

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	AUDIT COMMITTEE
DATE	15 JULY 2014
TITLE	REPORT OF THE CONTROLS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	TO REPORT ON THE MEETING HELD ON 6 JUNE 2014
AUTHOR	JOHN PUGHE ROBERTS, CHAIR OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
ACTION	TO ACCEPT THE REPORT AND CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The executive summaries of 30 Internal Audit reports were presented to the Audit Committee meeting on 6 May 2014, which represented reports whose final version had been released between 1 February 2014 and 31 March 2014. Seven of these reports had received a 'C' opinion.

1.2 Furthermore, it was reported to the Committee that one follow up report had received an "Unsatisfactory" opinion, and the Committee was also keen to discuss issues arising from another report which had been given a 'B' opinion.

1.2 Therefore, the Committee resolved:

To accept the reports on the Internal Audit Section's work for the period between 1 February and 31 March 2014 and to support the recommendations already submitted to the managers of the relevant services for implementation.

To convene two meetings of the working group, with the following members to serve on the working group in accordance with the details below:

(i) The Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Audit Committee and Councillors Huw Edwards, Michael Sol Owen and Angela Russell to consider the following audits:

- **Health and Safety Risk Assessments in Schools**
- **Schools Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant**
- **School Statistics and Censuses**
- **Verification of Performance Indicators**

(ii) The Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Committee and Councillors Aled Evans, Dafydd Meurig and Huw Edwards to consider the following audits:

- **Control Over Ordering and Payment for Property Repairs and Maintenance**
- **Arrangements for Registering Births, Deaths and Marriages**
- **Overnight Arrangements at the Council's Homes**
- **Overtime Claims Procedures**
- ***Siopau Gwynedd* Follow-up**

2 WORKING GROUP MEETING

- 2.1 In accordance with the decision, the Working Group was held in two sessions, on the morning and afternoon of 6 June in Ystafell Gwyrfa.
- 2.2 Councillors John Pughe Roberts, Robert Wright, Angela Russell, Michael Sol Owen, and Dewi Morgan, Senior Manager Audit and Risk were present in the morning session. The following reports were considered:

TITLE	DEPARTMENT	OPINION
School Statistics and Censuses	Education	C
Health and Safety Risk Assessments in Schools	Education	B
Verification of Performance Indicators	Corporate	C
Schools Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant	Education	C

- 2.3 Councillors John Pughe Roberts, Robert Wright, Dafydd Meurig and Aled Evans, and Dewi Morgan were present in the afternoon session, and considered the following:

TITLE	DEPARTMENT	OPINION
Control Over Ordering and Payment for Property Repairs and Maintenance	Customer Care	C
Arrangements for Registering Births, Deaths and Marriages	Democracy and Legal	C
Overnight Arrangements at the Council's Homes	Social Services, Housing and Leisure	C
Overtime Claims Procedures	Corporate	C
<i>Siopau Gwynedd</i> Follow-up	Customer Care	Unsatisfactory

- 2.3 Relevant officers attended to discuss all the reports.

2.5 Schools Statistics and Censuses

2.5.1 The main findings of this audit were as follows:

It was seen that there were specific arrangements and relevant forms in place to collect statistics and censuses figures from schools on an annual basis, with guidelines distributed to the schools to take them through the process. However, when examining a sample of schools, instances were identified where mistakes had been made by schools with the statistics and censuses figures submitted, with discrepancies appearing between the statistics figures and the school's pupil register. This led to incorrect statistics and censuses figures being submitted to the Education Department by the schools. It was seen that adjustments to school budgets following permanent exclusions had been calculated correctly. It was also found that some schools in our sample did not have a current registration with the Information Commissioner's Office.

2.5.2 Owain Dewi Hughes (Information Officer) and Owen Owens (Schools Senior Manager) were welcomed to the meeting.

2.5.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk presented the background to the audit. He noted that there were four schools in the sample, and that one in particular was responsible for this audit having received a 'C' opinion.

