



Watford Borough Council
Audit Committee Progress Report
14 September 2023

Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

- Note the Internal Audit Progress Report for the period to 1 September 2023
- Approve amendments to the Audit Plan as at 1 September 2023
- Agree the change to the implementation date for two recommendations (paragraph 2.5) for the reasons set out in Appendix C
- Agree removal of implemented audit recommendations set out in Appendix C
- Note the implementation status of high priority recommendations.

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1. Introduction and Background

Purpose of Report

1.1 This report details:

- a) Progress made by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) in delivering the Council's Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 as at 1 September 2023.
- b) Proposed amendments to the approved 2023/24 Internal Annual Audit Plan.
- c) Implementation status of all outstanding previously agreed internal audit recommendations from 2020/21 onwards.
- d) An update on performance management information as at 1 September 2023.

Background

- 1.2 The work of internal audit is required to be reported to a Member Body so that the Council has an opportunity to review and monitor an essential component of corporate governance and gain assurance that its internal audit provision is fulfilling its statutory obligations. It is considered good practice that progress reports also include proposed amendments to the agreed annual audit plan.
- 1.3 The 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan was approved by Audit Committee on 9 March 2023.
- 1.4 The Audit Committee receives periodic updates on progress against the Annual Audit Plan from SIAS, the most recent of which was brought to this Committee on 26 July 2023.

2. Audit Plan Update

Delivery of Audit Plan and Key Audit Findings

- 2.1 As at 1 September 2023, 27% of the 2023/24 Audit Plan days had been delivered for the combined Watford Borough Council and Shared Services audit plans (excludes 'To Be Allocated' days). Appendix A provides a status update on each individual deliverable within the audit plan.
- 2.2 The following 2022/23 reports have been finalised since July 2023 Audit Committee:

Audit Title	Date of Issue	Assurance Level	Number and Priority of Recommendations
Payroll	Jul '23	Reasonable	One medium Three low
Fixed Asset Register	Sep '23	Reasonable	Two low

No 2023/24 reports have yet been finalised. The Revenues and Benefits system parameter testing review is currently at draft report stage.

Status of Audit Recommendations

- 2.3 Audit Committee Members will be aware that a Final Audit Report is issued when it has been agreed by management and includes an agreement to implement the recommendations made. It is SIAS's responsibility to bring to Members' attention the implementation status of all audit recommendations. It is the responsibility of officers to implement recommendations by the agreed date.
- 2.4 The table below summarises progress in implementation of all outstanding internal audit recommendations as at 1 September 2023, with full details in Appendix C:

Year	Recommendations made No.	Implemented	Not yet due	Outstanding & a request made for extended time, or no update received	Percentage implemented %
2020/21	28	27	0	1	96%
2021/22	37	34	3	0	92%
2022/23	32	17	3	12	53%

- 2.5 Since 26 July 2023 Audit Committee, extension to implementation dates have been requested by action owners for two recommendations as follows:
- One from the 2022/23 Financial Reconciliations audit, with a revised target date of 30 November 2023 (was 31 August 2023), and
 - One from the 2022/23 Trees audit, with a revised target date of 30 September 2023 (was 31 July 2023).
- 2.6 In respect of the following five recommendations, no progress update was received from the action owner:
- One from the 2020/21 Debtors audit (target date - 31 December 2023),
 - Two from the 2022/23 Council Tax audit (target dates - 30 September 2023 and 31 March 2024), and
 - Two from the 2022/23 NDR audit (target dates - 31 March 2024).
- 2.7 In respect of the six recommendations from the Museum audit, at the July meeting of Audit Committee, members requested that the Associate Director of Environment provides a separate written update to members ahead of the September Audit Committee on the impact of the Museum relocation on the audit actions. We understand that a separate report may be tabled at the September Audit Committee. The details of this report have not been included in Appendix C.
- 2.8 No new high priority recommendations have been made since July 2023 Audit Committee.

Proposed Audit Plan Amendments

- 2.9 In consultation with the Head of Finance and Chief Accountant, the scope of the Main Accounting – Assurance Mapping review has now been defined and the audit renamed to more clearly align with the agreed approach. This work will be delivered in conjunction with the Key Financial Controls Testing review in October.

Performance Management

- 2.10 To help the Committee assess the current situation in terms of progress against the projects in the 2023/24 Audit Plan, we have provided an analysis of agreed start dates at Appendix B. These dates have been agreed with management and resources allocated.
- 2.11 Annual performance indicators and associated targets were approved by the SIAS Board in March 2023. Actual performance for Watford Borough Council against the targets that can be monitored for 2023/24 is shown in the table below.

