

REPORT A

Heads of Service Overview

This is a brief overview of half year performance from each Head of Service who reports data to the Policy & Resources and Community Scrutiny

Wendy S Walters – Assistant Chief Executive – Regeneration and Policy

Corporate Policy & Partnership

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- The Act became law on the 29 April 2015 and the duty will need to be implemented by public bodies, Public Service Boards and community councils from April 2016 onwards.
- The Act requires the bodies named, (the Council being one) to ensure the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales is considered in all that we do, individually and collectively, with the aim of achieving the well-being goals.
- Further information will be provided to members in due course, with a formal report to the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee at its January 2016 meeting on the key requirements for the Council.

Carmarthenshire Local Service Board Partnership Review

- As part of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and preparation for the new Public Services Board the LSB requested a review of the current partnership structure.
- This review included the current arrangements of the Children & Young Peoples Partnership; Community Safety Partnership; Health & Social Care Board; Regeneration Partnership; and Environment Partnership.
- An initial report and findings was presented to July 2015 LSB meeting, with agreement in principle on the way forward with further work to be undertaken to prepare draft Terms of Reference for the new proposed arrangements

Carmarthenshire Local Service Board Workstreams

- Following discussion about possible collaboration opportunities between LSB member organisations a series of workstreams have been taken forward with a view to delivering operational efficiencies for each of the members.
- The workstreams are currently focusing efforts on the following key areas:
 - Estates & Shared Accommodation
 - Procurement
 - Transport
 - People Development.

Town & Community Council Liaison Forum

- At the most recent meeting of the Liaison Forum on the 1 September 2015, members received a presentation on Planning notifications, Community Asset Transfer and Dementia Friendly Communities.
- The next meeting, scheduled for 8 December 2015, will focus upon the budget consultation.

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New Welsh Language Standards

- The new Welsh Language Standards being introduced by Welsh Government through the Welsh Language Commissioner, will focus on promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language for residents and staff in the following five key areas in all that the Council (and other public bodies) does in terms of Service Delivery; Policy Making, Operational, Promotion and Record Keeping.
- The draft Compliance Notice was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 22 June 2015 and a comprehensive response was prepared by the Council in terms of what was felt to be 'unreasonable and/or disproportionate'.
- The Commissioner took this on board and amended the set of standards issued to the Council in the final Compliance Notice which was received on the 30 September 2015. Work is now underway to ensure compliance against the new standards within the timescales noted.

Ageing Well in Carmarthenshire Plan

- In accordance with the Welsh Government requirement, an Ageing Well Plan for Carmarthenshire (which incorporates the Strategy for Older People) has been developed.
- The Plan incorporates available evidence and builds on relevant actions identified within divisional business plans.
- The Plan is currently proceeding through the political process (having been discussed at Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 5 October 2015), with sign-off by Council anticipated in December 2015.

Rural Poverty Study

- A study on rural poverty was undertaken on behalf of Grŵp Cefn Gwlad, the partnership responsible for overseeing rural development in the County.
- The study was commissioned to identify and assess levels of rural poverty in Carmarthenshire that could potentially be addressed under the new Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2014 – 2017 and LEADER 2014 – 2020 programmes.
- The rural poverty study looked specifically at areas supported by the new Rural Development programmes and set out to identify what issues are affecting rural communities and in what way. The study identified eight key areas for development:
 - Transport
 - Digital Inclusion
 - Fuel
 - Leisure
 - Loneliness and isolation
 - Housing (availability and affordability)
 - Food Banks and carers

As a result of these findings, further work is now underway to consider opportunities for future development in these key areas.

Universal Support Delivered Locally Pilot Project

- A 12-month pilot project was delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to test new ways of working to support the introduction of Universal Credit.

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- There was a test of a Hub-Spoke model where opportunities to access Yr Hwb support services in Llanelli from remote rural areas of the county through Skype were trialled.
- An evaluation of the pilot project is currently being finalised with a view to taking the learning to inform future delivery.
- As a result of the pilot and in order to support client with the introduction of Universal Credit the Council's Revenue Services Team have continued the employment of one of the Personal Budgeting Support Officers.

Performance and Information Management

Key Improvement Objective Priorities (KIOPs)

- Members were consulted during a workshop on our 2015/16 set of Key Priorities. The Corporate Strategy has also been refreshed and this set the context from which the KIOPs were identified.

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Corporate Assessment

- The Authority had its Corporate Assessment in October 2015. The purpose of the Corporate Assessment is to provide a position statement on the Council's capacity and capability to deliver continuous improvement.
- Jeremy Evans for the WAO reported to County Council on Wednesday October 14th, that the Corporate Assessment report should be available in January 2016. We will respond to any report drafting queries and formulate an action plan to address any proposals for improvement.

Annual Report and Improvement Plan (ARIP)

- The Council has published its Annual Report 2014/15 and Improvement Plan 2015/16 together with a Public Summary.
- The WAO subsequently issued a combined Certificate of Compliance to confirm that we met our planning and improvement duties.
- At County Council on the 14th October 2015, the WAO told the County Council that we had evaluated and reported our progress in a *'fair and balanced way, reporting good and not so good results and reacting to what the public have asked us to do in the 'you said...we did....' sections'*.
- When the All Wales Comparative data for 2014/15 became available we prepared and published a detailed report on how Carmarthenshire's results compare to other council's in Wales. This is available online.

Annual Improvement Report – WAO

- In June 2015, the WAO published its Annual Improvement Report and concluded overall that the Council continued to make progress on its priority areas and was addressing governance issues.

Information Governance

- At half year the unit dealt with 477 Freedom of Information requests with 440 requests being answered within the 20 working days time limit.
- Two training sessions have been held for Information Asset Owners and work has commenced on the Information Asset Register.

