

SWT Audit and Governance Committee - 13 March 2023

Present: Councillor Janet Lloyd (Chair)

Councillors Simon Coles, Tom Deakin, Dawn Johnson, Libby Lisgo and Steven Pugsley

Officers: Amy Tregellas, Paul Fitzgerald, Jackson Murray, Alastair Woodland, John Dyson, James Barrah, Ian Candlish, Alison North, Sean Papworth and Malcolm Riches. Alison North joined via Zoom.

Also Present: Councillors Benet Allen and Federica Smith-Roberts (via Zoom)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

Cllr Janet Lloyd said a few words at the start of the meeting:

'Welcome to the last Audit and Governance Committee meeting of this council. In particular, welcome to a new Committee Member, Cllr Lisgo who is attending her first and last meeting. Thank you to all Members and Officers for their attendance over the last four years. I think that the committee has asked pertinent questions in relation to agenda items and I feel that this has ensured that we have carried out our duties correctly and in line with this council's constitution. I am sure that we will have further questions to ask tonight although many items do refer to work on the Local Government Reorganisation process.'

128. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Lee Baker and Terry Venner.

Councillors Hugh Davies, Marcus Kravis and Andy Milne were absent.

129. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes from the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 12 December 2022.

(proposed by Cllr Janet Lloyd, seconded by Cllr Dawn Johnson)

130. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Taunton Town		
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	SCC, Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee & Shadow Taunton Town	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Pugsley	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

No other declarations of interest were received.

131. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

132. **Audit and Governance Committee Action/Recommendation Tracker**

Amy Tregellas, Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer presented the report:

- The action tracker provides an update on actions outstanding from the last meeting held on 12 December 2023.
- The Statement of Accounts were signed off on 1 March 2023 following the resolution of the statutory override relating to the treatment of infrastructure assets.
- At last meeting members were minded to have an email update on the position in respect of landlord compliance but it has been added to the agenda tonight to provide an update following some work done with Savills.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the Audit & Governance Committee action tracker be noted.

(proposed by Cllr Janet Lloyd, seconded by Cllr Simon Coles)

133. **External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update**

Jackson Murray from Grant Thornton presented the report:

- Highlights are on Page 26 of the agenda pack.
- 2020/21 financial year - the opinion was issued and work on the value for money conclusion was completed some time ago but the audit certificate was held open. The certificate was issued on 27 February 2023 and that audit year is now fully closed.

- 2021/22 financial year – the audit opinion and final value for money report was issued on 1 March 2023. The certificate was issued at the same time. So that audit year is also fully closed.
- 2022/23 financial year is a couple of weeks away from its conclusion. External Auditors and finance colleagues across the five councils have been discussing the accounts production and audit process for the 2022/23 financial year. Reports for Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) Council will move forward to the Somerset Council Audit Committee.
- Other work Grant Thornton completes for SWT relates to grant certifications. Work on Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim is due to be completed this month.
- The Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) issued guidance late last month relating to the return on the pooling of Housing Capital Receipts, so the work will be concluded once the detail has been worked through.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- Whether the grant certification work would be transferred to the Unitary once the work had been completed. The officer confirmed that whilst Grant Thornton don't have to statutorily report the findings of grant certification work it is included in the regular progress update reports, which will be taken to the Somerset Council Audit Committee.
- Whether liaison would continue with Somerset Council to deal with any questions or comments in the next few months, particularly in respect of the production of the 2022/23 Accounts. The Officer confirmed that Grant Thornton will be the appointed auditor of Somerset Council so there will be ongoing liaison. The operational meeting was to confirm who does that. There will only be one lead going forward, but current leads will take responsibility for the closure of the 2022/23 accounts.

Councillors thanked everyone at Grant Thornton and John Dyson for all their hard work.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Progress Report and Sector Update received from Grant Thornton.

(proposed by Cllr Janet Lloyd, seconded by Cllr Simon Coles)

134. **SWAP Internal Audit - Outturn Report 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan**

Alastair Woodland, Assistant Director from SWAP presented the report:

- The update report on the 2022/23 audit plan covers progress, highlighting any significant findings to the Committee and flagging any changes to the Plan.
- Page 36 lists the reports that have been issued since the last report in December 2022. There are two follow up audits to draw your attention to - management of material supplies and procurement cards.
- Page 37 shows changes to the audit plan that have been made since the December 2022 report. Those areas of risk will be taken forward and looked at as part of the Somerset Council Audit Plan.

