

Internal Audit Recommendation Tracker (High and Overdue)

Appendix B

Last Updated: 19 February 2021

Audit Year (Date report issued)	Rec Ref	Original Recommendation	Priority	Original Managers Response	Responsible Officer/ Head of Service	Agreed Imp Date	Revised Imp Date(s)	Status Update from Management	Status
<p>Purchase Cards (2018/19) October 2018</p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>Policies are required to clarify the Council's approach for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of hotel accommodation, • the provision of employee uniform and • subsistence and hotel allowance claims. 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Policies related to allowances , including those referred to within this audit are being reviewed or drafted as a suite of documents which will be presented to SMB by 30/12/18</p>	<p>HR Manager/ Head of Governance</p>	<p>30/12/18</p>	<p>30/04/19 30/09/19 31/03/20 30/09/20 31/03/21 30/06/21</p>	<p>Mar 19: New Head of Governance commenced in January 2019. Draft completed for review of HoS and SMB, recommendation by HR Manager accepted by SMB to expand coverage of policy to include "business travel" and mileage rates within the policy. For appropriate consultation with SMB/TU before implementation.</p> <p>May 19: Instruction from SMB to include rates for allowances as part of the overall review committed to by organisation and for consultation, as appropriate with trade union.</p> <p>Oct 19: Continuing instruction from SMB being followed with regard to rates for allowances forming part of the overall review committed to by the organisation. For consultation, as appropriate with trade union. Consultation still ongoing.</p> <p>Feb 20: Expenses for mileage rates agreed in principle. Employee uniform to follow HMRC requirements. Decision to be taken to SMB.</p> <p>May 20/July 20: Expenses rate for mileage has been agreed with TU at HMRC rates, communication underway with employees. The provision of uniform and relevant</p>	<p>Overdue</p>

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								<p>procurement if applicable under consideration.</p> <p>Oct 20: The current focus is on the new HR/payroll system implementation as it is due to go live 1st December, and therefore takes precedence. The new HR system is intending to pick up expenses from the new tax year (6 April 2021) and will have a policy to support this changeover. Expenses policy will need to take account of the new processes coming in phase 2 of the system implementation due in 2021. Subsistence cannot be claimed anymore (following the TU agreement – referenced last time) only reasonable expenses.</p> <p>Feb 21: The new HR system will pick up expenses from the new tax year (6 April 2021) and a policy will be brought forward to support this changeover. New expenses processes will come forward likewise.</p>	
<p>Safeguarding 2018/19 February 2019</p>	<p>3b</p>	<p>The Safeguarding record/policy should be updated so that it is clear on what data should be kept, where and for what period, in line with GDPR and the Council’s retention policy.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>This will be included in the next policy review/update.</p>	<p>Youth and Citizenship Manager, (Head of Community Wellbeing)</p>	<p>01/01/21</p>	<p>01/04/21</p>	<p>Feb 21: Delayed due to work pressures as a result of COVID-19.</p>	<p>Overdue</p>

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Complaints 2018/19 May 2019	1	Implement a mechanism whereby actions from the lessons learnt questionnaire are followed up. This could be achieved by SMB receiving a follow up action report.	Medium	A quarterly report is sent to SMB in regards to this.	Customer and Media Services Manager/ Head of Governance	30/06/19	31/03/20 31/12/20 01/10/21	<p>Oct 19: This has been happening since in a basic format since June 2019. It will give Heads of Service key trends but does require further development and this is likely to coincide with the action below.</p> <p>Feb 20: A report is still scheduled to go to SMB prior to 31 March 2020. This will outline a request to move to a two stage process and further work on a sustainable mechanism to learn from complaints.</p> <p>May 20/July 20/Oct 20: Report delayed due to Corona pandemic. At this stage it is not deemed urgent and therefore realistically would set new target of 31/12/20</p> <p>Feb 21: Not been progressed due to continued work being undertaken on Corona pandemic. Will be looked at end of Q2 2021 at the earliest.</p>	Overdue
Complaints 2018/19 May 2019	2	Consider moving to a two stage complaints process by presenting a paper to SMB (Senior Management Board) on this	Medium	This has been considered previously and will be raised again.	Customer and Media Services Manager/Head of Governance	30/06/19	31/03/20 31/12/20 01/10/21	<p>Oct 19: Although not progressed due to changes in service area, it has now been raised with Head of Governance with a view to take a report to SMB before 31/03/20</p> <p>Feb 20: A report is still scheduled to go to SMB prior to 31 March 2020. This will outline a request to move to a two stage process and further work</p>	Overdue

