



central midlands audit partnership

South Derbyshire District Council – Audit Progress Report

Audit Sub-Committee: 6th December 2023



South Derbyshire
District Council



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Our Vision

To bring about improvements in the control, governance and risk management arrangements of our Partners by providing cost effective, high quality internal audit services.

Contacts

Richard Boneham CPFA
Head of Internal Audit (DCC) &
Head of Audit Partnership
c/o Derby City Council
Council House
Corporation Street
Derby, DE1 2FS
Tel. 01332 643280
richard.boneham@derby.gov.uk

Adrian Manifold CMIA
Audit Manager
c/o Derby City Council
Council House
Corporation Street
Derby
DE1 2FS
Tel. 01332 643281
adrian.manifold@centralmidlandsaudit.co.uk

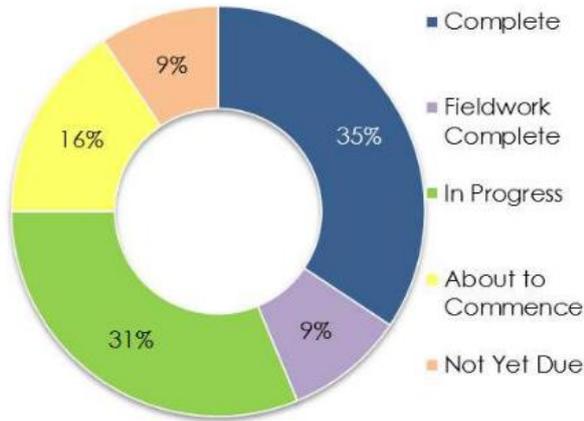
Mandy Marples CPFA, CCIP
Audit Manager
c/o Derby City Council
Council House
Corporation Street
Derby
DE1 2FS
Tel. 01332 643282
mandy.marples@centralmidlandsaudit.co.uk



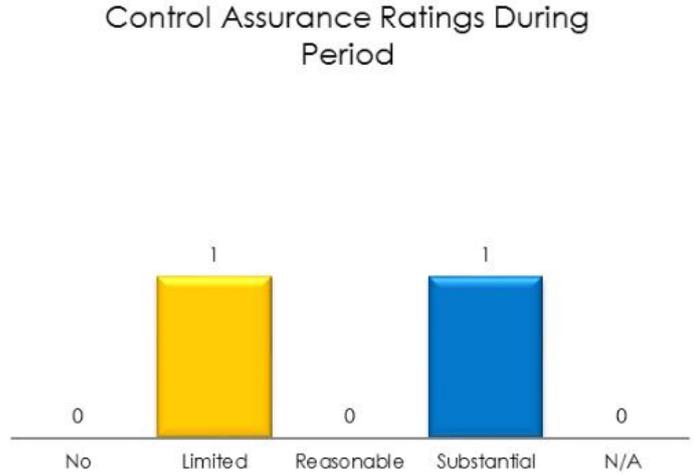
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Providing Excellent Audit Services in the Public Sector

