

Internal Audit Recommendation Tracker (High and Overdue)

Last Updated: 28 May 2021

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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 30/09/21</p>	<p>Mar / May 19: 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>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/Oct 20: Expenses rate for mileage has been agreed with TU at HMRC rates, communication underway with employees. The provision of uniform and relevant procurement if applicable under consideration. 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>Overdue</p>

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								<p>May 21: New Expenses policy being drafted; new HR system is now processing mileage claims; queries ongoing about VAT and VAT treatment currently being worked through with system provider.</p>	
<p>Complaints 2018/19 May 2019</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>A quarterly report is sent to SMB in regards to this.</p>	<p>Customer and Media Services Manager/ Head of Governance</p>	<p>30/06/19</p>	<p>31/03/20 31/12/20 01/10/21</p>	<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> <p>May 21: A full review of the complaints process is in progress.</p>	<p>Overdue</p>

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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 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> <p>May 21: As above, a full review of the Council's approach to dealing with complaints is in progress.</p>	Overdue
Responsive Housing Repairs 2018/19 August 2019	2b	Post inspections completed on more complex housing repairs should be formally documented and retained.	Medium	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.	HTS Operations Director and the Council's Housing Operations Manager	30/09/19	31/01/20 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.</p>	Overdue

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				Post inspections completed on complex repairs works will be formally documented and retained				<p>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 20: A response was not requested from Housing whilst Officers have been dealing with the current coronavirus situation</p> <p>July 20: A response 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>May 21: HTS (P&E) Ltd continue to</p>	

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								establish recovery aligned to recent Govt. restrictions. A phased approach to internal inspections has recommenced and will be included in the HTS (P&E) repairs recovery plans which is expected to be published in June 2021.	
Responsive Housing Repairs 2018/19 August 2019	3a	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.	Medium	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 Commercial Director will investigate if there approach to record job priority time changes.	Council's Housing Asset and Business Systems Manager and the HTS Commercial Director	30/04/20	30/09/20 31/01/21 30/10/21	<p>May 20: A response was not requested from Housing whilst Officers have been dealing with the current coronavirus situation</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 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</p>	Overdue

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								processes and are undertaking emergency plus repairs activities. Service quality is being monitored through Joint Operational meetings and Housing Portfolio meetings. May 21: HTS P&E are establishing their repairs recovery plan to deal with the back log from the Covid 19 pandemic. This will be published in June 2021 as part of the wider Council strategic recovery map.	
	3b	The reasons behind the housing repairs job priority times are allocated should be investigated to ensure that the appropriate timescales are given.					30/09/20 31/01/21 30/10/21	May 20: As above July 20: As above Oct 20: As above Feb 21: As above May 21: As above	Overdue
	3c	Repairs operatives working hours should be extended to increase efficiency and flexibility of the housing repairs service.					30/09/20 31/03/21 30/10/21	May 20: As above Oct 20: HTS has introduced this for heating repair staff and currently in negotiations with the other operatives. 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. May 21: An implementation timetable will be published at the Shareholder Sub Committee meeting in September 2021 as part of the Repairs Customer Access Plans.	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	<p>May 20: As above</p> <p>July 20: As above</p> <p>Feb 21: As above</p> <p>May 21: HTS P&E are establishing their repairs recovery plan to deal with the back log from the Covid 19 pandemic. This will be published in June 2021 as part of the wider Council strategic recovery map.</p>	Overdue
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	<p>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.</p> <p>May 21: The Playhouse budget outturn will not be overspent for 20/21. As a result of Covid-19 the Playhouse has been shut most of the last year. Funding of £500k has been secured from the Arts Council as part of the Covid-19 culture recovery fund. The business plan has been delayed and is included in the Governance Service plan for 21/22.</p>	Overdue
Business Continuity 2019/20 May 2020	1	The analysis by function that shows resource requirements should be distilled down to individual person, PC and connection requirements.	Medium	Accepted	Operations Manager	31/03/21	31/03/22	<p>May 21: Current working environment means that this data is irrelevant as working environments are predominantly remote and therefore risk of large scale disruptions reduced; interim arrangements to address localised issues have been mitigated through arrangements in place to allow some in office working/additional equipment to be issued where BC</p>	Overdue

