

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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Final report issued April 2017							
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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> <p>Position – February 2020 The Tree and Woodland Strategy is complete</p>				

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Tree Surveying 2016/17							
Final report issued April 2017							
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			along with the review of the Green Spaces Strategy and is on the Agenda for March 2020 Cabinet for adoption. Position – July 2020 No update provided.				

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020
Audit Plan 2018/19

APPENDIX C

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. Where the signature has not been applied this is flagged and remediated by an engineer.</p> <p>New remote working solution has AV checker</p>	ICT Section Head	30 September 2019	<p>* Part resolved. Extension requested to deploy new remote working solution.</p>	<p>31 December 2019</p> <p>31 January 2020</p> <p>31 May 2020</p> <p>31 December 2020</p>

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Cyber Security 2018/19 Final report issued January 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>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> <p>Position – July 2020 Request made to extend the deployment to December 2020. The deployment has been delayed due to ongoing COVID work and</p>				

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Cyber Security 2018/19							
Final report issued January 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			the requirement to continue to maintain and support all Officers to work from home. Partial deployment in place, approx. 70 staff are using the new solution, but this solution is now being reviewed with reference to the likely increase on an ongoing basis of an increasing volume of remote working.				

Benefits 2018/19							
Final report issued April 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
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</p>	Benefits Manager	31 May 2019	*	<p>31 October 2019</p> <p>30 June 2020</p> <p>30 Sept 2020</p>

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Benefits 2018/19 Final report issued April 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			still need. We are now awaiting a date for the training to take place. Position – July 2019 No management update received. 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. Position – September 2019 (Based on conversation with the Head of Revenues & Benefits) Issue has now been escalated with Northgate. Position – November 2019 No update provided by management. Position – February 2020				

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Benefits 2018/19							
Final report issued April 2019							
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			<p>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 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.</p> <p>Position – July 2020 The required Northgate system upgrade was due to be live now but has been delayed as a result of COVID-19. Northgate have currently rescheduled the upgrade for 8-9 September 2020 and when this takes place, we will test the module and if this is working as expected, run the necessary scripts to archive the data that should have been deleted.</p>				

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	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	Group Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	1 April 2020	*	31 July 2020

Agency Staffing 2018/19							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	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.		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. Position – July 2020 The situation is that the guide has been written however, unfortunately with Covid-19 it has not been shared with the appropriate management teams or adopted as yet. We do, however, have it planned to go to Operational Leadership Team on 28 July.				
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. Position – July 2020 The situation is that the guide has been written however, unfortunately with Covid-19 it has not been shared with the appropriate management teams or adopted as yet. We do, however, have it planned to go to Operational Leadership Team on 28 July.	Group Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	1 April 2020	*	31 July 2020

**WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020
Audit Plan 2019/20**

APPENDIX C

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> <p>Position – July 2020 I've conducted the review consisting of interviews with staff across the team. I have started drafting the guidance and hope to issue to staff later this month.</p>	Interim Head of Development Management	31 December 2019	*	31 August 2020
02	<p>The pre-application guidance for should advise that meetings are not 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</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	*	31 August 2020

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

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
	<p>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 – July 2020 I've conducted the review consisting of interviews with staff across the team. I have started drafting the guidance and hope to issue to staff later this month.</p>				

Financial Account Reconciliations 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend that the Payroll system is reconciled monthly to the general ledger to ensure the timely identification of any possible differences.</p>	Medium	<p>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 period.</p> <p>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.</p>	Section Head - Financial Accounting and Technical	30 June 2020	✓	

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Financial Account Reconciliations 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			Position – July 2020 Resolved				
02	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Low	<p>A review of financial procedures is currently underway that will ensure a consistent approach is taken.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 We are currently working on the financial regulations and we are on target to implement a consistent approach for all reconciliations.</p> <p>Position – July 2020 Due to the impact of Covid-19 this has been delayed and will be reported back in September.</p>	Section Head - Financial Accounting and Technical	31 March 2020	*	30 Sept 2020

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>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.</p> <p>The Council should complete regular spot checks of the records to ensure</p>	High	<p>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.</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.

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	<p>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.</p> <p>The Council should request that an agenda item be added to the monthly contract meetings in order to summarise actual inspections being completed and receipt of appropriate operational and annual inspection reports.</p>		<p>Position – July 2020 No update received.</p>				
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> <p>Position – July 2020 No update received.</p>	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.
03	We recommend that annual	Medium	This will be discussed with Veolia and the	Head of Parks,	Jan 2020	*	Not yet

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	<p>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 actions should be provided.</p> <p>The Council to ensure it receives the annual inspection reports for all play areas within the expected timeframes.</p>		<p>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> <p>Position – July 2020 No update received.</p>	Open Spaces & Projects	onwards		ascertained.
04	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>It is recommended that any accident reported to the contractor is</p>	Medium	<p>Noted and will be discussed with Veolia and a protocol developed.</p> <p>Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified.</p> <p>Position – July 2020 No update received.</p>	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20 Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	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.						
05	The Contractor should be required to maintain an overview spreadsheet of all inspections completed to include the following: <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. This spreadsheet should be used to monitor completion of works in a timely manner. We also recommend that the various templates in use for inspections are standardised to ensure a consistent approach for all inspections.	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. Position – July 2020 No update received.	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.
06	We recommend that upon receipt of the annual reports a programme of	Medium	To be discussed with Veolia and a programme developed.	Head of Parks, Open Spaces &	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

