

Audit Plan 2016/17

Tree Surveying 2016/17							
Final report issued April 2017							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend that during the review process to finalise the Woodland and Tree Strategy, the Council ensures that the strategy addresses the following:</p> <p>a) Measurement of the aims and objectives contained within the strategy;</p> <p>b) Frequency of inspections to be completed, both routine and high risk trees; and</p> <p>Detail of the maintenance programmes to be adopted.</p>	Merits Attention	<p>The strategy is meant to be an overview of trees and woodlands and intended to take a more strategic overview of tree and woodland management in the Borough. However, what this has raised is that the specification in the Parks and Open Spaces contract documentation, detailing what is required of Veolia does not cover enough detail in relation to planned maintenance and there is a clear emphasis on reactive management rather than proactive management. A review of the specification needs to be undertaken and ensure that the Strategy is aligned with this.</p> <p>Position – June 2017 As above.</p> <p>Position – September 2017 As above but delayed due to Cassiobury Park operational issues.</p> <p>Position – November 2017 No update received.</p> <p>Position – February 2018 The overarching Green Spaces Strategy is currently being reviewed as part of the Local Plan 2 work and this has the wider view of Trees and Woodlands. An action plan will be updated within this to ensure trees, woodlands and biodiversity are included and the need to</p>	Section Head Parks, Open Spaces and Projects	30 September 2017 and to be presented to Strategic Partnership Board.	*	<p>31 December 2017</p> <p>31 May 2018</p> <p>31 July 2019</p> <p>30 Sept 2019</p> <p>31 January 2020</p> <p>31 March 2020</p>

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			<p>update the Tree and Woodland Strategy. This will eventually be approved by PFH or Cabinet.</p> <p>Position – July 2018 The review of the Green Spaces Strategy is still underway and is tied up with the Local Plan 2 amends. The extension for the Veolia Contract is now currently being negotiated and this will be an opportune time to a) amend and agree the strategy and b) update the specification.</p> <p>Position – September 2019 In progress.</p> <p>Position – November 2018 In progress.</p> <p>Position – February 2019 In progress.</p> <p>Position – July 2019 The Tree and Woodland Strategy has been completed and is due at Cabinet in September 2019 and highlights a number of actions within.</p> <p>Position – September 2019 As above.</p> <p>Position – November 2019 The strategy is out for consultation and will go to Cabinet when that is completed. This may be either December or January.</p>				

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Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			Position – February 2020 The Tree and Woodland Strategy is complete along with the review of the Green Spaces Strategy and is on the Agenda for March 2020 Cabinet for adoption.				

Audit Plan 2018/19

Cyber Security 2018/19							
Final report issued January 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
02	<p>There should be a mechanism to restrict any non-complying devices to connect to the Council's IT network.</p> <p>Additionally, there should be continuous monitoring in place for all devices connected on the network to be fully antivirus protected.</p>	Medium	<p>Review current AV and VPN solution and viability to restrict devices with no up to date protection from connecting to the network fully.</p> <p>Ensure that daily reports for AV protection are monitored against asset register and this is reported to the ICT Section Head.</p> <p>Position – February 2019 Reporting mechanism from Infrastructure monitoring through to desktop services is in place. Mechanism to ensure that desktop services remediate the gaps sufficiently is currently underway.</p> <p>Replacement VPN, for all homeworking, is within scope for replacement Wide Area Network. New VPN solution will review ability to ensure that all connected devices have up to date AV.</p> <p>Position – July 2019 The following management update was received on 30 July:</p> <p>"Continuous AV monitoring in place. Daily reports reviewed to ensure all connected devices have the most recent signatures.</p>	ICT Section Head	30 September 2019	<p>*</p> <p>Part resolved.</p> <p>Extension requested to deploy new remote working solution.</p>	<p>31 December 2019</p> <p>31 January 2020</p> <p>31 May 2020</p>

