

Working Group Report to the Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Working Group:	Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee Heart of Wales Property Services (HoWPS) Working Group
Meetings Held:	From March to February 2024

[2023-00-00 G&A HoWPS Working Group Recommendations to Cabinet .docx](#) – approved by G&A Cttee

Matters Considered

The purpose of the Working Group was to examine, scrutinise, seek assurance and investigate the processes undertaken to re-integrate the functions previously performed by HoWPS back under Powys County Council management.

To identify any lessons to be learned, to inform the Councils work regarding the future delivery of Council functions.

The Working Group were tasked to scrutinise the lessons learnt review and examined in particular:

1. The findings of the decision-making process that led to the reinterrogating of HoWPS functions back to the council.
2. The transition of the functions of HoWPS back in house (Operational implications / Financial implications / Intellectual property)
3. Evaluate the outcome following re-interrogation of the service in house. (Financial costs / quality & quantity of work / Employee & customer experience)
4. Clarify what financial targets and Key performance indicators (KPI's) have been set moving forwards and how these will be monitored.
5. Investigate how the Architects element of the service will function.

Outcomes / Concerns / Observations:

- the Working Group acknowledged and expressed appreciation, for all the challenging work that was undertaken before, during and after the transition to make it successful.
- an extensive piece of work took place to review HoWPS/Kier processes/practises, which identified challenges within the Joint Venture and recognised that the break clause would be implemented.
- questions, queries, and challenges aimed at officers were answered with complete clarity and confirmation. Officers shared experiences with the Working Group and demonstrated how obstacles were tackled and resolved.
- substantial detailed documents were shared to provide openness and full transparency in which the Working Group were grateful.
- it was stressed that the pace in which the Council undertook the transition was crucial and at pace to achieve tight deadlines. Timescales were challenged but felt were realistic for the process to be conducted, completed and for actions to be undertaken in a timely manner.
- confirmation and assurance was received that regular reviews were undertaken to monitor progress and meetings held at all levels for fluid communication, to support workstreams and advance and complete actions.
- the five elements above were examined in depth with officers providing support and step by step guidance to ensure that all areas were included. The Working Group concluded that all elements had been thoroughly and carefully considered.

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The five elements of the process scrutinised provided:

- assurance that a full and comprehensive data set was shared. That the lessons learnt findings that were gathered from the workshop provided the Working Group with clarity over how the transition was experienced and would be held in regard for future endeavours.
- that all actions were thoroughly investigated, researched, and undertaken comprehensively with full consideration of the whole Council. Options and opportunities had been investigated and explored with budget processes and sustainability fully considered.
- initial concerns were raised around limited resources within the Council and assurance sought to ensure that the process and officer work was conducted and concluded comprehensively, however it was felt that additional duties had been added to staff workloads to complete the transition on time during extremely difficult exceptional circumstances .
- challenging areas identified were due to the high number of staff, equipment, data, and services involved and each having specific needs in which barriers were a regular hurdle to resolve. The Working Group noted that certain areas of the project could have been initiated before the outset of the project to ensure that services were aware and could comprehensively prepare for the transition.
- valuable insights were gained from operatives who provided first hand experiences to the Working Group to gain further understanding of the processes within the transition and how they were carried out.
- the approach to engagement was all-inclusive and evidence demonstrated the range of options taken to ensure all members of staff received updates and progress reports.
- a successful recruitment campaign was noted by the Working Group and pleased how the whole recruitment process had been updated and made easier for applicants.
- concerns were raised around the use of services from external organisations and although the need was recognised the Working Group felt that the Council could consider the lessons learnt document at the outset of any future project.

Documents provided and scrutinised included:

- a monthly financial ledger with Finance Officers on hand to explain each step of the process and how the different elements fed into the overall budget for the transition.
- a report from each service alongside a verbal summary reflected on the transition, it provided the Working Group details of process methods used and joint working workflows.
- Key Performance Indicators provided a snapshot in time and insight into how services were performing, which the Working Group would revisit in the near future for an update.
- a fleet report demonstrated a single but significant element within the transition. It included charges that the Working Group felt were excessive and challenged the officers to provide an outcome report to satisfy the questions asked.

Conclusions:

- Overall, the Working Group concluded that decisions and actions had been undertaken thoroughly for the best possible outcome for the Council as a whole but more importantly the residents of Powys which have gained positively from the transition.
- The Working Group would revisit the subject matter and undertake a further site visit in July 2024 to gain a full two year review.