- Pages 41 - 44 provides an overview of the work that has been completed during 2022/23. This includes a section on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) support work.
- The management of material supplies was given limited assurance in 2021/22. This was followed up during 2022/23 and it was found that good progress had been made on all recommendations. All but one recommendation had been completed, with the remaining one being materially complete with an expectation that it would be completed before 31 March 2023.
- There are a few recommendations outstanding in relation to the Procurement cards audit which are highlighted on page 47. There have been some staffing absences in that area which has delayed some of the recommendations. Procurement cards forms part of the risk assessment for the new authority and this will be kept under review during 2023/24 and looked at across the whole authority.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- The churn of staff in the next few months giving concern as to whether there is a process in place for the return of Procurement cards when staff leave.
- How the process will be managed with potentially four different systems currently being used by district councils being managed under the Somerset Council process.
- Whether there is a Somerset Council card set up and ready to be used from 1 April 2023
- How the transition process will be managed and controlled to ensure that transactions don't get lost.
- Officers confirmed that SWAP will be commencing work on 1 April 2023 looking at procurement card transactions and will do this across the year before doing a more in-depth review. New authority will have a new control framework. SWT have clear details as to who currently holds cards and there is a requirement for them to be handed in when they leave the Council. There will be continuity with it moving across to the new council. Where Officer has a card now, they will continue to use this going forward to the new authority to ensure continuity and no disruption to the business. Somerset Council have set up a working group to pick up the work on procurement cards. SWT has done a thorough review of the conditions for issuing the cards which cardholders are required to subscribe to as well as the policy and guidance. All documentation has gone across to the working group to pick up as they see fit. There are currently 3 different modes of operation for procurement cards, but this will move to the point where there is one bank, one card issuer and one way for recording transactions. Responsibility for coordinating and monitoring will be given to an individual or team and the Executive Director for Finance will be keeping this under close review and will ensure that audit actions are picked up by the new authority.
- The number of recommendations listed on page 41 relating to income collection from Deane Helpline (one level 2 priority and two level 3 priority) and health and safety follow up (4 level 3 priority). The Officer confirmed that in respect of the Income Collection for the Deane Helpline, the opinion was reasonable assurance and therefore the details would not have been brought forward to the Committee. However, the Officer confirmed he would circulate

the report for Members to see the recommendations. In respect of the Health and Safety follow up the audit was undertaken in 2021/22 and due to the number of recommendations it was given limited assurance. As per auditing standards a follow up must be completed and when that was undertaken there were 4 recommendations outstanding. That information was reported to the Committee earlier in the year and would also have been reported through the level 1 and 2 audit action tracker reports.

Councillors thanked Alastair Woodland and SWAP Internal Audit Service for the work they have done for SWT over the last 4 years.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note progress made in delivery of the 2022-23 internal audit plan and significant findings since the previous update in December 2022.

(proposed by Cllr Steven Pugsley, seconded by Cllr Dawn Johnson)

135. **Internal Audit Annual Audit Opinion Report 2022/23**

Alastair Woodland, Assistant Director from SWAP presented the report:

- The Head of Audit is required to provide an annual opinion on how well governance, risk and internal control is working in the authority.
- Page 54 provides summary of the opinion. Four categories of opinion that can be given – no assurance, limited assurance, reasonable assurance and substantial assurance. The opinion gives reasonable assurance. Over the lifetime of SWT governance, risk and control has generally improved year on year which is a good news story.
- Pages 57 and 58 provide more narrative on the opinion.
- There are certain things that have to be included in the opinion report. Page 59 highlights where SWAP's work has fallen this year against the corporate risks that are in place in the organisation. This highlights the coverage and where the gaps are. The Audit & Governance Committee would want to receive assurance in the areas not being covered by SWAP. For example, there has been regular reporting to the committee on landlord safety checks.
- Page 62 sets out the professional standards that are in place and that SWAP get externally assessed every five years. The last assessment showed that SWAP conformed with the standards and an annual self-assessment shows still conforming to them.
- Pages 63 to 67 sets out the work that has been completed to form the basis of the opinion.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- Page 59 listing cyber security as no coverage in 2022/23 and whether it should be near the top of the list of priorities due to it being a high risk. The Officer confirmed that cyber security is a very high-risk area and has been covered in a lot of detail previously. It was not covered in as much detail in 2022/23 due to LGR and all the domains merging into a single domain. It has also been appreciated that there has been a large pull on IT resources during 2022/23 with IT radically changing for the new authority. Work has been carried out in terms of IT support to try to mitigate or provide assurance on

