

COMMITTEE	GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
DATE	29 SEPTEMBER 2026
TITLE	REPORT OF THE CONTROLS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	TO REPORT ON THE MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2026
AUTHOR	LUNED FÔN JONES – AUDIT MANAGER
ACTION	TO ACCEPT THE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A meeting of the Working Group was held on 1 September 2026 with the Deputy Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, Dewi Lewis, Councillors Geraint Parry, Ioan Thomas and Menna Baines, Gwawr Owen (Senior Auditor) and Luned Fôn Jones (Audit Manager) present.
- 1.2 It was decided at the Governance and Audit Committee held on 21 May 2026 to further discuss the following audits at a meeting of the Controls Improvement Working Group:

TITLE	DEPARTMENT	AUDIT ASSURANCE LEVEL
School Transport Follow-up	Education / Environment	SATISFACTORY
Breakfast Clubs – Follow-up	Education	LIMITED
Fire Arrangements	Corporate	SATISFACTORY
Category Management – Environment – Follow-up	Highways, Engineering and YGC	LIMITED

- 1.3 Relevant officers attend to discuss the reports and the Audit Manager explained that the Controls Improvement Working Group is an opportunity to ask the relevant officers about the findings of the recent audits as time does not allow for such in-depth detail in the Committee.
- 1.4 The full audit reports were distributed to members of the Controls Improvement Working Group.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 **School Transport Follow-up**

2.1.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

Of the 5 operations agreed from the original audit, 4 were found to have been implemented, the conclusions are reported below. As a result, a revised agreed action plan is presented attached to this report.

The Transport Co-ordinator confirmed that the Transport Team are still not notified when there is a significant change in a child's circumstances, i.e. a change that would affect their right to receive free transport. While the schools report similar changes in the SIMS system, which are then fed into the Synergy system (to which the Transportation Team has access), without the change being highlighted, thousands of records would have to be checked to identify changes. The Systems Support Officer explained that SIMS is in the process of being replaced by a new system, Bromcom, which will allow better monitoring of the data. In the meantime, he noted that it is possible to run reports from Synergy of any significant changes to share with the Transportation Team. By the time the draft report was released, it was confirmed that arrangements had been put in place where the Transport Team receive a monthly report, automatically generated from the Synergy system, highlighting any children who had changed schools. It was reported that the report had enabled the Transport Team to identify two children already where their journeys needed to be changed.

For the period 01/04/25-02/02/26 it was found that 3,371 post-16 travel tickets were provided. From the sample of 20 reviewed in detail, it was found that the applicants all live in Gwynedd, and at least 3 miles away from school or college, making them eligible for the ticket. The Education Transport Manager confirmed that consideration had been given to reintroducing a fee for post-16 travel tickets, but that the Council did not favour the idea.

It was found that the Transport Team is now preparing reports to the School Group Accountant every term, stating the number of new bus passes issued, i.e. following the loss of a bus pass. For the period September-December 2025, 26 tickets had been provided, with only £10 of income recorded in the ledger. Passes are £5 each. It is assumed that the schools do not collect the income, or that it is incorrectly referenced. No response had been received from the Group Accountant by the time the draft report was released.

2.1.2 Debbie Jones, Assistant Head of Department - Education Services, Robert John Jones (Education Transport Manager) and Gerwyn Jones (Assistant Head – Environment) were welcomed to the meeting)

2.1.3 The discussion was initiated by receiving an update on progress on the original agreed actions. The Assistant Head – Education Services explained that the Department has been working towards publishing a policy for around a year now in order to meet current statutory requirements and guidance. The draft policy was submitted to Cabinet on 20 January 2026 with a request for permission to hold a consultation on the policy.

2.1.4 It was explained that consultation was required at least 12 months before introducing a change to some or all of the discretionary elements of the policy and explained that the Education Transport Manager had been holding sessions at colleges and schools across the county, including opinion gathering sessions. It was expressed that the comments received were evaluated in order to assess whether any changes to the policy were needed.