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								<p>on a sustainable mechanism to learn from complaints.</p> <p>May 20/July 20/Oct 20: Report delayed due to Corona pandemic. At this stage it is not deemed urgent and therefore realistically would set new target of 31/12/20</p> <p>Feb 21: Not been progressed due to continued work being undertaken on Corona pandemic. Will be looked at end of Q2 2021 at the earliest.</p>	
Responsive Housing Repairs 2018/19 August 2019	2(b)	Post inspections completed on more complex housing repairs should be formally documented and retained.	Medium	<p>Agreed. Customer Satisfaction Surveys are currently sent out to tenants on a sample basis. The sample size will be increased to ensure that the quality of repairs works is completed to a satisfactory standard.</p> <p>Post inspections completed on complex repairs works will be formally documented and retained</p>	HTS Operations Director and the Council's Housing Operations Manager	30/09/19	31/04/20 30/04/20 30/09/20 31/01/21 30/10/21	<p>Oct 19: HTS carries out a 100% post inspection regime on all housing voids it completes (see enclosed handover forms to demonstrate this).</p> <p>There are ongoing discussions with HDC over who should be carrying out more detailed Post Inspections on completed Housing Repairs. Traditionally this has been carried out by Technical Services who transferred from HTS and now work for HDC. We will provide a further update once this is resolved.</p> <p>Feb 20: It has been agreed that HTS will carry out post inspections on repairs from 1st April 2020. These will be recorded formally.</p> <p>May and July 20: A response</p>	Overdue

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								<p>will not be forwarded from HTS whilst they establish recovery under the current Coronavirus situation. This will be picked up as part of their recovery plans</p> <p>Oct 20: HTS (P&E) Ltd continue to establish recovery and aligned to recent Govt. restrictions (Tier 2 for Essex). This activity is recognised as a key quality control mechanism and is included in their implementation plan from learning the lessons from Covid 19 initial lockdown. This will be monitored through the shared operations group.</p> <p>Feb 21: HTS are still in the process of establishing their response/recovery processes following the third Covid-19 lock down ,Post Inspections currently suspended due to this and Government restrictions. HTS currently only providing an emergency plus repairs service</p>	
<p>Responsive Housing Repairs 2018/19 August 2019</p>	<p>3a and b</p>	<p>All repairs job priority time changes should be recorded, authorised and the reasons why they were changed documented. This information should be shared with the Council when KPI data is submitted.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Agreed. The constraints of the Callsys system makes it difficult provide an audit trail of job priority time changes. The Council’s Housing Asset and Business Systems Manager and the HTS</p>	<p>Council’s Housing Asset and Business Systems Manager and the HTS Commercial Director</p>	<p>30/04/20</p>	<p>30/09/20 31/01/21 30/10/21</p>	<p>July 20: HTS re-established the repairs service on 22nd June 2020. A response will not be forwarded from Housing whilst establishing recovery under the current Coronavirus situation.</p> <p>The SSC has requested a report back at the next Committee meeting. Covid-19 recovery is being established and this will</p>	<p>Overdue</p>

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		The reasons behind the housing repairs job priority times are allocated should be investigated to ensure that the appropriate timescales are given		Commercial Director will investigate if there approach to record job priority time changes.				<p>mean the Council diary will be adapted and meeting dates realigned.</p> <p>Oct 20: HTS (P&E) Ltd continue to establish recovery and aligned to recent Govt. restrictions (Tier 2 for Essex). This activity is recognised as a key quality control mechanism and is included in their implementation plan from learning the lessons from Covid 19 initial lockdown. This will be monitored through the shared operations group.</p> <p>Feb 21: HTS P&E are continuing to establish their response/recovery processes and are undertaking emergency plus repairs activities. Service quality is being monitored through Joint Operational meetings and Housing Portfolio meetings.</p>	
	3c	Repairs operatives working hours should be extended to increase efficiency and flexibility of the housing repairs service.					30/09/20 31/03/21	<p>May 20: As above</p> <p>Oct 20: HTS has introduced this for heating repair staff and currently in negotiations with the other operatives.</p> <p>Feb 21: Delayed due to the pandemic and restricted working practices, HC have requested a timetable for implementation to align with resuming full service delivery .</p>	Overdue