2.5.4 The Education officers acknowledged that weaknesses had been seen in one school in particular, but they noted that this school had a new head teacher and administrative officer at the time of the audit. It was also noted that this school was unique in terms of the nature of the pupils attending the school – the location and nature of the school meant that many of the pupils came from families who migrate due to their work.

2.5.5 The officers were asked what was happening in response to the report. They replied that work was currently underway to verify between the school and what is included in the Education Department's systems. In the past, primary schools have viewed the SIMS system as something "remote" which was used by the area offices, but by now the system is in every classroom. As the school's register was on paper, the school did not worry about SIMS, but the details are now fed straight into SIMS.

2.5.6 The members of the Working Group were keen to know that if the weaknesses were only apparent in one school, were there arrangements in place to offer support to that school, such as training? The Information Officer noted that he had spoken with the school following the report and they now understood the importance of having the correct figures. It was noted that the school had not made any financial loss or profit since two errors had cancelled each other out. The Information Officer was confident that the correct arrangements would be in place by September.

2.5.7 With regard to registering with the Information Commissioner, the Schools Senior Manager noted that the Education Department did not intend to verify the registration of each individual school, but the schools had been reminded. The Council's Information Manager had made a presentation to the primary and secondary schools strategic groups emphasising that they must register every year. It was also noted that they had raised awareness amongst schools recently regarding scams where companies offered to register schools but charged them large amounts of money.

2.5.8 The Schools Senior Manager noted that there were no problems with implementing the recommendations of the report.

2.5.9 The officers were thanked for attending the meeting and for their answers.

2.6 Health and Safety Risk Assessments in Schools

2.6.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

The main findings stemming from this audit is that a practical system needs to be established to conduct training session in the field of health and safety risk assessments for Head teachers/Health and Safety Coordinators in schools as well as other school staff. It was also seen that there is a need to ensure that the appropriate risk assessments exist in each school and that they are reviewed annually or when there is any significant change to the risk.

2.6.2 Owen Owens (Schools Senior Manager) stayed at the meeting to discuss this report.

2.6.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk presented the background to the audit, and explained that this report had received a 'B' opinion, as arrangements were fairly good overall. Two officers worked full time in the field of schools' Health and Safety.

2.6.4 The Schools Senior Manager explained that a Head Teacher's responsibilities could not be differentiated from his responsibilities as site manager, although this had caused some contention in the past; head teachers had now accepted the situation.

2.6.5 In terms of the training aspect, the Schools Senior Manager noted that it was difficult to organise training where everyone could attend. It was easier to release secondary teachers than primary teachers, but trainers were willing to be flexible in order to assist.

2.6.6 It was noted that a specific course was being arranged for the Council's officers, and the Schools Senior Manager noted that it would be a small matter to amend this for schools. Health and Safety officers already attended every school before they received an inspection.

2.6.7 However, the report referred to the need to formalise assessments. The aim was to use a system developed by the Council's Information Technology Unit to keep the registers, with a note being sent to schools reminding them to update. Technical problems have delayed the introduction of this system to date. A member enquired whether the system would record educational visits to locations outside the school. The Schools Senior Manager responded that another system, *Evolve*, was available for this – training had been given to every School Visits Coordinator, but not every school undertook such visits.

2.6.8 It was noted that the two schools Health and Safety officers (one employed by Human Resources, the other by the Education Department) sampled and monitored schools' risk registers. If there was an incident at a school, one of these officers went there. At present, not all schools had sent their risk assessments to the officers.

2.6.9 The Schools Senior Manager noted that he expected the governing body to review risk registers if there was any change at the school, or to keep an eye periodically. A member asked whether it would be appropriate for a Sub-committee of the Governing Body to undertake this work, and the Schools Senior Manager agreed that this would be better than the Full Body.

2.6.10 The report referred to inconsistencies in the way Report Accidents ('HS11 forms') were dealt with. Two secondary schools would be trialling a new HS11 procedure soon. A member commented that the definition of "accident" was a matter of interpretation. The Schools Senior Manager responded that he expected the guidance that was given to the schools as well as the forms themselves to be reviewed.

