

## List Of Audits Completed as Part of the 2017/18 Audit Plan

Audit	Audit Objective & Opinion		
Freedom of Information	<b>Control Objectives (CO):</b>  1. Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) are handled promptly in line with the FOI Act (FOIA), appropriate monitoring functions are in place and appropriate training has been provided to those involved with FOIs.		
	<b>Audit opinion</b>		
	<b>CO</b>	<b>Assurance Level</b>	<b>Opinion</b>
	1	Satisfactory	<p>The FOI management system went live in November 2015, introducing a more robust system for logging and processing FOI requests. The system provided increased monitoring abilities and enables the extraction of reports and data on numbers of FOIs handled; a report from the system identified that in the previous financial year (2016/17) 321 requests were received, with only 14 responses sent late equating to almost 96% processed in line with the FOI Act. The Corporate Services Officer is responsible for monitoring the progress of each FOI, which helps to ensure that the large majority of FOIs are responded to promptly.</p> <p>During the Information Governance (IG) audit 2016/17 it was noted that FOI handling procedures required updating; it is further recommended that these be expanded upon to include reference to the handling of FOI complaints or “Internal Reviews”. The IG audit also recommended that a training programme be established and appended to the IG policy, including training for dealing with FOIs.</p> <p>Testing a sample of 15 FOIs confirmed that these had been dealt with in accordance with the legislation. There were some variances between how staff use the system to process exemptions, and therefore it might be appropriate to offer further training to ensure consistency across the board. Monitoring is reported on informally by the Head of Corporate Services, but is due to be reported to the Corporate Management Team on a more formal basis biannually, commencing this month. Staff discussions suggested that the training supplied for using the system was sufficient.</p>

		<p>It was also suggested in discussions that, whilst the FOI system was appropriate for processing requests, additional functionality would enhance the staff's experience. Therefore it is recommended that a review of the systems functionality be completed in relation to the ability to sub-allocate, management of duplicate FOIs, viewing previous responses and potential to record additional queries.</p> <p>An independent commission report published in March 2016 made several recommendations in regards to the application of FOIA 15 years on. It should be noted that the recommendations have not been enforced at this time; however it is advised that consideration be given to the relevance of these recommendations.</p>						
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)	<p><b>Control Objectives (CO):</b></p> <p>CO1: Grant applications are received through the Occupational Therapist referral service and are approved in accordance with the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.</p> <p>CO2: Grant payments are processed promptly and are in accordance with the terms of the grant entitlement.</p> <p>CO3: Grant monies are re-paid in the event of the owner selling the property.</p> <p><b>Audit opinion</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>CO</th><th>Assurance Level</th><th>Opinion</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td><td>Satisfactory</td><td>Grant applications are received through the Occupational Therapist referral service and a review of 10 grant referrals confirmed that an assessment in relation to eligibility is undertaken through the initial visits and the performance of the means test (where applicable), using the Ferret financial software system. In some instances evidence of the means test, notification of eligibility and schedule of works have not been retained and it was agreed with the Environmental Health Manager that a check of documentation to be retained including the means test would in future be undertaken at the case closure stage. There is a satisfactory level of assurance that grants are being approved within the legislative time frame of six months. Monitoring is now being supported through the use of reports generated from the Uniform system.</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		CO	Assurance Level	Opinion	1	Satisfactory	Grant applications are received through the Occupational Therapist referral service and a review of 10 grant referrals confirmed that an assessment in relation to eligibility is undertaken through the initial visits and the performance of the means test (where applicable), using the Ferret financial software system. In some instances evidence of the means test, notification of eligibility and schedule of works have not been retained and it was agreed with the Environmental Health Manager that a check of documentation to be retained including the means test would in future be undertaken at the case closure stage. There is a satisfactory level of assurance that grants are being approved within the legislative time frame of six months. Monitoring is now being supported through the use of reports generated from the Uniform system.
CO	Assurance Level	Opinion						
1	Satisfactory	Grant applications are received through the Occupational Therapist referral service and a review of 10 grant referrals confirmed that an assessment in relation to eligibility is undertaken through the initial visits and the performance of the means test (where applicable), using the Ferret financial software system. In some instances evidence of the means test, notification of eligibility and schedule of works have not been retained and it was agreed with the Environmental Health Manager that a check of documentation to be retained including the means test would in future be undertaken at the case closure stage. There is a satisfactory level of assurance that grants are being approved within the legislative time frame of six months. Monitoring is now being supported through the use of reports generated from the Uniform system.						

