

Working Group Report to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Working Group:	Governance and Audit Highways Transport and Recycling (HTR) Working Group
Meetings Held:	From February to June 2023

Matters Considered

The Working Group carried out a deep dive into 7 SWAP Internal Audit Reports with Action Plans being presented to the Working Group. The Reports:

1. Commissioning
2. Procurement
3. Monitoring and Delivery
4. Stock
5. Fleet
6. Non-standard Payments
7. Time Recording

Outcomes / Concerns / Observations:

- HTR were commended on the actions that had been implemented from the outcome of the audit reports.
- Reports would have been more informative had the HTR Department advised at the time of its commissioning of the classification of different types of resurfacing works. These range from filling potholes to area patching, to resurfacing of one or both sides of the highway to resurfacing trunk roads as agents for Welsh Government. This only became apparent through the officers' presentations and highlighted the work necessary for each type.
- Which raised a further concern that officers need to comment constructively on the terms of reference for Audit reports.
- Since the implementation of new policies and systems more robust monitoring methodologies were in place which is an essential element for a successful service. It was not evident that prior to this adequate monitoring was undertaken.
- The pace in which the Council undertook actions with the discovery of malpractice was disappointing and left the Council open to criticism. The Working Group felt that the reputation of the Council could be under threat if a future occurrence were to occur.
- Use of excess tarmac remains a concern due to the slow roll out of the AMX system, however, assurance was provided that new policies and procedures had been implemented to eradicate deficient performance.
- The Working Group stressed the importance of embedding improvements at all levels of the service and not to assume understanding. Senior staff members must hold responsibilities that staff are fulfilling their roles in the correct manner.
- The service being under resourced, raised concerns and may have health and safety implications to uphold and abide by current policies and regulations.
- The Working Group felt that the audit report did not always provide clarity and that Officers had to expand and provide more detail of common and specific procedural improvements the spectrum of road surfacing works ranging from filling in potholes to area patching to part and full carriageway planning and re-surfacing to major works on trunk roads undertaken as Agents for the Welsh Government.
- It was hoped that Contractor Days could be re-introduced on at least an annual basis to attract and engage with local contractors due to the lack of availability within the local area.

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- Lastly but importantly, Data Map Wales presented a live layered database GIS system of real time works within Wales to the Working Group, they felt the need for a Council-wide policy on GIS and associated relational and interrogatable databases which would generate similar benefits for other Departments such as Planning and Property which should be taken up by the main Governance and Audit Committee.

Follow up SWAP Audit Report – November 2023

- The reports evidenced several Amber and Red status items including that the AMX Specialist role which had not begun and would commence until the 01st of February 2024.
 - It was emphasised that the need for critical posts must be recognised and safeguarded by the Council and emphasised that key roles must exist within the new sustainable Powys structure to provide resilience within the service.
 - The potential for attracting and retention of staff had proven difficult within the service and the recruitment of internal staff into a key role had led to a prolonged start date which was an uncomfortable compromise.
 - The vacant role left the service vulnerable, however the Working Group were reassured that a AMX Technician role was being advertised what would provide better resilience to the Service.
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- The Working Group will meet in six months' time to review progress.

Recommendations to the Governance and Audit Committee:
Recommendations to the Cabinet:

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus, Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus, Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus, Rationale)
1. Ensure the AMX Specialist Posts are fulfilled as soon as possible and ensure the AMX system continues to be fully supported for the service.			
2. Data Map Wales presentation to be extended to CLT and Cabinet and ensure awareness and implementation responsibilities are allocated.			