2.6.11 In respect of First Aid, the Schools Senior Manager was of the opinion that schools met the statutory requirement, but often no more than that.

2.6.12 The Schools Senior Manager was thanked for attending the meeting, and for his observations.

2.7 Verification of Performance Indicators

2.7.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

It was found during the audit that deficiencies existed in the system for performance indicators. Although the value of indicators is considered before they are selected, it was observed that not all indicators achieved SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic and Timely). Some indicators are inappropriate and insensible, as they are irrelevant to the customer, and take up officers' time to report on them.

There was insufficient verification of 'green' indicators according to the RAG scale, and the owners of the indicators had not had to submit evidence to the relevant officers in the Strategic and Improvement Department to support their performance.

It was also found that there were discrepancies in the details of relevant officers associated with the indicators on the record cards and on the Ffynnon system.

2.7.2 Hawis Jones (Performance Improvement and Efficiency Manager) was welcomed to the meeting.

2.7.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk presented the background to the audit. He noted that Internal Audit had received a specific request from the Strategic and Improvement Department to undertake the review in order to consider the situation across the Council in respect of the accuracy of the performance indicators that were reported.

2.7.4 The Performance Improvement and Efficiency Manager elaborated on the background. Before the start of the financial year, she worked with the Heads of Service and their managers to assist them to establish indicators. This was an opportunity to influence and challenge whether the indicators were truly useful – the aim is to have indicators that affect the citizen, and effort is made to have the best indicators in order to focus on the most important ones. They tried to promote a culture where everyone are owners and are responsible for their indicators.

2.7.5 A member noted that there were a great number of indicators, and many of them were difficult to understand and were ambiguous; the member asked how did the Performance Improvement and Efficiency Unit refine them? In response, the Manager noted that she tried to have the units to consider what their purpose was, and what could prevent them from meeting their objectives. In other words, what are their risks?

2.7.6 Although not every indicator was relevant to everyone, a member asked whether one big questionnaire was used by everyone in the Council as they prepared their indicators? The Senior Manager Audit and Risk noted that they were concerned about overcomplicating things, and that the procedure should be kept as simple as possible. The Council was much more mature in this context by now. The Senior Manager emphasised that this was a point of interest to the Audit Committee, as risk was a key part of their duties.

2.7.7 The Performance Improvement and Efficiency Manager added that there was an effort to keep the quarterly performance report simple. When an indicator is red – i.e. underperforming – an action plan is expected, and an answer to the Cabinet Member. The relevant Department and the Cabinet Member are expected to discuss the matters.

2.7.8 The Chairman asked whether the officers were happy with the situation. It was noted that there was one recommendation for Heads; the Working Group agreed that it was important that everyone understood this and that the responsibility remained with them.

2.7.9 The Performance Improvement and Efficiency Manager was thanked for attending the meeting and for explaining the situation clearly to the members.

2.8 Schools Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant

2.8.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

We found that the Council had a specific strategy and plans in place for the Schools Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant in 2012-13, and that a signed agreement was in place between the Council and the Welsh Government for the grants, with a strategy in place for 2012 - 13. However, it was found that no supporting documentation and evidence had been retained to support the grant output figures presented by the Council to the Welsh Government for 2012-13. In addition, it was found that the Education Department did not have ownership of all of the relevant grant documentation for 2012-13, and that there weren't adequate arrangements in place to keep grant documents for the retention periods set by the Welsh Government in the terms and conditions.

2.8.2 Helen Walker, Education Quality Improvement Officer (Grants Management and Monitoring) in the Education Department, was welcomed to the meeting.

2.8.3 A brief background was given to the purpose of the two grants, which are awarded by the Welsh Government. 80% of the Schools Effectiveness Grant is devolved to the schools with 20% remaining centrally, and its purpose is to raise literacy and numeracy standards. The purpose of the Pupil Deprivation Grant is to reduce the effect of poverty on pupils' attainment – this grant is fully devolved to the schools.