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Complaints and Compliments

All complaints received by the Council are dealt with in a timely, appropriate and efficient manner by the Complaints Team, in accordance with the principles of the Council's Complaints Procedure.

- The Council investigated and responded to 251 complaints during the first half of 2015/16, compared to 313 during the same period for 2014/15.
- The Council received 239 compliments between April 2015 and September 2015, compared to 288 for the same period in 2014/15.

Civil Registration

- The **Tell Us Once (TUO)** bereavement support service continues to be delivered in partnership with Customer Services (CCC) and Department of Work and Pensions.
- There are now more services available on the national system following feedback from the public and registrars and there has been an increase of 30-35% of bereaved families using the service.
- The service continues to encourage appropriate venues to be licensed for marriages and civil partnerships and there is a steady interest and growth in numbers.

Electoral Registration

- Planning and delivering the Parliamentary Election was a key priority for the Election team for 2015/16. The election was successfully administered with positive feedback received by political parties and candidates on the smooth running of the whole process, especially the count and delivery of result.
- Percentage turnout for the Carmarthen East and Dinefwr Constituency was 70.8% and percentage turnout for the Llanelli Constituency was 65.1% with over 85% turnout in returned postal votes.
- Annual Wales Week in July 2015 saw the staff of the Lord Lieutenancy Section help deliver a successful visit to the County in which Carmarthenshire welcomed HRH Prince of Wales and HRH Duchess of Cornwall.

Communications

- The new bilingual corporate website www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales has been well received. Work is ongoing to train staff to develop their own content and changes to ensure that the website becomes our resident's main way of communicating with the Council.
- We have produced a new Corporate DVD which was used at the recent corporate assessment and is available on the corporate website
- We organised the recent Manager's Event and the next event will take place Spring 2016.
- We have assisted with the communications plan and awareness raising of corporate initiatives such as the People Strategy, TIC projects and the recently launched Welsh language standards.
- We have assisted with the budget consultation and resurrect 'Insight Carmarthenshire' to communicate with young people on the importance of voting at elections and our democratic process.

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- Print and graphics continue to work with divisions and various partner organisations to create quality material which helps us to ensure all material created for the public is published bilingually and branded accurately.
- Continue to work closely with ERW and the indoor and outdoor markets to assist with their marketing plans and raise awareness.

Press

- The Press & Media Protocol was reviewed and the final Protocol has now been produced and approved by Council. It is available to view on the Newsroom.
- Creation and management of Facebook pages to promote services including the Chair of Council and Pembrey Country Park.
- Management of the Twitter account has increased the number of followers from just over 4,000 in April to almost 5,000.
- The online Newsroom is the focus of information for both the public and the media. From April – September there were almost 80,000 views, and over 10,000 new users.

Customer Services

- During the first half of the year efforts have focused on improving operating performance, identifying and minimising avoidable demand, and collaborating with Un Sir Gar.
- A detailed study of contacts coming into both the Customer Service Centres and the Contact Centre has been undertaken, determining proportions of ‘avoidable demand’, ‘value demand’, and demand which could be automated or pushed on line.
- A Transform, Innovate Change Channel Shift Group (a sub-group of Agile Working & Channel Shift), led by Customer Services, is providing support in order to get more services on line, to replace PDF forms with e-forms, and to encourage customer take up of automated options.
- The Llanelli CSC was moved to ‘The Hub’ in Llanelli, to co-locate with Un Sir Gar. This has proved extremely successful and it is intended to make this a permanent arrangement.
- The success of the Llanelli Hub/CSC model has prompted a review of the possibilities in the other two main towns in the county; Carmarthen and Ammanford. Possible locations and resourcing configurations are currently being explored.

Paul Thomas – Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Corporate Assessment

During the reporting period the Division was subject to the “People” element of the Corporate Assessment, which was undertaken by the WAO. Verbal feedback has now been provided to the Division’s management team and early indications suggest a very positive outcome for the Council in the way in which it manages its people. The key findings and areas for development will be contained within the published Final Corporate Assessment report.

Investors in People – liP

The Council achieved “Investors in People” (liP) status in 2009 and has since undergone regular reviews to ensure it is able to maintain the standard required in terms of managing and developing its people. During the summer the Council underwent its second post accreditation review and was successful in retaining its liP status. The review also found that, as an organisation, the Council is working towards being a “High Performing” employer in some areas.

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The Division was responsible for managing the entire process, developing the skills of the internal review team and worked closely with the external Managing Assessor in terms of gathering the objective evidence required by liP.

Welsh Language Standards

One of the Division's key challenges moving forward will be to meet the requirements of the recently published Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice. This agenda cuts across all business units within the Division including the Translation Service, which has already begun to experience an increase in the number of requests for support. Work is well underway within the Division to better understand the impacts of the new Standards and to ensure the requirements of the Compliance Notice are met.

Recruitment

The Division recently launched the new bilingual online recruitment system (Web Recruit) and, during this period, has run four Assessment Centres for Senior Management posts, resulting in the appointment of two Directors, one Head of Service and one interim Head of Service.

Elected Members are integral to the appointments process and so the Division has designed and delivered bespoke training for all Members involved in the process.

The Division has also begun the process of recruiting and appointing 14 Apprentices and 7 Graduate Trainees. Every Department will benefit from this initiative, which also supports the Council's commitment to job creation within the County.

Policy / Guidance Development

The Division has developed / reviewed and published several policies during this reporting period including:

- Adoption and Surrogacy Policy
- Behavioural Standards in the Workplace Guidance
- DWP Fit for Work Service – Manager's and employee guidance
- Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) procedure
- Learning & Development Strategy
- Parental Leave Policy
- Pay Policy
- Redeployment Policy
- Severance Scheme
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Workforce Planning – Support for Managers

The Council had identified workforce planning as an area requiring further development and, to support managers, the Division has developed and published the [“Workforce Planning Toolkit for Managers”](#). Briefing sessions for managers have been held and further support will be provided by the Division to ensure the Council is able to plan effectively in terms of its workforce.