AUDIT DASHBOARD

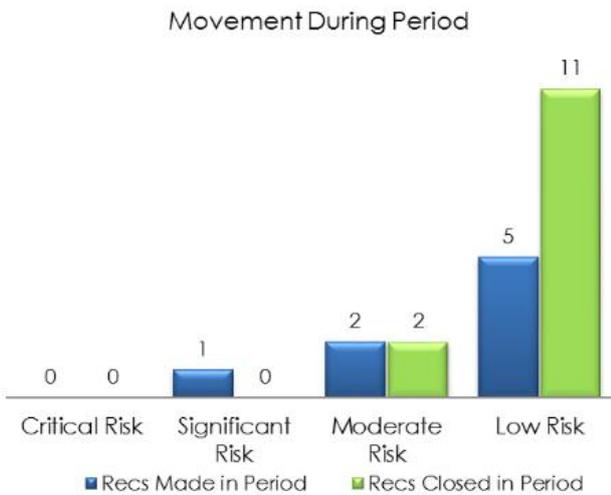
Plan Progress



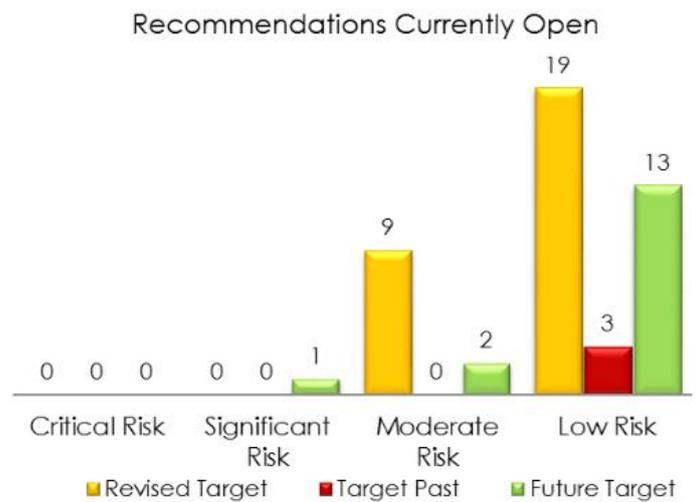
Jobs Completed in Period



Recommendations



Recommendations



Recommendations



Customer Satisfaction



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AUDIT PLAN

Progress on Audit Assignments

The following tables provide Audit Sub-Committee with information on how audit assignments were progressing as at 16th November 2023.

2023-24 Assignments	Status	% Complete	Assurance Rating
Leisure Centre Management - Tender 2023-24	In Progress	45%	
Bank House-Sabines Yard Project	In Progress	65%	
Grant Certification 2023-24	In Progress	50%	
Revenues Systems 2023-24	Allocated	10%	
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support 2023-24	In Progress	30%	
IT Key Controls 2023-24	In Progress	60%	
Health & Safety 2023-24	Not Allocated		
Trade Waste (Route Optimisation)	Allocated	10%	
Fleet Management 2023-24	Not Allocated		
Planning & Building Control Fees 2023-24	Allocated	0%	
Section 106 Agreements 2023-24	Final Report	100%	Substantial
Climate Change 2023-24	Allocated		
Warden Controlled Services 2023-24	In Progress	65%	
Rosliston Forestry Centre	Deferred		
Housing Repairs (2023-24	Allocated	0%	
Housing Safety Inspections 2023-24	In Progress	45%	
Improvement Grants 2023-24	In Progress	10%	
Rent Accounting 2023-24	Draft Report	95%	
Right To Buy - Follow-Up	In Progress	70%	
Visitor Centre	In Progress	25%	
B/Fwd Assignments	Status	% Complete	Assurance Rating
Procurement 2022-23	Final Report	100%	Limited
Safeguarding 2022-23	Final Report	100%	Substantial
Capital Programme 2022-23	Final Report	100%	Substantial
Revenues Systems 2022-23	Final Report	100%	Substantial
Mobile Device Management	Final Report	100%	Reasonable
Data Quality & Performance Management 22-23	Final Report	100%	Reasonable
Street Cleansing 2022-23	Draft Report	100%	Substantial
Development Management 2022-23	Draft Report	95%	
Parks & Open Spaces 2022-23	Final Report	100%	Reasonable
Sheltered Housing - Careline 2022-23	Final Report	100%	N/A
Land Charges 2022-23	Draft Report	95%	
Organisational Culture & Ethics 2022-23	Final Report	100%	Reasonable

Plan Delays

We have been unable to finalise the Development Management report as the relevant manager has failed to provide a response to our draft report which was sent on 2nd June 2023, despite many reminders. Also, the same manager has failed to provide information necessary to progress the Planning & Building Control Fees audit, again despite many requests for information that began on 26th April 2023.