2.8.4 A paper was submitted which had been produced by the Education Quality Improvement Officer outlining what the Education Department intended to do in response to the Internal Audit report. The paper included detailed steps that have been adopted to change the procedure of administering the grants.

2.8.5 It was noted that the national guidelines made it a requirement for every school to submit a detailed Expenditure and Action Plan which corresponded with the plan of the North Wales Consortium / GwE. These plans include details of action and expenditure under the sub-headings of the two priorities (Literacy/Numeracy and Reducing the Impact of Poverty) with learner outcomes and costs noted clearly. These forms are returned electronically to the Education Quality Improvement Officer so that the plans and the expenditure can be approved by the Authority.

2.8.6 As well as tracking the expenditure carefully, the schools and the Authority present clear evidence of the 'effect' of any expenditure on pupils' attainment/learning outcomes e.g. improved reading/numeracy results. Information regarding targets / outcomes / outputs is noted on the Form. Specific and measurable (SMART) targets must be set.

2.8.7 The Working Group was assured that the Finance Unit would not release grant money to the school unless the claim form was completed correctly. This form notes the expenditure on resources, staffing etc. Each school is also required to submit evidence of their expenditure when they claim the money from the Authority, noting the name of the supplier and the amounts paid, and noting employment. The Education Quality Improvement Officer verifies every such Form that is submitted, and signs it. There was now awareness of the importance of using the appropriate payment slip when processing and paying invoices that have been funded by grant money. The expenditure on this form had to correspond with the expected expenditure in the Business Plan.

2.8.8 Supporting documents and evidence are kept on file to support the figures and performance results and outputs that are presented to the financial body at the schools. It was noted that the Education Department was already in the process of ensuring the transfer of the documents relating to the Schools Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant 2012-13 which were in Cynnal's ownership.

2.8.10 The officer was thanked for her comprehensive response.

2.9 Control Over Ordering and Payment for Property Repairs and Maintenance

2.9.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

The electronic system that is in place for the production of orders for property repairs by the Maintenance Team has been in use by the Property Service for a considerable period. Recently, the team has been subject to a review of streamlining processes with the result that a number of expected traditional controls have been abolished. The relevant principle in the current process is trust in the staff, and that managers accept the risks that are inherent in this. At the time of the audit, processes of establishing payments through the system are being tested and the process is expected to be operational by the 2014/15 financial year.

Some issues arising from the tests of this audit were noted which will need to be addressed by the Maintenance Team. There is a need to continue to transfer paper invoices to the Payments Service because of taxation requirements whilst avoiding a significant delay in the process. There is a need to establish a system of delegating the task of processing invoices in the absence of a member of staff. It is possible to create a payment for an item of work that has already been recorded as being completed and it would be appropriate to prevent this.

There is a need to ensure that there are processes within establishments to prevent reporting more than once on the same matter in order to avoid duplicate orders. There is scope to slightly amend the clauses that appear on official orders so that the impact of contractors not operating as expected are made clear.

2.9.2 Dafydd Gibbard (Senior Manager for Corporate Property) and Owain Samuel Owen (Maintenance System Leader) were welcomed to the meeting.

2.9.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk presented the background to the audit. Specifically, he explained that the Property Maintenance Unit is a service that has been subject to a “systems thinking” study, a system where all business procedures and processes are reviewed. This was part of the vision of the Gwynedd Way, which the prospective Chief Executive wanted to spread across the Council, namely to put the people of Gwynedd central to everything we do, and refrain from doing anything that will not add value to the people of Gwynedd. The Senior Manager Audit and Risk noted that this mentality would affect Internal Audit – not only in terms of reviewing our own work arrangements, but also in terms of what we will be reporting in our work. To this end, everyone in Internal Audit had already received a presentation from the prospective Chief Executive. It followed, therefore, that there will be an effect on what is reported to the Audit Committee in the future. The Senior Manager Audit and Risk emphasised that he was keen that Internal Audit and the Audit Committee supported the new procedure, and did not hinder it.

