

Eastern Internal Audit Services



NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Follow Up Report on Internal Audit Recommendations

Period Covered: 1 April 2020 to 25 November 2020

Responsible Officer: Faye Haywood –Internal Audit Manager for North Norfolk DC

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is being issued to assist the Authority in discharging its responsibilities in relation to the internal audit activity.
- 1.2 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards also require the Chief Audit Executive to establish a process to monitor and follow up management actions to ensure that they have been effectively implemented or that senior management have accepted the risk of not taking action. The frequency of reporting and the specific content are for the Authority to determine.
- 1.3 To comply with the above this report includes:
 - The status of agreed actions.

2. STATUS OF AGREED ACTIONS

- 2.1 As a result of audit recommendations, management agree action to ensure implementation within a specific timeframe and by a responsible officer. The management action subsequently taken is monitored by the Internal Audit Contractor on a regular basis and reported through to this Committee. Verification work is also undertaken for those recommendations that are reported as closed.
- 2.2 **Appendix 1** to this report shows the details of the progress made to date in relation to the implementation of the agreed recommendations. This appendix also reflects the year in which the audit was undertaken and identifies between outstanding recommendations that have previously been reported to this Committee and then those which have become outstanding this time round.
- 2.3 In relation to the historic recommendations (i.e. those prior to the 2016/17 financial year), there is one important recommendation from a 2010/11 review on Development Management. The most recent management response can be seen at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.4 In 2017/18 internal audit raised 50 recommendations; 44 of which have been implemented by the agreed date, and six of which are outstanding (five important and one needs attention).

Number raised to date	50	
Complete	44	88%
Outstanding	6	24%

The five important recommendations can be seen at **Appendix 3** to the report. Management responses in relation to Environmental Health and Waste Management have not been provided.

- 2.5 A total of 40 recommendations were raised during 2018/19. 36 have been completed. Four recommendations are now outstanding (one important, three needs attention).

Number raised to date	40	
Complete	36	90%
Outstanding	4	10%

Management responses in relation to one important recommendation has not been provided. The important recommendation can be seen at **Appendix 4** to the report.

- 2.6 A total of 61 recommendations were agreed in 2019/20. 22 have been completed. A total of 22 important and eleven needs attention recommendations are now outstanding, and six are not yet due.

Number raised to date	61	
Complete	22	36%
Outstanding	33	54%
Not yet due	6	10%

The 22 important recommendations can be seen at **Appendix 5** to the report. Management responses have not been received for four areas.

- 2.7 We recommend that officers now focus on completing recommendations raised during 2017/18 as these are now significantly overdue. As requested, the Committee continues to observe the progress made against completion of the one remaining important recommendation made during the 2010/11 review of Development Management, in relation to the Section 106 Arrangements. During our recent review of this area we have been unable to verify that this has been completed and it therefore continues to be monitored.

APPENDIX 1 – STATUS OF AGREED INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

			Completed bt 31 March 2020 and 25 November 2020			Previously reported to Committee as outstanding			(New) Outstanding			Total Outstanding	Not Yet Due for implementation		
			Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3		Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Audit Ref	Audit Area	Assurance Level													
2010/11 Internal Audit Reviews															
NN1112	Development Management, Building Control and Land Charges	Adequate					1					1			
2017/18 Internal Audit Reviews															
NN1803	Land Charges	Reasonable					1					1			
NN1807	Environmental Health	Reasonable					2	1				3			
NN1816	Procurement	Reasonable					1					1			
NN1817	Waste Management	Reasonable					1					1			
2018/19 Internal Audit Reviews															
NN1905	Homelessness and Housing Options	Reasonable						1				1			
NN1906	Accounts Payable	Reasonable						1				1			
NN1910	Corporate Governance	Substantial			1							0			
NN1914	Environmental Health	Reasonable		1	2		1	1				2			
2019/20 Internal Audit Reviews															
NN2001	Project Management Framework	N/A		1						9		9			
NN2003	Leisure	Substantial			1							0			
NN2004	S106 Agreements	Reasonable					3			2		5			
NN2005	Accountancy Services	Substantial			2						1	1			
NN2006	Accounts Receivable	Reasonable						1			1	2			
NN2007	Income	Reasonable			5							0			
NN2009	Planning and Development	Reasonable		2	1					2		2			
NN2010	Risk Management	Reasonable								1		1			
NN2011	Key Controls and Assurance	Substantial										0			1
NN2012	Procurement	Reasonable		1	1							0		1	
NN2013	Property Services	Reasonable		1	1							0		3	1
NN2014	Affordable Housing and Enabling	Reasonable								1		1			
NN2015	Business Continuity	Reasonable			2						3	3			