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Learning & Development Support for Staff

During the period in question the Division provided a range of learning opportunities to over 4,200 members of staff. The team has also recently:

- Designed and delivered briefings for Development Centres for aspiring leaders
- Designed and launched a new programme for [“Future Leaders”](#)
- Rolled out a new training strategy in response to the Social Care and Well Being Act Wales
- Implemented the Continuing Professional Education and Learning Framework (CPEL) for qualified Social Workers
- Developed learning & development programmes in partnership with Hywel Dda NHS Trust and other LSB partners

Occupational Health (OH) Support for Staff

During this reporting period the Division has received an award for its Occupational Health support – SEQOHS¹ and has supported a total of 888 members of staff via a variety of OH interventions. The Division has also provided services to 10 external organisations such as Ceredigion County Council and University of Wales Trinity St David. The team is leading on the “Time to Change” campaign (an anti-stigma campaign in relation to mental health illness) and in July this year the Council signed the “Pledge” to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination in the work place.

Employee Relations Support

During this reporting period the Division has supported:

34 Disciplinary cases
21 Grievances
8 Capability cases

Support for Schools

The Division has held workshops with Head Teachers and Governing Bodies and worked closely with Schools in terms of their support requirements. As a result the following policies / guidance have been developed specifically for schools:

- Safer Recruitment / Disclosure & Barring Services (DBS) Policy & Guidance
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Pay Policy
- Health & Safety Manual

The Division has also rolled out the online DBS for schools to support safer recruitment, agreed a revised Service Level Agreement and led the development of a Mutual Fund for schools to cover staff absence. Further workshops for Schools will be held in the New Year.

Core Values

As an organisation, the Council last explored its core values in 2007, given the scale of change that the organisation has experienced recently, it was agreed to revisit them. The Division has

¹ Safe, Effective, Quality, Occupational Health Standards

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led this exercise and an extensive consultation exercise has been undertaken with Elected Members, Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service, Staff and Trades Union. The culmination of this exercise was at the People Managers Conference held in Y Ffwrnes on the 9th October. (At the time of reporting the results of the exercise were in the process of being analysed).

Linda Rees - Jones – Head of Administration & Law

Democratic Services Unit

Building A Better Council

- Implementing modern.gov as a system of producing and publishing Agendas and reports for democratic meetings
- Assisting the Constitutional Review Working Group (CRWG) with its consideration of the Peer Review recommendations. CRWG's recommendations were presented to and adopted by County Council on the 17th June 2015.
- The Monitoring Officer drafted the recommendations adopted by Council at its June 2015 meeting into the Council's Constitutions and these revisions were agreed by County Council on the 9th September 2015. The revised Constitution is available for the public and members to view on-line.
- Some of the revisions agreed to the Constitution were implemented earlier eg. in January 2015 we added Standing Items on to the Agendas of County Council meetings to include Questions on Notice by Members and Questions on Notice by Members of the Public, regardless of whether any such questions had been received. Implementation of a Standing Item for Questions on Notice by Members have not yielded much increase in the numbers of questions tabled (up slightly from 5 to 7 for the April – September comparative periods for 14/15 and 15/16) but this may be due to the fact that members were already aware of their ability to submit such questions. Implementation of a Standing Item on Questions on Notice by the Public resulted in 3 questions by the public being received for the September 2015 meeting. One of the questioners attended the meeting and asked her question in person and received an answer verbally at the meeting. The other two questioners did not attend the meeting and received their answers in writing. All the answers given are available to view on-line.
- Adding the Executive Board meetings to the list of meetings now being webcast and facilitating those webcasts
- Publishing (and maintaining) the Register of Members' Interests electronically on the Authority's website.

Working in Partnership

As a Service we provide lead administrative support for various regional Partnerships and other joint arrangements including for the first half of the financial year:

- 3 meetings of the Central and Mid Wales Regional Partnership Board
- 23 Independent Education Appeals Panels (244 appeals processed by the Unit for this period)
- 3 meetings of the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel
- 5 meetings of Education in regional Working (ERW)

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Improving Our Service

- The Executive Board Support and Scrutiny Support Officers have now co-located with the Democratic Services Officers in County Hall and the structure of the Unit is currently out to consultation.
- The introduction of modern.gov has not yet allowed us to achieve savings through going paperless, but this is something that we continue to aspire to.

Departmental Support Unit

Working in Partnership

The internal courier service is currently provided in partnership with the Dyfed Powys Police and its effectiveness is currently being analysed as part of the TIC challenge on mail handling across the Authority

Improving Our Services

- The TIC Handling and Printing Project team has been pro-active with a number of options being considered to reduce the franking machines within the Authority.
- A replacement franking machine has been secured for County Hall which will enable the Authority to benefit from postal discounts on the mail being despatched from the building
- The leases for some smaller franking machines have been terminated and the mail from those buildings is now brought to County Hall for franking, saving on machine lease costs and the collection charges levied.
- Additional buildings have been added to the security card system and staff issued with security cards, not only to provide them with access to the relevant buildings, but also to access the safe print machines.