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Plan Changes

Following concerns raised by the Council's Corporate Anti-Fraud Service and in consultation with the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources (S151 Officer), it was agreed that Internal Audit would follow up the issues raised in the 2019-20 Right To Buy audit to establish whether the risks originally identified have been appropriately addressed. As a result, the planned review of Rosliston Forestry Centre has been deferred for consideration for the 2024-25 Audit Plan.

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AUDIT COVERAGE

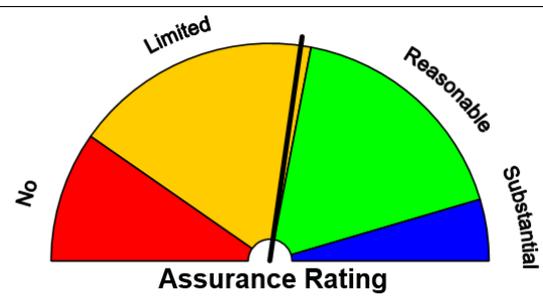
Completed Audit Assignments

Between 22nd August 2023 and 16th November 2023, the following audit assignments have been finalised.

Audit Assignments Completed in Period	Assurance Rating	Recommendations Made				% Recs Closed
		Critical Risk	Significant Risk	Moderate Risk	Low Risk	
Procurement 2022-23	Limited		1	2	1	50%
Section 106 Agreements 2023-24	Substantial				4	75%

Control Objectives Examined	Controls Evaluated	Adequate Controls	Partial Controls	Weak Controls
	There are adequate arrangements in place to monitor and manage the contract accordingly.	6	1	2
The contract is being delivered in accordance with the contractual requirements.	8	8	0	0
TOTALS	14	9	2	3

Summary of Weakness	Risk Rating	Agreed Action Date
Notes from the fortnightly meeting between the Council and the Procurement Service Provider were not always kept and there were no notes or minutes kept for the six-monthly review meeting.	Low Risk	01/10/2023 Implemented
10 of the 11 key performance indicators documented in the contract were no longer being monitored, with no information being supplied from the Procurement Service Provider.	Moderate Risk	01/10/2023 Being Implemented 31/03/2024
Progress reports were not being sent through to the Council by the Procurement Service Provider and satisfaction levels with the service received were below the required 80% threshold, as required by the contract.	Moderate Risk	01/10/2023 Implemented
It could not be demonstrated that the contract with the Procurement Service Provider provided an effective procurement function which sought genuine competition.	Significant Risk	01/03/2024 Future Action



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Section 106 Agreements 2023-24	<p style="text-align: center;">Assurance Rating</p>			
Control Objectives Examined	Controls Evaluated	Adequate Controls	Partial Controls	Weak Controls
Procedures relating to Section 106 agreements adhere to both Council policy and legislation.	4	4	0	0
Existing Section 106 agreements are monitored in accordance with the requirements of the agreement.	10	8	1	1
Incoming Section 106 funds are appropriately managed and allocated in a timely manner.	5	3	2	0
Expenditure of Section 106 funds is appropriate and meets the terms of the agreement.	4	3	1	0
TOTALS	23	18	4	1
Summary of Weakness	Risk Rating	Agreed Action Date		
Expenditure deadlines were not always accurately recorded in Exacom, the planning obligations software, and covenants were not always recorded as being discharged promptly.	Low Risk	15/09/2023 Being Implemented 30/11/2023		
Section 106 agreements were not routinely added to the Land Charges Register.	Low Risk	Implemented		
We identified in testing some instances where the date or amount of Section 106 monies received were inaccurately recorded in Exacom, the planning obligations software.	Low Risk	15/09/2023 Implemented		
We found that base payment amounts due had been incorrectly calculated/entered into Exacom, the planning obligations software, for 2 of the 7 Section 106 agreements tested, and indexation had been incorrectly calculated for a further 2 agreements.	Low Risk	30/11/2023 Implemented		