	2	Satisfactory	Testing confirmed that grant payments are processed promptly and in accordance to the terms of the grant. The current monitoring process gives consideration to approved grants; however, in view of the current funding arrangements with the county being based on approved and paid grants only it is recommended that a quarterly review of paid, approved and estimated eligible grants against the funding allocation is undertaken to assist in identifying shortfalls against county allocated funding promptly.
		Good	Environmental Health and Land Charges work co-operatively to ensure that land charges are applied when necessary for the allotted length of time. When re-payment of a DFG occurs the amount is calculated and approved by an officer and Land Charges remove the charge when instructed to do so. Testing confirmed that money had been re-paid and the charge was removed as appropriate.
Absence Management	<b>Control Objectives (CO):</b> 1. Absence Management is dealt with in accordance to the policy.		
	<b>Audit opinion</b>		
	CO	Assurance Level	Opinion
	1	Satisfactory	<p>The Council has an Absence Management Policy and there are accompanying procedures which can be accessed through the intranet. It was noted that the absence process flow chart needs to be updated to reflect the policy in respect of the number of absences in a rolling period. Audit testing confirmed that the handling and recording of absences are dealt with in accordance with this policy, although there was not a consistent approach in the recording of past absences within the return to work forms. It should be noted that HR does maintain a spreadsheet listing all absences within a 12 month rolling period and a function of the new HR administration system 'Breathe', (which is to be introduced shortly) is the recording of absence. Absence details were found to have also been transferred to payroll correctly.</p> <p>In respect of the reporting of sickness at a corporate level, absence is a standard agenda item within the Corporate and Union Liaison Group meetings and is also a performance measurement reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.</p>

NNDR3	<p><b>Control Objectives (CO):</b></p> <p>1. The reporting values within the NNDR3 return have been entered correctly from the evidence obtained to support the return.</p> <p><b>Audit opinion</b></p> <table><tr><th>CO</th><th>Assurance Level</th><th>Opinion</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Good</td><td><p>The reporting values entered by the authority within the NNDR3 return have been fairly stated and evidence is retained to support these values. A sample of business rate accounts which included reliefs and exemptions applied, confirmed that these had been accurately calculated and appropriately applied to the accounts.</p><p>Following up on previous recommendations confirmed that a review into the “mini review” procedure for discretionary relief had been completed, with the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirming that amendments to the policy are being made and will be taken to members for approval at the end of August 2017. In addition, the recommendation to amend the Council's discretionary relief policy to give consideration to the Localism Act is yet to be completed however discussions are ongoing. It was agreed that this recommendation be deferred for a further six months whilst an exercise is completed to identify the financial implications and the feasibility of this discretionary relief.</p></td></tr></table>	CO	Assurance Level	Opinion	1	Good	<p>The reporting values entered by the authority within the NNDR3 return have been fairly stated and evidence is retained to support these values. A sample of business rate accounts which included reliefs and exemptions applied, confirmed that these had been accurately calculated and appropriately applied to the accounts.</p> <p>Following up on previous recommendations confirmed that a review into the “mini review” procedure for discretionary relief had been completed, with the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirming that amendments to the policy are being made and will be taken to members for approval at the end of August 2017. In addition, the recommendation to amend the Council's discretionary relief policy to give consideration to the Localism Act is yet to be completed however discussions are ongoing. It was agreed that this recommendation be deferred for a further six months whilst an exercise is completed to identify the financial implications and the feasibility of this discretionary relief.</p>
CO	Assurance Level	Opinion					
1	Good	<p>The reporting values entered by the authority within the NNDR3 return have been fairly stated and evidence is retained to support these values. A sample of business rate accounts which included reliefs and exemptions applied, confirmed that these had been accurately calculated and appropriately applied to the accounts.</p> <p>Following up on previous recommendations confirmed that a review into the “mini review” procedure for discretionary relief had been completed, with the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirming that amendments to the policy are being made and will be taken to members for approval at the end of August 2017. In addition, the recommendation to amend the Council's discretionary relief policy to give consideration to the Localism Act is yet to be completed however discussions are ongoing. It was agreed that this recommendation be deferred for a further six months whilst an exercise is completed to identify the financial implications and the feasibility of this discretionary relief.</p>					
Housing Benefits – Discretionary Housing Payments	<p><b>Control Objectives (CO):</b></p> <p>1. The values as recorded in the discretionary housing payments 2016/17 subsidy are accurately stated.</p> <p><b>Audit opinion</b></p> <table><tr><th>CO</th><th>Assurance Level</th><th>Opinion</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Satisfactory</td><td><p>At the start of the financial year 2016/17, the Government allocated the Council £92,900 in funding, to be used to award Discretionary House Payments (DHPs) to support those affected by welfare reforms. The Council is required to complete a DHP 3 return to identify where there has been any over or underspend.</p><p>A review of the 2016/17 return confirmed it that the cells required to be filled in had been done so in accordance with the guidance provided. In addition, the return had been appropriately signed off by the S.151 Officer, and lodged within the stated deadline. The return value had been understated by £510.24 - this is not material as the Council is not gaining any financial advantage by this error as the council's DHP spending exceeded the Government contribution by £6,000. The</p></td></tr></table>	CO	Assurance Level	Opinion	1	Satisfactory	<p>At the start of the financial year 2016/17, the Government allocated the Council £92,900 in funding, to be used to award Discretionary House Payments (DHPs) to support those affected by welfare reforms. The Council is required to complete a DHP 3 return to identify where there has been any over or underspend.</p> <p>A review of the 2016/17 return confirmed it that the cells required to be filled in had been done so in accordance with the guidance provided. In addition, the return had been appropriately signed off by the S.151 Officer, and lodged within the stated deadline. The return value had been understated by £510.24 - this is not material as the Council is not gaining any financial advantage by this error as the council's DHP spending exceeded the Government contribution by £6,000. The</p>
CO	Assurance Level	Opinion					
1	Satisfactory	<p>At the start of the financial year 2016/17, the Government allocated the Council £92,900 in funding, to be used to award Discretionary House Payments (DHPs) to support those affected by welfare reforms. The Council is required to complete a DHP 3 return to identify where there has been any over or underspend.</p> <p>A review of the 2016/17 return confirmed it that the cells required to be filled in had been done so in accordance with the guidance provided. In addition, the return had been appropriately signed off by the S.151 Officer, and lodged within the stated deadline. The return value had been understated by £510.24 - this is not material as the Council is not gaining any financial advantage by this error as the council's DHP spending exceeded the Government contribution by £6,000. The</p>					