			Completed bt 31 March 2020 and 25 November 2020			Previously reported to Committee as outstanding			(New) Outstanding			Total Outstanding	Not Yet Due for implementation		
			Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3		Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Audit Ref	Audit Area	Assurance Level													
NN2016	Cyber Security	Reasonable								2	2	4			
NN2017	GIS Application	Reasonable								2	3	5			
TOTALS			0	6	16	0	10	5	0	19	10	44	0	4	2

APPENDIX 2 - OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS – 2010/2011

Audit Title	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response	Responsible Officer	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Status	Latest Response
NN1112 Development Management	Written guidance detailing the roles and responsibilities for monitoring the key requirements of Section 106 Planning Agreements should be produced to ensure appropriate action is taken to enforce the conditions contained therein. The guidance should be accompanied by a collated record of all Section 106 Planning Agreements, detailing the trigger points and accompanying obligations. This should include key responsibilities and contacts for the obligation and state action to be taken as and when those trigger points are reached. Where trigger points have been reached, action should be taken in a timely manner to enforce those conditions.	2	Agreed	Head of Planning	30/11/2011	30/11/2021	Outstanding	A complete list of S106 agreements has now been produced covering all agreements from the last ten years. This is being used as the current reference point and will form the basis of the data for when the new software system is introduced. Progress with the software remains as per previous update - it is expected that the new planning system, Uniform, will be installed in December 2019 and the S106 module, Exacom, will be added once Uniform is fully functional.

APPENDIX 3 – OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS – 2017/18 AUDIT REVIEWS

Job	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Responsible Officer	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Status	Latest Response
NN1803 Land Charges	<p>Recommendation 1: Procedure notes be produced for all aspects of the local land charge service. These notes to be version controlled and reviewed on a regular basis.</p> <p>Rationale & risk: Ensuring procedure notes are in place and up to date for all aspects of the service will provide assurance to management that staff are following correct practices. This reduces the risk of errors being made within the process where staff follow incorrect practice, leading to reputational damage and financial loss for the Council.</p>	2	The service accept that the current procedural manual is incomplete and could be improved to include version control and recent changes that have occurred within the service.	Property Information Team Leader	31/12/2017	30/01/2021	Outstanding	The Uniform project has been delayed again (until December 2020), which has resulted in a knock-on delay to the implementation of this audit recommendation.
NN1807 Environmental Health	<p>Recommendation 1: All the Environmental Health procedures, policies and guidance, including those related to the scope of the audit, be reviewed and updated to ensure that current statutory and non-statutory requirements, where applicable, are included.</p> <p>Rationale and risk: The processes in the procedures may no longer be relevant as current statutory requirements and legislations may not be included in the procedures, policies and guidance. This may lead to non-compliance with the relevant statutes and legislations, errors and delays in processing licences and permits and inconsistent practice arising.</p>	2	The BPR and IT implementation are scheduled to continue until April 2018. Therefore, not all processes will have been completed within the timescale recommended. BPR will tackle the largest volume work first and so processes which deal with the most workload will be addressed first.	Head of EH	30/04/2018	31/03/2020	Outstanding	The focus of the BPR continues to be on implementing the new IT system, which has taken significantly longer than originally anticipated. New processes are being developed and reviewed within the separate teams of Environmental Health and once these have been agreed then the associated new procedure notes can be produced.