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								events occur in individual remote working environments. Once plans for future ways of working are finalised new BC assessments will need to be carried out accordingly and this recommendation will be incorporated.	
Business Continuity 2019/20 May 2020	2	The "service plan" tab on the service area plan spreadsheets be fully completed in every case.	Medium	Service Planning for 20/21 will be changeable due to Covid 19 and we are likely to remain in BC scenario for majority of the current year.	Heads of Service	30/04/21	30/09/21	May 21: This will be carried out following 2021/22 Service Planning process.	Overdue
Business Continuity 2019/20 May 2020	3	The recovery detail, both in the corporate plan and in the service area plans define the IT systems individually and specifically and a prioritised list for recovery for them developed.	Medium	Changes will be made as part of review process of the COVID 19 BC scenario and applications of plans and processes during this time.	Operations Manager/Seni or ICT Manager	31/03/21	31/03/22	May 21: Team level Covid specific BC Plans were carried out in September 2020 and have been reviewed in March 2021; IT systems have been considered as part of these. Once plans for future ways of working are finalised new BC assessments will need to be carried out accordingly and this recommendation will be incorporated.	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	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 Head of Planning and Environment.	Environment & Licensing Manager and Head of Environment & Planning	30/09/20	31/03/21 30/09/21	Oct 20 and Feb 21: 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 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	Overdue

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				Subject to resources audit of risk assessment targeted by risk will be reinstated		31/03/21	30/09/21	before the close of the municipal year May 21: Whilst additional resources to support the corporate Health and Safety function continue to be made available from within existing service budgets, the demands placed on the team by the ongoing change in circumstances and central government advice remain high and absorb available capacity. The position will again be reviewed following the lifting of the majority of COVID-19 restrictions.	
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 30/06/21	Feb 21: HGGT legal advisors, Weightmans, have been instructed to develop a partnership agreement for the HGGT. The most appropriate agreement is currently being evaluated. May 21: A draft data sharing agreement has been prepared for the Partners by Weightmans and is currently being considered by one of the Partners' internal legal team.	Overdue
Data retention and disposals 2019/20 October 2020	4	Housing need to start preparing for an eventual document management system by initiating a project to rationalise its paper files. This in turn will ensure that data held within the housing paper files is compliant with data	Medium	We will start rationalising our files immediately by adding and implementing the checklist to each file as it is taken out and implementing the training being provided. It should be recognised this is	Head of Housing/ Senior Housing Operations Manager (People)	31/03/21	31/01/22	May 21: Housing has implemented the file checklist together with the training and awareness of officers of the required documents to be contained within the tenancy files. The service is still waiting clarification from the Council's DPO officer regarding retention and disposals. A plan will be established with a project to rationalise the manual housing files when staff return to the office on a	Overdue

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		<p>protection legislation.</p> <p>In the short term this is being achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The introduction of a checklist of what documents should be retained within housing files and for how long * Pilot of rationalising paper Housing Options files being facilitated by the Council's Data Protection Officer bringing in an external lawyer for advice. 		a long term project as the majority of staff continue to work remotely due to Covid-19.				more regular basis aligned to corporate requirements (Covid secure). It is expected for a plan to be established in January 2022.	
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	<p>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.</p> <p>However, due to not yet having that</p>	Environment and Licensing Manager Senior Landscape Officer	31/03/21	30/09/21	<p>Feb 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</p> <p>May 21: HTS continues to employ an external contractor to reinforce the existing team structure to undertake</p>	Overdue

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				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.				routine inspections. A monthly update is provided by HTS for outstanding tree inspections.	
	1.2	<p>The Council will work with HTS to ensure a tree maintenance strategy is agreed and implemented, in accordance with the contract specification.</p> <p>The tree maintenance strategy should ensure:</p> <p>a) Tree surveys are completed to provide a complete record of the type and condition of the Council's tree stock</p> <p>b) Risk assessments are undertaken to identify and manage risks to public safety</p> <p>c) Remedial work is identified and managed in order of risk.</p>					31/03/22	<p>Feb 21: 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 work will commence in the course of 2021/22.</p> <p>May 21: HTS has drafted a proposal for the use of an external provider to conduct a risk based town wide survey of the age and condition of all trees. The Council is also looking at options for a real time database to record tree information.</p>	Overdue
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	Operations Director (HTS)	31/12/20	30/09/21	Feb and May 21: Two further periods of "lockdown" since early autumn 2020 have restricted HTS's capacity to complete programmed tree works. Further, improvement in the	Overdue