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RECOMMENDATION TRACKING

Final Report Date	Audit Assignments with Open Recommendations	Assurance Rating	Recommendations Open		
			Action Due	Being Implemented	Future Action
07-Sep-23	Section 106 Agreements 2023-24	Substantial		1	
23-Aug-23	Procurement 2022-23	Limited		1	1
18-Aug-23	Revenue Systems 2022-23	Substantial			2
17-Aug-23	Street Cleansing 2022-23	Substantial			3
14-Aug-23	Parks & Open Spaces 2022-23	Reasonable			6
02-Aug-23	Organisational Culture & Ethics 2022-23	Reasonable		2	
02-Aug-23	Mobile Device Management	Reasonable	3	1	
31-May-23	Data Quality & Performance Management 22-23	Reasonable			3
05-May-23	Safeguarding 2022-23	Substantial		1	
08-Mar-23	Electoral Services 2020-21	Reasonable		1	
28-Feb-23	Records Management 2022-23	Reasonable		1	
31-Oct-22	Rosliston Forestry Centre 2022-23	Reasonable		3	
24-Oct-22	Officers Expenses & Allowances 2022-23	Reasonable		2	
22-Aug-22	Homelessness 2021-22	Substantial		1	
02-Aug-22	Income Streams	Reasonable		3	
10-Mar-22	Rent Accounting 2021-22	Reasonable		3	
23-Feb-22	Climate Change	Substantial		1	
15-Sep-21	Insurance	Substantial			1
16-Jun-21	Housing Repairs 2020-21	Limited		2	
22-Oct-20	Grounds Maintenance 2019-20	Reasonable		3	
06-Aug-20	Bereavement Services 2019-20	Reasonable		2	
		TOTALS	3	28	16

Action Due = The agreed actions are due, but Internal Audit has been unable to ascertain any progress information from the responsible officer.

Being Implemented = The original action date has now passed and the agreed actions have yet to be completed. Internal Audit has obtained status update comments from the responsible officer and a revised action date.

Future Action = The agreed actions are not yet due, so Internal Audit has not followed the matter up.

Audit Assignments with Recommendations Due	Action Due			Being Implemented		
	Significant Risk	Moderate Risk	Low Risk	Significant Risk	Moderate Risk	Low Risk
Section 106 Agreements 2023-24						1
Procurement 2022-23					1	
Organisational Culture & Ethics 2022-23					1	1
Mobile Device Management			3			1
Safeguarding 2022-23						1
Electoral Services 2020-21					1	
Records Management 2022-23						1
Rosliston Forestry Centre 2022-23					1	2
Officers Expenses & Allowances 2022-23					1	1
Homelessness 2021-22						1
Income Streams						3
Rent Accounting 2021-22					1	2
Climate Change						1
Housing Repairs 2020-21					2	
Grounds Maintenance 2019-20						3
Bereavement Services 2019-20					1	1
TOTALS			3		9	19

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HIGHLIGHTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Being Implemented – Significant or Moderate Risk Recommendations

The following significant or moderate risk rated recommendations, that have not yet been implemented, are detailed for Committee's scrutiny.

Bereavement Services 2019-20	Rec No. 2
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>Contract opportunities for the provision of a grave digging service had not been advertised on the Contracts Finder website, in line with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, and there was no current contract in place.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council pursues one of the following actions: A corporate contract may be required for the area of spend and as such a formal tender exercise should be undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the Council's DSO to provide the service at the rural cemeteries as well as the urban cemeteries. The area of spend may be relevant to an existing or new framework agreement/contract which should be used to formalise the process. If no competitive market is available this should be demonstrated and a formal exemption from the Contract Procedure Rule should be put in place. 	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
All options will be assessed and taken forward after the Covid-19 pandemic is over as the risk of any changes to the service are too great at the present time.	01/01/2021
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
Cemetery Space in rural area of Marston is becoming limited and there is a project to look at an extension or another site; this will need to be considered as part of that.	01/12/2023 Future Action