- 2.1.5 Following the results of the consultation, a draft policy was published on 9 June 2026 and on 15 September 2026 the Policy was presented to Cabinet – the report to Cabinet states *“Subject to the consideration of the contents of the Report and the Appendices, together with the outcomes of the consultation and engagement activities, the Cabinet is requested to make a decision on the adoption of a new Education Transport Policy, which will come into effect on 1 September 2027.”*
- 2.1.6 The monitoring arrangements and agreements relating to the Alcohol and Drugs Policy were discussed in the Working Group. A new Corporate Policy has been established but the policy does not currently apply to third parties.
- 2.1.7 Officers explained that legislative change is a slow process, and the relevant agreements usually last for around 5 to 7 years and it is necessary to ensure that the agreements remain appropriate throughout their life. This is considered a high-risk area, and the service implements mitigation measures where possible to ensure that arrangements are as robust as practically possible. It was also noted that it is not feasible to monitor all agreements on a weekly basis but that monitoring programmes and processes are in place.
- 2.1.8 Councillor Geraint Parry suggested that the current regime of using two systems and entering data twice is not ideal and that investing in one integrated system would offer a more efficient approach, reduce duplication of work and provide better management information.
- 2.1.9 It was enquired on the number of cases where it was necessary to call the Police following an allegation of an employee of a company under the influence of alcohol or drugs but the specific information was not available at the time and the Assistant Head – Environment would send the information for the attention of the Audit Manager.
- 2.10 In relation to the DBS checks, it was explained to the Working Group that the process has recently been simplified. Discussion has been ongoing over the last few months, and staff have been receiving safeguarding training through online resources. Members of the Working Group enquired about the level of monitoring being carried out and if there is a risk that an individual may be without a proper DBS and continue to drive school buses. The Education officers explained that this is not in line with the requirements of the agreements, and that ongoing communication with operators is an important part of the management and monitoring arrangements.
- 2.11 It was also discussed that there is also a need to improve the information system. The service is currently in the process of moving away from SIMS, with the primary schools having already switched to the Bromcom system, and the piloting of the secondary schools will soon begin. Since the audit, significant work has been done to clean up and improve the quality of the data. The Assistant Head – Education Services explained that a transport system used by Powys Council, which offers much wider functionality, but with an estimated cost of around £70,000, was considered. As the Bromcom system is relatively new, there is potential to add more functions to the system in the future. It is hoped that it will develop into an effective system for managing school data.
- 2.12 The Working Group expressed satisfaction that the necessary actions had been taken, with the hope that the new policy will be in force by this time next year. The officers explained that the Environment and Education departments are working closely together to identify areas for improvement and review existing arrangements.

- 2.13 The officers were thanked for attending the meeting and for explaining the current situation and the ongoing work being done.

2.2 **Breakfast Clubs – Follow-up**

- 2.2.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

Of the 10 actions agreed from the original audit, 6 were found to have been implemented, the conclusions are reported below. As a result, a revised agreed action plan was presented.

As in the full audit, the breakfast clubs of Waunfawr, Gwaun Gyfni, and Dolbadarn schools were visited to carry out the follow up. For the 3 schools, records relating to children with allergies ranged from document to document, i.e. kitchen records disagreeing with those of the Catering Team, making it difficult to identify all children with allergies. Not only did the names disagree, but also the type of foods the child had an allergy to.

On one occasion, it was found that the school had provided documentation in relation to a pupil with an allergy, but that the kitchen had not acted as there was no supporting medical evidence. In addition, it was found that 2 of the 3 schools did not display pictures of children with allergies on the kitchen wall, as stated in the Allergy Policy. In discussion with the Education Catering and Cleaning Service Manager, it was discovered that the previous Manager had been instructed by the Data Protection Team not to display pictures of the children, but that the policy had not been updated to reflect that. It was acknowledged that the policy was complex, and some of the content was now irrelevant. It was confirmed that meetings had been held with the Welsh Local Government Association, as well as enquiries to neighbouring authorities to formulate a new, simpler policy, which would place more emphasis on the receipt of supporting medical evidence.

