1</sup> Wales Audit Office, Meeting the Financial Challenges Facing Local Government in Wales, 27 January 2014.

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5. As the first in a series of studies looking at how councils are managing to deliver with less, this study considers the impact of cuts in resources on the ability of council environmental health services to deliver their statutory obligations. We have a clear rationale for selecting environmental health services for our first national delivering with less study. Environmental health is highlighted as a service where councils should collaborate more effectively in the “Simpson” Report<sup>2</sup>. Environmental health is also a service that has been afforded less priority than other local government areas such as education and social services. Finally, citizens highly value many of the services provided by council environmental health teams, work such as tackling noise nuisance, dealing with dog fouling and inspecting food premises.
  6. The report provides a summary of our overall national level findings and compares this all Wales picture with the specific findings for Vale of Glamorgan Council (the Council). We have reviewed a wide range of documents and media and undertook fieldwork at all 22 local authorities in Wales. In addition, we completed an assessment of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Wales Best Practice Standards and the current levels of practice within each council and a detailed analysis of revenue expenditure and staff data at each Council against the Best Practice Standards. We also undertook a survey of all local authority environmental health staff and all elected members and made available and promoted an on-line survey for Welsh citizens.
  7. In summary, we concluded that **the Council is delivering environmental health services at above minimum levels despite a cut in budgets and a significant fall in staff numbers but stakeholders have a mixed view about the management of services and the Council will find it difficult to take on new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment.** We came to this conclusion because we found that:
    - councils have many statutory environmental health duties but spending is not being protected during the current period of financial austerity, which is making it more difficult to deliver national strategic priorities;
    - the Council is delivering most of its environmental health services at minimum levels or above as judged against the Best Practice Standards;
    - between 2011-12 and 2013-14 the Council cut expenditure on environmental health services and the number of staff engaged in this work fell significantly;
    - staff survey respondents have mixed views on the current standard of environmental health service but there is a low awareness of current performance or future plans amongst citizens; and
    - new environmental health statutory duties are being introduced which the Council will find it difficult to deliver.

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<sup>2</sup> Local Government Leadership Centre, Local, Regional, National: What Services are Delivered Where? March 2011.

## Recommendations

8. The key recommendations arising from work we carried out under our national report are set out below. We identify the responsible partners who should co-operate to address these recommendations. These include the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Cymru as well as councils. We have listed these recommendations in full to ensure all councils are fully aware of our findings and are working with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Wales Head of Environmental Health Group to address these.

Recommendation	Responsible Partners
<p>R1 Revise the best practice standards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>align the work of environmental health with national strategic priorities;</li> <li>identify the wider contribution of environmental health in delivering strategic priorities of Welsh Government; and</li> <li>identify the benefit and impact of environmental health services on protecting citizens.</li> </ul>	<p>Councils Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Cymru</p>
<p>R2 Provide scrutiny chairs and members with the necessary skills and support to effectively scrutinise and challenge service performance, savings plans and the impact of budget reductions.</p>	<p>Councils Welsh Local Government Association</p>
<p>R3 Improve engagement with local residents over planned budget cuts and changes in services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consulting with residents on planned changes in services and using the findings to shape decisions;</li> <li>outlining which services are to be cut and how these cuts will impact on residents; and</li> <li>setting out plans for increasing charges or changing standards of service.</li> </ul>	<p>Councils Welsh Local Government Association</p>

Recommendation	Responsible Partners
<p>R4 Improve efficiency and value for money by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying the statutory and non-statutory duties of council environmental health services;</li> <li>• agreeing environmental health priorities for the future and the role of councils in delivering these;</li> <li>• determining an 'acceptable standard of performance' for environmental health services (upper and lower) and publicise these to citizens;</li> <li>• improving efficiency and maintaining performance to the agreed level through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collaborating and/or integrating with others to reduce cost and/or improve quality;</li> <li>out sourcing where services can be delivered more cost effectively to agreed standards;</li> <li>introducing and/or increasing charges and focussing on income generation activity;</li> <li>using grants strategically to maximise impact and return; and</li> <li>reducing activities to focus on core statutory and strategic priorities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Councils Welsh Local Government Association Welsh Government</p>
<p>R5 Improve strategic planning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying, collecting and analysing financial, performance and demand/need data on environmental health services;</li> <li>• analysing collected data to inform and understand the relationship between 'cost: benefit: impact' and use this intelligence to underpin decisions on the future of council environmental health services; and</li> <li>• agree how digital information can be used to plan and develop environmental health services in the future.</li> </ul>	<p>Councils</p>
<p>R6 Clearly set out the expectations of council environmental health services under new housing and health legislation and agree how these new duties will be delivered.</p>	<p>Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association</p>

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## The Council is delivering environmental health services at above minimum levels despite a cut in budgets and a significant fall in staff numbers but stakeholders have a mixed view about the management of services and the Council will find it difficult to take on new statutory duties that protect the public and the environment

9. In this section of the report, we summarise the findings of our national report on the state of council environmental health services in Wales and specific to the Council. This information is based on an analysis of the financial pressures councils are under; the changes in environmental health budgets and staffing between 2011-12 and 2013-14; the Best Practice Standards for Environmental Health; the findings of our staff survey for individual councils and the national survey findings for elected members and citizens; and an analysis of new council environmental health duties proposed by the Welsh Government.