2.9.4 The result of the “old way” of working was that tiers of bureaucracy and internal controls had grown over a number of years, creating ineffective procedures. On the other hand, removing all the controls could lead to unacceptable risks. One of the main aspects to consider when planning this audit, therefore, was to review which activities had been identified as “waste”, and whether essential controls had been removed from this system as a consequence of that.

2.9.5 The Senior Manager for Corporate Property explained that he agreed with the presentation by the Senior Manager Audit and Risk, and noted that the whole purpose of the arrangement was to put the Customer first, and introduce procedures that were a better way of working in order to provide for the Customer. It was noted that the Unit was now being run at a cost of £100,000 less per annum, and customer satisfaction had increased significantly. Work was now completed within 10 days, whereas previously it would take 89 days.

- 2.9.6 The officers from the Property Unit were completely comfortable with the recommendations of the report; each one had already been addressed, but Recommendation A03 (*The Maintenance Team should request that each site manager gives their assurance that they have incorporated a procedure within their establishment to prevent more than one order being made for the same work*) required further attention, and the ability to implement Recommendation A04 (*The manufacturers of the Tribal K2 system should be requested to programme an adjustment to the system which would prevent users from creating any payments for work that has been recorded as having been paid for in total*) was beyond the Department's control.
- 2.9.7 One member said that he was familiar with these arrangements as he was a member of the Systems Thinking Working Group through his membership of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. In a discussion, the Senior Manager Audit and Risk emphasised that this thinking, if implemented correctly, could have a far-reaching effect on the Council's attitude to risk, and the way Internal Audit will review, assess and report, including reporting to the Audit Committee. Auditors will need to change their way of thinking, and concentrate on the things that are truly important, and which affect the Council's ability to provide for the people of Gwynedd. It was noted that auditors could be nervous about not reporting on a relatively minor issue in a report, in case something stemmed from it. In response, the Senior Manager for Corporate Property noted that this nervousness could filter down to the units, who were hesitant of doing something that Internal Audit had drawn attention to.
- 2.9.8 The Senior Manager for Corporate Property explained that the Unit dealt with 9,000 pieces of work annually, and that 80% of these were categorised as "simple" work.
- 2.9.8 The Working Group agreed that systems thinking and the Gwynedd Way were important procedures, which needed support. If Internal Audit and the Audit Committee were not willing to buy in to the new mentality, it could undermine the vision.
- 2.9.9 The officers were thanked for their positive responses, and for the background to the new work arrangements.**

2.10 Arrangements for Registering Births, Deaths and Marriages

2.10.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

During the audit, it was discovered that the registrars still use the cash books, although it was expressed some years ago that there were plans to move to an electronic system. It was regretful to see that there were no developments in this field, and many of the of control weaknesses in the Registration Service, especially in respect of reconciling the Contact Centre's income, stem from the absence of an adequate operating system that is able to cope with the various elements.

2.10.2 Iolo Roberts, Registration Manager, was welcomed to the meeting.

2.10.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk gave a brief background to the situation, and explained the historical working arrangements of the Registrars.

2.10.4 The Registration Manager explained that there are two Registrars in Dolgellau and Pwllheli, and three in Caernarfon. The Registrars are now employed by the Council (they were previously employed by the General Register Office), and the arrangement has been modernised. However, each Registrar is responsible for their own stock (i.e. blank certificates), and it is their personal responsibility to reconcile the stock in their possession. They receive new stock from the Registrar General. Therefore, the Registrars are accountable to the Council on a daily basis, but accountable to the Registrar General for their stock.

2.10.5 The Registration Manager gave an update on developments since the report was released. He said that they intended to do away with the paper cash book, as Information Technology had designed a system which would be tested very soon. It was hoped that this will answer many of the problems that have arisen in the past, and which are highlighted in the report.

2.10.6 In terms of reconciling applications that are received through Galw Gwynedd, it was noted that the money went to a central fund, and it was difficult to know which Registrar the money should be allocated against, which made reconciliation difficult. The new system should be synchronised with the Siebel system in Galw Gwynedd, to be able to reconcile properly.