Although the Allergy risk assessments seen in the Allergy Folders during the visits were not up to date, copies, reviewed in the last year, were received by the Education Catering and Cleaning Services Manager. It was noted that each school's folders would be updated with the current assessments as soon as possible.

It is expected that separate equipment is available for the provision of food to children with allergies, i.e. a purple plate, bowl, and cup. Although the full audit revealed that the kitchen at Ysgol Dolbadarn did not have purple bowls, it was found that this was still the case during the most recent visit. It was confirmed that the School Catering and Cleaning Team Leader had ordered bowls prior to the release of the draft report. It is noted that consideration has been given to the provision of separate eating utensils for children with allergies, but that the Public Protection service has confirmed that sterilisation alone is adequate.

As for the content of the breakfast, foods ordered must be as set by the Government. There are four categories, and one option must be provided from each category. The categories are: Milk or yogurt-based beverages, Cereals, Fruit and Vegetables, and Bread. At the time of the full audit, juice was being provided as the fruit option. Since then, the juice has been replaced, offering a drink of water or milk in its place. In Waunfawr school a bowl of fruit was spotted at the entrance to the kitchen, with several children asking for fruit during the session. In Gwaun Gyfni and Dolbadarn schools, although the staff noted that fruit was available to any child who requested any, it was found that the fruit bowls were hidden out of the children's view, and that the quality of the fruit was also poor. The Education Catering and Cleaning Service Manager noted that they had struggled with suppliers recently, where orders were not being fully received, and the quality of the food was poor.

Despite being involved in fire drills in the schools since the full audit, it was found that kitchen staff remained without access to the Council's E-learning portal to complete mandatory modules.

- 2.2.2 Haydn Jones (Education Catering and Cleaning Service Manager) joined the Assistant Head – Education Services to discuss the findings of the audit.
- 2.2.3 The Audit Manager explained that the Education Catering and Cleaning Service Manager was new to the post and the audit had been carried out prior to his appointment.
- 2.2.4 All of the agreed actions contained in the revised Action Plan were discussed.
- 2.2.5 **Failure to review and update guidance and policies results in staff being unsure of their duties, and inconsistencies in the arrangements of different kitchens, which can lead to a failure to identify children and allergies, and a failure to protect staff and pupils.** The Catering and Cleaning Service Manager explained that the biggest risk in this area is the management of food allergies. Although a policy is currently in place, it was recognised that it is complex and does not provide the clarity that is required. The intention is to develop a new policy, but as there is not enough specialist experience within the service to develop the policy independently, collaborative work is being carried out with other partners. It was noted that there is no national template available to Welsh schools that clearly defines the requirements, and therefore collaborative work is being done to develop a suitable policy for the whole of Wales. Work is expected to start before Christmas, with a first draft to be prepared by the end of the year. As part of the new arrangements, medical evidence will be required to confirm that a special diet is required. Schools will collect this information on behalf of the service, and the data will be recorded on the Bromcom system and kept secure.
- 2.2.6 **Failure to share current guidance and information results in staff being unaware of their duties.** The Education Catering and Cleaning Service Manager explained that there is a need to improve the transfer of information and communication with the schools. It is expected that the new arrangements will be in place by this time next year.
- 2.2.7 **Failure to review and update the contents of the Allergy Folder, in particular risk assessments, results in a failure to protect staff and pupils, with staff acting on historical information.** It was noted that folders and risk assessments relating to allergies and related issues are available. Two files are kept in each kitchen, namely an allergy file and a procedural manual. It was recognised that risk assessments can be complex, and it would be best to have the new policy in place before any further work in this area is completed. It was confirmed that the current risk assessments are available and the cooks are aware of their location and use.