Play Safety Inspections 2019/20							
Final report issued December 2019							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	works required is completed which is prioritised and planned. The timely completion of works should be monitored, and appropriate action taken if necessary. Where items of equipment are considered at risk, these should be reassessed and reported at the next contract meeting.		Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified. Position – July 2020 No update received.	Projects			
07	We recommend that a planned maintenance / service schedule be created for all play equipment as per the manufacturer's instructions.	Medium	To be discussed with Veolia and a programme developed. Position – February 2020 Currently working with Veolia on this. Processes being reviewed and clarified. Position – July 2020 No update received.	Head of Parks, Open Spaces & Projects	Jan 2020 onwards	*	Not yet ascertained.

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

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. <p>The defined procedure should be approved and made available to all relevant members of staff.</p>	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> <p>Position – July 2020 Completed. Updated security management procedure circulated to all relevant staff.</p>	Head of ICT	31 March 2020	✓	
02	<p>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.</p>	Medium	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Position – February 2020 No action as yet.</p> <p>Position – July 2020 No action as yet.</p>	Head of ICT	30 September 2020		

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Cyber Security 2019/20							
Final report issued January 2020							
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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	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Position – February 2020 In progress. Security awareness training in the process of being updated prior to being circulated to all staff for completion.</p> <p>Position – July 2020 Security training updated, but yet to be confirmed to all staff. Delayed due to COVID related activities.</p>	Head of ICT	30 April 2020		31 December 2020

Contract Management 2019/20							
Final report issued April 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend the Contract Register is updated to allow contract minimum terms, notice periods and extension lengths to be logged for each contract.</p> <p>We further recommend the populating of contract trigger points in the contract register is set as a mandatory process. Should trigger points not be populated for a contract, this must be followed up with the contract manager within the Council.</p>	Medium	<p>It may be more helpful to managers to use the Contract Dashboard template. This was introduced a couple of years ago but hasn't been well used. It does however capture contracts within a particular service area and highlights a series of key trigger points and issues. I suggest that this is used rather than changing the Contract Register format and it can be updated and circulated each quarter as and when the Contract Register is updated and published.</p> <p>Position – July 2020</p>	Corporate Procurement Manager	Implemented	✓	

Contract Management 2019/20							
Final report issued April 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			Implemented				
02	<p>We recommend:</p> <p>1. End of Contract Review forms are completed and held centrally, with good practice and learning cascaded to other contract managers and relevant officers.</p> <p>The Council holds cascade events, such as the Contract and Relationship Management Forum.</p>	Low	<p>A closure report to be produced following the end of procurement or retender process e.g. leisure or waste services</p> <p>Closure reports to submitted (where relevant) to the councils Programme Management Board (PMB) or Group Head of Service</p> <p>A end of contract year report to be completed during the term of the contract period to capture amendments to the service specification or report performance of the contractor</p> <p>End of contract review forms are to be completed and held centrally, with good practice and learning cascaded to other contract managers and relevant officers</p> <p>The Council to host events, such as the Contract and Relationship Management Forum, lunch and learns sessions, alongside bespoke master classes</p> <p>Position – July 2020 Implemented</p>	Head of Leisure & Environmental Services	Implemented	✓	
03	<p>We recommend:</p> <p>1. Where appropriate, contracts should include agreed SLAs and KPIs prior to the service commencing. Each KPI and SLA should have an</p>	Low	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Position – July 2020 Implemented</p>	Corporate Procurement Manager	Implemented	✓	

Contract Management 2019/20							
Final report issued April 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	<p>appropriate monitoring and reporting method.</p> <p>2. Where SLAs or KPIs have been specified, contractor performance should be assessed using the outlined monitoring methods, with results formally documented and communicated to the contractor.</p> <p>3. Contract documents should include the actions and processes which would be followed by the contractor to rectify poor performance and what actions would be taken by the Council under these circumstances.</p>						

WBC Internal Audit Recommendations Follow Up – July 2020

APPENDIX C

Debtors 2019/20							
Final report issued June 2020							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A check is undertaken for all cases that are on hold (this should be a routine task undertaken at suitable intervals to be determined by management); • Reminders are produced and sent in a timely manner; • Instalment reminder lists should be checked and reviewed to ensure that instalments are correctly applied and are being adhered with (this should be a routine task undertaken at suitable intervals to be determined by management). 	Medium	<p>Work has already begun on this recommendation as it forms part of the bigger Recovery Review. We have requested some different reports from the Efin system to help us better monitor s/debts. In terms of the bullet point about ensuring instalments are correctly applied, I would like it noted that we are not always responsible for applying instalments. Some of this work is done by the services themselves. As part of the Recovery review I will be meeting with all services to remind them to set up instalments plans that are reasonable etc. and we will be terminating instalment plans that currently see the arrangement going on into 2045 and beyond! As a recovery team we will then monitor the arrangement plans and chase for missing payments etc.</p> <p>Position – July 2020 No update received.</p>	Revenues Manager	30 June 2020		