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			<p>Where the signature has not been applied this is flagged and remediated by an engineer.</p> <p>New remote working solution has AV checker within Enterprise Management module.</p> <p>Request to extend the new remote working solution roll out to December 2019. The rollout will have commenced in August 2019 but needs to be deployed to all users across all sites, in line with the deployment of new personal IT kit and Unified Communications.”</p> <p>Position – September 2019 As above</p> <p>Position – November 2019 This is in progress, and a key issue/dependency resolved. Slight delay in roll out means that this is likely to completed mid-end of January 2020.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 The solution is ready to deploy. This has been tested. The deployment has been paused due to the coronavirus outbreak. Migration to a new home working solution during a period where there is a high possibility of large scale home working required has meant a decision to pause.</p> <p>I have made a request to extend to the end of May to accommodate other business risk also, elections and revenues and benefits year end processing.</p>				

Benefits 2018/19							
Final report issued April 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend that declaration of interests forms are completed by all staff annually.</p> <p>A process for new staff should be put in place to form part of the induction programme to complete a declaration of interests form.</p>	Medium	<p>Declarations of interests will be completed by all Revs and Bens staff for 19/20.</p> <p>A prompt for this form to be signed will be added to our corporate wide new starter form so that we pick up new starters as and when required.</p> <p>Position – July 2019 No management update received.</p> <p>Position – 21 August 2019 All officers with access to the Revenues and Benefits systems need to sign a declaration annually. This work is underway. We amended our internal Revs and Bens Information Security Policy in May of this year. We are now making some amendments to the declaration itself before it is sent out to all staff for signing. All signed declarations will be held on the Revs and Bens drive electronically for internal and external audit to view whenever necessary. We anticipate this work being completed by 31.08.19. The form will also form part of the new starter process being developed within Firmstep so that we capture new starts as and when.</p> <p>Position – September 2019 (Based on conversation with the Head of Revenues & Benefits) Revised declaration of interest form to be reviewed by SIAS before issue to staff.</p>	Head of Revenues and Benefits	30 April 2019	✓	<p>30 Sept 2019</p> <p>31 December 2019</p>

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Benefits 2018/19							
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Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Position – November 2019 There are some amendments that need to be made to the declarations of interest form and I anticipate having all of the forms signed by 31.12.19.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 The new form has been signed off in terms of design and was emailed across both councils to those who have access to the Revs and Bens systems. The majority of the forms have now been returned and we are just chasing the last few replies.</p>				
02	We recommend that testing of the module is carried out to reinstate the ability to delete obsolete data.	Medium	<p>The Retention and Destruction module is currently suspended from use as it has been destroying documents incorrectly that we are still relying on to support 'live' housing benefit claims.</p> <p>We have reported this to the system supplier (Northgate) and have requested their assistance with correcting the issue so that we can start using the module again and remain GDPR compliant.</p> <p>During a meeting with Northgate on 21.03.19 we agreed we needed a Retention & Destruction refresher training day during which they would help us set up the system so that the system does not destroy documents we still need. We are now awaiting a date for the training to take place.</p> <p>Position – July 2019</p>	Benefits Manager	31 May 2019	*	<p>31 October 2019</p> <p>30 June 2020</p>

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			<p>No management update received.</p> <p>Position – 21 August 2019 The system is designed to destroy all documents that are older than 6 years plus current. We discovered that the system was not working properly and has destroyed some documents that are still required to support live Benefit claims and therefore we need to retain. Clearly we could not allow that to continue so the system was been suspended. We have sought advice on how to fix this issue from the system provider and are awaiting their response. I have chased this today and have also now asked if it's possible to use the system in part so that we can carry on destroying old documents that we no longer require for Council Tax and Business Rates and unsuspend the Benefits part of the system once we have fixed the problem. I will escalate this issue in a week if I have not had a response.</p> <p>Position – September 2019 (Based on conversation with the Head of Revenues & Benefits) Issue has now been escalated with Northgate.</p> <p>Position – November 2019 No update provided by management.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 The Northgate system is currently being upgraded. The upgrade is now available in test and the live upgrade is due to take place 1st and 2nd May 2020. We will test this</p>				

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			module of the system as part of the overall testing. If this module works, we will be able to run scripts which will 'back archive' documents that would have been due to be archived since it was discovered the system was not working properly.				