### Councils have many statutory environmental health duties but spending is not being protected during the current period of financial austerity, which is making it more difficult to deliver national strategic priorities

10. Following the May 2010 election, the new UK coalition government carried out a Spending Review, which was finalised in October 2010. The Spending Review covered the years 2011-12 through to 2014-15 and was driven by a desire to reduce UK government spending in order to cut the budget deficit. The details of the Spending Review were announced on 20 October 2010 and introduced significant cuts in public spending. The review intended to cut £81 billion in public spending over the life of the coalition government, with average departmental cuts of 19 per cent. In addition, major changes in welfare were announced including £7 billion of cuts, changes to incapacity benefit, housing benefit and tax credits and a rise in the state pension age to 66 from 2020. Public sector employees also face a £3.5 billion increase in public pension contributions<sup>3</sup>. Because of slow economic growth, the UK government undertook a further Spending Review in 2013 to adjust its spending plans and introduce an additional two years of public spending cuts, taking fiscal austerity up to 2017-18.

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<sup>3</sup> *An introduction to Spending Review*, HM Treasury, 2010.



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11. The Welsh budget is agreed following the UK government spending reviews. While some of the money is spent directly by the Welsh Government in accordance with Ministerial priorities, a significant proportion is allocated to the public bodies which it sponsors and funds; for example local government, the NHS in Wales and Welsh Government sponsored public bodies. Because of the spending reviews, there have been major cuts in Welsh Government budgets. Between 2010-11 and 2013-14, the Welsh Government's revenue budget reduced by around £1 billion (seven per cent) in real terms (at 2010-11 prices). However, the capital budget has seen much sharper reductions – in the order of 40 per cent, in real terms<sup>4</sup>.
  12. Overall, councils in Wales had a £155 million (3.8 per cent) real-terms reduction in their revenue funding from the Welsh Government in 2011-12. In real terms, the revenue funding from the Welsh Government will be around £283 million (seven per cent) lower in 2013-14 than 2010-11. In October 2013, the Welsh Government announced reductions in core funding of £175 million in 2014-15 and a further £65 million in 2015-16. By the end of 2016, the Welsh Local Government Association expects the local government shortfall will be £460 million<sup>5</sup>.
  13. The Welsh Government is prioritising investment in creating jobs, improving educational attainment and supporting children, families and deprived communities. By prioritising these areas, other services get less priority and, consequently, less protection from the cuts that the Welsh Government has to make. In 2012-13, the bulk of council spending is on education and social services, which account for 63 per cent of net revenue expenditure.
  14. Statutory services, which councils are required to deliver, have grown incrementally through the years on the back of numerous individual statutory provisions, regulations, directives and interpretations of all of these by judges on a case-by-case basis. It can sometimes be a very difficult matter of interpretation and judgement as to whether a particular service is a statutory or discretionary one. Work by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government identified 1,340 separate statutory duties and councils have over 200 separate environmental health statutory powers. However, no work has been undertaken in Wales to identify the statutory and non-statutory duties of council environmental health services or agree the national priorities for environmental health in the future.
  15. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the all Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group has, through its Best Practice Standards, further defined the range of statutory and discretionary environmental health services delivered by councils in Wales. This extensive range of services highlights the importance of environmental health in protecting the public and improving the quality of life for people living and visiting Wales. Whilst the best practice standards outline the statutory responsibilities for council environmental health services, they could be improved by better aligning the work of environmental health with national and local strategic priorities.

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<sup>4</sup> Wales Audit Office, *Meeting the Financial Challenges Facing Local Government in Wales*, January 2014