some of those risks as well as supporting LGR. The Officer confirmed that cyber security is high on the radar for SWAP for 2023/24 and the next few years as the new IT infrastructure evolves in Somerset Council.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Annual Opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control environment in the delivery of SWT objectives.

(proposed by Cllr Janet Lloyd, seconded by Cllr Steven Pugsley)

136. **Summary of Level 1 and 2 Audit Actions Progress**

Malcolm Riches, Business Intelligence and Performance Manager presented the report:

- The report shows the position at the 31 January 2023 which is:
 - 2 audit reports (General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and SWT Regeneration Projects) with all Priority 1 and 2 actions completed since the last report (see Appendix 1).
 - 3 audit actions completed since the last report (see Appendix 2).
 - There are currently no overdue audit actions that are beyond their current target date.
 - 4 audit actions currently open whose due date is after 31 January 2023. These actions are listed along with a Red Amber Green (RAG) status of progress being made in Appendix 2 with all showing as green. 3 of these actions are on schedule to be completed before 31st March 2023, and the 1 remaining action (Records Management) is being incorporated as part of the LGR Information Governance Workstream.

There was no debate on this item.

Councillors thanked Malcolm Riches for preparing the report and providing regular reports to the committee.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the progress being made with audit actions, and that there are currently no overdue audit actions.

(proposed by Cllr Simon Coles, seconded by Cllr Tom Deakin)

137. **Fraud Outturn Report 2022/23**

Amy Tregellas, Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer presented the report:

- The report gives an outturn position on the work that has been done on fraud following on from the SWAP fraud maturity reports previously presented to the Committee.
- Page 78 sets out the list of recommendations and actions proposed by SWAP as well as an update on the current status of those actions.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- Whether work has been completed to identify where fraud tends to happen, the high risk areas and what things to be particularly alert for. Officers confirmed that there is a document provided by SWAP which focuses on the high-risk areas where fraud could occur, and this risk increases where there is a change of system or personnel. Fraud is factored into the SWAP annual audit plan. SWAP have been working with the fraud workstream to evaluate the risks fully across the new authority to ensure that it is factored into the corporate and operational risk registers moving forward. There is also a counter fraud programme for the new authority.
- Whether cyber fraud was high on the list of frauds that take place. The officer confirmed that there is a fraud risk assessment being undertaken on the authority which will identify high fraud risk areas. SWAP has a specialist trained team who have an in-depth knowledge of fraud, and work with external specialists to ensure fraud risks are identified and evaluated in a proactive way.
- Whether and stress testing would be carried out for the new Council to ensure that any new systems put in place are working, e.g. that fictitious employees are not being set up and paid on the Payroll system. Officers confirmed that every audit undertaken by SWAP must consider the fraud risks as a requirement of the auditing standards. SWAP are aware of the significant changes that are happening as a result of LGR with services and systems coming together, and it will be a case of making sure that there are appropriate controls in place which are robust in terms of fraud. SWAP are considering priority areas with the Somerset Council Senior Leadership Team and will also have dialogue with Service Directors, once appointed to find out when service changes will take place in order to make sure SWAP are involved when they can be to advise on fraud controls. SWAP have a key role in providing management assurance. The management of risk relies on robust management controls such as budget monitoring arrangements. In terms of the staffing example SWT has monitored staff pay and carried out reconciliations between the finance records and payroll system.
- In respect of 15 items on the report all are complete with the exception of the 4 being carried forward to the new Council.

Councillors thanked Amy Tregellas for bringing forward this report.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Fraud outturn position report.

(proposed by Cllr Janet Lloyd, seconded by Cllr Simon Coles)

138. **Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**

Amy Tregellas, Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer presented the report:

- The Annual Governance Statement is being presented earlier than normal this year so that the committee can review and sign it off before the council is dissolved on 31 March 2023.
- The format follows the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) guidance and framework which hasn't changed in the last few years.