IT Contract Management 2018/19							
Final report issued July 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
02	A review of retention systems should be undertaken to ensure IT contracts are held in a central location.	Low	<p>Action will be undertaken to ensure that soft copies of all current contracts are stored in the appropriate folders on the service drives.</p> <p>Position (September 2019) In progress.</p> <p>Position (November 2019) In progress</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Completed</p>	Head of ICT	31 March 2020	✓	

Agency Staffing 2018/19							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that an HR led workforce strategy for the use of agency staff is formally established, jointly agreed and implemented by both Councils. It should cover the financial, administration and overall control benefits of using providers such as Comensura as well as providing clarity about the circumstances when it is appropriate / necessary to consider alternative suppliers. It should also include clearly defined responsibilities for overseeing and monitoring the overall use of agency staff and for carrying out periodic reviews of agency staff.	Medium	Work has commenced on producing a guide for managers in both Watford and Three Rivers regarding compliance with agency worker regulations and IR 35. This guide once agreed will be provided to Audit for information. Position – February 2020 The guidelines have been drafted and will be available on the intranet shortly. The action will be completed in accordance with the original timescale.	Group Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	1 April 2020	*	
02	We recommend that appropriate corporate policies and procedures are established, formally agreed and then implemented in both Councils regarding the use of agency staff. This should provide clarity about the engagement process and the use of Comensura or alternative suppliers. Also, it should provide confirmation of the key roles and responsibilities of the local Service Areas, the shared HR Service, and for financial administration, including appropriate coding, in relation to the use of agency staff.	Medium	As above, we believe the guide will cover the requirements for both councils. Position – February 2020 The guidelines have been drafted and will be available on the intranet shortly. The action will be completed in accordance with the original timescale.	Group Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	1 April 2020	*	

Agency Staffing 2018/19							
Final report issued December 2019							
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Audit Plan 2019/20

Development Management (pre-app process) 2019/20							
Final report issued October 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>Management should produce written guidance to inform the minimum acceptable retention requirements for major and minor pre-application enquiries. This should make to clear to planning officers if meetings, telephone conversations and emails with potential applicants during the advisory period need to be documented and stored on case files for information request and auditing purposes.</p> <p>Management should periodically spot check a sample of case files for major pre-applications as a way to ensure that the minimum acceptable retention requirements are being adhered to in practice.</p>	Medium	<p>Agreed. The whole pre-application process will be reviewed so that there is clear guidance.</p> <p>Position – November 2019 In progress in accordance with original timescale.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Delayed as the Interim Head of Development Management was replaced by a permanent appointment at the beginning of February. Revised deadline of 30 April 2020.</p>	Interim Head of Development Management	31 December 2019	*	30 April 2020
02	The pre-application guidance for should advise that meetings are not	Medium	Agreed. The whole pre-application process will be reviewed so that there is clear guidance.	Interim Head of Development	31 December 2019	*	30 April 2020

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Development Management (pre-app process) 2019/20							
Final report issued October 2019							
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	<p>minuted by the Council, and if a record of what is discussed and agreed by the parties during a meeting is required then the onus is on potential applicants rather than the lead planning officer to provide the administrative support for this.</p> <p>Planning officers should attach a copy of any minutes provided by potential applicants to the relevant case file for information request and audit purposes.</p> <p>Planning officers should ensure that after each meeting with a potential applicant (for a major project proposal) the relevant case file is updated with the date and main outcomes for information request and auditing purposes.</p>		<p>Position – November 2019 In progress in accordance with original timescale.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Delayed as the Interim Head of Development Management was replaced by a permanent appointment at the beginning of February. Revised deadline of 30 April 2020.</p>	Management			

Financial Account Reconciliations 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that the Payroll system is reconciled monthly to the general ledger to ensure the timely identification of any possible	Medium	We recognise that during Apr – June, the payroll reconciliations fell behind due to the focus on the annual accounts. For this year additional support is in place to cover this	Section Head - Financial Accounting and Technical	30 June 2020	*	