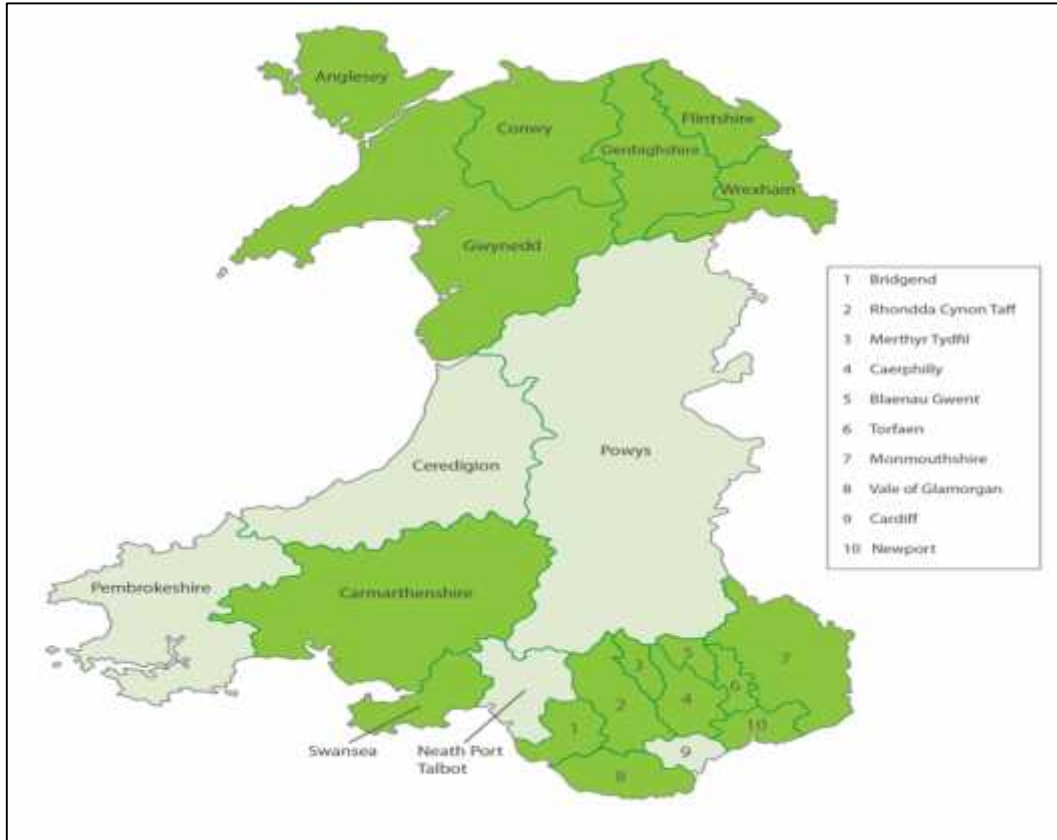
<sup>5</sup> [www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/175m-down-and-counting](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/175m-down-and-counting)

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- 16.** In addition to the wide range of statutory duties that councils are responsible for, they also provide many preventative and discretionary services. In terms of environmental health these include health promotion, work under school-based health initiatives such as the Healthy Options programme and dealing with pests that are detrimental to a person's health. These services contribute to the well-being of communities and are very often highly valued. Indeed, there is increasing recognition of the value of these low-level preventive and discretionary services in promoting quality of life. They can often also delay or prevent any need for more intensive and costly services. Yet, with councils having to make significant cuts to their budgets and under pressure to prioritise resources on education and social services, many of these high-value: low-cost discretionary services are under threat.
- 17.** Environmental health work is often a local priority for improvement for councils. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) places a general duty on councils to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the services they provide. In 2013-14, 17 of the 22 councils have adopted improvement objectives that relate to the work of environmental health services. Eleven councils set objectives relating to the need to improve the quality, condition and/or affordability of housing; eight councils to improve and protect the environment; five prioritised health improvements; and one council improving public health and protection services.

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### Exhibit 1: Council Improvement Objectives 2013-14

Seventeen of the 22 Welsh councils prioritised environmental health work as part of their 2013-14 improvement objectives



*Exhibit Source: Wales Audit Office, Review of Improvement Objectives 2013-14.*

- 18.** The Council has set one improvement objective that relates to environmental health: To reduce the time taken to deliver disabled facilities grants to children and young people and to adults to achieve the Welsh average performance of 2011-12 as a minimum. [Appendix 1](#) provides the full list of council Improvement Objectives 2013-14 relating to environmental health services for all councils in Wales.

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19. In 2011, the Welsh Government published its Programme for Government, which sets four broad strategic themes covering the Assembly term 2011-2015. These are: growth and sustainable jobs; educational attainment; supporting children, families and deprived communities; and improving health and well-being for all citizens<sup>6</sup>. Under these four broad objectives, the Welsh Government has made a series of commitments to either improve current services or develop new approaches, and allocated funding to support this activity. Many of these relate to the work of council environmental health services. For example: improving the quality of Welsh homes; preventing poor health and reducing health inequalities; improving safety in communities; and living within environmental limits and acting on climate change. Reductions in environmental health services will have an effect on the delivery of national strategic priorities.

### The Council is delivering most of its environmental health services at minimum levels or above as judged against the Best Practice Standards

20. Our review has been delivered consistently across the 22 Welsh Councils judging the Best Practice Standards that cover all aspects of environmental health services delivered by councils in Wales. These show that the work of council environmental health teams are broad and far reaching and impact on all residents and visitors in Wales as well as supporting delivery of the Programme for Government and local improvement priorities. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the all Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group has, through its Best Practice Standards, sought to further define the range of statutory and discretionary environmental health services delivered by councils in Wales<sup>7</sup>.
21. The standards are subject to regular review and update to take account of changes in statutory guidance; the impact of new legislation or case law; and to reflect new ways of delivering services. The standards define activity in each of the service areas and set out the characteristics that constitute: a minimum standard service; a good standard of service; and best practice in each of the areas. These broadly reflect the statutory obligations for all environmental health services covering 11 areas of activity. A short summary is set out on each of these in [Appendix 2](#).
22. Exhibit 2 shows that in most environmental health areas the Council is delivering services that are above minimum standard. Overall, the Council is delivering:
- Ñ 31.2 per cent of environmental health services to the highest standard compared to an Wales average of 37 per cent;
  - Ñ 37.3 per cent assessed as being delivered to a good standard compared to an all Wales average of 30 per cent;
  - Ñ 22.5 per cent at the minimum standard of service set compared to an all Wales average of 22 per cent;

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<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government: <http://wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgov/about?lang=en>

<sup>7</sup> Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Wales and all Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group, Best Practice Standards, October 2013.