- The Statement starts of Page 93.
- Page 119 sets out the Council’s corporate governance framework.
- Pages 121 to 126 give an outturn position on the actions raised last year and their current status. They have either been completed or superseded by LGR.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- Members expressed disappointment that the SWT equality group ceased to meet some time ago but appreciated that this was due to LGR work.
- The lack of feedback system relating to Members sitting on outside bodies and that feedback rarely happened through the Portfolio Holder reports due to time constraints at Full Council meetings.
- Reporting on the outside bodies needs to be established at Somerset Council due to the amount of work (approximately 100 outside bodies on the list) and the need to keep people updated with what is going on. The officer confirmed that this point would be picked up with colleagues in the Democratic Services team to take forward.
- Whether the key to success with reporting back from outside bodies is to keep it as simple as possible for Members so they engage in that process. A template would be helpful that could be completed electronically.
- Whether the reasonable assurance conclusion is as good as it gets? Officers confirmed that the opinion could be either no assurance, limited assurance, reasonable assurance or substantial assurance. A substantial opinion is the highest opinion, but the threshold is very high and it is unlikely that many authorities would achieve that.
- That Local Community Networks should also be considered in terms of giving feedback so that case studies and best practice is shared around the County.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 (Appendix A) and notes the outturn position for the 2021/22 Action Plan (Appendix B).

(proposed by Cllr Steven Pugsley, seconded by Cllr Simon Coles)

139. **Health and Safety Update**

Sean Papworth, Assistant Director – Corporate presented the report:

- The quarterly report covers performance and the programme that has been running for the last 18 months.
- In terms of the programme every work-stream and project has been completed and the programme will be wrapped up once assurance has been completed in respect of the original audits. A desktop exercise is underway to complete the assurance piece of work and to collate appropriate evidence.
- Lone working continues to be reviewed and additional devices have been rolled out to staff for additional safety. This will continue to be reviewed to ensure that all staff that need devices get them.
- The Health and Safety Team continue to carry out inspections across the work that we do, and this will continue going forward. The focus at the moment is around contractors as the data continues to suggest that’s the area where attention is needed.

- The Health and Safety Team and Human Resources Team are working to ensure that the data around our people is being reviewed to identify any themes or trends, and that they are picked up and dealt with accordingly.
- The performance report on page 138, in 2022/23 there should be a total of 98 accidents listed in the table. The trend is seeing a lot more reporting in terms of near misses. Also seeing a slight increase in accidents but for the most part they are very minor accidents that might have gone unreported in the past. The improvement in reporting allows officers to start picking up any themes in the data.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- What the term fracture (MOP) meant on Page 138. The officer confirmed that MOP means member of the public.
- Where the responsibility lies in terms health and safety in terms of contractors and whether it depends on the type of work that they are doing. Officers confirmed that it varies dependent on the size and duration of the work. The focus has been on the fundamentals to understand as much as possible about our contractors such as whether they have the right health and safety systems in place, do they have documentation to prove they are paying attention to their health and safety and do they have the right insurance in place. This information is then input into our systems to keep track on whether the contractors are keeping their information up to date. A piece of work has been completed on risk assessments to ensure they are thinking ahead and that work isn't starting before risk assessments have been completed. Officers can review and challenge risk assessments from contractors when they are received. Work being carried out on our behalf by contractors is still a risk so inspections will continue to focus on the paperwork and ensuring that what they are doing on the ground matches what they say they are going to do in their paperwork.
- How health and safety arrangements will transition across to the new Somerset Council, particularly the Housing Service. Officers confirmed that there will be a number of new policies for the Council. Housing is one of the key areas of focus, and that work will continue through the work of officers and the Health and Safety Business Partners.
- Whether there was assurance that health and safety will have adequate coverage during the transition stage to ensure that items are passed over and don't fall through the net. Officers confirmed that the good work that has been completed over the last 18 months will not stop because we are getting to vesting day. Work will continue to improve areas such as contractor inspections. Toolbox talks for staff are being rolled out, as well as dynamic risk assessments which can be completed when officers get to a job rather than having to do it beforehand or not completing it. Everything will continue as the same people will be doing the same jobs with broadly the same management in place. Work will carry on with the existing programme, performance and health and safety governance until a new process is in place. Once the new arrangements are in place there will be a further transitional period.
- What the situation would be from a legality perspective if work is happening under Somerset Council but the arrangements are going to be operating under existing SWT arrangements. Officers confirmed that the work will be