Performance Indicator	Annual Target	Profiled Target to 1 September 2023	Actual to 1 September 2023
1. Planned Days – percentage of actual billable days against planned chargeable days completed (excludes unused contingency)	95%	30% (67 / 227 days)	27% (62 / 227 days)
2. Planned Projects – percentage of actual completed projects to draft report stage against planned completed projects by 31 st March 2024	90%	18% (3 out of 17 projects to draft)	6% (1 out of 17 projects to draft)
3. Planned Projects – percentage of actual completed projects to Final report stage against planned completed projects by the production of the HoA Annual Report	100%	n/a	n/a New Indicator – first measurement will be May 2024 (Currently 0/17 delivered to final report)
4. Client Satisfaction – percentage of client satisfaction questionnaires returned at 'satisfactory overall' level (minimum of 39/65 overall)	95%	100%	100% (Based on 2 received in 23/24)

Performance Indicator	Annual Target	Profiled Target to 1 September 2023	Actual to 1 September 2023
5. Number of High Priority Audit Recommendations Agreed	95%	95%	N/A (No high priority recommendations made)

2.12 In respect of delivery of Planned Projects, performance is behind the profiled target as it was anticipated that the Project Management (Town Hall Quarter) and Operational Buildings Compliance Follow Up audits would have been completed in time for the September audit committee reporting cycle. However, due to delays in getting these reviews underway, at the time of writing this report, both are currently in fieldwork. Draft reports are now expected to be issued by mid-September.

2.13 In addition, the performance targets listed below are annual in nature. Performance against these targets will be reported on in the 2023/24 Head of Assurance’s Annual Report:

- **6. Annual Plan** – prepared in time to present to the March meeting of each Audit Committee. If there is no March meeting, then the plan should be prepared for the first meeting of the financial year.
- **7. Head of Assurance’s Annual Report** – presented at the Audit Committee’s first meeting of the civic year.

APPENDIX A - PROGRESS AGAINST THE 2023/24 AUDIT PLAN AT 1 SEPTEMBER 2023

2023/24 SIAS Audit Plan

AUDITABLE AREA	LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	RECS				AUDIT PLAN DAYS	LEAD AUDITOR ASSIGNED	BILLABLE DAYS COMPLETED	STATUS/COMMENT
		C	H	M	L				
Key Financial Systems									
Benefits (Shared Services Plan)						10	No	0	Not Yet Allocated
Debt Recovery (Shared Services Plan)						12	No	0	Not Yet Allocated
Key Financial Controls Testing (Shared Services Plan)						10	BDO	1	In Planning
Main Accounting / Creditors – Control Risk Assessment (Shared Services Plan)						10	SIAS	1	In Planning
Payroll (Shared Services Plan)						10	No	0	Not Yet Allocated
Parameters Testing (Shared Services Plan)						3	SIAS	3	Draft Report Issued
Operational Audits									
Agency Staffing (Shared Services Plan)						12	SIAS	2	Terms of Reference Issued
Asset Management System Data						10	BDO	0	Not Yet Allocated
Croxley Business Park						15	BDO	0	Allocated
Operational Buildings Compliance Follow Up						6	BDO	4	In Fieldwork
Performance Management & Data Quality						12	SIAS	0.5	In Planning
Play Safety Inspections Follow Up						5	Yes	4	In Fieldwork
Risk Management						8	SIAS	6	In Fieldwork

APPENDIX A - PROGRESS AGAINST THE 2023/24 AUDIT PLAN AT 1 SEPTEMBER 2023

AUDITABLE AREA	LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	RECS				AUDIT PLAN DAYS	LEAD AUDITOR ASSIGNED	BILLABLE DAYS COMPLETED	STATUS/COMMENT
		C	H	M	L				
Shared Services						15	BDO	0	Allocated
Grant Certifications						3	No	0	Not Yet Allocated
Contract Management, Project Management & Procurement									
Project Management – Town Hall Quarter						12	BDO	10	In Fieldwork
IT Audits									
IT Operations (Shared Services Plan)						15	BDO	5	In Fieldwork
Cyber Security (Shared Services Plan)						15	BDO	0	Allocated
Follow Ups									
Follow up of Audit Recommendations						8	Yes	4	Through Year
To Be Allocated									
Unused Contingency (Shared Services Plan)						0	N/A	0	N/A
Strategic Support									
Audit Committee						8	Yes	4	Through Year
2024/25 Audit Planning						5	Yes	0	Due quarter 4
Head of Internal Audit Opinion 2022/23						3	Yes	3	Complete

APPENDIX A - PROGRESS AGAINST THE 2023/24 AUDIT PLAN AT 1 SEPTEMBER 2023

AUDITABLE AREA	LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	RECS				AUDIT PLAN DAYS	LEAD AUDITOR ASSIGNED	BILLABLE DAYS COMPLETED	STATUS/COMMENT
		C	H	M	L				
Monitoring & Client Meetings						8	Yes	3	Through Year
SIAS Development						3	Yes	3	Complete
Completion of 2022/23 audits									
Time required to complete work commenced in 2022/23 (4 days Shared Services Plan; 5 days WBC)						9	Yes	8.5	In Progress
WBC PLAN TOTAL						126		46.5	
SHARED SERVICES PLAN TOTAL						101		15.5	
COMBINED TOTAL PLAN DAYS						227		62	

Key to recommendation priority levels: C = Critical; H = High; M = Medium; L = Low / Advisory.