2.10.7 The Registration Manager was thanked for the information.

2.11 Overnight Arrangements at the Council's Homes

2.11.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

Examples of good practice were found within some areas of night staff arrangements in the Council's Homes, e.g. night staff timetables. However, it appears that more robust staff monitoring is needed and clear guidelines provided for them. Consequently, appropriate steps should be taken to strengthen the controls within the audited field.

2.11.2 Gwenno Williams, Senior Operational Manager, was welcomed to the meeting.

2.11.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk explained that this audit had been undertaken at the request of the Senior Operational Manager, and that it was no surprise to the Department that the audit had received a 'C' opinion.

2.11.4 There is plenty of work to do during the night. The duties night workers are expected to complete include usual housework such as cleaning, washing and ironing. Not every home has a check list that highlights what should be done, but some managers do carry out spot checks during the night.

2.11.5 In terms of work hours, night staff work 9¼ hours for 3 nights in one week, and then for 4 nights the following week. Because of fire regulations, it is a requirement to have three people sleeping in on site during the night. However, it is not expected for all three of them to work, and the one who sleeps in is only woken up if there is a fire.

2.11.6 The Senior Operational Manager showed the Working Group a copy of the Management Monitoring Book that had been prepared by the Department. This booklet was a series of check lists, and every manager is expected to check this book in the mornings. Although some of the residents slept throughout the night, this was not the case with every one. Homes have changed, with many people with dementia residing in them now, which meant that some residents were awake throughout the night. The Management Monitoring Book is a means of addressing and managing this changing situation.

2.11.7 The Senior Operational Manager said that she was happy with all the recommendations.

2.11.8 The Senior Operational Manager was thanked for her comments and the arrangements that were outlined.

2.12 Overtime Claims Procedures

2.12.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

It was found that the majority of overtime worked is planned in advance and that the circumstances have been considered carefully, exploring other possibilities before plans for overtime are authorised. Due to the nature of some services, it is inevitable that unplanned overtime occurs when an emergency arises. It was found that each service selected for the audit uses an appropriate form for recording overtime, although there is a difference in the style and format of the forms used.

Evidence was found of good processes to confirm the appropriateness of claims, including checks of cross referencing together with good practice for numerical checks by a number of services. However, it was found that this was not consistent across the Council and there have been instances where no checks are carried out at all on the claims submitted.

2.12.2 Two main matters had come up in this audit, namely an overpayment that had been made in the Leisure Service as a result of an error, and the general arrangements across the Council when dealing with overtime claims.

2.12.3 Since the Senior Operational Manager was already at the meeting, the overpayment in the Leisure Service was dealt with first. It was reported that the overpayment had occurred through a complete mistake. The relevant officer had not received training on how to complete overtime forms (this would not have been part of the basic training). Furthermore, this form had been sent to someone else to be certified, but this person had not noticed the mistake either.

2.12.4 The Senior Operational Manager noted that new arrangements had been introduced in order to better verify the overtime claimed.

2.12.5 The Senior Operational Manager was thanked for the explanation, and for reviewing the arrangements.

2.12.6 William Jones, Senior Finance Manager, attended to answer any questions the Working Group may have regarding the general arrangements for claiming overtime. He said that in some departments, officers approved overtime for a number of services. The problem with this is they cannot take an overview of the entire situation, including the financial situation. Also, they did not always check the overtime against the budget allocated for it.

2.12.7 He noted that there had been substantial costs due to work following the inclement weather last winter. An effort was made to recover the money from the Government, but to be able to do this, very detailed records had to be kept in order to be able to claim them. In other circumstances, the requirements were not as stringent.

2.12.8 The relevant information arrived at the Payroll Unit in one of two ways:

- Individual paper forms
- On a spreadsheet from the relevant Department (the preferred format by Payroll, as there is a risk with the paper forms that a false claim has been submitted).