Legal Services

Building A Better Council

- Significant Monitoring Officer and lawyers time was allocated to the governance review and as mentioned earlier the Constitutional Review Working Group's recommendations were adopted by County Council on the 17th June and the subsequent revisions to the Council's Constitutions (as drafted by the Unit) were approved by County Council on the 9th September 2015. The revised Constitution is now available to view on-line.
- Completion rates of the Whistleblowing E-Learning Module across the Authority (which the Monitoring Officer oversees in conjunction with the Standards Committee) had increased to 84% of managers by the 7th August 2015. This represented a significant improvement, with the Chief Executive's Department achieving 100% completion.
- Amongst the major pieces of work advised upon by Legal Services are:-
 - aspects of the Carmarthen West Development,
 - the Solar Panels project,
 - the Community Infrastructure Levy,
 - Community Assets Transfers,
 - the Brechfa Forest Connection project,
 - the possible transfer of Leisure Facilities into a trust,
 - the review of the Licensing and Gambling Policies,

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- the consultation process on the proposal to charge for post-16 school transport
- implementation of the Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-School Attendance,
- drafting a structure for Deprivation of Liberty applications for adults and under 18 year olds (following a recent Supreme Court case)

Working in Partnership

- Our main Partnership working is our role as partner and lead authority for the Central & West Wales Shared Legal Service. The Regional Collaboration Funding originally allocated to this project was substantially reduced at the end of March 2015, but the work streams affected by that lost funding were more or less complete. The funding retained for the 15/16 financial year (which funds some of the partner Authorities, including Carmarthenshire's costs of the joint Commercial and litigation teams) will cease at the end of March 2016. The impact of this loss of funding and the way forward is currently being considered by the Project Board.
- We have attended and advised at the 3 meetings of the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel (April and September) as well as providing advice in between meetings as required.
- We continue to provide advice on governance to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority under an SLA.
- Due to the departure of a solicitor in our property team we have sought the services of a neighbouring Authority to assist us with the community asset transfers volume of work. We are, however, in the process of recruiting to the vacant post.

Improving Our Service

- The National Procurement Service (NPS) delivered their Framework of External Solicitors on 1st September 2015. NPS advised that of the 19 suppliers awarded a place on the Framework, 11 (58%) are Welsh based and 6 (32%) are Welsh based SMEs. They also advised that of the 24 suppliers who were previously on the Framework, previously procured by the South West Wales Shared Legal Service, 9 have been awarded a place on the NPS Framework.
- Unfortunately NPS have not delivered the Framework of Barristers as yet.
- We have reflected the "cradle to grave" approach in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act in one of our Team's structures, by incorporating the adult services legal advice function into the child care and education legal team.

Land Charges

Working In Partnership

- The Infrastructure Act agreed the transfer of the statutory Land Charges Register to HM Land Registry's control. The Act relates to the whole of England and Wales, but the digitisation and import of data within the 22 local authorities within Wales, will be dealt with separately from the timetable in England. There are currently no firm proposals for H M Land Registry to assume control of the CON 29 search function, so there will still be work for the Unit to handle. Members will be updated on the impact of this project on this Service (if any) as they become clearer.
- The new CCC in-house land charges software (see note under Improving Our Services below) is being considered by some other local authorities.

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Improving Our Services

- The land charges service had already migrated to the new in-house Ladybird software system at the beginning of March 2015, enabling us to cancel our external provider contract. The in-house system currently only relates to in-house handling of searches and the first half of the 15/16 financial year has essentially involved getting used to the new software system.
- Phase 2 of the Ladybird software being developed by the IT Service, will in due course deliver the external part of the process, by allowing electronic submission of searches, payments and receipts. We still aim to go live on this element before the end of the financial year.
- The number of searches received during the first half of the financial year is similar to the same period last year although the number of personal search application is slightly up.
- The Law Society's revised CON 29 and CON 290 forms will go live on 4/7/16 and the Unit participated fully in commenting on draft versions of the new forms (via the Local Government Association). The CON 29 is a standard form agreed between the Law Society and the Local Government Association with 65 or so questions often referred to as the Standard Local Search. The aim of the revisions is to improve the quality and consistency of information provided and to add some new enquiries eg. on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and assets of community value. The Unit will use the new forms once they become live.

Phil Sexton – Head of Audit, Risk & Procurement

Audit

The Internal Audit 3 year Strategic Plan 2015/18 including the 2015/16 Annual Plan was approved at the March 2015 Audit Committee. The Plan was prepared after consultation with Heads of Service, Wales Audit Office and Chair of Audit Committee.

Internal Audit performance against the Annual Plan is closely monitored by the Audit Committee and 92% of those reviews originally programmed for 2014/15 were completed by 31st March 2015, thereby meeting the 92% target.

The 2015/16 Annual Plan agreed at the March 2015 Audit Committee reflects the current establishment of 9.4 staff and continues to provide a broad coverage of the Authority services and systems.

Wales Audit Office monitor the effectiveness of Internal Audit annually against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Wales Audit Office confirmed for 2014/15 that:

“The Council has suitable Internal Audit arrangements and an effective service is provided. “

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 refers to Audit Committees and the way the Committee should function. Current processes comply with the requirements of The Measure.

Member Development Sessions (specifically dealing with the Draft Statement of Accounts 2014/15 and Grants Management) have been provided for Members of the Audit Committee.

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The ***Annual Governance Statement 2014/15*** was prepared in consultation with following Officers:

- Executive Board Member (Resources)
- Executive Board Member (Deputy Leader / Community & Rural Affairs)
- Director of Corporate Services
- Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)
- Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Focus & Policy)
- Head of Finance,
- Head of Administration and Law,
- Head of Audit, Procurement & ICT
- Audit & Risk Manager
- HR Manager
- Chair of Audit Committee (Observer Role)

Risk Management

The Web Based Risk Register System has been made available to all Departments, which aims to further embed risk management within the Authority and facilitate the risk management process at Strategic, Service and Project levels.

A self assessment of our Risk Register System was carried out in the summer of 2015 and the findings and actions shared and agreed with the Corporate Management Team.