APPENDIX B – AUDIT START DATES 2023/24

Apr	May	June	July	August	September
Project Management – Town Hall Quarter In Fieldwork	Parameters Testing (Shared Services Plan) Draft Report Issued	IT Operations (Shared Services Plan) In Fieldwork	Agency Staffing (Shared Services Plan) Terms of Reference Issued		Debt Recovery (Shared Services Plan)
Operational Buildings Compliance Follow Up In Fieldwork		Risk Management In Fieldwork	Play Safety Inspections Follow Up In Fieldwork		Performance Management / Data Quality In Planning
					Shared Services

October	November	December	January	February	March
Key Financial Controls Testing (Shared Services Plan) In Planning	Benefits (Shared Services Plan)	Payroll (Shared Services Plan)	Cyber Security (Shared Services Plan)		

APPENDIX B – AUDIT START DATES 2023/24

Main Accounting / Creditors – Control Risk Assessment (Shared Services Plan) In Planning **			Croxley Business Park		
Asset Management System					

** Start date moved from August to October, see section 2.9

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Debtors 2020/21							
Final report issued June 2021							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
03	Consideration should be given to an annual review of debtor accounts to identify duplicate or dormant for deletion or deactivation.	Low	<p>Position – July 2021 We will speak to Finance about the best way of doing this.</p> <p>Position – September 2021 A complete review of the entire Sundry Debtor service has recently been commenced and this will be included as part of the review.</p> <p>Position – November 2021 No update received.</p> <p>Position – February 2022 No update received.</p> <p>Position – July 2022 To date we have not been able to resource this review as we have had to prioritise Grant work and more recently the Council Tax Energy Rebates. We will pick up this project towards the end of the calendar year once the Energy rebate work is completed.</p> <p>Position – August 2022 No update received – target date not yet reached.</p> <p>Update received September 2022 but after reporting deadline for September 2022 Audit Committee: Finance are going to run and extract this data from the Finance System which Revs & Bens will then check. It may be completed before 30 October 2022; it really depends on how many are on the list.</p> <p>Position – November 2022</p>	Recovery Team Leader, Revenues Manager and Finance.	31 August 2021	*	<p>31 October 2021</p> <p>31 October 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p> <p>30 June 2023</p> <p>31 December 2023</p>

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Debtors 2020/21 Final report issued June 2021							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>The lists were provided by Finance mid-September, but work has not yet commenced as the entire Revs and Bens Service was delivering the Energy Fuel Rebate payments. Work will commence on the lists, week commencing 14.11.22.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Revs and Bens have not had the capacity to carry out this work yet as resource has diverted to Energy Fuel Rebate schemes and resource has been very low due to long term staff sickness. Revs and Bens will take ownership of checking duplicate customer account and deleting those where we are certain there is no current billing rule. Finance and the individual services will need to take responsibility for deleting or de-activating old accounts. We will remind them of this requirement.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 The list has been generated and there are 2252 accounts to check. Each one must be checked individually before it can be decided if the duplicate entry can be deleted. Work has commenced on the checking / deletion. We are allocating a little resource to this each week as BAU work is extremely high currently so it will take some time to check all 2,000 accounts.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 No update received from the action owner.</p>				

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Audit Plan 2021/22

Safeguarding 2021/22							
Final report issued April 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>When temporary staff members are being appointed, the Council should ensure that necessary safeguarding checks have been completed prior to the employee starting work, and that appropriate records are maintained.</p> <p>If there is an expected delay to such checks being performed, a decision should be recorded to delay the start date until completed</p>	High	<p>HR Management will remind Comensura of the pre-employment checks required by Watford prior to someone starting.</p> <p>HR will carry out spot checks of temporary staff and ask Comensura [or any other provider] to provide evidence of the checks undertaken at least annually.</p> <p>HR will ensure the specification for a future agency partner includes all requirements for pre-employment checks to be undertaken and the checking process to be in place to ensure compliance.</p> <p>Recruiting Managers across the council will be reminded of the need to ensure all compliance documentation is received prior to commencement of staff in post and the different requirements if agency staff come through Comensura or direct through agency to the council.</p> <p>Position – July 2022 Comensura have been reminded of the pre-employment checks required. Their booking system has the requirement for a DBS check as a pre-requisite. The tender specification for the current tender process for future agency partner has included the requirement for DBS checks to be carried out. HRBPs have reminded managers of the compliance documentation required and this will be raised as new bookings are made.</p> <p>Position – August 2022</p>	HR Operations Lead	<p>1 June 2022</p> <p>1 April 2023</p> <p>When required.</p> <p>1 June 2022</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>*</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>1 June 2023 30 Sept 2023</p>

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Safeguarding 2021/22 Final report issued April 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>All recommendations are complete except the one action in progress (spot checks) This has a due date of 1 April 2023.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 The position regarding spot checks will be taken up with Hays (the new contractor/agency partner who commence their contract with the Council on 05 December 2022).</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Hays took up the contractor/agency partner in December 2022. Spot checks will be carried out after 6 months of the contract running when sufficient appointments for spot checking have been made.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 The issue of spot checks is on the agenda for the contractor meeting to be held on 20 July 2023. Spot checks to be completed by 30 September 2023.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Hayes have been asked to provide the information relating to spot checks and it is expected to be received by 15 September 2023.</p>				