		<p>understatement related to the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A single DHP for £372.24 had in error not been included in the total value of DHPs</li> <li>- A suspension of a claim at year-end resulted in £138 of due monies not being included within the return.</li> </ul> <p>In respect of any overspend against the funding allocation this is currently offset through any housing benefit repaid. As a result of the introduction of universal credit and the expected reduction in government benefit subsidy and overpayment contributions, an appropriate monitoring process of DHP expenditure will need to be instigated in order to ensure DHP payments made reflect the government subsidy.</p> <p>Audit testing of 20 awards found that all had been approved or refused in line with the Council's DHP policy and that the amounts awarded were arithmetically correct. On discussion with the Benefits Team Leader it was identified that DHP overpayments are not actively recovered and therefore it is recommended that recovery processes be put into practice, in line with the council's DHP Policy.</p>
--	--	---

**The level of internal control operating within systems will be classified in accordance with the following definitions:-**

<b>LEVEL OF CONTROL</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>Good</b>	Robust framework of controls – provides substantial assurance.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Sufficient framework of controls – provides satisfactory assurance – minimal risk. Probably no more than one or two 'Necessary' (Rank 2) recommendations.
<b>Limited</b>	Some lapses in framework of controls – provides limited assurance. A number of areas identified for improvement. A number of 'Necessary' (Rank 2) recommendations, and one or two 'Essential' (Rank 1) recommendations.
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Significant breakdown in framework of controls – provides unsatisfactory assurance. Unacceptable risks identified – fundamental changes required. A number of 'Essential' (Rank 1) recommendations.

### **Recommendations/Assurance Statement**

<b>CATEGORY</b>		<b>DEFINITION</b>
1	Essential	Essential due to statutory obligation, legal requirement, Council policy or major risk of loss or damage to Council assets, information or reputation. Where possible it should be addressed as a matter of urgency.
2	Necessary	Could cause limited loss of assets or information or adverse publicity or embarrassment. Necessary for sound internal control and confidence in the system to exist and should be pursued in the short term, ideally within 6 months.