Housing Repairs 2020-21	Rec No. 5
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>Orchard, the Council's Housing Management System, did not contain a full record of materials used on a job and there was consequently no tracking of materials purchased over the counter to confirm their usage.</p> <p>We recommend that all materials used on a job should be recorded on the job ticket used to populate Orchard. This will ensure full data is available for the purposes of costing and post inspections. Operatives should be provided with clear instruction and this should be monitored by management until embedded.</p>	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
Written instruction for the completion of job tickets will be provided for operatives by the Interim Team Leader.	30/07/2021
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
Currently we are checking material spends from reporting supplied by the materials suppliers daily / weekly until the mobile working system is built. Comprehensive solution will be in place with Accuserve in January 2024	30/01/2024 Future Action

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Housing Repairs 2020-21	Rec No. 3
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>There was a high degree of manual input in scheduling repair jobs and the system in place to record repairs was heavily reliant on paper job tickets, resulting in inefficiencies and possible inaccuracies. We were unable to locate a job ticket for 10 of the 19 completed repair jobs selected for testing.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council considers the procurement of dynamic scheduling software. In the interim we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear guidelines are provided to operatives on the information required to be completed on job tickets and timesheets, to improve the quality of data subsequently entered into Orchard, the Council's Housing Management System. • The possibility of sending job tickets directly from Orchard to operative's smartphones (or scanning and emailing them) is investigated. • The capability of the smartphones issued is reviewed to establish whether job tickets can be viewed and edited or whether other hardware /software is required to do this. • Training requirements for operatives are considered to allow implementation of the above and further training be undertaken, where required. 	<p>Moderate Risk</p>
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>As part of the Council's Transformation Project, the renewed Orchard Contract package includes the option for the future purchase of dynamic scheduling/mobile working software. Written instruction for the completion of job tickets will be provided for operatives by the Interim Team Leader (by 30/07/2021). A possible interim solution for the electronic transmission of job tickets has been identified and is being tested. This will require new devices to be provided to operatives. The use of smartphone for this process has been tested and found to be not viable. Once testing of the process and new devices is complete this will be implemented across the team with the appropriate training.</p>	<p>01/10/2021</p>
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>MRI/Accuserve implementation in progress. The kick off meeting is 24th July for Phase one which includes the Repairs Module.</p>	<p>31/03/2024 Future Action</p>

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Rent Accounting 2021-22	Rec No. 7
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>Energy costs paid by the Council for individual properties were not consistently recharged to tenants and there was a large outstanding debt relating to this.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council writes off outstanding ground source heating debts where there is insufficient legal basis to pursue recovery. Furthermore, for existing tenants, appropriate action should be taken to obtain agreement to future energy cost charges, which should be invoiced as soon as possible to prevent further financial loss to the Council.</p>	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>Agreed, the Former Tenant Arrears Officer will prepare the documentation for write off where recovery cannot be pursued against former / current tenants for ground source heating charges at Brook Street, Hartshorne.</p> <p>A third-party agent is currently being procured to take meter readings and prepare figures for consumption costs to the responsible tenant for payment. At this point it is the Councils intention for the third-party agent to read meters and invoice tenants, however this may change in so far as Business Support may invoice tenants and collect the payments which are due.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once procured, all existing tenants will be required to re-sign a contract indicating their agreement to be responsible for and pay their ground source heating charges to the Council. • All new tenants will sign a separate contract/letter when they sign their new Tenancy Agreement indicating their agreement to be responsible for and pay their ground source heating charges. • The Former Tenant Arrears Officer and the Tenancy Services Manager will have operational responsibility for implementing this recommendation. 	31/03/2022
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>Outstanding debts have now been written off. A process for billing has been prepared and meter readings for Carnegie House are now being taken and billed monthly. Service Charge which includes energy costs for those under licence agreement in temporary accommodation. Currently unable to receive meter readings for GSHP at Brook Street - order placed for new mBus readers with Raleigh Instruments.</p>	31/12/2023 Future Action

