

Date: 17 January 2024

Councillor Caro Wild,
Cabinet Member for Climate Change,
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Dear Councillor Wild,

PRAP Scrutiny Committee 10 January 2024: Central Transport Services

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee my sincere thanks for attending Committee on 10 January 2024 to update Members on the Central Transport Services function. Please also pass on my appreciation to Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources, and Dean Thomas, Operational Manager CTS, for their presentation and for facilitating the scrutiny.

The Committee heard that CTS is an important element in the delivery of council services and has been undergoing transformative change in 2023 following a series of unsatisfactory reviews. We are pleased that large numbers of improvement actions set out in the programme for improvement are already in place, and opportunities exist to develop this service further, with a CTS service portal and a business continuity plan currently under development. I have, however, been asked to pass on Members' observations, requests and recommendations following discussion.

Access to papers

Importantly, Members highlighted that they had not had sight of the internal audit report or the programme for improvement that addresses the issues identified. Fundamentally the Committee cannot assess progress without access to both documents and Members considered this should have formed a part of scrutiny papers. At the meeting officers agreed to share the improvement plan. We therefore *request* that both the internal audit report and the programme for improvement are sent to the Committee's scrutiny officer for circulation.

Root and branch

The Committee established that the internal audit of CTS published in May 2023 revealed a number of non-compliant areas. There had been a lack of management

stability, and paperwork in areas such as banking procedures, use of council vehicles, vehicle signing in and out, logging and approval of overtime was non-compliant. A full root and branch review was required on the operation of CTS. Following the scrutiny, we are assured that the action plan improvements to address all issues raised in the audit will be completed by the end of March 2024 and we will continue to monitor.

Utilisation of vehicles

Members found this report very interesting and look forward to scrutinising CTS further. We wish to stress that we consider the full utilisation of council vehicles is an area of importance to improve efficiency, and perhaps is the most important for us to examine closer. We have therefore identified how we wish to continue monitoring CTS and *request* your co-operation as follows:

- April /May – Committee wish to visit the CTS depot followed later in the year by a more in-depth short scrutiny at committee that includes information addressing:
 - Directorate versus corporate ownership of vehicles
 - Data - numbers and types of vehicles & service area budget
 - IT software tracking system in vehicles
 - Utilisation of all vehicles, including minibuses
 - Clear examples of the effective use of vehicles.

Income generating opportunities

Members recall that in previous years CTS has aspired to generate income through offering its services to external organisations. We understand that the Coleridge Road facility is state of the art and there will be opportunities once all improvements are in place to market our services to other authorities, public service bodies and partners.

Staff structure

The Committee considers it will be important that the right staff structure is in place to deliver on future opportunities for the CTS service. We note this is currently under review with the aim of stabilising both the management team, the culture and prioritising an additional apprenticeship.

Internal Audit reports

This item came to Committee at my request because CTS is an important part of the Committee's Terms of Reference. As referenced above, the Committee would like access to Internal Audit reports, particularly where services are found to be unsatisfactory. We are therefore *recommending* that when an unsatisfactory Internal Audit is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee, the relevant Scrutiny Committee Chair is notified by the Chair of Governance and Audit. This would ensure that monitoring the programme of improvement to address the matter is factored into future work programming. We are also *recommending* that where a committee is scrutinising a service that has been party to an unsatisfactory audit report, the internal audit report is automatically included in papers, accompanied by the action plan in place to address the opportunities for improvement identified. If necessary, the report can be marked confidential.

Recommendations following the scrutiny

To summarise, the Committee makes 2 formal recommendations as set out below. As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could, for each recommendation, state whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet's response. If the recommendation is accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet.

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
When an unsatisfactory Internal Audit is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee, the relevant Scrutiny Committee Chair is notified by the Chair of Governance and Audit.				
Where a committee is scrutinising a service that has been party to an unsatisfactory audit report, the internal audit report is				

automatically included in papers, accompanied by the action plan in place to address the opportunities for improvement identified.				
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Requests following the scrutiny

In addition, the Committee makes 2 requests following the scrutiny:

- that both the internal audit report and the programme for improvement are copied to the Committee’s scrutiny officer for circulation to Members;
- that you facilitate a committee visit to the CTS depot in April/May, and support a more in-depth short scrutiny at committee that includes information addressing:
 - Directorate versus corporate ownership of vehicles
 - Data - numbers and types of vehicles & service area budget
 - IT software tracking system in vehicles
 - Utilisation of all vehicles, including minibuses
 - Clear examples of the effective use of vehicles.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, thank you once again for briefing us on the position at CTS. I look forward to continuing the Committee’s engagement with the service in 2024/25. I have captured our requests and recommendations, and I therefore look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR JOEL WILLIAMS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee;
Leaders of Opposition Parties – John Lancaster, Rodney Berman & Andrea Gibson;
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources
Dean Thomas, Operational Manager CTS
Mr Gavin McArthur, Chair, Governance & Audit Committee
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit;
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications
Jeremy Rhys, Assistant Head of Communications and External Affairs
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Business Manager
Jenny Goss, Cabinet Support Officer
Andrea Redmond, Committee Support Officer