Job	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Responsible Officer	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Status	Latest Response
NN1807 Environmental Health	Recommendation 2: A process for sharing data relevant to the Environmental Health Team which can be used for identifying businesses requiring licences be agreed with other Council departments including Planning and Revenues (CTAX/NNDR). Rationale and risk: The risk of businesses operating illegally which may harm the members of the public or the environment through unregulated activities carried out by the businesses.	2	Agreed.	Head of EH	31/01/2018	New date required	Outstanding	This has been delayed due to staff absence within the IT team. However, the required Crystal report development has now been scheduled in over the next few weeks with the Application Support team, so the reports should be available soon after this.
NN1816 Procurement	Recommendation 4: A new Procurement Strategy be produced, approved and communicated to staff. Rationale and risk: Clear communication of a strategy will provide officers responsible for procurement with the most up to date guidance when procuring goods and services on behalf of the Council. This will also help to confirm that the Council complies with its regulatory responsibilities.	2	The current Procurement Strategy will be reviewed and updated in time for the new 2019/20 financial year.	Procurement Officer	31/03/2019	31/03/2021	Outstanding	This has been delayed due to the Procurement Officer being on long term sick leave. Further changes to the strategy are also expected as a result of an ongoing senior management restructure.
NN1817 Waste Management	Recommendation 1: A review of M3 users is carried out and any accounts belonging to staff who have left the Council are deactivated. Future leavers should be deactivated when notification of their departure is received from HR. Rationale and risk: Promptly deactivating old user accounts will help manage systems access more effectively by ensuring only those requiring access actually have access. If users are not removed, especially from the administrators group, there is a risk of inappropriate changes being made using these accounts.	2	Agreed. Access Policy and Procedure to be written which covers granting access to new users and removal of leavers. This is being tied in to the implementation of the Assure System. In the meantime the Environmental Protection Manager is acting as the control point for all new user access.	Environmental Protection Manager	28/09/2018	30/11/2021	Outstanding	This is still in progress and will be actioned once the service is in a position to be able to do so as part of the IT implementation. The same controls as in the last update are still in place.

APPENDIX 4 OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS – 2018/19 AUDIT REVIEWS

Job	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Responsible Officer	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Status	Latest Response
NN1914 Environmental Health	Recommendation 2: An updated version of the licence register is published on the Council's website, using the method used prior to Assure implementation if necessary.	2	Agreed	Environmental Protection Manager	30/05/2019	31/03/2021	Outstanding	The software functionality is still not available to the Council. It is expected to be in place by March 2021.

APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS – 2019/20 AUDIT REVIEWS

Job	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comments	Responsible Officer	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Status	Latest Response
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 1: Develop and implement a formal process for selecting which proposed projects should go ahead. This should include assessing whether the project is: suitable (i.e. meets the Council's corporate objectives) acceptable (to various stakeholders) feasible (sufficient resources, both financial and officer availability)	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/03/2021	Outstanding	The issues raised in the Position Statement of last August have been shared with SLT and reported to GRAC - however, with issues within the SLT and then the COVID response the majority of the recommendations have yet to be implemented in full. It has been proposed to establish a small Corporate Delivery Unit, which will develop and provide oversight to project governance and management arrangements. This team will meet with the Chief Executive in early November to agree a revised project appraisal process, with project thresholds clearly defined for Small, Medium and Large projects. At the same time the Cabinet, at their meeting of the 5th October, agreed a refined set of Delivery Plan objectives (three key actions under each of the six Corporate Plan priority objectives) which will prioritise activities over the next 6 - 9 months recognising the reality of reduced capacity due to COVID and operating as far as possible Business As Usual. The project governance principles will be applied to both these 18 priority actions and new and emerging projects - with the first projects

								discussed with the CDU team being the existing Sheringham Leisure Centre Replacement Project (under construction); the North Walsham Heritage Action Zone Project (which has its own reporting framework which will need to reflect / be aligned with the wider corporate framework); the proposed Tree Planting Project; and a "new" project - Fakenham A148 Roundabout project - which is arguably the "first" project which would be taken through the new framework arrangements from a standing start.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 2: Update the guide to project management. In particular, this should include: removing outdated references to posts/staff members developing a template for progress reports add Finance representation to project teams to advise on financial matters update project risk scoring to align with corporate risk scoring.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/12/2020	Outstanding	To be actioned by the new Corporate Delivery Unit.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 3: Ensure consistency of documentation and record keeping for all projects, using a central database. Use of standard templates will enable more effective comparison between projects.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/12/2020	Outstanding	This is under development through the CDU - will be a refinement of what is currently in place rather than a complete new start.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 4: Regular updates to senior management on project progress to be provided, including details of issues arising and remedial actions required. This should include updates on projects within the Digital Transformation Programme, although not at the same level of detail. Updates need to be at a frequency which allows the information presented	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/03/2021	Outstanding	This will be addressed through the new management structure, which will focus on accountability for delivery.