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Electoral Services 2020-21	Rec No. 4
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>There was no current contract in place for the provision of election printing services.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council pursues one of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A corporate contract may be required for the area of spend and as such a formal procurement exercise should be undertaken. • The area of spend may be relevant to an existing or new framework agreement/contract which should be used to formalise the process. • Where a tender exercise would not be beneficial to the Council or where the particular organisation is required for a specific reason, a formal exemption from the Contract Procedure Rules should be sought. 	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>A tender exercise may not be suitable due to the specialist nature of this contract.</p> <p>A formal exemption under the Contract Procedure Rules will be explored.</p>	31/03/2023
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>A tender exercise may not be suitable due to the specialist nature of this contract. A formal exemption under the Contract Procedure Rules will be explored.</p>	30/11/2023 Future Action

Officers Expenses & Allowances 2022-23	Rec No. 2
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>The Council's expenses policy did not support the Council's Staff Travel Plan, adopted to reduce the environmental impact of the journeys made by Council employees, and the mileage expenses paid were considered to be uneconomic and did not offer efficiency or value for money for the residents in the District.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council considers the savings that could be made by adopting the HMRCs (or a hybrid) scheme for paying mileages expenses. Pool cars could also be considered to reduce the need for paying lump sums for essential users (electric ones would also contribute to the Council's Staff Travel Plan.)</p>	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>An options appraisal will be undertaken as part of the Council's recruitment and retention package.</p>	31/07/2023
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>Work has commenced to consider options to reimburse officers using different modes of transport other than petrol/diesel cars. This will be subject to formal consultation. Once completed, and if approved, will be included in the Expenses Policy.</p>	31/03/2024 Future Action

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Rosliston Forestry Centre 2022-23	Rec No. 2
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>Some of the pathways through the forest were in poor condition and no longer accessible to members of the public with disabilities. Ongoing talks with Forestry England regarding the lease agreement was delaying any repair works, causing them to increase in cost.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council, in conjunction with Forestry England, negotiate a lease agreement that clearly outlines the Council's responsibilities within the Forestry Centre. Should the maintenance of pathways fall with the Council, they should then look at repairing these pathways or altering the visitor map to make people aware that they are no longer entirely accessible.</p>	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
To be considered as part of the lease renewal. Possible funding opportunities via the National Forest.	01/06/2023
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
A new lease has been agreed with Forestry England for 30 years. A 'Revitalising Rosliston' consultation has started which will help create the future vision for the site and identify where investment is best placed.	30/06/2024 Future Action

Procurement 2022-23	Rec No. 2
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>10 of the 11 key performance indicators documented in the contract were no longer being monitored, with no information being supplied from the Procurement Service Provider.</p> <p>We recommend in accordance with the contract, information for all 11 key performance indicators should be provided to the Council by the Procurement Service Provider and then verified to enable effective monitoring. This will ensure compliance with the contract and enable the Council to identify any issues with performance in a timely manner in order for appropriate action(s) to be taken.</p>	Moderate Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
The agenda for the recently timetabled quarterly review meeting will include a KPI report to be reviewed as part of the meeting. Any issues of under-performance or non-compliance will be addressed in line with the contract.	01/10/2023
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
Next fortnightly meeting is 25th October, an action plan is to be maintained going forward with a progress report and KPI report shared at the meeting.	31/03/2024 Future Action

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Organisational Culture & Ethics 2022-23	Rec No. 1
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>The Council had not undertaken a staff survey, which was specifically geared towards the Council's culture, ethics and values.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council undertake an employee survey aimed at assessing officer opinions on the Council's culture, ethics and values. The results of the survey should then be used to make improvements, where necessary, for any common themes or patterns resulting from the data.</p>	<p>Moderate Risk</p>
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>Plans are underway to deliver the Employee Survey in Autumn 2023</p>	<p>30/11/2023</p>
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>The employee survey is being completed from 13 November - 22 December 2023. The result are scheduled to be published by 29 March 2024.</p>	<p>29/03/2024 Future Action</p>

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Being Implemented - Low Risk Recommendations Over 12 Months

The following low risk rated recommendations, that have not yet been implemented and have exceeded their original action date by more than 12 months, are also detailed for Committee's scrutiny.