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Cyber Security 2021/22 Final report issued April 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	1.1 Management should ensure that appropriate monitoring controls are in place for the password monitoring and management activities. These should include but not be limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brute-forcing of account passwords including password spraying, • login attempts from unexpected geographic areas, • unexpected account lockouts • password database for the deny list hashes, • other unusual behaviour from users. 1.2 The above proposed controls, once in place, should be actively reported upon, through the periodic cyber security reports, to the senior management.	Medium	01 Mar 2022 the Azure AD Password Protection was implemented. Users will not be able to change passwords to weak passwords nor known passwords nor passwords from our Ban List of passwords. 1.1 – requires a third-party tool and associated funding would be required. The implementation of the password protection for Azure AD lowers the risk. 1.2 - this would be dependent on the ability to fund with a third-party tool – 1.1. Position – July 2022 Third party tools currently being reviewed and costed. Item not yet due. Position – August 2022 1.1 - Third party tools have been evaluated and Netwrix has been selected as the preferred tool. 1.2 – Netwrix had demonstrated the tool in detail and a 30-day trial to test the system further is available. 1.3 – Quotation for 1- and 3-year option has been provided. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-year option - £7,806 • 3-year option - £16,483 1.4 – Implementation of the tool will be dependent on the ability to fund the third-party tool, this will require an approval by ITSG for an additional spend. A paper to review this recommendation and request any growth in budget 2022.	Associate Director of ICT and Shared Services	31 March 2023	*	31 March 2024

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Cyber Security 2021/22 Final report issued April 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			Position – November 2022 1.1 – Due to the audit, which was performed by DLUHC, the scope of the security posture has extended. The grant to address the sections of the new recommendations within the scope has been successfully secured. 1.2 – The evaluation of the third-party tool has been extended, due to the new requirements within the scope presented post the DLUHC audit. 1.3 The new proposed completion dates recommended by DLUHC is end of Q4 March 2024. Position – February 2023 In progress. Produce options and costs continue to be reviewed and costed against all recommendations included within the DLUHC cyber grant budget. Position – July 2023 1.1 – All available options offered by a number of vendors have been evaluated. The decision has been made to utilise the DLUHC grant and to expand on the existing CSOC provision from Exponential-e to meet the requirements of the recommendation. 1.2 The quotation has been provided from Exponential-e to expand the CSOC offering. This has been approved and the project is now moving to the procurement phase. The procurement should be completed by the end of October 2023. Position – September 2023				

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Cyber Security 2021/22 Final report issued April 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>1.1 The procurement to expand the CSOC offering is completed, duration of the contract is set for 24 months.</p> <p>1.2 – The on prem virtual deployment is currently in progress, deadline to implement the solution is set for end of October 2023.</p>				
03	Management should conduct regular monthly vulnerability scans across the entire IT estate including endpoint, to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities including software flaws, missing patches, misconfigurations and malwares.	Low	<p>This would require additional budget and would need a growth item approved, as there are licence implications for the Qualys scanner.</p> <p>Position – July 2022 Extension of current third-party tools currently being reviewed and costed. Item not yet due.</p> <p>Position – August 2022 1.1- Third party Qualys had introduced a new module which will enable the management of remote devices through the cloud.</p> <p>1.2 – Both options are currently being evaluated and costed. Decision made will be based on cost, functionality, and management.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 1.1 – Due to the allocation of a new Account Manager at Qualys and the changes within the licensing structure, Qualys are currently reviewing the proposed quotation to align the requirements with the new licensing structure.</p> <p>1.2 – Workshop with Qualys has been scheduled to discuss the new proposed licensing structure and the modules which are required to enable the</p>	Associate Director of ICT and Shared Services	31 March 2023	*	<p>30 June 2023</p> <p>30 November 2023</p>

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Cyber Security 2021/22 Final report issued April 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			management of the devices remotely through the cloud and not relaying on the VPN. Position – February 2023 Remains in progress, however Associate Director of ICT and Shared services requests an extension of 3 months. This is due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Qualys licencing for public sector has recently changed. Awaiting updated quotations. b. In terms of funding, a recent grant award from DLUHC will cover this item. Therefore, no requirement for additional growth within the ICT service budget. Position – July 2023 1.1 The quotation from Qualys has been provided to extend the service to include the endpoint vulnerability scanning. This has been handed over to the desktop support team, who are currently reviewing the offering. Position – September 2023 1.1 The revenue budget is currently being reviewed by the Director of Partnerships in absence of the Associate Director of ICT and Shared Services.				