	to be meaningful/informative and allow queries/challenge.							
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 6: Ensure that funding is formally confirmed and in place for all projects prior to approval and commencement – this links to the 'feasibility' criteria in Action Point 1.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/03/2021	Outstanding	There is a need to strike a balance between investing some small or very small amounts of funding for some "seed-bed" projects approved by the Cabinet, which do then not move forward without a very clear "traffic light" type of system such that there isn't a "formal start" until a full funding package is secured or the project is broken down into deliverable "chunks" or phases to minimise risk of abortive works / expenditure. There have been examples of style being implemented effectively, such as the Deep History Coast Project.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 7: Funding requests to Cabinet/Council should be robust and have input from Finance, to reduce the risk of budget overspend and to more accurately control the Council's budgets.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/03/2021	Outstanding	This does happen to some extent but will be developed further in the context of the new arrangements.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Action Point 8: Initial risk assessments be completed consistently between projects, using a standard template and methodology. Risk assessments are subject to regular review and update including those in respect of the DTP projects.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/12/2020	Outstanding	This is essentially in place but will be given wider ownership under the new management structure.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Project objectives and milestones are defined at the beginning of the project and progress against these is regularly reported on.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/12/2020	Outstanding	This is essentially in place but will be given wider ownership under the new management structure.
NN2001 Project Management Framework	Post-implementation reviews to be completed for all major projects to identify areas of success and lessons learnt for future projects.	2	Agreed. Progress will be monitored by Internal Audit.	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer		31/03/2021	Outstanding	There are good examples of this being implemented - the best being the post project review and evaluation of the Bacton & Walcott Sandscaping Project - where an

								independent post-completion evaluation was undertaken by a department of the UEA and have project team meetings proposed to review performance of the scheme annually. However, this still needs to be implemented across the board.
NN2004 - Section 106 Agreements	Recommendation 1: Individual obligations and triggers from S106 agreements are recorded and monitored on a systematic basis, by a designated officer.	2	Agreed, but requires a single officer to be designated for monitoring of S106. This provision is linked to delivery of integrated monitoring software.	Head of Planning	30/04/2020	31/03/2021	Outstanding	No single officer has been appointed to monitoring role. The role remains operational under the case officer, property information, housing and finance officers. Responsibility remains under Head of Planning. To be reviewed once planning applications software system has been updated in January 2021.
NN2004 - Section 106 Agreements	Recommendation 2: Deadlines for spending financial contributions be recorded with each sum received. Deadlines to be routinely monitored and decisions made in respect of the use of monies at agreed intervals prior to deadlines approaching, including the two cases found where the deadlines had passed.	2	Agreed. Short term pre Q2 2020 meetings to be held on with group accountant quarterly to risk assess upcoming spend deadlines. Mid to long term software introduction for trigger monitoring	Head of Planning	30/04/2020	31/03/2021	Outstanding	Remains subject to internal meetings for spending review, to be reviewed once planning applications software system updated (January 2021 onwards).
NN2004 - Section 106 Agreements	Recommendation 4: Parish and town councils are regularly informed of money from S106 agreements that is available for them to spend and be required to submit expenditure commitments within given deadlines, giving explanations for monies held for extended periods with no commitments, through a quarterly statement of existing and new receipts that is updated and returned to the Councils designated officer.	2	Agreed. Short term – pre 30/04/2020 lead by quarterly meeting with group accountant. Mid / longer term Post 30/04/2020 software is publically viewable and monitoring officer will be tasked with contacting PC/ TC.	Head of Planning	31/01/2020	31/01/2021	Outstanding	Capacity implications have arisen from Covid-19 response, meaning this has not been completed. Now awaiting new software introduction to implement this.
NN2004 - Section 106 Agreements	Recommendation 5: The process for approving the expenditure of S106 funds and	2	Agreed. Process map to be agreed by the Major Projects Manager, or the Head of	Head of Planning	31/01/2020	31/01/2021	Outstanding	This remains subject to internal meetings for spending review, to be