Executive Board Member briefing sessions on our approach and the Corporate Risk Register were held in October 2015.

The Business Continuity Working Group is responsible for co-ordinating the Business Continuity Plans for critical services within the Authority. Each Department is responsible for ensuring that Business Continuity Plans are established, reviewed and tested. The Business Continuity Working Group reports up to the Risk Management Steering Group which in turn reports up to the Audit Committee. In conjunction with the Emergency Planning Group a desktop group exercise was carried out in July 2015 to test the plans in place and to establish where there were gaps in processes.

All insurance covers except for leasehold properties were renewed with existing insurers in July 2015. The leasehold properties policy was renewed with the existing insurer following a tender exercise.

Procurement

a) National Procurement Service (NPS) Update

Over the past 12 months the National Procurement Service (NPS) has expanded its procurement influence beyond the original Business Case and has awarded 20 contracts and frameworks with an annual value of £250m across 322 suppliers, with a further eight due to be awarded.

When Corporate Procurement Unit is made aware of category forums which have been set up by NPS to scope a new Framework, we discuss the opportunity with the relevant department to ensure Carmarthenshire's needs are represented in the tender strategy and subsequent specification.

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b) Procurement Fitness Check conducted by KPMG Consultants

The Procurement Fitness Check carried out on the Procurement Function across the Authority by KPMG Consultants on behalf of Welsh Government found the Authority to be “Developing towards conforming”. This suggested that there were a number of areas where the Authority needed to consider the Report’s Recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness of its performance. In response to these Recommendations and as part of the development of a better and more effective Council, the Transformation, Innovation and Change (TIC) team have recognised the need to re design the Procurement Function across the Authority to transform service delivery. The TIC Procurement Review began in July 2014 and the recommendations of the Fitness Check were incorporated for consideration as part of this review.

Despite the fact there some decisions on the Procurement Fitness Check Recommendations remain unresolved at this stage (including the implementation of a Category Management approach), excellent progress has been made and a comprehensive consideration of the recommendations can be demonstrated. A response to the outstanding recommendation will be developed as the picture becomes clearer ensuring that appropriate action is being taken to address improvements in full knowledge of the challenge faced by the Authority. The Council has received confirmation it will face a 2nd Procurement Fitness Check towards the end of 2015/16.

c) Collaboration

Carmarthenshire is currently leading on a new regional contractors framework for property related works that is currently being tendered through the OJEU procurement route. This is being undertaken on behalf of the 5 Regional authorities Pembrokeshire County Council, Neath-Port Talbot County Borough Council, City and County of Swansea Council, Ceredigion County Council; along with other public sector participants including Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Services, Dyfed Powys Police, and University of Wales Trinity St. David’s.

A Tender briefing and Joint Bidding session for a forthcoming Floating Support tender exercise was held in November, whereby an element of joint bidding is actively being encouraged. Officers from CPU supported the Wales cooperative, with Business Wales and CCC’s Social Care team providing potential bidders with targeted support on joint bidding / consortium bids.

d) E-Trading

The Electronic trading Group, chaired by the Corporate Procurement Unit is currently working with Value Wales’ eProcurement Service to determine the Council’s involvement moving forward with their eTrading Wales programme. This programme aims to enable buyers and suppliers to interact electronically for the supply and payment of goods and services.

We are now at the stage where we need to confirm our commitment to Procserve (eTrading Wales supplier) & e-PS in proceeding with the project and identifying the appropriate internal resources required to ensure successful delivery. We will be working with Procserve in the next coming few months to analyse our spend data and agree on the appropriate approach for the Council.

e) Compliance

Our Contract Procedure Rules are in the final stages of being rewritten to bring them in line with the changes introduced in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, and to reflect the Wales

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Procurement

Policy

Statement

Recommendations.

f) Community Benefits and Sustainable Procurement

In July 2015 the revised Wales Procurement Policy Statement formally lowered the requirement of the application of the Measurement Tool for Community Benefits in tender exercises from £2million to £1million. Work continues in identifying appropriate Tenders to include Community Benefits clauses within.

Work is ongoing with both the South West Wales Regional Civil Engineering (SWWREC) Steering Group and the South West Wales Regional Construction (SWWRFCF) Group to develop standardised approaches in delivering and monitoring Community Benefits in the call-off projects over the next 4 years. The SWWREC group of regional contractors, Cyfle, and CECA was set up to look at what we can provide within the region. This group has taken the industries needs and lack of available 'suitable' training and looked at what was needed and could be delivered. This has now reached a point where identified training and delivery options are close to being set up. Many of our framework contractors have made the commitment to support the scheme and put up candidates for training through the scheme. Initially we see this as being exiting employees due to the time scale, but see this as a continual scheme with new starts and return to work candidates being on future years.

CPU has been increasingly involved in the evaluation of tenderers responses to Community Benefits as part of wider tender evaluation panels. As well as providing specialist advice and guidance in this area, we also lead on a practical basis, scoring the Community Benefits submissions as part of the wider team. We have seen a greater emphasis of importance being placed on Community Benefits as part of the overall quality criteria in tenders.

Further 'Introduction to Community Benefits' supplier workshops are scheduled for this Autumn, with the Welsh Government's Tender Support team continuing to support them.

John Roberts – Joint Head of ICT Service

Joint Working

A Joint Arrangement has been established with Pembrokeshire County Council whereby the Head of ICT for Pembrokeshire, has taken the lead as Joint Head of ICT Service for Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. The Interim IT Manager for this Authority will work closely with the Joint Head of ICT Service during this interim period of up to 12 months.

In addition to the Joint Head of ICT a Joint Senior Programme Manager has been appointed to assist the joint Head of ICT in evidencing whether a joint ICT service is a viable option for both Councils moving forward. A number of work streams have been established and baseline information for both organisations is being collated. The analysis of the output will support or otherwise moving to a different style of ICT delivery.