- Ñ 2.3 per cent below the minimum standard; and
- Ñ 6.7 per cent of the services covered were not included within the environmental health services audited.

### Exhibit 2: The Council's performance against the Best Practice Standards 2013-14

The Council's environmental health service is mostly delivering above minimum standard against the Best Practice Standards.

Vale of Glamorgan	Not included within EH services audited	Below Minimum Standard	Minimum Standard	Good Standard	Best Practice
Communicable Disease Control	0	0	2	0	5
Food safety Control	0	0	0	5	13
Health and Safety	0	0	1	7	7
Recruitment Training and Development	0	4	10	6	0
Port Health	5	0	17	8	5
Pest Control	0	0	2	6	7
Dog Control	0	0	2	6	9
Pollution Control	10	1	9	18	7
Licensing	0	0	0	3	3
Housing	0	0	3	19	6
Health Improvement	0	0	4	5	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>69</b>

*Exhibit Source: Wales Audit Office analysis of Welsh councils' performance in delivering the Best Practice Standards, 2013-14.*

Between 2011-12 and 2013-14 the Council cut expenditure on environmental health services and the number of staff engaged in this work fell significantly

- 23. In this part of the report, we examine the reduction in the budgets for council environmental health services over the last three years and the impact of these changes on staff numbers and roles. The amount of money that councils spend on environmental health services is very small, relative to total local government spend. In 2012-13, councils in Wales spent £9,085 million on the services they provide, of which £40.8 million was spent on Environmental Health services. This equates to 0.44 per cent of all council expenditure. The combined budgets for all council environmental health services in 2011-12 were £41.2 million. This fell to £40.8 million in 2012-13 and to £39.5 million in 2013-14. This equates to a fall of 4.2 per cent between 2011-12 and 2013-14.
- 24. With regard to the Council, the budget for environmental health services in this period has fallen by 2.5 per cent, the thirteenth largest cut in expenditure for all councils<sup>8</sup> with the budget falling from £2,097,270 in 2011-12 to £2,045,960 in 2013-14. In addition, the Council also underspent against its environmental health budget in 2011-12 by 19.45 per cent and by 1.5 per cent in 2012-13.

Exhibit 3: Percentage difference between budgets set in 2011-12 and 2013-14

The Council has had the third smallest budget cut in environmental health resources.

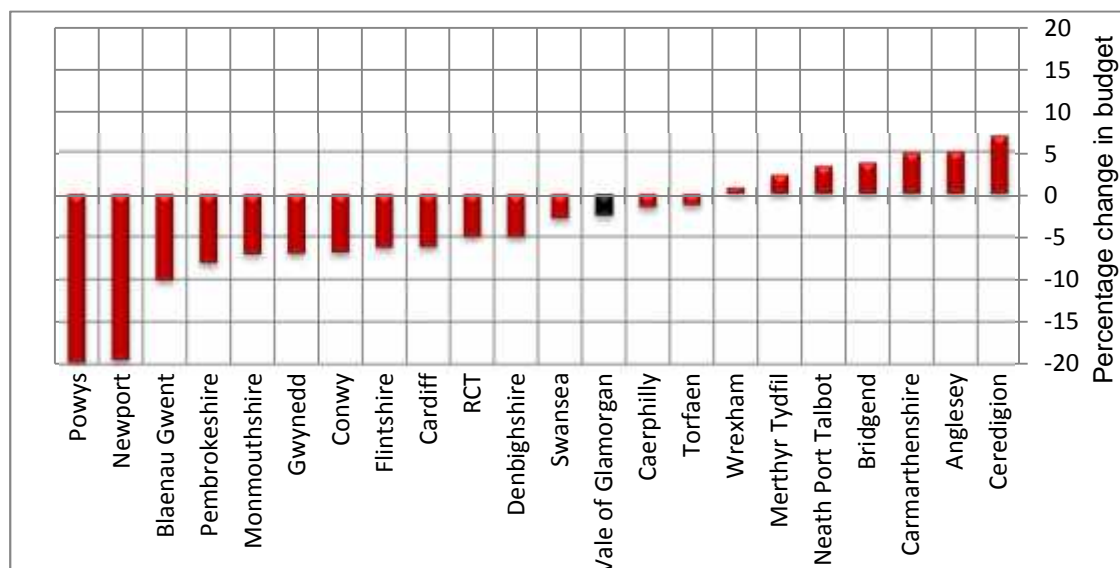


Exhibit Source: Wales Audit Office analysis of Welsh councils’ environmental health budget and staffing for the period 2011-12 to 2013-14.