undertaken in all respects by the new council. The assets, contracts will be novated, the staff will be employees of, and the legal duties will all fall to the new Somerset Council. What happens on a day to day basis and operationally will be continuing with systems and governance and procedures that allow that work to continue, and continue in a safe fashion. This does not affect the legality as the duty and responsibility falls to the new council and its employees. The processes they work to will continue for a period until new processes are brought to bear.

- The lack of reference to Member in terms of lone working and that Member lone working should be included in the policy, as it is just as important for Members as it is for staff. Officers confirmed that this will be followed up with colleagues in the Democratic Services Team at Somerset Council to ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place for Members. Officers also confirmed that a risk assessment and guidance pack was put together and sent to all members previously as well as information sent out to all Members on 29 March 2022.
- It was highlighted that at a recent SCC Council meeting there was a motion passed on debate not hate which demonstrates that the new council are very aware of the issues faced by Members and the need to ensure that democracy is taken forward without negatively impacting on individuals.

Councillors thanked Sean Papworth and James Barraah for their work on health and safety.

The committee **RESOLVED** to note and endorse:

A) the H & S Performance Scorecard data, together with the observations/recommendations/conclusive summary (appendix A)

B) the HSMS Improvement Programme progress update (detailed in section 4.4)

(proposed by Cllr Janet Lloyd, seconded Cllr Simon Coles)

140. **Landlord Compliance Report**

Ian Candlish, Assistant Director Housing Property presented the report:

- This is an update to landlord safety compliance up to 6 March 2023.
- It covers the key safety areas as outlined in section 1.2 on page 139.
- Comparative performance is set out for each workstream in the tables for each area in section 4 of the report, based on the previous report that came to the committee in December 2022.
- Overall, there is an improvement in compliance activities and particularly we have done a range of procurement activities set out in section 1.6 on page 140.

During the debate, discussion took place around:

- Whether the figure of 81% in section 4.2.8 on page 144 was due to accessing tenants properties.
- What was meant by compartmentalisation and tenancy management in section 4.3.8 on page 147. Officers confirmed that if you take a large building such as a block of flats, it is split into different compartments for fire safety.

For example, long corridors would have fire door breaks and in the roof area there would be splits between the different parts of the building with fire break walls. When work is carried out one of the key issues is to ensure that it isn't breached, for example if a hole is drilled to put a cable or pipe through then the appropriate sealing would have to be put in place. The actions come out of the fire risk assessments and remedial actions arise when the assessor has seen an area of concern, or they haven't been into a particular area. SWT has to provide evidence that what is in place is appropriate.

- That the tenancy management actions relate to fire safety in terms of talking to tenants about areas that are fire escape routes that might have items in them which could create fire or block an escape route in the event of a fire. The Housing Tenancy team check these on a regular basis and take appropriate action if any issues are found.
- The number of overdue actions for fire safety listed on pages 147 and 148. Officers confirmed that the actions for this area related to two things. Firstly, the communal fire door programme and entrance door fire programme, both of which relate to compartmentalisation. Where work is undertaken to take out the fire door, the whole frame would also have to be taken out and any issues that might be found when taking the frame out would also have to be dealt with. If there is no evidence that this check was completed when the previous door and frame was fitted there is an assumption that it needs to be checked. Secondly, inspections are taking place and a contract is running for any areas where evidence is needed following a fire risk assessment, which couldn't be evidence at the time of the assessment.
- That the overdue actions relating to fire safety are all medium and low risk so all urgent and high-risk actions have been addressed and nearly 10,000 actions arising from fire risk assessments have been completed, and it is an ongoing programme of activity. To give further assurance a formal review of the overdue actions takes place and a quarterly report is presented to the Housing Senior Management Team, who monitoring this very closely.
- Whether SWT was in a high area for Radon and whether there are any results to show that Radon levels are higher than they should desirably be, and what remedial action can be taken if Radon levels are higher than they ought to be. Officers confirmed that there is a UK Radon map which indicates where likely instances of Radon are located. Radon fundamentally comes from the types of rock underneath you and that houses are built on. Monitoring equipment has gone into the properties that were identified from the map. The monitors sit in the property for 90 days plus measuring their Radon levels or potential Radon levels in the property. The monitor is then taken away and analysed by a laboratory. No results have been received yet, so this information is awaited. If results confirm there are instances of Radon in a property, ventilation either some form of natural ventilation or a fan would be the likely remedial works that would be done as part of the programme.

