

City and County of Swansea

Length of review: 69 days Savings: £155,000 per year

APSE was commissioned by the Council to undertake service reviews of Transport, Corporate Building Services and Parks and Open Spaces.

Objectives:

- **Value for money:** to establish if the current in-house service provision is delivering value for money based upon a balanced cost / quality appraisal
- **Added value:** to identify the “added value” features of the services and identify costs incurred in pursuing these policies and practices
- **Efficiencies:** to identify options for further cost reductions and improvements in operational efficiencies with the current services
- **Options appraisal:** to undertake an options appraisal incorporating an assessment of alternative delivery models to see how the organisation can best meet the challenges and opportunities in the future.

Outcomes:

- **External confirmation of a high quality, value for money service**
- **Efficiency savings**
- **Increased productivity**

Transport:

The report found that many aspects of services provided within the Council were cost effective and well managed. However, the value for money status of the service as a whole was being adversely affected by excessive vehicle downtime, poor performance monitoring and the lack of a co-ordinated approach across departments within the Council with regard to fleet procurement, maintenance arrangements and external hire arrangements. APSE recommended that a centralised vehicle function be established responsible for fleet procurement, i.e. in conjunction with the corporate procurement function, internal and external maintenance arrangements and management, external hire, fuel management and performance monitoring.

Corporate Building Services:

The overall findings of the review team were that the service was operating well and delivering value for money for the Council. Benchmarking suggested consistently above average performance and a forward direction of travel. CBS market positioning was healthy, competitive and has improved over the last two years. CBS was a well functioning department, indeed, one of the best we have seen

in England and Wales, and consequently any suggested improvements were of a minor nature. APSE identified scope for increasing productivity and this is linked to a need to implement a performance management approach to service delivery.

APSE highlighted that Stores was one area for future efficiencies, and also recommended that Swansea reduce management/supervisor overheads through the adoption of more targeted inspections. This has already been implemented as part of the authority's 20% reduction in management costs.

Parks and Open Spaces:

APSE established that the Council's in-house grounds maintenance unit within the Parks Services Section provides a value for money grounds maintenance in terms of competitiveness and quality of service. The service benefits from strong management leadership, a motivated workforce and an effective productivity related bonus scheme.

APSE recommended that the GMU review its seasonalised working hour arrangements and realign them to meet the seasonal variations of grounds maintenance operations. The proposed reprogramming of seasonalised working hours should result in a reduction in the demand of seasonal part time staff with potential cost savings in excess of £50k. The utilization of high cost grounds maintenance machinery was very poor and APSE recommended that current working practices be reviewed to increase machinery utilization. Through increased machinery utilization, GMU should be targeting a reduction of the number of ride-on mowers/compact tractors of between 10 and 15 units and with it a potential cost saving of up to £100k.

The Parks Services Section would also benefit through a reduction of its ride-on mowers / compact tractors from the income generated from the sale of surplus items. GMU was operating a performance related pay bonus scheme based upon productivity values established by time and motion studies some twenty years previously. APSE recommended that the times for selective tasks be re-measured, and the unproductive allowance applied to the measured times of 25% should be reassessed with a view to reducing it to 20%.