- 2.2.8 **Failure to provide children with allergies with the appropriate equipment, resulting in failure to identify children with allergies, risk of reaction, and failure to comply with the Allergy Policy.** The team has worked to ensure that the appropriate equipment, including plates and bowls of a specific colour, is available in all schools. Mixed feedback has been received, with some stating that this highlights the fact that the child has needs. However, the general view is that it is better to have additional measures in place than to take a risk that may result in a child becoming ill or losing a life. The Technical Officer visits schools and discusses arrangements directly with parents where necessary.
- 2.2.9 **Failure to offer fruit during the breakfast club sessions results in failure to comply with Welsh Government requirements.** The Catering and Cleaning Service Manager – Education confirmed that fruit bowls are now available at the proper locations.
- 2.2.10 **Failure to comply with the Council's requirements by not completing mandatory E-learning modules.** Funding has been secured to provide laptops to all schools. Discussions have been held with the IT service to identify the requirements, and a pilot scheme is underway in three secondary schools before the new arrangements are rolled out more widely. This work will be carried out in partnership with the Council's training team. It was noted that the lack of access to systems and training is a challenge that can be seen across the Council. Reaching all relevant staff is difficult and involves a significant use of resources. However, work has been undertaken to increase awareness, and a number of new appointments have been made during the year, including a Business Officer, Support Officer and apprentice. The officers explained that these additional resources have enhanced the service's ability to focus on areas of development and increase capacity. With the funding now secured, the piloting work has commenced and a programme is now in place to develop the digital system. It was noted that there was a lot of training work ahead of them but in order to deliver all the planned work within the timeframe, more resources would be required. Members of the Working Group suggested that further consideration should be given to this issue as part of the service's resource planning.
- 2.2.11 The Assistant Head – Education Services and the Catering and Cleaning Service Manager were thanked for the progress and plans underway to improve controls.

2.3 **Fire Arrangements**

- 2.3.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

The impact of inadequate fire management arrangements can be serious, and for this reason it is essential that the Council follows the Corporate Fire Safety Policy by recognising its responsibilities as an employer, and it is committed to ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of its workers, as well as the safety of any other person who may be affected by fire hazards. Fire risks have been included on the corporate risk register.

Site managers have been appointed for each property, and they are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe day-to-day working environment at the site. The Housing and Property Department's Safety and Compliance Team visit the properties annually to carry out checks, identify deficiencies, arrange repair work, and offer support to the site manager. The Safety and Compliance Team follows the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (amended 2023), which means that a thorough fire risk assessment must be carried out for

each property whenever there is a change in use or site manager, followed by annual inspections.

A sample of 6 properties was selected from the Council's insurance database. The sample included offices of various sizes, a Youth Centre, a Library, and a Secondary School. Inspection records of the Safety and Compliance Team were reviewed for these properties, encompassing a wide range of fire management and prevention arrangements, as well as other matters such as legionella and asbestos.

One property was excluded from the sample as it is used and managed by an external organisation. At the time of the audit, no inspection report was available for one property because the visit took place in April 2025 and the staff member had since left before completing the report. Reports are expected to be submitted within six weeks of the visit. For three other properties, it was found that thorough inspections had been carried out and that findings and recommendations had been made. Some of the recommendations included receiving and recording fire training, arranging Portable Appliance Testing for electrical equipment, removing obstructions from evacuation points, and placing fire procedure notices in appropriate locations. Some Internal Audit Service visits of external establishments such as care homes also include fire management elements, and findings have included failures to carry out and record equipment tests as frequently as expected. The Corporate Health & Safety Team also visit properties to review the contents of their blue boxes, namely the property's fire test records, fire plan etc

It was found that Site Managers had been designated for each property in the sample. A Site Management training course is available which provides the necessary knowledge and skills for managers to deal with health and safety matters relating to fire, among other topics. Although all site managers in the sample had attended the course (except one who had recently been appointed), training records in MODS suggest that a considerable amount of time can pass before attending the course after being appointed to the role. Refresher courses are available to remind managers of the arrangements, and if the managers have not completed the refresher course within 3 years, they must retake the original course.

A Fire Awareness e-module is available on the e-Learning Portal, but it was noted that several site managers had not completed it, nor had they read the Corporate Fire Safety Policy. Completing the module and accepting the policy is something every member of staff should do, but it is recognised that the Site Management course surpasses the e-learning module.

It is the Site Manager's responsibility to act on the Safety and Compliance Team's recommendations, but progress is not followed up until the next annual visit. However, some of the actions are the responsibility of the Housing and Property department, and the department says that they prioritise these actions based on risk.