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Financial Account Reconciliations 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	differences.		period. Position – February 2020 We have recruited temporary cover for reconciliations and closing the accounts. The person started on 17th Feb 2020 and will be with us until 31 July 2020.				
02	We recommend that all identified reasons for differences are carried forward and clearly shown in the next periods explained comments column where unresolved or action is pending. In addition, a date be detailed in the reason / comment column to provide a time trail leading back to the original date the difference occurred.	Low	A review of financial procedures is currently underway that will ensure a consistent approach is taken. Position – February 2020 We are currently working on the financial regulations and we are on target to implement a consistent approach for all reconciliations.	Section Head - Financial Accounting and Technical	31 March 2020	*	

Temporary Accommodation 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that Housing Case Workers are reminded to link 'Risk Assessment and Referral for Interim Accommodation' forms electronically to the 'Home Connections' system.	Low	Alongside Watford 2020 review, new service wide procedures are being developed which will cover the risk assessment referral process (Housing Section Head).	Housing Section Head, Housing Demand Manager &	30 April 2020	✓	

Temporary Accommodation 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Once the new procedures have been agreed management will monitor cases to ensure they are being implemented and adhered to (Housing Demand Manager).</p> <p>The risk assessment form will also be reviewed to make sure it is user friendly and contains the necessary information needed (Housing Properties Manager).</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Resolved</p>	Housing Properties Manager			
02	<p>We recommend that:</p> <p>a) The Excel spreadsheet is password protected and access restrictions are put in place to limit officers that can make direct changes to the document. 'Read-only' access should be made available where appropriate;</p> <p>b) Temporary Accommodation Officers should be required to enter their name and the date alongside notes to support the chronological record and transparency;</p> <p>c) Consideration should be given to retaining details of individuals that leave temporary accommodation, e.g. through the addition of an Excel sort field to hide previous</p>	Medium	<p>Recommendation B and D can be implemented with immediate effect and staff involved shown how and what to record.</p> <p>Recommendation A and C will need further thought as to how best to set up to ensure sort and count functionality is effective plus retaining usable layout of sheet.</p> <p>Position – February 2020</p> <p>a) Password protecting did not work. 5 officers open sheet each morning and leave it open all day so unprotected all day. Alternative solution is that we have started daily copies of TA sheet not weekly. So, if lost we have previous days.</p> <p>b) Started</p> <p>c) And d)</p>	Housing Properties Manager	<p>31 December 2019</p> <p>31 January 2020</p>	✓	

Temporary Accommodation 2019/20							
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	occupiers; d) Consideration should be given to the inclusion of additional columns showing details of the date that accommodation becomes void to enable the identification of information to support council tax liability dates and aid monitoring.		Can't make this function as clients move too frequently to record on the spreadsheet each previous occupant plus void dates. It is too extensive. We have daily copies of TA list backed up so can look back to see who was previous occupant via the daily copies then look into home connections to see when they left for void period.				

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that the Contractor maintains a complete list of all play areas detailing the agreed inspection regime in place for each site in accordance with the Contract Service Specification - Play Areas. The Council should complete regular spot checks of the records to ensure compliance with the agreed inspection regime and that they are sufficient to provide an overview of the current status of all play areas for which the council has responsibility. The Council should request that an agenda item be added to the monthly contract meetings in order to summarise actual inspections being	High	Noted and this will be discussed with Veolia and added to the monthly ops meetings as an agenda item. Random inspections by the Contract Manager (Parks and Streets) will be carried out quarterly. Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
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	completed and receipt of appropriate operational and annual inspection reports.						
02	<p>We recommend that operational inspections are completed 3 times per year for all play areas and reports of each inspection should be submitted to the Council.</p> <p>As for the daily/weekly inspections, all repairs and maintenance identified by the 'operational' inspections should be recorded in a spreadsheet and be used to prioritise and monitor completion of works in a timely manner.</p> <p>In addition, at the monthly contract meetings, assurance should be gained on the completion of the remedial works required from the operational inspections.</p>	High	<p>This will be discussed with Veolia and the Contract Manager (Parks and Streets) to ask for all records to be updated and will be checked quarterly - this will also feature as a part of the monthly ops meetings.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.</p>	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.
03	<p>We recommend that annual inspection reports are revised to include details of the company, inspectors name (initials only) and their qualifications or registration.</p> <p>In addition, the presentation and clarity of the inspection and risk assessment information be improved to make a clear distinction and relative link between the equipment inspection scores and risk assessment score.</p> <p>A key to the scoring and expected</p>	Medium	<p>This will be discussed with Veolia and the Contract Manager (Parks and Streets) to ask for all records to be updated and will be checked annually.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.</p>	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