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Audit Plan 2022/23

Watford Museum 2022/23							
Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>We recommend that the statement of purpose for the Watford Museum provides a clear link and reference to the Council’s cultural strategy.</p> <p>We also recommend that the existing delegated authority arrangements are reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently clear, with a local scheme of delegation created where sub-delegations are in place (for example responsibilities assigned from the Group Head or Head of Service to the Museum Curator).</p>	Medium	<p>The statement of purpose will be developed as the forward plan is revised and to align with the ambitions for the Town Hall Quarter and to link to the cultural strategy.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 Being planned.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Being planned, resources allocated and work commencing in April 23 to align with Town Hall Quarter Programme and ACE requirements.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Work is underway on shaping a vision and governance for the museum. As the museum is moving location Arts Council England have informed WBC that it cannot submit for accreditation this year and will likely move to provisional accreditation whilst the museum is closed for redevelopment. Once the museum is located in the Town Hall we will be invited to submit. NOTE this is usual process for a museum capital project. The plans and policies required can still be developed and implemented in readiness for submission.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p> <p>Museum Governance will be reviewed as part of the process of developing the Arts Council</p>	Associate Director of Environment	<p>30 April 2023 (Subject to Arts Council Submission date)</p> <p>30 April 2023</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>Mid-late 2024</p> <p>Mid-late 2024</p>

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Watford Museum 2022/23 Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Position – February 2023 Being planned, resources allocated and work commencing in April 23 to align with Town Hall Quarter Programme and ACE requirements.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Work is underway on shaping a vision and governance for the museum. As the museum is moving location Arts Council England have informed WBC that it cannot submit for accreditation this year and will likely remain on provisional accreditation whilst the museum is closed for redevelopment. Once the museum is located in the Town Hall we will be invited to submit. NOTE this is usual process for a museum capital project. The plans and policies required can still be developed and implemented in readiness for submission.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p>				
02	<p>We recommend that all documents or policies are fully completed or subject to review and update prior to the end of the financial year, with policies passed to the Executive for approval.</p> <p>We also recommend that a log is kept of all policies, including the last and the next review dates, to ensure that they are reviewed in a timely manner in future years.</p>	Medium	<p>Arts Council re accreditation is due for submission in April 2023 at the earliest. (The Arts Council will inform us when they require us to submit). A project will be created using EPMO protocols to oversee delivery and approval of the forward plan and policies, linked to the Museum Project and THQ programme boards and revised governance. Some policies are in development already.</p> <p>Monitoring of policies will be brought into service delivery and as a KPI or service plan output.</p>	Associate Director of Environment	30 April 2023 (Subject to Arts Council Submission date)	*	Mid-late 2024

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Watford Museum 2022/23 Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Position – November 2022 Being planned.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Being planned, resources allocated and work commencing in April 23 to align with Town Hall Quarter Programme and ACE requirements.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Work is underway on shaping a vision and governance for the museum. As the museum is moving location Arts Council England have informed WBC that it cannot submit for accreditation this year and will likely remain on provisional accreditation whilst the museum is closed for redevelopment. Once the museum is located in the Town Hall we will be invited to submit. NOTE this is usual process for a museum capital project. The plans and policies required can still be developed and implemented in readiness for submission.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p>				
03	The current investigation of the one item identified as missing should be concluded at the earliest opportunity, with further advice on required actions being sought if the item cannot be located.	Medium	<p>Complete investigation.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 On hold due to staff absence, deadline will be met.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Due to staff absence this has been on hold. To be completed by 1st May 2023.</p>		31 December 2023		1 September 2023

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Watford Museum 2022/23 Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Position – July 2023 Draft report received and under review.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p>				
04	<p>We recommend that all staff are reminded of what paperwork needs to be completed for loans including the log which would summarise what items were currently on loan.</p> <p>We also recommend that policies are updated to reflect the approval delegation authorities included within the constitution.</p>	Medium	<p>Staff training on loans process to be implemented. Develop log of loans and regularly monitor.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 On hold due to staff absence, deadline will be met.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Due to staff absence this has been on hold. To be completed by 1st May 2023.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Diarised - being undertaken as part of refresh Documentation Procedural manual.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p> <p>See action against recommendation 1.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 Being planned.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Being planned, resources allocated and work commencing in April 23 to align with Town Hall Quarter Programme and ACE requirements.</p>	Curator	31 December 2023	<p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>30 September 2023</p> <p>Mid-late 2024</p>

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Watford Museum 2022/23							
Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	Finally, consideration should be given to clarifying within the constitution the value and time thresholds above which loans of objects are required to be authorised, and below this value the local delegation that has been agreed.		<p>Position – July 2023 See action against recommendation 1.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p> <p>See action against recommendation 1.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 Being planned.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 Being planned, resources allocated and work commencing in April 23 to align with Town Hall Quarter Programme and ACE requirements. Constitution has had an interim update to reflect this.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 See action against recommendation 1.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p>			*	Mid-late 2024
05	<p>We recommend that an action plan is put in place to support the identification, control and monitoring of remaining key actions in respect of the accreditation preparation. This should include the actions required, target dates and action owners.</p> <p>The above action plan should also include the recommendations made in this report and progress should be</p>	Medium	<p>See actions against recommendations 2 and 3.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 Being planned.</p> <p>Position – February 2023 This is now part of the Museum Project board to oversee.</p> <p>Position – July 2023</p>	Associate Director of Environment		*	Mid-late 2024