Departmental Health and Safety forums are a good opportunity to discuss fire related matters, and the Finance Department has already discussed and circulated an email encouraging staff to read and complete the Fire Awareness e-learning module, as well as committing to discuss PAT testing, which, according to the Council's Portable Electrical Appliance Testing Procedure, is the responsibility of the department, although this does not appear to be widely known.

For the final property in the sample, the Pencadlys offices, the most recent inspection records, September 2023, were received. No inspection has been carried out since then due

to ongoing work, such as office moves and the redevelopment of the former reception area. Normally, this would require several thorough fire risk assessments for each change, but the Safety and Compliance Team has decided to work collaboratively with the offices team while the work continues, and the fire risk assessment is intended to be carried out soon. However, the Corporate Health & Safety Team is of the opinion that periodic assessments should have taken place.

Following a meeting of the Corporate Forum, weaknesses in the arrangements for evacuating the main offices in a fire emergency were highlighted. The risk is included on the corporate risk register and is one of the weaknesses highlighted in the 2023 audit. This stems from the fact that offices of this size require fire marshals to be responsible for identifying who is present on the day, but hybrid working is undermining the effectiveness of the current arrangements.

- 2.3.2 Gareth Wyn Jones (Statutory Maintenance and Compliance Manager – Housing and Property) and Gail Warrington (Health, Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Services Manager – Corporate Services) were welcomed to the Working Group.
- 2.3.3 The Statutory Maintenance and Compliance Manager – Housing and Property explained that the last risk assessment at HQ was conducted in 2023. It was explained that he had had a discussion with Karen Moseley-Jones (Office and Cleaning Manager), who confirmed that the refurbishment work on the building was now almost complete, except for one meeting room. As a result, a full new risk assessment is planned to be arranged. As the floor layout of the building has changed significantly, the plans will need to be updated before the assessment is carried out. This work is expected to be completed before Christmas.
- 2.3.4 The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Services Manager emphasised the need for a culture change in this area. Site Managers have specific responsibilities under the Health and Safety Policy and are required to carry out a number of statutory and operational tasks. As part of these arrangements, a blue box has been set up at each site, containing relevant information and documents. Ad-hoc checks are carried out in some buildings when resources allow, and basic arrangements have now been put in place.
- 2.3.5 A challenge remains in identifying and keeping an up-to-date record of Site Managers. At present, there is no formal system that can provide a list of new managers who have been appointed in the last six months. Information about new appointments is often only obtained through informal communication. While responsibilities are clearly defined at all levels within the Council, awareness of these requirements needs to continue to be raised.

- 2.3.6 Site Managers are required to regularly complete and renew their relevant e-learning training. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of completing this training, and the issue has been discussed in numerous forums, including performance challenge forums. Emails have been sent to services asking managers to ensure that training requirements are met. However, it has been noted that a change of culture is needed to strengthen ownership and accountability in this area.
- 2.3.7 The portable appliance testing (PAT) arrangements were also discussed. Work was carried out to understand what is being done at departmental level, as not everyone is aware that it is the responsibility of individual departments to organise this work. With the financial pressures and cuts that have taken place over the last few years, there is a need for a clearer understanding of the current situation and associated risks. It was also recognised that changing established practice takes time and requires significant commitment from staff and management. It was explained that previous procurement arrangements included a framework for PAT testing work, but it was recognised that it was difficult to monitor all aspects of compliance and therefore key activities needed to be prioritised. It was also explained that PAT testing arrangements have become more complex since more staff started working from home.
- 2.3.8 The Site Manager's responsibilities include maintaining and updating the contents of the blue box, managing fire arrangements, asbestos and legionella, ensuring that information is available on gas and electricity switch-off locations, and maintaining building evacuation arrangements. In offices, the role will be undertaken by a dedicated Site Manager, while in other settings such as leisure centres the role will be undertaken by designated site managers. In each school, the Headteacher is the Site Manager.
- 2.3.9 It was emphasised that control over all aspects of these responsibilities cannot be centralised. Site Managers themselves must recognise and undertake their duties. If a Site Manager is found not to be carrying out his/her responsibilities properly, he/she should be assessed as having the necessary resources, training and support before taking any further action.
- 2.3.10 In addition, fire training arrangements and compulsory courses require further review to ensure that the right people receive the most relevant training. The IOSH course was cited as an example, noting that attendance is not always sufficient. Although the number of courses available has tripled, around 40% of places remain vacant, although services often express concern about a lack of provision. Again, this was recognised as reflecting the need for a culture change.
- 2.3.11 Finally, it was confirmed that annual audits are being carried out and that a review of fire safety arrangements is only one part of this process. However, the question was raised as to whether once a year inspection is frequent enough to ensure that risks are identified and managed in a timely manner.
- 2.3.12 The officers were thanked for attending the Working Group and for an open discussion on the issues highlighted in the audit and the work being done.