2.12.9 The Senior Finance Manager noted that there were developments in the pipeline – the arrangements of Payroll and Human Resources had been reviewed, with a view to integrate both systems. This will introduce an element of self-service, which should improve effectiveness and control – the information will be fed in directly to the system by the individual, and will be authorised on-line by the Manager. The Senior Finance Manager was asked how far we were from having a fully operational electronic system. He replied that the Human Resources and Finance Departments currently had separate systems, and the task now was to merge both systems.

- 2.12.10 The Senior Finance Manager emphasised that the Payroll Unit worked to a very tight schedule. When individuals complained that they had not been paid, the information may have been slow arriving at the Unit, or perhaps the individual was not aware of the timescale. Further to this, it must be considered that the details have to be sent to the banks two days before the pay day, which in itself reduces the timescale.
- 2.12.11 The Senior Finance Manager was satisfied with the particular recommendation that was relevant to the Payroll Unit, but he emphasised the importance of pressing on departments to improve their arrangements.
- 2.12.12 As part of performance measuring arrangements, the Payroll Unit measures enquiries. This enables them to monitor which problems have arisen within the Unit, and which ones have come from which departments.
- 2.12.13 As well as the discussion regarding specific cohorts of employees, the Working Group was keen to receive further information on whether recycling / waste collection workers received overtime payments, or whether they were expected to complete all the work within the basic salary. Concern was also expressed that the Council's translators travelled to meetings where they were not needed, because the individuals who would have required their service had not notified the Council that they would not be attending.
- 2.12.14 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk agreed that he would look into this, and report back to the Audit Committee.**
- 2.12.15 The Senior Finance Manager was thanked for attending the meeting, and for his information and advice.**

2.13 *Siopau Gwynedd* Follow-up

2.13.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

Action was unsatisfactory. Of the six recommendations made, it was seen that the Department had implemented four of them.

- 2.13.2 Idris Thomas Jones, (Customer Contact Manager) and Joanne Parry (Customer Contact and Council Offices Cleaning Service Assistant Manager) were welcomed to the meeting to respond to the report.
- 2.13.3 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk explained that the original report had received a 'C' opinion and that it had been addressed by the Working Group in September 2013. The follow-up work had received an 'Unsatisfactory' opinion.
- 2.13.4 The Customer Contact Manager noted that the Unit had strived to ensure that all staff at *Siopau Gwynedd* received personal safety training. Unfortunately, although this was a priority for Customer Contact, the Manager reported that Social Services were afforded the priority by the Training Unit. Nevertheless, only one worker remained who had not received the training, and this would happen before the end of June. As in September, he emphasised to the Committee that it was not possible to close the doors of *Siopau Gwynedd* for everyone to receive the training at the same time.
- 2.13.5 The Customer Contact and Council Offices Cleaning Service Assistant Manager expressed that no one from Internal Audit had spoken to her when the audit was being undertaken. The Senior Manager Audit and Risk responded that Internal Audit staff were also expected to learn and develop in the work continuously.
- 2.13.6 The Senior Manager Audit and Risk emphasised that the report stated that four out of six recommendations had been implemented, and that the reason the report had been categorised as unsatisfactory was the failure to reconcile the *Siop Gwynedd* income at the time of the follow-up. The Senior Manager said that Internal Audit did not hold spot-checks often, but they had in this instance, because of the nature of the test that had to be undertaken.
- 2.13.7 The Customer Contact officers reported that the performance weaknesses in this field were being formally addressed at present.
- 2.13.8 On the other hand, it was reported that the Senior Revenue Manager had praised the steps taken by staff at *Siopau Gwynedd* as they provided advice on benefits and taxation.
- 2.13.9 The Customer Contact and Council Offices Cleaning Service Assistant Manager was particularly unhappy that new things were being addressed in the follow-up memorandum (RADAR key fees) that had not been included in the original report. Furthermore, she emphasised that this matter was not a managerial weakness by *Siopau Gwynedd* in any case, since *Siopau Gwynedd* implemented the instructions of the Highways and Municipal Department.
- 2.13.10 Finally, the Customer Contact Manager emphasised that the savings system will have a significant effect on the service.
- 2.13.11 The officers were thanked for attending the meeting, and for the information presented by them.**