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Watford Museum 2022/23							
Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	monitored by Senior Managers on a monthly basis.		<p>This is now part of the Museum Project board to oversee so consider this complete.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p>				
06	<p>We recommend that advice is sought from the Council's insurers as to the frequency of review of valuations. Upon completion of any future revaluations, this should also support a review of the existing levels of insurance.</p> <p>Upon the above clarity being obtained, the required frequencies (or process for determining review periods) should be incorporated into the relevant policies and procedures.</p>	Low	<p>Follow recommendation and link to action against recommendation 2.</p> <p>Response from Zurich Commercial Insurance: Our Fine Arts team in Zurich Commercial usually work to a valuation every 3 years, however we would be comfortable with valuations every 5 years. That said I would always apply a flexible common-sense approach to the 5-year average guide. If for instance you know some items are subject to rapid increases in value then obviously, I would look to revalue every 3 years, whereas you may have some other items that don't move much at all in value and these items you could push out to say 7 years and everything else falls in between.</p> <p>Naturally the onus is on the council to prove the value of an item in the event of a loss, and this is always made harder after the event if the item is stolen or destroyed with no recent valuations to hand.</p> <p>Position – November 2022 Existing valuations being reviewed by staff and considering commissioning new valuations.</p> <p>Position – February 2023</p>	Curator	1 May 2023	*	1 Sept 2023

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Watford Museum 2022/23							
Final report issued October 2022							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Due to staff absence this has been on hold. Quotes for valuation to be obtained by 1st May 2023.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Quotes received from Bonhams, clarification from insurance team confirmed and orders placed for valuation.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Update to be included in a separate report from the Associate Director of Environment.</p>				

Financial Reconciliations 2022/23							
Final report issued April 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that the reconciliation procedure notes detail the responsible owner as well as the next review date to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant.	Low	<p>The process notes do name the author of the note; however, we will add a next review date and responsible person. We will introduce a front sheet on each reconciliation to provide all details recommended.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Process notes are in the process of being updated – on target for completion by deadline.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Process note updates are continuing but progress is slower than anticipated due to work pressures. Completion is expected by 30th November 2023.</p>	Chief Accountant	31 August 2023	*	30 November 2023

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Cyber Security 2022/23 Final report issued April 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>Management should review and assess the current cyber security training platform and put arrangements in place so that training completion can be recorded, reported and monitored on an on going basis.</p> <p>Arrangements should be put in place for ensuring that the cyber security training is completed by all members of staff, as required, which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying specific staff members who are required to complete the training and working with their line managers to ensure completion. Ensuring regular, top-down communication to increase awareness of the training. <p>Requiring completion of the e-learning before issuing new devices to individuals or as part of performance and progression reviews.</p>	Medium	<p>We will review the current cyber security training platform. The current platform is used for all mandatory training for staff.</p> <p>We will review the viability of users not receiving their device until they have completed their cyber-related mandatory training.</p> <p>Position – July 2023</p> <p>1.1 – A review of alternative training platforms has been conducted and a demo of the products has been provided by the vendors.</p> <p>1.2 - Each product comes at a cost and budget implications are being considered.</p> <p>1.3 - The management of training completion by staff is currently being carried out by HR and members of staff are being notified by email when they are due to complete each training module.</p> <p>1.4 – Starters, Movers, Leaver’s process is currently being updated to ensure that joiners complete the Cyber Security Modules as part of the probation period as per HR Probationary Policy.</p> <p>Position – September 2023</p> <p>1.4 – The Starters, Movers, Leaver’s process has been updated to reflect the completion of the cyber security module as per the requirement of the HR Probation Policy.</p>	Associate Director of ICT and Shared Services	31 December 2023		

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Treasury 2022/23							
Final report issued April 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>1) The Councils should develop an ESG policy, which ensures that investments are made in consideration with the Councils climate change, environmental and governance policies. The policy should emphasise that the Council seeks to be a responsible investor and consider ESG risks as an important overlay to the investment process, thereby improving future sustainability of investments. Once incorporated, ESG risks should also be included in under the Risk Management section of the Treasury Management Practices document for consistency.</p> <p>2) The policy should also explain that the Councils will not knowingly invest directly in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the Council's mission and values.</p> <p>3) The policy should outline the conditions where investments should not be made with certain organisations, which have material links to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights abuse (e.g., child labour, political oppression) • Environmentally harmful activities (e.g., pollutants, destruction of habitat, fossil fuels) 	Medium	<p>An ESG Policy will be developed for both Councils during 2023/24 for approval alongside the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy Statements.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Guidance has been provided by our Treasury Management providers and we are on target to include an ESG policy within the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy Statements.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 We remain on track to include an ESG Policy in the Draft Treasury Management Strategy Statements for 2024/25 which will be presented to Audit Committees in November and December.</p>	Head of Finance	30 November 2023		

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Treasury 2022/23							
Final report issued April 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socially harmful activities (e.g., tobacco, gambling). 						