An interim re-alignment of the ICT division is underway and will support CCC as it stands until the Joint new way of working is agreed. In the interim period the re-aligned division will adopt some key principles in going forward. The principles include:-

- Consolidate – review the entire ICT estate and consolidate to as few products/technologies as possible.
- Quality – deliver quality solutions which are right first time.
- Service – deliver a service which is sustainable and puts the customer/end user first.
- Efficiencies – Re-engineer processes to drive out waste.

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The new structure aims to be more responsive to business demand, and specifically will create resilience in key areas, for example web/channel shift skills.

ICT Digital Strategy

Although the cross departmental Digital Strategy which was endorsed by the Council's Executive Board in Dec 2014, still has currency, the new arrangement with Pembrokeshire may affect delivery of some work streams. However, it is too early in the collaborative arrangement to be specific about what these will be.

Secure Managed Printing

The Secure Print Management project is now nearing completion with just over 3,500 staff successfully using the new secure solution. It is on target and being well received across the organisation.

With the rollout complete meaningful management information will be available which will provide intelligence to hopefully deliver further savings and efficiencies.

The next phase of the deployment will automate the ordering of toner and seek to introduce a fax capability to the devices deployed. This will allow the decommissioning of nearly 200 dedicated phones lines used for fax without diminishing CCC's fax capabilities.

Microsoft Lync

Part of the new licensing agreement with Microsoft will allow the Council to deploy a unified communications application, called Lync. The product is currently being piloted within ICT and will be rolled out to other services within the coming months. Lync can be used for instant messaging, voice calls and video conferencing; it also displays 'presence', showing when an officer is at their desk, away, busy, etc. The implementation of Lync should have an organisational wide impact, reducing the requirement to travel saving time and money. Lync can also be used to federate with other organisations, federation provides the capability to enable the same communication channels between organisations. Carmarthenshire has already federated with Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys.

Optimised Corporate Desktop

The back end infrastructure to deliver the optimised corporate desktop is built and currently under test within IT. The first deployment of the new way of working is planned for early in 2016. This will provide a consistent, improved, agile, flexible and robust end-user desktop experience. This will be the case whether the end-user is at home, in an office, off site, in another authority or anywhere access to the internet is achievable, it also does not compromise on ICT security.

Rollout of WiFi

Following on from the installation of wireless access points in key meeting rooms, a further 170 access points have been procured. Already 137 have been installed at various locations throughout the county including the main branch libraries in Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli where the legacy equipment has been replaced for improved availability and service.

Modern.gov

Along with the deployment of iPads to members and Senior Officers ICT has been working with Democratic Services to implement the Modern.gov application to enable paperless

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meetings. The public are also able to access meeting agendas and minutes using the same application.

Schools

Building on the technology deployed to schools over the past 8 years, work is underway to provision the ability for each school pupil to have a consistent digital learning experience. This will be achieved utilising the HWB national online learning platform delivered from Welsh Government.

The 100+ primary schools will benefit from a standard approach of managing and deploying iPads in the classroom. Each iPad will be managed by a central management console with licensing and applications deployed and managed from that resource. This will ensure that schools have local management but benefit from CCC's governance. This will be completed by March 2017.

All schools in Carmarthenshire now have Wi-Fi networks installed.

Transformation Innovation Change (TIC) Activity

The ICT Service is supporting a number of pilots for mobilisation projects where staff utilise mobile technology for inspections and data collection. The projects are cross departmental and savings will be reported through the established TIC governance process.

The Agile and Channel Shift projects have been amalgamated to report through TIC and a board has been established headed by the Director for Education and Children's' services. The project will promote agile working and strive to deliver efficiencies. Both Eastgate and Parc Myrddin will be equipped to prove the concept as staff are moved into the buildings. The Channel Shift element of the project will encourage contact with the council to be made on-line where possible.

Regional ICT Activity

A number of applications are being shared between authorities, these include the Legal Portal, the Libraries' system, Joint Resilience Unit application, Geographical Information System, and the Land Charges Application. Discussion is taking place at a regional level as to charging mechanism and the sustainability requirements to ensure these are properly supported.

Owen Bowen – Interim Head of Financial Services

The challenging financial climate and the tightening of the Public Sector spending continues to be one of the main focuses of the Financial Services division during the first half of this year, together with some significant staff changes.

Following the appointment of Chris Moore as Director of Corporate Services in early September, Interim arrangements have been put in place to manage the division and deliver efficiencies over the coming year.

The division has however continued to make good progress with the performance measures and actions during the year.

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Accountancy

During the first half of the year the main priorities have been:

Closure and Audit of the Authorities accounts was successfully achieved by the respective dates with the Accounts being closed within budget and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) issuing an unqualified audit opinion

The team has completed the implementation of a new timesheet module on our Financial Management System for the Authority's in-house design teams.

The Financial Management System is currently being upgraded to a recent version of the software. This new version has enhanced budgeting and commitment accounting tools, and should also give users of the web additional functionality and an enhanced user experience.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – Budget 2016/19 – The budget preparation this year presents particular difficulties due to the difficult economic climate and the lateness of the notification of both the provisional and final settlement from Welsh Government. The current MTFP has therefore been developed on officer's best estimate of the likely settlement. The Authority has for some time recognised the need to do things differently and prioritise how it wishes to spend its' scarce resources, but it is evident that some difficult decisions will need to be made to set a balanced budget.

We are now entering the budget consultation process which has been enhanced to assist members with the decision making and the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan that will go to Full Council in February 2016.

Accounts Payable and Administration

Performance continues to improve in respect of the Key Performance Indicator - 'Payment of undisputed Invoices within 30 days' with the first half year figure yielding an outcome of 96% against the target of 93%, confirming an out performance of 3% over the established target, thus, significantly aiding SME cash flow within the County.