2.4 **Category Management – Environment – Follow-up**

2.4.1 The main findings of the audit were as follows:

Four actions were agreed as part of the original audit in April 2025, one with a risk score of 6, two with a risk score of 12, and one with a risk score of 9. It was found that the actions had been partially implemented and the findings are reported below, however, ongoing work is in place to develop systems in order to prioritise value for money and retain benefits locally. As a result, a revised agreed action plan was prepared.

The original internal audit identified that one of the risks to be mitigated was a failure to properly maintain and manage a register of all contracts to ensure they receive timely attention. The service intended to transfer all contracts to the K2 system so that contract status could be monitored, including identifying when relevant documents need to be renewed. However, the K2 system has not yet been fully developed, and the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department is currently the only department using it. It does not appear likely that development of the K2 system for use by other departments can begin for several months due to departmental workload. As a result, the Environmental Category Management Team decided to begin trialling a PowerApp system to monitor accreditations of contracted companies and their subcontractors, to ensure company details remain up to date. The intention is for the PowerApp system to go live by April 2026.

To date, the Environmental Category Management Team has transferred a list of subcontractors to the PowerApp system, along with the Tree Management framework as a starting point. Further work is required to fully develop the system, and a significant amount of time will be needed to input all relevant information and contracts. Once completed, the system will allow access to company contact details, contract status, accreditations, start and end dates, records of social benefits, insurance details, and any essential documents that require renewal. The system will flag expired documents and send automatic email notifications to companies. It is intended to establish a tile for each contract on the PowerApp system and share these with relevant departments once the system is fully implemented.

During the original audit, the Environmental Category Management Team intended to transfer all arrangements to the K2 system. However, it now appears that the K2 system is not suitable for all frameworks and contracts across all departments. Although the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department currently uses the K2 system, it requires individual licences, which can create barriers for managers in other departments. In contrast, the PowerApp system can be shared with all staff without such restrictions.

Another risk raised during the original audit was the potential failure to comply with the new Procurement Act 2023, which came into force in February 2025. The Act introduced several requirements to be embedded within processes, along with mandatory training for staff. The training status of members of the Environmental Category Management Team was reviewed, and evidence was received that one member of staff had completed the Government's "Transforming Public Procurement" course, with another officer currently working through the modules. However, one member of staff had not yet started the training due to absence but intends to begin the training in March 2026. In addition, the Category Team Manager has arranged for the Environmental Category team to attend further training (Pass Procurement) once a date becomes available.

Following a request from the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department, a training session was delivered to the Department's Management Team on 17 July 2025. Evidence was seen that the session provided information on the Council's procurement rules and arrangements, ensuring that all attendees had the same basic understanding of procurement. The session also highlighted the changes introduced by the Procurement Act, ensuring staff were aware of the new arrangements now in force. The Procurement Service confirmed that it is willing to provide this training to any team that requires it, and the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department has requested further sessions. The Procurement Service is currently developing a presentation for the Highways and Engineering teams, with the intention of delivering sessions shortly. YGC has also requested a further presentation, and a session has already been delivered at the beginning of February.