<sup>8</sup> Budgets for environmental health services include ‘back office’ support activities provided by other directorates and costs are recharged to environmental health through an apportionment model and include their associated overheads (furniture, equipment, IT, etc).

25. Exhibit 4 shows that between 2011-12 and 2013-14, the Council has seen large reductions in its health and safety inspections; pest control; and dog control budgets. The Council has also increased expenditure on food safety control; and communicable disease control. Overall, the Council has reduced expenditure on environmental health services by 2.5 per cent, lower than the average budget reduction of 4.18 per cent for all Welsh councils.

**Exhibit 4: Comparison of the change in Best Practice Standards budget between 2011-12 and 2013-14**

The Council has reduced expenditure on environmental health services by 2.5 per cent in the last three financial years

Best Practice Standard Area	All Wales % change in budget	Vale of Glamorgan % change in budget
Recruitment Training and Development	28.8%	0%
Health Improvement	13.7%	0%
Port Health	2.6%	0%
Dog Control	1.6%	-14.9%
Food Safety Control	1.2%	21.8%
Pollution Control	-3%	-8.4%
Housing	-4.7%	-2.68%
Communicable Disease Control	-7%	16.3%
Health and Safety	-11.7%	-35.5%
Licensing	-17.5%	-3%
Pest Control	-18.9%	-19.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>-4.18%</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>

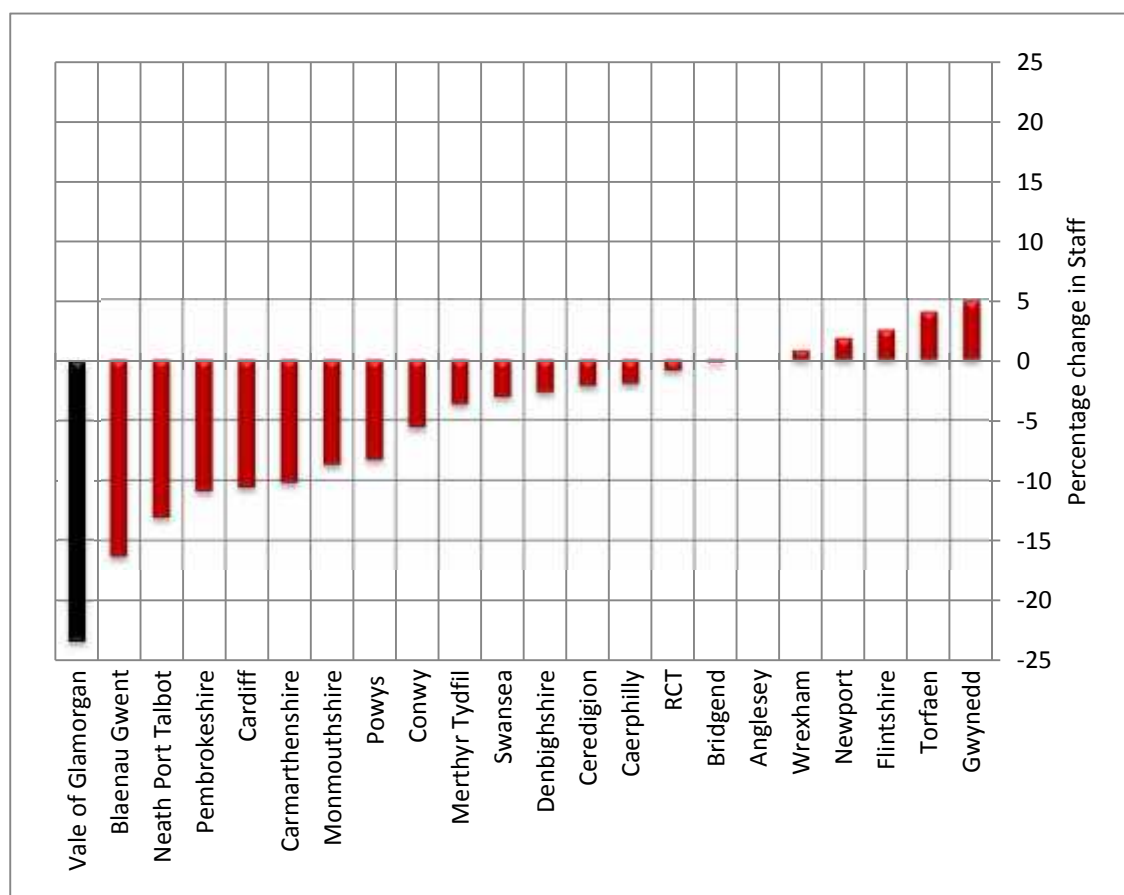
*Exhibit Source: Wales Audit Office analysis of Welsh councils' environmental health budget and staffing for the period 2011-12 to 2013-14.*

26. A council's workforce is one of its greatest assets and a significant proportion of council expenditure is on staffing. At a time of financial pressures, balanced budgets are often achieved mainly by reducing staff numbers through voluntary early release and vacancy management, where staff that leave are not replaced. This trend is set to continue as councils look to further reduce staff costs as part of their strategies for achieving additional budget reductions.