The implementation of the 'Purchase to Pay' (P2P) project within departments has directly led to both workload and staff transferring to the centre. It will continue to be rolled out, affording management the opportunity of applying economies of scale in an effort to effectively support the budgeting process through delivery of efficiencies. Further work in this service area will see a management realignment resulting in the delivery of an efficiency at the end of this financial year in line with the planned implementation of 'P2P' within the remaining service areas and departments.

Treasury Management and Banking

Treasury Management continues to be challenging in the current economic environment, however we continued to outperform our performance target of hitting a better return than the average 7 day LIBID (London Interbank Indicative) rate, with outperformance for the first six months of the year achieving 0.22%.

The policy of delaying our borrowing until rates become more favourable and using internal cash has continued this year, however we have needed to borrow £10m so far this year to support our capital programme.

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This borrowing was achieved at very favourable interest rates. Our Treasury Management consultants (Capita) have continued to support us with advice and service provision during this period.

The Council made a one off payment of £79m to the Welsh Government in April 2015 which removed the Authority's obligation to the HRA Housing Subsidy system. The equivalent figure was borrowed from the PWLB and met the requirements of the HRA business plan and the overall requirements of the Council.

The Barclays bank and Barclaycard contracts continue to run smoothly. Improvements in processes and procedures and the pursuit of efficiencies continue in the banking service.

Payroll

During the past year the Payroll section has co-located with Human Resources to lessen the administration burden and to improve the service provided to employees.

Further development of Resourcelink, My View 2 is scheduled to commence before the end of the financial year and will include:

- Introduction of a reporting tool for managers
- Improved access to schools allowing for input of claims, absence data, etc.
- Access to certain screens to all employees from their own personal computers, including accessing payslips.

Pension Fund

The Pensions Administration section has continued to further encourage scheme members to take advantage of **'My Pension Online' to access their personal Annual Benefit Statements online and to** improve the level of service provided by permitting any active, deferred or pensioner member access to their record whilst reducing printing and postage costs in addition to reducing the Fund's carbon footprint.

The first half of this year concentrated on ensuring the data from employers for the end of year exercise was completed within new statutory timescales to ensure production of Annual Benefit Statements by 31st August. This was the first year that the LGPS 2014 career average benefits had been recorded and uploaded for inclusion statements.

Guaranteed minimum pension (GMP) reconciliation has continued to be undertaken in order to identify liabilities which should not be allocated to the Pension Fund by HMRC and that HMRC amend their records. Over 4000 queries have already been raised and sent to HMRC. There are over 31000 discrepancies which must be resolved with HMRC.

We have continued to work with employers towards implementing the electronic transfer of data directly from payroll systems into Altair via the i-connect module.

To ensure compliance with Auto Enrolment requirements the administration unit has also met with employers prior to their staging dates and has provided template documentation for use whilst ensuring they are aware of their roles and responsibilities. We have also met with Employers reaching their re-enrolment dates to ensure all statutory requirements are met. Employers have also been provided with information regarding the cessation of contracting out in April 2016.

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The service standards provided by the team have been recognised on a national basis by winning the 'Quality of Service Award' on 4th November 2015. The Fund had to demonstrate how service standards are equally as good across all member categories (active, deferred and pensioner) and how we performed against our service standards.

Both the Pensions Administration and Pension Investments units have continued to fully participate in the All Wales collaboration project. The business case for greater collaboration and a Common Investment Vehicle has been completed. All 8 Welsh funds will be appointing a joint investment manager for passive global equities over the next few months and a Common Investment Vehicle will be established over the next 24 months. Members will be kept updated on its progress.

A Pension Board has been established and met in July 2015. The board assists the administering authority in ensuring the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Dyfed Pension Fund.

All five investment managers to the fund continue to perform well.

Jonathan Fearn – Head of Corporate Property

Asset Management & Property Review

The Corporate Asset Management Plan is currently being updated and will be presented to Members towards the end of the financial year. The review of the Plan includes liaison with and challenge to all services using the Council's property, to ensure need and utilisation are kept under review to maximise the use of the Council's assets.

Carmarthenshire County Council continues to play a lead role in asset management in Wales and the Council's Head of Corporate Property is a member of the Welsh Government's National Assets Working Group.

Regular meetings continue to be held with all the public sector bodies with significant property interests in Carmarthenshire. In March 2015, this Group was reconstituted as one of the collaboration workstreams established by the Local Service Board and is chaired by the Head of Corporate Property. The purpose of the Group is to share property strategies and facilitate the identification of further property collaboration opportunities through the use of the Asset Review reports. The meetings include Welsh Government, Dyfed Powys Police, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Wales Ambulance, Mid & West Wales Fire Service, Ministry of Justice Wales, University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Coleg Sir Gar. Benefits realised to date include:

- Potential for joint management of services at St David's Park, the University's Carmarthen Campus, the Health Board's Hafan Derwen campus and the College's Job's Well Road Campus
- Opportunities for sharing of buildings
- Advance notice of disposal or acquisition plans to ensure that property decisions are taken with full knowledge of partners' plans.

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Disposals

The property market continues to be weak in some areas and, as a result, it can take increasing time for disposals to complete as purchasers seek to delay completion dates to defer capital outlay. Achieving capital receipts remains a challenge but our current targets to meet capital programme commitments remain achievable. Significant disposals during the year to date include:

- 10-14 Bridge Street. Llanelli to Llanelli Credit Union
- Deers Park Farm, Laugharne
- 1 West End, Llanelli
- Land at Dyffryn Road, Saron

Terms have also been agreed for the sale of the following properties which are expected to complete in coming months:

- 1 Spilman Street, Carmarthen
- Pensarn Printworks
- Foundry Row, Ammanford
- New Inn School
- Llanycrwys School, Llanwrda
- Rhydcymerau School, Llanybydder
- Whitemill School

Many of these disposals are of buildings no longer required by the Authority and have led to ongoing revenue savings.