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	actions should be provided. The Council to ensure it receives the annual inspection reports for all play areas within the expected timeframes.						
04	We recommend that an agreed accident reporting protocol should be documented and implemented to ensure accidents and reports relevant to play areas are investigated appropriately and outcomes stored in a database available to the Council. Any agreed protocol should include when the Council should see any draft responses / communications prior to being sent to the persons (public) involved in reporting the accident. It is recommended that any accident reported to the contractor is immediately notified to the Council for awareness and monitoring purposes. All accident inspection outcomes should be reviewed by the Council and the inspection regime adjusted as appropriate. Any lessons learned could form part of the monthly contract meeting.	Medium	Noted and will be discussed with Veolia and a protocol developed. Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.
05	The Contractor should be required to maintain an overview spreadsheet of	Medium	Noted and will be discussed with Veolia and a protocol developed.	Head of Parks, Open Spaces &	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
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	<p>all inspections completed to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of all works required, • priority of works, • date works order passed to sub-contractor or completed in house, and • any equipment taken out of use pending assessment or repair. <p>This spreadsheet should be used to monitor completion of works in a timely manner.</p> <p>We also recommend that the various templates in use for inspections are standardised to ensure a consistent approach for all inspections.</p>		<p>Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.</p>	Projects			
06	<p>We recommend that upon receipt of the annual reports a programme of works required is completed which is prioritised and planned. The timely completion of works should be monitored, and appropriate action taken if necessary.</p> <p>Where items of equipment are considered at risk, these should be reassessed and reported at the next contract meeting.</p>	Medium	<p>To be discussed with Veolia and a programme developed.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.</p>	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.
07	<p>We recommend that a planned maintenance / service schedule be created for all play equipment as per the manufacturer's instructions.</p>	Medium	<p>To be discussed with Veolia and a programme developed.</p> <p>Position – February 2020</p>	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

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			Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.				

Cyber Security 2019/20							
Final report issued January 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend that Management should define the Councils' cyber security incident management procedure, which should include but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The procedures for confirming and validating cyber security incidents, • The actions to be taken by members of staff in the event of a cyber attack occurring, • The responsibilities of cyber security incident handlers, • The actions to be taken to recover a service or services following a cyber attack, • The contact details for all relevant members of staff and any third parties involved, • The arrangements for identifying lessons learned and reporting on cyber security incidents. 	Medium	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 In progress. Draft procedures for confirming and validating cyber security incidents, and the associated actions under review.</p>	Head of ICT	31 March 2020	*	

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Cyber Security 2019/20							
Final report issued January 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	The defined procedure should be approved and made available to all relevant members of staff.						
02	Furthermore, there should be requirement to have a process to perform a full scan on the end point devices and servers on a regular basis.	Medium	Agreed Position – February 2020 No action as yet.	Head of ICT	30 September 2020		
03	The Councils should determine an appropriate percentage of staff that should complete the cyber security training – best practice would be 100%. Performance against this target should be monitored and reported.	Medium	Agreed Position – February 2020 In progress. Security awareness training in the process of being updated prior to being circulated to all staff for completion.	Head of ICT	30 April 2020		

Payroll 2019/20							
Final report issued February 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that leaver forms are forwarded to the payroll provider before the leaving date to avoid the risk of overpayments being made.	Medium	Noted and agree with recommendation. We will forward leavers form to Payroll prior to leaving date on the basis that managers get the leaving form to HR in time. Position – February 2020 Implemented	Head of HR (Ops)	Immediate	✓	

Payroll 2019/20

Final report issued February 2020

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