Bereavement Services 2019-20		Rec. No. 5
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation		Risk Rating
Historic graves and burials information had not been fully digitised.		Low Risk
The Council should consider making resource available to digitise historic graves and burials information to minimise the risk of data loss.		
Management Response/Action Details		Action Date
Report being drafted to Leadership Team and Housing and Communities Committee.		30/11/2020
Status Update Comments		Revised Date
Currently recruiting a Service Admin Assistant. Once recruited which we are hoping will be in June/July part of their remit will be to work through the historic burial information and digitise it. Aiming to complete work depending on recruitment by end of year December 2023.		31/12/2023 Future Action

Grounds Maintenance 2019-20		Rec. No. 2
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation		Risk Rating
The specification and associated bills of quantities were out-of-date, having not been updated since 2011.		Low Risk
We recommend that resources should be identified to review and update the specification and associated bills of quantity to reflect the current situation, to ensure better clarity over the areas covered within the 'contract' and the detailed requirements.		
Management Response/Action Details		Action Date
Previous detailed specification to be reviewed for Housing land and Cultural and Community Service land. Timing will depend on when restructures are in place. Officers with operational responsibility are the Parks and Green Space Manager and the Housing Improvement and Asset Manager.		01/10/2021
Status Update Comments		Revised Date
Information/data that was available to transfer from the existing specification and Bill of Quantities has been added to the Operational Services GIS system. This data will need to be fully reviewed in conjunction with the clients and any missing data added. This work will require substantial time resources and will need to be scheduled after significant projects such as implementation of a new waste management system, route optimisation and the hydrogen hybrid trial, within Operational Services have been completed.		31/10/2024 Future Action

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Grounds Maintenance 2019-20	Rec. No. 8
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>Monitoring of quality of work performed did not take place or was not formally recorded.</p> <p>We recommend that regular quality monitoring is undertaken to ensure that quality of work meets the standards set within a revised specifications, and any performance issues are addressed.</p>	Low Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>Quality Monitoring Schedule derived from annual plan/programme for Housing Land and Cultural and Community Services land to be implemented. Officers with operational responsibility are the Parks and Green Space Manager and the Housing Improvement and Asset Manager.</p>	01/04/2021
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>A revision to the specification will not be ready until October 2024, in the interim. The charge hands and supervisors will be required to undertake several monitoring inspections a month, utilising a paper-based system. These will be used to monitor performance and delivery of the teams and quality assess the work being undertaken. This practice will continue until such time as a digital system can be installed. The introduction of a digital GM system will require substantial time resources and will need to be scheduled after significant projects such as implementation of a new waste management system, route optimisation and the hydrogen hybrid trial, within Operational Services have been completed.</p> <p>Internal Audit will require evidence of the manual system being in place and at that point would be happy to sign this recommendation off.</p>	<p>31/10/2024</p> <p>Future Action</p>

Climate Change	Rec. No. 2
Summary of Weakness / Recommendation	Risk Rating
<p>There was a low uptake of Climate and Environment training for Councillors, and we were unable to establish whether there was a lead Council Member for Climate and Environment.</p> <p>We recommend that Councillors are encouraged to attend Climate and Environment training, as is required for all Council officers. Additionally, we recommend that consideration should be given to identifying a lead Council Member for Climate and Environment.</p>	Low Risk
Management Response/Action Details	Action Date
<p>We delivered on-line climate training for members in early 2021, although no record of the number of attendees was taken. We propose to offer further member training following the publication of the second iteration of our Climate and Environment Action Plan in summer 2022. Attendance will be encouraged but not mandated.</p> <p>Councillor Taylor (as Chair of the Environment & Development Services Committee) is currently appointed as Champion for Environment, Waste & Recycling. This appointment is considered to cover the climate change agenda.</p>	01/09/2022
Status Update Comments	Revised Date
<p>Training was due to be arranged post-election in May 23, however, the Sustainability Officer post is currently vacant and being advertised. Once an officer has been recruited training will be arranged.</p>	<p>31/12/2023</p> <p>Future Action</p>