Corporate training is also underway, including the "Procurement and Contracting" training available on the Council's Learning and Development Framework. The Procurement Service confirmed that consultation with the Category teams will take place prior to the session, so that they are aware of and familiar with the content and can provide relevant comments and input. In addition, "Social Value and Sustainability" training is being provided to procurement officers, and the Category Management Team has already attended one of these sessions. The intention of the Procurement Service is to develop more training in the future to strengthen procurement understanding and skills across the Council.

- 2.4.2 Arwel Evans (Procurement Manager – Corporate Services) and Bethan Meira Owen Category Manager – Environment - Highways, Engineering and YGC) were welcomed to the meeting.
- 2.4.3 The Officers explained that the team is trying to cope with a very substantial programme of work, as there is a need to manage a wide range of contracts and procurement activities across the Council. The service is aware of the areas and goods that need to be purchased, as well as the need to manage new contracts and ensure that existing contracts that are expiring are renewed in a timely manner. Given the number of contracts in place across the Council and the relatively small size of the team, the work must be prioritised and which procurement activities need attention at specific times.
- 2.4.4 It was emphasised that the team is trying to make the best use of the resources available. The Environment – Highways Engineering and YGC category manager team have been working on introducing arrangements and systems to assist with contract management, but as there are only three members in the team, the work programme remains very extensive.
- 2.4.5 Monitoring contractors' accreditations, certificates and insurance is an important part of the work. Ensuring that all relevant documents are up to date creates a significant administrative burden, which increases as the number of contracts increases. As a result, discussions have been held with the IT service about developing a system that can monitor expiry dates and provide automatic notifications when insurance or contractor accreditations requires renewal.

- 2.4.6 Potential development was discussed using PowerApp, which would be able to provide an individual record for each contractor. Although agreements and procurement arrangements are already in place, it was noted that it was a challenge to ensure that all services across the Council consistently used the approved tendering arrangements and frameworks. The proposed system would be able to save contractor information, accreditations and insurance documents, as well as provide automatic alerts when records expire. Currently, only a small number of contracts are included, but it is envisaged that the system would significantly facilitate administrative work and contract management.
- 2.4.7 Reference was also made to the K2 system, which is used by the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department to manage frameworks and contracts. The system enables officers to record costs and relevant information, and restricts ordering to only suppliers that have been approved through the framework. If an officer wished to use a supplier who is outside the framework, the system would not allow this. However, there is currently no full assurance that all officers are using the system and frameworks consistently.
- 2.4.8 It was explained to the Working Group that the input of the necessary information into the system is significant work and relies heavily on the support of the IT service. The K2 system is mainly used by the Highways Service but in order to extend the use across the Council, a wider development, such as PowerApp, would be required. The new system has not yet been formally launched.
- 2.4.9 The current target is to introduce the new arrangements before December, although progress has been acknowledged to be slow due to the complexity of the work and the limited resources available.
- 2.4.10 The use of expenditure analysis as a means of gaining a better understanding of expenditure across the Council was also discussed. The use of a suitable system will enable the service to identify how much is being spent in different areas and support better decision-making around procurement and contract management.
- 2.4.11 In relation to training, it was noted that the service needed to ensure a clear understanding of the new arrangements and processes prior to the introduction of a wider training programme. Sessions have been held with management teams to provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of the procurement service. At the same time, corporate work is underway to develop more comprehensive training to improve awareness and compliance across the Council.
- 2.4.12 The Procurement Manager sent an update to the Audit Manager following the Working Group:
- It is intended to undertake an analysis of the financial year's expenditure (2026/27) to get a overview of the areas of expenditure the team is responsible for and compare it with the 2025/26 analysis.
 - Continue to develop the K2 system and PowerApp to manage contracts, providing an update with the number of contracts that have transferred to the system by December 2026.

- Team Officers to complete training and 'procurement reform' modules by December 2026.
- Procurement and Contracts training is carried out through the learning and development framework.
- The procurement team to conduct review of the category team's 'tree trimming and felling' agreement by October 2026.

2.4.13 The Officers were thanked for attending the meeting and for explaining the actions already in place and the proposed arrangements to mitigate the risks identified.