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	3d	Performance improvements made as a result of changes to the housing repairs service should be demonstrated, monitored and reported as part of the HTS governance and scrutiny arrangements.					30/09/20 31/01/21 30/10/21	May 20: As above July 20: As above Feb 21: As above	Overdue
Conflicts of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality (Staff and Members) 2019/20 December 2019	2b	The roles and responsibilities in the process of declaring and monitoring conflicts of interest should be clearly defined within the Code of Conduct.	Medium	Agreed A review of the PPP process will be undertaken and updated to include conflicts of interests. This process is also to be added in one-to-ones. This process will be reviewed after a year of operation to see if it is possible to stream line the process by incorporating it into the new Payroll system.	Head of Governance, Human Resources Manager and Corporate, Democratic Services Manager in conjunction with Third Tier Managers	31/12/20	31/03/21	Feb 21: The Code of Conduct has been reviewed and requires Officer and Member approval from the Constitution working Group and Council, hopefully to be obtained by the end of March 2021.	Overdue

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Harlow Playhouse overspends 2018/19 March 2020	1	Produce a report to SMB and Councillors to consider the direction of travel for the playhouse. To include consideration of the importance of the relationship with the Arts Council.	Medium	Business Plan has been produced and the process of getting the plan adopted has been included in the corporate plan as an objective of the coming municipal year.	Head of Governance	31/12/20	31/03/22	Feb 21: As a result of Covid-19, the 2020/21 milestones have moved to 2021/22 in line with the revised Governance business plan.	Overdue
Former Tenant Arrears 2019/20 April 2020	1	Former tenant debt needs to be proactively managed in accordance with the former tenant arrears policy with resources targeted in the following priority order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new former tenant arrears (from the voids notifications) • recent former tenant debt (less than a year old) • historical debt between 1 and 5 years old. In March 2020 resources should be targeted at the £93,646.82 of 2014/2015 debt that is a risk of being uncollectable during 2020/21 through the time Limitation Act 1980. All these former tenants be contacted	High	An Orchard Business Objects report to be produced to breakdown the former tenant debt in to age category in line with recommended priority order. Rent Officers to prioritise former tenant recovery in line with the priority order recommended. These cases will be actioned once the current arrears recommendations are actioned. The total financial amount written off will be in line with our allocated bad debt provision for 2020/21.	Senior Housing Operations Manager - people.	01/06/20	31/12/20 31/03/21	July 20: Rent Officers during lock-down are actively working on the former tenant arrears. Under new Government guidance. Covid-19 recovery is being established and progress will be reviewed as part of the wider Business Plan priorities and action plans at Quarter 2 together with wider bad debt provisions reporting. Feb 21: Former Tenant debt is being pro-actively chased, with historic debt written off in line with agreed process and financial regulations.	Overdue

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		and if there are no responses, they are passed to the tracing agency to maximise the opportunity for debt recovery before it becomes irrecoverable. On reputational and compassionate grounds any debt due to the death of a tenant in 2014/15 be excluded from this recovery project.							
Former Tenant Arrears 2019/20 April 2020	2	<p>The Voids notification list be actioned weekly in all cases and either Rent Officers are asked to ensure they action their properties each week or an officer is designated with all Voids notifications.</p> <p>On a monthly basis the Senior Housing Operation Manager People receives a sample check on compliance to ensure void notifications have been actioned and followed up.</p>	High	<p>Circulation list for weekly void list to be amended to include Team Leaders to ensure circulation to all Rent Officers on a weekly basis.</p> <p>The monthly audit will be carried out by the rents Team Leader, who will sample 10% of the void accounts.</p>	Senior Housing Operations Manager - people.	27/04/20	31/12/20 31/03/21	<p>July 20: Rent Officers during lock-down continue to working on the former tenant arrears, under the new Government guidance. Covid-19 recovery is being established and this will be reviewed as part of the wider Business Plan priorities and action plans at Quarter 2 together with wider bad debt provisions reporting.</p> <p>Feb 21: Rent Officers are reviewing the weekly void list to ascertain whether accounts have any former tenant debt remaining, if so recovery action is started. The Team Leaders carries out an audit of this process on a monthly basis.</p>	Overdue