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				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.				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.	
Parks and landscapes 2019/20 October 2020	3	The Council will work with HTS to ensure an annual landscape programme is implemented in accordance with the contract specification. The annual programme will define planned activities by season for planting and maintenance to aid transparency, improve efficiencies and the performance monitoring process.	Medium	The Council will work with HTS to ensure the landscape/winter programme is agreed and implemented in accordance with the contract specification. Target date for this year's winter programme shouldn't be next spring but to have a rolling, approved format etc. can be set as a March 21 date.	Environment and Licensing Manager Senior Landscape Manager	31/03/21	31/12/21	Feb and May 21: A temporary digital system is now in use. Development of a system postponed until works can resume to a normal service. Due to Covid/ lockdown/ safe working etc. the works are focusing on essential priority works. This will be reviewed regularly.	Overdue
Key Financial Controls – Fixed Assets 2020/21 December 2020	1	A full reconciliation of ICT Assets purchased in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to date (Per Technology Forge) to the ICT Inventory and 'Homeworking'	Medium	The Technology Forge system will be compared to ICT Inventory and 'Homeworking' spreadsheet, and any discrepancies	Principal Finance Manager	31/03/21	31/08/21	May 21: The Technology Forge system will be reconciled to the ICT inventory. This will be done at a high level based on total capital expenditure on ICT for each year as we do not record all the individual items purchased in the Technology	Overdue

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		spreadsheet be undertaken, with any discrepancies investigated. Any items that cannot be identified be reported upon to the S151 Officer so that a decision can be made regarding these being written-off Annual reconciliations to take place thereafter.		considered as recommended.				Forge system. Instead a record of individual ICT equipment purchased each year is kept by the IT service, being more efficient. It is this total capital expenditure amount for the year that is then depreciated in accordance with policy. This approach is felt to be appropriate for individual items that would fall below the de minimis value if recorded separately. Any large items e.g. replacement or purchase of a full IT system would be recorded separately.	
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 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.	High	<p>A review of the draft objectives and actions has been completed.</p> <p>Once approved the EWG will ensure the publication of the Plan and commence its implementation.</p> <p>A timeline for reporting progress of the Plan to the Corporate Governance to be agreed.</p>	Head of Governance/ Corporate and Democratic Services Manager	Following the first Cabinet meeting of the municipal year		May 21: The Policy has been added to the Forward Plan for the Cabinet un June 2021. The documents have been reviewed by the Third Tier Managers.	In progress

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Equality Act and Impact Assessments 2020/21 February 2021	2	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.	High	The current process (Cabinet & Committee Reports, Decisions) to be reviewed to reflect the new process/ arrangements.	Head of Governance/ Corporate and Democratic Services Manager	Following the first Cabinet meeting of the municipal year		May 21: The Policy has been added to the Forward Plan for the Cabinet un June 2021. The documents have been reviewed by the Third Tier Managers	In progress
Equality Act and Impact Assessments 2020/21 February 2021	3	To drive equality improvements and ensure buy-in from managers across the Council, there should be an 'equality champion' at Senior Management Board. Key messages from the Equality Working Group (EWG) should be reported to the Third Tier Managers meeting to be filtered down to staff.	Medium	(a) Head of Governance to be Equality Champion' at Senior Management Board (SMB). (b) An EWG Group has been established. (c) The Chair of EWG to develop key messages for the Third Tier Managers and their Teams. (d) The EWG will be expanded to include participants from the protected characteristics to work on the Action Plan and build on the other work required to	Head of Governance/ Corporate and Democratic Services Manager	(a) Completed (b) Completed (c) 28/02/21 (d) May 2021 onwards	(c) 31/05/21 (d) 31/05/21	May 21: (c) This has not been progressed as quickly as needed due to continued work being undertaken on Corona pandemic and the Elections. This will now fall in line with (d) and will be underway by late May 2021	(c) Overdue (d) Overdue

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				meet the PSED.					
Equality Act and Impact Assessments 2020/21 February 2021	5	To comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) the Council should publish annually its equality objectives and the progress made towards achieving them. This could be achieved through the publication of an Equalities Annual Report.	Medium	An interim report is being compiled for publication in April 2021.	Head of Governance/ Corporate and Democratic Services Manager	30/04/21	30/06/21	May 21: This is currently being developed and should be ready for publication soon.	Overdue