27. The staffing of council environmental services nationally across all 22 councils has seen a sharp cut of 16.4 per cent, with the number of council employees working in environmental health services falling from 1,046 in 2011-12 to 874 in 2013-14. The number of staff employed by the Council to deliver environmental health services has also marginally increased from 50.9 full time equivalents in 2011-12, to 39 in 2013-14. This equates to a reduction of 23.4 per cent – Exhibit 5.

**Exhibit 5: Percentage difference in staff numbers in 2011-12 and 2013-14**

Sixteen councils have reduced the number of staff employed to deliver environmental health services since 2011-12 and the Council has the largest percentage cut.



*Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office analysis of Welsh councils' environmental health budget and staffing for the period 2011-12 to 2013-14*

28. Exhibit 6 shows that the Council has seen large cuts in all staff groups and no change in trainees. The 23.4 per cent cut in the Council's environmental health staff numbers is significantly higher than the overall average reduction of 16.4 per and is the largest cut for all Welsh councils.



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**Exhibit 6: Comparison of the number of full-time equivalent Environmental Health Staff by function between 2011-12 and 2013-14**

The number of full-time equivalent staff employed by the Council to deliver Environmental Health services fell by 23.4 per cent between 2011-12 and 2013-14

<b>Staff Function</b>	<b>All Wales % change in staff</b>	<b>Vale of Glamorgan % change in staff</b>
Manager/Team leader	-18.8%	-32%
Qualified EHO	-13.3%	-30%
Technician	-16.6%	-9.7%
Administrator	-19.6%	-25.4%
Trainee (Paid)	-62.5%	0%
Trainee (Unpaid)	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>-16.4%</b>	<b>-23.4%</b>

*Exhibit Source: Wales Audit Office analysis of Welsh councils' environmental health budget and staffing for the period 2011-12 to 2013-14.*

**Staff survey respondents have mixed views on the current standard of environmental health service but there is a low awareness of current performance or future plans amongst citizens**

- 29.** Carrying out surveys of the views of staff, elected members and citizens can be valuable in providing an insight into the relative strengths or weaknesses of the service and the scope for improvements. For this work, we undertook a survey of all local authority environmental health staff and all elected members between December 2013 and January 2014. We received 599 responses from council environmental health staff (62.7 per cent of those surveyed) and 206 responses from elected members (17.6 per cent of those invited to respond). We also made available and promoted an on-line survey for Welsh citizens. The survey began on 5 December 2013 and closed on 4 March 2014 and we received 572 responses.
- 30.** For the staff survey we report the findings specific to the Council comparing responses from Council employees with the Welsh survey average. Given the size of the respondent base, for the elected member and citizen survey we only report findings at an all Wales level.

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- 31.** Our survey of environmental health staff found that 98 per cent of Council staff respondents felt they fully understood the requirements of their job and 79 per cent strongly agreed or agreed that they had received sufficient training to do a good job. Fifty one per cent of Council staff responding to our survey strongly agreed or agreed that they had enough time to do all the work that is required, significantly higher than the all Wales staff survey average of 35 per cent.
  - 32.** Similarly, a larger proportion of respondents agreed that the quality of the Council's environmental health services are improving than the Welsh survey average, 51 per cent for the Council compared to the all Wales average of 47 per cent. However, only 51 per cent of Council staff respondents felt that the environmental health service met all of its statutory obligations, much lower than the all Wales average of 63 per cent.
  - 33.** Our surveys found that whilst councillors are receiving information and deciding on budget cuts in environmental health services, a significant proportion – 46 per cent – are unclear on the impact of their decisions and whether services are able to continue to deliver in the future. 70.4 per cent of councillors responding to our survey believe that their council's environmental health services are meeting their statutory obligations and 69.4 per cent that these services are improving.
  - 34.** Only 36 per cent of staff respondents in the Council felt that senior managers communicated their plans effectively to staff. This is lower than the all Wales survey average of 38 per cent. However, 48 per cent of Council respondents felt that councillors and senior managers recognise the importance of environmental health services, lower than the all Wales survey average of 51 per cent. Fifty four per cent of staff felt that the Council encouraged them develop new and more efficient ways of working, the same as our all Wales survey average.
  - 35.** With regard to members of the public, the people who receive these services, we found a mixed picture of how informed they feel about the changes taking place. We found that most respondents have yet to see a significant change in how their council provides services to them. For example, 69 per cent felt that the speed of response when requesting a service remained quick and only 28.3 per cent felt that it took longer to deal with their query. Only 27.7 per cent stated that they are now paying for services that were provided free in the past and only 16.6 per cent that the charge for the service had increased. Only 15.9 per cent stated that the service they requested was no longer provided.
  - 36.** Whilst 90.5 per cent of citizens who responded to our survey are aware that councils have to cut how much they spend on the services they provide, only 33 per cent believe that they have been informed on where the council plans to make savings and reduce expenditure and a large proportion – 45.6 per cent – state they did not know what their council planned to do and where cuts in services are planned.