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Former Tenant Arrears 2019/20 April 2020	3	If considered appropriate the £100 write-off limit for the Senior Housing Officer be formally approved by incorporation into the next update of Financial Regulations. The Former Tenants Arrears procedure note is updated to accurately reflect debt write off delegated authority arrangements and limits, if the £100 write off delegation is not approved.	Medium	Currently Investigating whether Financial Regulations can be updated in regards to authorised delegation. If authorised delegation can be updated, then the write off limit for the Senior Housing Operations Manager will be incorporated. If not, the Former Tenant Arrears Procedure in terms of authorised delegations for write off will be amended.	Senior Housing Operations Manager – people.	31/08/20	31/12/20 31/03/21	Oct 20: This recommendation will be formally followed up by Internal Audit and an update given in due course. Feb 21: The write off limits have not been amended to include Senior Housing Managers having authority to write off debts below £100. Therefore all debts off all amounts are now authorised by the Head of Service and other senior managers in line with the approved financial regulations.	Overdue
Former Tenant Arrears 2019/20 April 2020	5	As this review identified that all debt over six years old, is in effect irrecoverable it may be appropriate to monitor the former tenants' arrears levels against additional targets is 2020/21, specifically: • A collectable net target (debt less than six years old) • Current year former tenant debt (being former tenant debt from 1st April 2020 -	Medium	Quarterly performance dashboard to be re-configured to separate recoverable and non-recoverable former tenant arrears, with aligning SMART targets.	Senior Housing Operations Manager – People.	01/07/20	31/12/20 31/03/21	July 20: Rent Officers are actively working on the former tenant arrears. Covid-19 recovery is being established and this will be reviewed as part of the wider Business Plan priorities and action plans at Quarter 2, together with wider bad debt provisions reporting. Feb 21: Officers are pro-actively writing off historic debt following a review of each case. The amount of debt written off will be in line with Housing's Bad debt provision, which will be fully	Overdue

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		the target being the level to be below by the 31st March 2021).						utilised at the end of each financial year.	
Former Tenant Arrears 2019/20 April 2020	6	The Former Tenant Arrears policy is updated to reflect changes due to GDPR and also recommendations made within this report on former tenant arrears debt management.	Low	The Former Tenant Arrears Policy/ procedure to be reviewed and strengthened to reflect changes due to GDPR, and incorporating recommendations made on former tenant arrears management.	Senior Housing Operations Manager – people.	31/12/20	31/03/21	Feb 21: This is still outstanding but will be actioned within the next month.	Overdue
Corporate Health and Safety 2019/20 May 2020	3	Third Tier Managers be reminded to ensure that all risk assessments are carried out and reviewed at least annually thereafter. Further, the Health and Safety Team to co-ordinate this.	Medium	Responsibility for formal assessment and review of risk will be drawn to Third Tier Managers' attention at Third Tier Managers' Group	Environment & Licensing Manager and Head of Environment & Planning	30/09/20	31/11/20 31/03/21	Oct 20 and Feb21: The routine meeting cycle of Third Tier Managers' group has been affected by revised working practices adopted in response to the COVID-19 emergency. The Environment and Licensing Manager will write directly to Third Tier Managers to draw to their attention ongoing responsibility for assessment and review of risk.	Overdue
				Options to provide additional resources to reinstate annual logging in the H&S team of risk assessments by third tier managers will be identified and presented to the		30/09/20	31/03/21	Oct 20 and Feb21: Whilst additional staff resources to support the corporate Health and Safety function, policy advice and support for managers across the authority in in response to the COVID-19 emergency has been an overriding priority to which	Overdue

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				Head of Planning and Environment.				resources have been devoted. This resource allocation appears likely to continue to be necessary pending the resolution of the emergency. The position will be reviewed however before the close of the municipal year.	
Corporate Health and Safety 2019/20 May 2020	4	Third Tier Managers be reminded to ensure that all COSHH data sheets be reviewed and, where necessary, updated, with link to risk assessments as appropriate.	Low	Responsibility for obtaining retaining and reviewing and updating COSHH data sheets and linking them to risk assessments as appropriate will be drawn to Third Tier Managers' attention at Third Tier Managers' Group.	Environment & Licensing Manager and Head of Environment & Planning	30/09/20	31/11/20 31/03/21	Oct 20 and Feb 21: The routine meeting cycle of Third Tier Managers' group has been affected by revised working practices adopted in response to the COVID-19 emergency. The Environment and Licensing Manager will write directly to Third Tier Managers to draw to their attention ongoing responsibility to obtain maintain and take into account in risk assessment COSHH data sheets where relevant.	Overdue
Harlow Gilston Garden Town 2019/20 July 2020	3	A data sharing agreement should be drawn up to cover any personal or commercially sensitive data which may be shared between the councils as part of the Garden Town project.	Medium	A data sharing agreement will be developed and entered into by all the HGGT partners.	HGGT Director HGGT Programme Manager	31/12/20	31/03/21	Feb 21: HGGT legal advisors, Weightmans, have been instructed to develop a data sharing protocol for the HGGT. The most appropriate agreement is currently being evaluated.	Overdue