James Barra, Director of Housing, gave the Committee an update on work undertaken by Savills:

- Savills have undertaken a package of work for SWT and Homes in Sedgemoor, which has included the creation of a Building and Resident Safety Strategy which goes before the SCC Executive this week. The Strategy primarily implements the new building safety legislation relating

specifically to high rise properties. Across our combined housing stock there is only one high rise property located in the Homes in Sedgemoor area.

- Savills have also undertaken a range of other audit and assurance work focusing on the criteria of being safe, legal and functioning for the new organisation. This was an opportunity for SWT to measure overall progress with our property safety compliance improvement programme. From previous reports we have had a trajectory of programmes to achieve 100% compliance. Savills completed a desktop exercise based on housing data, including the reports that have been presented to this Committee. Savills confirmed that there are effective systems in place and there are no concerns regarding our compliance records. They recommended that maturity is improved in some activities including demonstrating more internal audit activity on a cyclical basis. This has been agreed with SWAP in terms of a future programme going forward. Savills also recommended that further third party assurance processes is needed for all of the disciplines. This is in place at the moment for gas safety and electrical safety but needs to be in place across all of the other disciplines. Officers are working to ensure that is in place.
- Savills highlighted two key areas of focus which relate to the programmes around air source heat pump servicing and electrical testing which haven't achieved their programme as expected. Both programmes were due to get to 100% compliance by the end March 2023.
- The air source heat pump programme was delayed due to the procurement of a new contract and the Section 24 sign off process which is carried out by the new council. This meant that the mobilisation of the contract has taken longer than expected. The current incumbent contractor is continuing at the current time until the new contract comes into play in April 2023. It is then hoped that the programme will catch up as quickly as possible with the new contractor in place.
- The challenges in relation to the electrical inspections is one previously discussed several times at this committee, and includes a lack of capacity in the marketplace, contractor failure, the inability to recruit to the inhouse team due to the challenging marketplace and the shortage of electrical contractors.
- The other challenge relates to access. The electrical testing programme was the programme most affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Due to the public health implications, the work was paused during that pandemic as the nature of electrical testing means that an officer would potentially be in a property for 2 to 3 hours, possibly more with remedial works and would need access to all parts of the property. In comparison servicing a boiler is just going into one room and it's normally 20-30 minutes. In that context, after the Coronavirus Pandemic there was catch up work to do and unfortunately the programme hasn't delivered as hoped. A further challenge is the transition from a ten-year cycle to a five-year cycle which means more properties will come out of date and require electrical safety testing as we move forward.
- To go into the new council with a new start the decision has been made to write to the regulator this week to inform them of our current position. The letter will set out the context, i.e. the work Savills have completed as well as the SWT performance across all areas, giving a mostly a positive picture.
- The Savills work also reviewed and compared all the SWT address list to look for omissions by triangulating information from one data set to another. That has resulted in zero omissions confirming that our data quality is very good.

- The referral to the regulator is purely to confirm that our programmes have not delivered as we hoped for the reasons set out and that we have been reporting progress transparently to this Committee, our Tenants Strategic Group and our Strategic Management Team. Any response or follow up work from the regulator will flow into the new authority. The Chief Executive of the new council has been briefed and informed.

Councillors thank Ian Candlish and James Barrah for their comprehensive report and update.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and progress being made in relation to landlord property safety compliance.

(proposed by Cllr Dawn Johnson, seconded by Cllr Simon Coles)

141. **Audit and Governance Committee Chair's Annual Report 2022/23 - For Information Only**

There were no questions, comments or discussion on the Chair's Annual Report and it was for information only.

(The Meeting ended at 7.46 pm)