Council Tax 2022/23							
Final report issued May 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>TRDC should ensure that a review of debt outstanding is conducted, and decisions taken regarding whether or not to proceed for write-offs.</p> <p>Subsequently, write-offs should be conducted at regular intervals going forward.</p> <p>The 'How and Why to put a write off code on a Council Tax Account' procedure should include version control to ensure that it is reviewed periodically.</p>	Medium	<p>A review of all outstanding debt will be completed during 2023/24.</p> <p>All outstanding write-offs have been cleared since this report was written and on-going write-offs will be reviewed once a quarter.</p> <p>Agreed. Our quality team will get a version control sheet added.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 The review of all debt is underway, and this will include looking at debts suitable for write-off.</p> <p>The write-offs for Q1 are being prepared.</p> <p>Version control has been added to all procedures.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 No update received from the action owner.</p>	Revenues Manager/Data Performance Manager	31 March 2024		
04	The Council should document the processes relating to backdated discounts and exemptions to ensure that consistent actions are undertaken by staff and these refunds are	Low	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 The document for backdating an SPD has been documented. We will incorporate the approach for all the other types of discount and</p>	Revenues Manager/Data Performance Manager	30 June 2023	*	30 Sept 2023

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Council Tax 2022/23							
Final report issued May 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	appropriately reviewed and approved prior to payment.		exemptions so that it the guidance is held in once process. Position – September 2023 No update received from the action owner.				

NDR 2022/23							
Final report issued May 2023							
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"> • Actions are taken to address the issue preventing the production of the monthly 'default arrangement list' and (subject to the issue being successfully resolved), arrangements are put in place for Senior Officers to check that these are being actioned appropriately. • As an interim measure, Revenues Officers should be reminded to diarise arrangements to enable checks to be conducted to confirm arrangements are being complied with. 	Medium	<p>The default arrangements list is working and being run. During 2022/23 much of the BAU recovery work slipped due to the service having to process energy and business grants (CARF). During 2023/24 all recovery work will be reviewed, and this will include a review of arrangements that have defaulted.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Review is currently underway.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 No update received from the action owner.</p>	Revenues Manager	31 March 2024		
02	We recommend that:	Medium	The 7-day list is working and being run. During 2022/23 much of the BAU recovery work slipped due to the service having to process energy and business grants (CARF). During	Revenues Manager	31 March 2024		

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

NDR 2022/23							
Final report issued May 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven-day lists are produced and actioned at regular interval (e.g. monthly). Arrangements are put in place for Senior Officers to check that these are being actioned appropriately. 		<p>2023/24 all recovery work will be reviewed, and this will include a review of arrangements that have defaulted.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Review is currently underway.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 No update received from the action owner.</p>				

Tree Management 2022/23							
Final report issued June 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend the 10% check of tree works that have been completed by Veolia are formally recorded on a written report or on Ezytreev. This is to ensure Veolia can provide suitable assurance the correct works have been completed and the same trees are not included in the next round of checks.	Medium	<p>Tree Manager to find out whether Ezytreev has the functionality to record checks and if not will create a separate template to record these.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 In progress with Tree Manager.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Tree Manager records on Aver as Ezytreev does not have functionality.</p>	Tree Manager, Veolia	31 July 2023	✓	
03	We recommend for resilience purposes; back-up resource is trained in tree management activities to provide cover in the event of capacity gaps.	Low	Veolia are currently recruiting for a new apprentice which will hopefully be in post later this year. Existing Veolia staff are able to provide cover during short absences of a Tree Manager including John Priestley, Horticultural Development Manager and Nick Graham,	Tree Manager, Veolia	Apprentice September 2023 External resources as required		

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Tree Management 2022/23 Final report issued June 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>Contract Manager Parks, Open Spaces and Street Cleansing, who both have good arboricultural knowledge. External resources will be utilised if required, such as through Maydencroft who have recently provided cover during recruitment of a Tree Manager and are still assisting with Planning matters and handover to the new Tree Manager.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Apprentice position is currently being advertised and applications are being received. Maydencroft are due to continue providing support with Planning matters until the end of August 2023 to ensure a smooth handover.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Apprentices are being interviewed w/c 4 September 2023.</p>				
04	We recommend the Council undertakes system training to enhance monitoring activities. This is to ensure the Council can provide their own independent assurance that inspections and works have been completed and logged in a timely manner.	Low	<p>Training on the Ezytreev system will be arranged for relevant Watford Borough Council officers in order to carry out enhanced monitoring.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 Training has been requested, awaiting a date.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Training completed on 15 August 2023.</p>	Contract Manager (Parks and Streets), Watford Borough Council	31 July 2023	✓	
05	We conducted sample testing of six trees to ascertain when they were last inspected, what the inspection results were, whether the tree required remedial works and if required, what actions were taken. We found remedial work for one tree was not completed as the tree was outside of	Low	<p>Tree Manager to run a report for all outstanding works in order to review progress and programme in if required.</p> <p>This will include a report for each ward to review the 3 yearly survey recommended works that are required to be carried out within 3, 6 or 12 months. A report will also be</p>	Tree Manager, Veolia	31 July 2023		30 Sept 2023