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Parks and landscapes 2019/20 October 2020	1.1	Routine inspections should be implemented and documented to demonstrate the Council has a process for managing trees.	High	The council will assist HTS to produce a robust maintenance strategy for the trees. A wider Tree and Landscape Strategy Document is also required for the Harlow area. This will include more than tree maintenance, but ideally would influence a maintenance strategy. However, due to not yet having that document the production of a tree maintenance programme should go ahead regardless. Any adjustments that may be required based on a wider strategy can be incorporated at a later date. However if we work closely with HTS (including Tim Moya associates) the programme should be suitable for the most part.	Environment and Licensing Manager Senior Landscape Officer	31/03/21	31/03/21	HTS has engaged a leading Arboricultural consultancy to carry out routine tree inspections, incorporating robust condition, value, and risk assessments. Inspection outcomes are now comprehensively documented and retained in an interactive database to which HTS has access and from which data may be downloaded for transfer to the Council's GIS system. This will form the foundation of the tree management strategy the need for which is identified at 1.2	Completed
	1.2	The Council will work with HTS to ensure a tree maintenance strategy is agreed and implemented, in accordance with the contract specification. The tree maintenance strategy should ensure: a) Tree surveys are completed to provide a complete record of the type and condition of the Council's tree stock b) Risk assessments are undertaken to identify and manage					31/03/22	In working with HTS to develop a tree strategy for Harlow, it has become evident that improved baseline data is required in order to properly assess the implications of potential policy options. A town-wide condition survey led by HTS will allow the issues costs and values to be quantified so that the cost and effect of options can be reasonably estimated. This will delay adoption of formal policy, but will provide a robust basis for informed policy making. It is anticipated that a budget cost for the most pragmatic approach to this work will be arrived at by 31/03/2021, and subject to the identification of resources, that	In progress

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		risks to public safety c) Remedial work is identified and managed in order of risk.						work will commence in the course of 2021/22.	
Parks and landscapes 2019/20 October 2020	2.1	2.1 Outstanding tree work identified in the improvement action plan should be completed.	High	2.1 Outstanding works are being prioritised and worked through in-conjunction with the client. Regular updates are provided and the CAM system is now being regularly updated. The services of a consultant are being employed to speed up the inspection process.	Operations Director (HTS)	31/12/20	31/09/21	Two further periods of “lockdown” since early autumn 2021 have restricted HTS’s capacity to complete programmed tree works. Further, improvement in the consistency of inspections delivered as a result of 1.1 above has over time resulted a higher rate of recommendations for works in the long medium or short term. Thus despite a year on year increase in the rate at which jobs were completed, HTS has not to date succeeded in completing all outstanding work. HTS has increased arboricultural capacity by engaging qualified subcontractors to reduce the quantity of work on hand.	Overdue
Equality Act and Impact Assessments 2020/21 February 2021	1	As a priority, the Equality Working Group should finalise and implement the action plan. This includes a review of the draft objectives and actions to ensure they fully support the Council’s Corporate	High	A review of the draft objectives and actions has been completed. Once approved the EWG will ensure the publication of the Plan and commence its implementation. A timeline for	Head of Governance/ Corporate and Democratic Services Manager	Following the first Cabinet meeting of the municipal year			In progress

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		<p>Plan equalities goals. To enable progress to be evaluated, targets should be assigned to the actions, the action plan monitored by the EWG, and progress reported to the Corporate Governance Group to update the risk register.</p>		<p>reporting progress of the Plan to the Corporate Governance to be agreed.</p>					
<p>Equality Act and Impact Assessments 2020/21 February 2021</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>In line with the Equality Act 2010, the Council should develop a consistent and proportionate procedure for assessing and recording the equalities impacts of policies (using an EIA or other agreed methodology) to be completed before a proposed policy is adopted.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>The current process (Cabinet & Committee Reports, Decisions) to be reviewed to reflect the new process/arrangements.</p>	<p>Head of Governance/ Corporate and Democratic Services Manager</p>	<p>Following the first Cabinet meeting of the municipal year</p>			<p>In progress</p>