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- 37.** Only 17.4 per cent of respondents feel they know how reductions in budgets will affect them with regard to the services they receive, compared to 53.3 per cent who claim they have not been informed. In addition, only 26 per cent of respondents believe that their council keeps them informed of how well the services they receive are performing. Only 24 per cent of respondents to our survey believe their council has effectively engaged with them on future plans and are clear how future cuts will affect them.

### **New environmental health statutory duties are being introduced which councils will find it difficult to deliver**

- 38.** The Welsh Government is planning significant new legislation that will impact directly on the services provided by councils' environmental health teams. This is on top of recent major legislative changes such as the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013<sup>9</sup>, which created new mandatory duties for council environmental health services. There is concern, especially amongst councillors and staff, that the introduction of new powers and duties at a time when services are being significantly cut back will prove unworkable.
- 39.** The Housing (Wales) Bill was introduced on 18 November 2013 and will make significant changes across the housing sector to ensure that people have access to a decent, affordable home and better housing-related services. In particular, the Welsh Government is proposing improved standards and management in the private rented sector by the introduction of a mandatory registration and licensing scheme; reduced levels of homelessness by placing its prevention at the centre of local authority duties to help people at risk; and fewer long-term empty properties by encouraging owners to sell or rent them – thereby helping to increase housing supply. Key to many of the bill's intentions will be the effective oversight of private sector housing and use of new enforcement powers to drive up standards and improve housing quality. Many of these new duties will become the responsibility of environmental health teams.
- 40.** In April 2014, the Welsh Government began consulting on the Listening to you: Your health matters White Paper<sup>10</sup> that sets out a series of proposals for legislation to help further improve and protect people's health and well-being in Wales. The White Paper identifies actions to address the important public health issues of tobacco, alcohol misuse and obesity; to build community assets for health through proposals to strengthen the role of local health boards when planning and delivering pharmaceutical services, and to improve provision and access to toilets for public use; and to improve the regulation of certain types of procedures such as cosmetic piercing and tattooing. Council environmental health teams will play an important role in delivering key elements of this legislation such as health promotion and regulation of services.

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<sup>9</sup> The act makes it compulsory for food businesses to display their food hygiene rating where it can easily be seen by customers. Food businesses are rated between 0 (urgent improvement necessary) to 5 (very good) based on their compliance with food law requirements. The act requires local authorities to enforce the mandatory scheme in their area and ensure ratings are correctly displayed.

<sup>10</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/phhs/consultation/140402consultationen.pdf>

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- 41.** Bridgend, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Councils are planning to create a single regulatory service covering environmental health, trading standards and licensing. Each Council is considering the business case for this new regional service which, if approved, is planned to be established in the autumn of 2015-16. The business case highlights that combining these services will result in savings of between £1.1 million and £1.3 million for the three councils.

# Appendix 1

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## Council Improvement Objectives 2013-14 relating to environmental health services

Council	Improvement Objective
Blaenau Gwent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To provide a clean and pleasant environment to enjoy and be proud of, by listening to our citizens and visitors and promoting what we do.</li></ul>
Bridgend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working together to tackle health issues and encourage health lifestyles.</li></ul>
Caerphilly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improve the availability of private and public sector housing to reduce the number of residents who may become homeless.</li></ul>
Carmarthenshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improve the Council housing stock and assist local people to gain access to rented and affordable homes.</li><li>Protect and enhance the environment and make a major contribution to sustainable energy and climate change policies.</li></ul>
Conwy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>People in Conwy are safe and feel safe.</li><li>People in Conwy live in safe and appropriate housing.</li><li>People in Conwy are healthy and independent.</li></ul>
Denbighshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensuring access to good quality housing.</li></ul>
Flintshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To meet housing need in the County and to work with partners to ensure a sufficient supply of quality and affordable homes and housing services in the social, mixed tenure and private sector housing markets.</li><li>To protect, plan and develop sustainable natural and built environments.</li></ul>
Gwynedd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promoting an appropriate supply of housing for local people.</li></ul>
Isle of Anglesey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase our Housing Options and reduce Poverty.</li></ul>
Merthyr Tydfil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Active Lifestyles - People in Merthyr Tydfil are physically active and as a result have improved health.</li><li>Sustainable Environment - People in Merthyr Tydfil will live in communities that are sustainable, clean and energy efficient.</li></ul>
Monmouthshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>We want to work with our residents to reduce the impact we have on the environment and use our resources more sustainably.</li></ul>
Newport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) - To provide an enhanced programme of Disabled Facilities Grants with the aim of reducing average delivery time from first date of contact.</li></ul>