	ensuring that it is in accordance with the agreement be formally agreed and consistently applied, with evidence retained.		Planning and group accountant.					reviewed once planning applications software system updated (January 2021 onwards).
NN2004 - Section 106 Agreements	Recommendation 3: Legal advice is to be sought for S106 agreements where contributions are not spent within the given timeframe. The advice should include whether the Council must repay the monies should be refunded to the developer, with interest, or whether the developer has legal right to request a refund on monies spent after the deadline.	2	Agreed. This will be on a bespoke case by case basis legal consultation will be undertaken where triggers are missed.	Head of Planning	30/11/2019	31/01/2021	Outstanding	The terms of S106 vary on this matter, historically there was little if any provision for unspent commuted sum to be refunded, while more recent agreements from 2016 onwards include repayment clauses. Records on new system to include alert to spending triggers.
NN2009 - Planning Applications and Development Management	Recommendation 2: Response time targets and fees for pre-application work be reviewed, to ensure that they enable good quality, timely responses to be provided to applicants.	2	Agreed, but to be actioned post go-live of UNIfarm system. NNDC customer satisfaction survey to correlate with review of Pre-application advice service. This will commence on 1st July 2020, to complete by 31st October 2020.	Head of Planning	31/10/2020	30/06/2021	Outstanding	Unfortunately due to the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic we have not yet got UNIfarm live. However, this is happening imminently on 7th December 2020. There are a number of necessary updates to UNIfarm required quickly post go live (to be completed by end of March 2021) and thereafter we can look to review the pre-application advice service and alongside this a customer survey.
NN2009 - Planning Applications and Development Management	Recommendation 4: Monthly reconciliations of planning fee income be reinstated and subject to independent review.	2	Agreed. Meeting with Finance to ascertain procedures and regularity of reconciliation to be arranged and then actioned. The timescales will be as follows:28/02/2020 (meeting)31.03.2020 (procedures in place, staff trained as necessary)01.04.2020 (new procedures commence for start of financial year)	Head of Planning / Head of Finance	01/04/2020	31/01/2021	Outstanding	Unable to recommence due to capacity issues arising from redeployment to Covid-19 response and delivery of new planning software. To be reviewed in January 2021, as the new planning software may assist with the process.
NN2010 Risk Management	Recommendation 1: A clear decision-making process be defined for escalating and de-escalating risks from service risk or project risk to corporate risk, and vice versa.	2	Agreed – this can be added in to the framework for agreement and monitored through the new InPhase risk module. However the process has been discussed and	Policy and Performance Manager	30/11/2020	New date required	Outstanding	

			shared with SLT and any service level or project risks that are scored within the 'red' zone ie a score of 15 or more.					
NN2014 - Affordable Housing and Housing Enabling	Recommendation 1: The Council is to review the sums available and liaise with partners and community groups regarding potential uses for these funds, to ensure that they are to deliver affordable housing in the district, in accordance with the S106 agreement.	2	Agreed. The Council will review the procedures for holding these S106 receipts and evaluate options for putting it to use in the delivery of affordable housing in a timely manner and in a way that does not jeopardise the receipt or use of such funds in the future. Such procedures can be set out in the forthcoming Housing Strategy.	Housing Strategy & Delivery Managers	01/09/2020	28/02/2021	Outstanding	A report was recently presented to Business Planning (an informal meeting of Cabinet) which set out the level of s106 receipts and also made some initial recommendations for their use. This report was supported by members. A request has been made to establish a "s106 housing enabling" budget in next year's capital programme. Decisions on individual uses of the s106 monies can then be made under delegated authority or via a Cabinet report – depending on the level of the contribution to an affordable housing scheme recommended.
NN2016 Cyber Security	To achieve level 4 the secure configuration of digital assets has to be proactively monitored by the use of regular vulnerability scans. Appropriately trained personnel must be responsible for the maintenance of secure configurations.	2	Agreed.	Head of Business Transformation	30/06/2020	New date required	Update required	Management update required.
NN2016 Cyber Security	To achieve level 4 user accounts must be regularly reviewed to ensure access is appropriate. Account usage has to be monitored and adverse incidents investigated. Security concerns must be reported to senior management for action.	2	Agreed.	Head of Business Transformation	30/04/2020	New date required	Update required	Management update required.
NN2017 – Cadcorp SIS (GIS) Application Audit	Recommendation 2: The Council to ensure that the formally documented operational Cadcorp policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis.	2	Agreed. We have documentation but it does need reviewing and updating and with a new member for the team to be recruited it will be ideal timing to bring them up to speed too	ICT Applications Manager	31/07/2020	31/12/2020	Outstanding	This work is in progress, but Covid-19 has had the impact of an increased workload initially. Also, the Council has not been able to recruit a replacement for its GIS Support Officer currently, due to a change

								in funding this year, so the resources needed to complete this task have not been available.
NN2017 – Cadcorp SIS (GIS) Application Audit	Recommendation 1: Management to ensure the GIS service is resourced appropriately according to workload to ensure that continued appropriate seamless support and resilience for the Cadcorp environment is put in place.	2	The role of GIS Administrator has been recruited and the successful candidate starts in post on 14/02/2020. The successful candidate is Carlos Jara Alvarez, previous incumbent of the GIS Support Officer role therefore the shortfall in GIS resource remains. The GIS Support Officer post was a fixed term contract due to end in October 2020 so this is currently under review by the Head of Digital Transformation and IT. Once the term of this post has been clarified it will be recruited accordingly	ICT Applications Manager	01/05/2020	30/04/2021	Outstanding	Recruitment on hold until next year's budget due to Covid-19.