Expressions of Interest have recently sought for significant landholdings at Trostre, Llanelli with strong interest from developers for a range of potential uses. Also, land at Brynmefys, Llanelli for 70 houses is currently being marketed.

Asset Transfer Programme

Discussions have continued with Community and Town Councils, community groups and sports clubs with a view to transferring various community buildings and facilities to local management. A number of Community Councils have agreed to accept a transfer of facilities and leases are being negotiated. A number of sports clubs have also expressed interest and a community group in Ferryside has now taken over the former education centre in the village.

The adopted Community Asset Transfer Procedures serve to provide the framework for discussions about transfer for any Council property for ongoing service delivery by other organisations. Corporate Property is leading a cross-departmental Asset Transfer Team to co-ordinate and provide a single point of contact for asset transfer within the Authority.

In relation to recreational facilities, Executive Board has set a deadline of 31st March 2016 for expressions of interest and 31st March 2018 to complete transfers. As at the half-year point, Corporate Property officers were in active discussion with all but 5 Community / Town Councils with facilities in their areas. Discussions with 6 Councils have proceeded to the issuing of legal instructions on a total of 30 assets with a further 4 assets being the subject of legal instructions in relation to sporting clubs and associations. A recent statutory notice has reminded all of the range of recreational facilities under consideration and has helped to reinforce the deadlines.

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The Asset Transfer Team will continue to monitor the position and seek engagement with those remaining Community Councils that have not responded.

The Welsh Government has preparing national asset transfer guidance and the Council's Strategic Asset Manager formed part of a small team which contributed to the documentation.

Managed Property / Development

Occupation of let retail, industrial and agricultural property remains high, despite difficult economic conditions and gross income received continues to be in excess of £3m per annum. Marketing of vacant stalls and shops in Carmarthen and Llanelli Provisions Markets has seen increasing interest, with competing offers for vacant stalls and shops. Both indoor markets are now nearing 100% occupation for the first time in many years. Rents in Llanelli remain significantly below peak levels.

Occupation of the Council's 400 industrial units continues to be high (around 96%), and accommodate approximately 2,000 jobs. There is an increasing turnover of tenants, particularly at the smaller units, where the turnover of tenants has increased over the last 12 months.

The rural estate remains fully occupied, although, with a number of tenancies coming to an end in 2016, there will be an opportunity to review the size and number of holdings in some estates. Executive Board recently reviewed the estate and Llangadog and decided to sell one farmstead, retaining the majority of the farmland, together with the other farms for reletting.

Rent arrears across the portfolios continue to be challenging, with a limited number of businesses struggling to meet their financial commitments. The level of debt, however, remains within target levels.

Development continues at the Cross Hands West site, which has planning permission for a new 55,000 sq ft food store, 620-space car park, cafe and petrol station, a 250-home residential scheme, new bus bays and access for Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth, a new health centre and the refurbishment of Cross Hands Workingmen's Club. Major infrastructure works including clearance of the site, provision of the development plateaus and new road system are now close to completion. The development is being managed through a joint venture partnership between Carmarthenshire Council and property developers George LB. Sainsbury's recently sold-on the food retail site to a developer and this area will be the subject of a revised planning application. The residential land continues to be developed by Persimmon Homes.

Development of the Carmarthen West development area continues to be co-ordinated by Corporate Property. Landowner agreements are now in an agreed form, to facilitate the building of a new link road to the west of Carmarthen, to serve 1,100 new houses, a new primary school, employment space, district centre and parkland. Construction of the new road is to commence shortly.

Operational Property

The current Office Accommodation Strategy runs until 2017.

Refurbishment of Ty Elwyn, Llanelli is close to completion and has enabled the relocation of staff and subsequent sale of 1 West End and the future relocation of staff from Crown Precinct. Fit-out of the remaining offices at East Gate will start shortly, which will enable vacation and

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disposal of Ty'r Nant. The Council's office occupation continues to reduce, which increases the efficiency savings that can be offered from the portfolio.

A program of further office rationalisation is planned, facilitated by adapting the way we currently use the buildings to suit the needs of those providing services and to engender a new, more agile, way of working. This will further reduce the number of buildings and cost of office accommodation required to deliver the Council's services.

Despite the Government's dramatic cuts in subsidies for solar panel installations, the Council has negotiated pre-registration of solar installations for a range of non-housing buildings, which will reduce the cost of electricity for those properties. While the number of installations has reduced significantly as a result of the reduced subsidies, the programme of installations is to commence in coming months

Property Records

Improved property data continues to be used to guide strategic decisions on the planned maintenance programme, and there is improving detail on the condition of properties and future maintenance requirements. A dedicated team in Corporate Property are co-ordinating school surveys and producing updated floor plans to improve essential data as required by Education and to enhance records for asset management purposes.

All the Council's title documents have been submitted to HM Land Registry as part of the voluntary registration programme to ensure that Council property is protected against adverse possession.

The details maintained and mapped by the Property Records Team on a daily basis is the source and foundation for plotting all Carmarthenshire County Council properties on e-PIMS (the Electronic Property Information and Mapping Service). This UK Government tool aims to assist all public sector bodies to identify surplus property or opportunities for joint use of buildings and will help all public sector bodies in Carmarthenshire to use property more effectively. Carmarthenshire was the first council in Wales to invite all Town and Community Councils to include their property on the system and over half of Town and Community Councils have either declared that they have no properties or have added them onto the system.