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Council	Improvement Objective
<b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public health and protection – protecting people from harm and tackling anti-social behaviour – this was called Enforcement and Regulation in previous years and has been re-titled to better reflect the main outcomes to be achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Swansea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help people adopt and develop healthy and sustainable lifestyles in order to improve health.</li> <li>Improve Housing and Housing supply in order to increase the availability of good quality, affordable housing.</li> </ul>
<b>Torfaen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the local environment is safe, managed and maintained.</li> </ul>
<b>Vale of Glamorgan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce the time taken to deliver disabled facilities grants to children and young people and to adults to achieve the Welsh average performance of 2011/12 as a minimum.</li> </ul>
<b>Wrexham</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All people are enabled to make healthy choices.</li> <li>Homes that meet people's needs and aspirations.</li> <li>An environmentally responsible place.</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2

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## The Best Practice Standards 2013-14

### Best Practice Standards

**Communicable Disease Control** – Councils have statutory responsibility for notifiable infectious disease in their locality (which includes the control of food poisoning) under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. Certain infectious diseases are notifiable to Public Health Wales and these are investigated by the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) or by officers of the local authority to try to prevent the spread of illness within the community and to try and establish possible causes.

**Food Safety Control** – Councils are responsible for the routine inspection of food premises located within their area and for the on-going enforcement of relevant food law. Duties include investigating complaints made by the public about food and food premises; undertaking food surveillance sampling; providing advice on all food safety matters to the public and the food industry; and providing reports to the Licensing Board in relation to licensed premises.

**Health and Safety** – Health and safety enforcement is split between local authorities and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Local authorities tend to cover most service and retail premises within an area and the HSE larger premises such as factories. Local authorities carry out health and safety inspections and investigate complaints about workplaces.

**Recruitment, Training and Development** – Provision of learning and development opportunities to equip staff to deliver their job more effectively. For environmental health this includes Continual professional Development or CPD; the means by which environmental health staff maintain their knowledge and skills related to their profession. This is especially important for environmental health services because Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) are often required to provide evidence in court cases and qualified EHOs need to satisfy the court that their knowledge is up to date and of sufficient breadth for them to be considered an authoritative expert witness.

**Port Health** – The UK imports just under 50 per cent of its overall food requirements. Consequently, it is important that public health safeguards are established and maintained for the commercial use of shipping and the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. For some local authorities this is an important area of work and includes the inspection of shipping, including passenger vessels, to ensure public health standards are met; investigating reported sickness amongst ship's company or passengers; and inspecting foodstuffs and products of animal origin.

**Pest Control** – Councils often offer a pest control service for homes and commercial premises. They can provide treatments to control rats, mice, cockroaches and bedbugs. Some services are chargeable and whilst the service is important in dealing with pests that are perceived to be detrimental to a person's health, the ecology or the economy, not all councils provide these services.

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## Best Practice Standards

**Dog Control** – Councils deal with complaints from members of the public about dog fouling, stray dogs, nuisance dogs and dangerous dogs. Councils in Wales also have the power to create specific dog control orders through the Dog Control Orders (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Wales) Regulations 2007.

**Pollution Control** – Councils provide a specialist range of monitoring, investigation and enforcement services covering air pollution and air quality; contaminated land; and noise and vibration. This work can include review and assessment of air quality; identification and regulation of contaminated land; routine monitoring of landfill gas at closed council landfill sites; noise and vibration measurements and analyses; regulation of industrial processes; investigation of complaints concerning industry; provision of environmental data and information; and provision of advice and technical support for the Building Regulation, regeneration and development control processes.

**Community Safety** – Community safety is not just an issue for police and fire and rescue authorities. Councils contribute in a variety of ways, including the work of environmental health services. For example regulation, licensing and trading standards through the provision of alcohol and entertainment licenses to help maintain public order, food hygiene certification for businesses to prevent food poisoning.

**Public Health** - Public health is about helping people to stay healthy and avoid getting ill. Responsibility for many Public Health functions rests with Councils and includes advice and information on a whole range of health services such as immunisation, healthy eating, tobacco and alcohol, drugs recovery, sexual health and mental health issues.

**Licensing** – Council licensing services cover a wide range of activities, events and services, most of which we encounter during our day-to-day life. In terms of environmental health licensing relates to visits and inspections carried out of specific licensed premises and services that impact on the health of citizens and livestock, including premises licensed for animal welfare purposes or acupuncture, tattooing, cosmetic piercing and electrolysis.

**Housing** – All landlords have a legal responsibility to maintain their properties and ensure they are let in a good state of repair. The property must be free from all serious health and safety hazards. Where the landlord fails in this duty, councils will inspect the property using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and where necessary enforce that the landlord removes the hazard(s) from the property. Councils must also run a licensing scheme for certain types of high-risk houses in multiple occupation (HMO). Various acts of Parliament also give councils discretionary powers to resolve unsatisfactory conditions in houses, HMOs and flats, and to reduce the impact of long-term empty properties. Councils also deliver capital improvement work to private sector housing through renewal areas and group repair schemes, as well as provide Disabled Facilities Grants to support people to live independently.

*Exhibit Source: Best Practice Standards, October 2013.*





Wales Audit Office  
24 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: [info@wao.gov.uk](mailto:info@wao.gov.uk)

Website: [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru  
24 Heol y Gadeirlan  
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn Testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: [info@wao.gov.uk](mailto:info@wao.gov.uk)

Gwefan: [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)