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Tree Management 2022/23							
Final report issued June 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	the ward that was part of the survey, and the Tree Manager had also not been in post.		<p>produced and reviewed for any ad hoc works that fall outside of these surveys.</p> <p>Position – July 2023 In progress with Tree Manager.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 A cycle of 3 yearly surveys are underway and recommended works are being programmed in and carried out according to level of priority. Ad hoc reactive works appear up to date but Tree Manager will request a report from Ezytreev to ensure recommendations logged by previous Tree Managers have all been captured.</p>				

Payroll 2022/23							
Final report issued June 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that managers are reminded to inform HR if any starter information changes, including start date.	Low	<p>On this occasion, the manager of the service area agreed an earlier start date with the employee, after the contract had been sent out but without informing HR. This resulted in an underpayment that was rectified and the right date entered onto the iTrent system.</p> <p>HR will remind managers that HR need to be informed if an earlier or later start date is subsequently agreed.</p> <p>Position – September 2023</p>	HR Operations Lead	Implemented	✓	

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Payroll 2022/23 Final report issued June 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			Implemented				
02	We recommend that officers should annotate the starter form to confirm that it has been input by one officer and checked by a different officer.	Low	<p>The Payroll preview forms are reviewed by the first and second officer and MHR are annotated to note changes to payroll in the month and to review any discrepancies.</p> <p>Cross checking, and annotation, is therefore undertaken at pay preview as well as at the time of inputting and discrepancies are picked up before final sign off. Payments cannot be made until all relevant information is obtained and inputted.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Implemented</p>		Implemented	✓	
03	<p>We recommend that all additional payments are reviewed to ensure that an end date is included. This should be for the period the additional payment is required (e.g. six months).</p> <p>Furthermore, approvals for additional payments should be received before the extra duties or additional work is undertaken. Full explanation of the reasons for the additional payment should be recorded and retained on file.</p>	Medium	<p>These occasions relate to instances where backpay has been applied, i.e. the officer has already been undertaking the duties and managers have agreed the earlier commencement date for the duties and payment to be applied.</p> <p>HR are already ensuring that end dates (where applicable) are included on all forms and that explanations for the additional payment is recorded and retained. However, it is not always possible to ensure approval for the additional duties is received prior to the duties being carried out, especially when managers agree that a backpay situation has occurred. In all situations of additional payment, HR are already ensuring no payment is made until there is approval.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Implemented</p>	HR Operations Lead	Implemented	✓	

APPENDIX C – PROGRESS AGAINST OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

Corporate Governance 2022/23 Final report issued July 2023							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>The Terms of References for the Management Boards should be reviewed to ensure they meet good practice standards by including the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Purpose 2) Frequency of meetings 3) Quorum 4) Review date and approving body. 	Low	<p>The report will be considered at our Corporate Management Board with a view to deciding whether to implement this recommendation.</p> <p>Position – September 2023 Considered at CMB on 1 August 2023 agreed to review CMB and Strategic Group terms of reference in April 2024.</p>	Group Head of Democracy and Governance	31 August 2023	✓	

APPENDIX D – ASSURANCE AND PRIORITY LEVEL DEFINITIONS

Audit Opinions		
Assurance Level	Definition	
Assurance Reviews		
Substantial	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exist, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.	
Reasonable	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.	
Limited	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.	
No	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.	
Not Assessed	This opinion is used in relation to consultancy or embedded assurance activities, where the nature of the work is to provide support and advice to management and is not of a sufficient depth to provide an opinion on the adequacy of governance or internal control arrangements. Recommendations will however be made where required to support system or process improvements.	
Grant / Funding Certification Reviews		
Unqualified	No material matters have been identified in relation the eligibility, accounting and expenditure associated with the funding received that would cause SIAS to believe that the related funding conditions have not been met.	
Qualified	Except for the matters identified within the audit report, the eligibility, accounting and expenditure associated with the funding received meets the requirements of the funding conditions.	
Disclaimer Opinion	Based on the limitations indicated within the report, SIAS are unable to provide an opinion in relation to the Council's compliance with the eligibility, accounting and expenditure requirements contained within the funding conditions.	
Adverse Opinion	Based on the significance of the matters included within the report, the Council have not complied with the funding conditions associated with the funding received.	
Recommendation Priority Levels		
Priority Level	Definition	
Corporate	Critical	Audit findings which, in the present state, represent a serious risk to the organisation as a whole, i.e. reputation, financial resources and / or compliance with regulations. Management action to implement the appropriate controls is required immediately.
Service	High	Audit findings indicate a serious weakness or breakdown in control environment, which, if untreated by management intervention, is highly likely to put achievement of core service objectives at risk. Remedial action is required urgently.
	Medium	Audit findings which, if not treated by appropriate management action, are likely to put achievement of some of the core service objectives at risk. Remedial action is required in a timely manner.
	Low	Audit findings indicate opportunities to implement good or best practice, which, if adopted, will enhance the control environment. The appropriate solution should be implemented as soon as is practically possible.