

# INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

**TO:** Head of Neighbourhood Services    **SUBJECT:** Public Conveniences

**CC** Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executive ( AJ)  
Head of Finance  
Contract Services Manager  
Senior Contract Officer

**MY REF:** JK/PC/JW

**FROM:** Audit & Risk Manager    **DATE:** 12 December 2012

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of the 2012/2013 Audit Plan, an audit has recently been completed on the systems and procedures in place to manage the council's public conveniences (PCs).
- 1.2 This report outlines the approach to the audit and presents the findings and conclusions arising.

## 2. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE AUDIT

- 2.1 The audit was undertaken in order to establish and test the controls in place for the management of PCs. Specifically, the controls in the following areas were examined:
- Service provision and monitoring
  - Service reviews
  - Contract costs
  - Repairs and maintenance

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The provision of PCs is a discretionary local authority service. At Warwick District Council there are 15 PCs provided which is on a par with Stratford on Avon District Council and well above the other three Warwickshire districts where provision is minimal.
- 3.2 The estimated cost of the service in 2012/13 is £247,300.
- 3.3 The main element of the overall cost is the cleaning which is carried out by SITA as part of the Integrated Waste Management contract. As from April 2013 the cleaning of PCs will form part of a corporate buildings cleaning contract.

#### **4. FINDINGS**

4.1 In overall terms the audit concluded that there are adequate controls in place for the management of PCs and they are being complied with.

4.2 In respect of the areas listed at 2.1, the findings are as follows:

##### **4.3 Service provision and monitoring**

4.3.1 An examination of the contract specification and supporting documentation found that all of the sites were included together with the frequency of cleaning and the standards to be achieved.

4.3.2 Monitoring of the service, both the cleanliness of the facilities and other issues is not a high priority for council officers as there are few complaints received and the service provided by SITA is of a good standard.

4.3.3 The contract officers do carry out some inspections on an informal, ad hoc basis, but in the main reliance is placed on the public and primarily SITA staff.

4.3.4 SITA staff visit the PCs every day and so are best placed to identify any repairs required and any issues that need attention.

4.3.5 The overall delivery of the IWM contract is monitored and, as part of that, regular meetings take place with the contractor when any matters relating to PCs would be discussed.

##### **4.4 Service Reviews**

4.4.1 The fairly low level nature of the service and the general satisfaction with the service delivery does not make it a priority for any scrutiny type review.

4.4.2 Any significant dissatisfaction with the service would no doubt be expressed by the public, the local media and other relevant parties.

4.4.3 Attempts to gauge satisfaction with PCs have been made by using the Citizens' Panel. The last survey was carried out in November 2010 with the report being produced in January 2011.

4.4.4 At the time 17.1% of the residents responding were dissatisfied with the PCs provided by Warwick District Council. This represented a significant improvement on a figure of 40.7% in 2004.

##### **4.5 Contract Costs**

4.5.1 An examination of current year activity and historical budgetary performance showed that budgets are well controlled and in the main slightly underspent. Any overspendings have been due to one-off capital charges or building improvements.

- 4.5.2 Payments to SITA are in line with their prices submitted, as adjusted for changes in the Retail Price Index, and they are constant throughout the year despite additional work being undertaken during the summer.
- 4.5.3 A variation order is issued for the additional work (value £8,665 in 2012/13) but it is charged to the main contract rather than to the PCs on the basis that the budget for PCs would not accommodate it.
- 4.5.4 Adopting this approach merely moves the expenditure from one cost centre to another and therefore understates the true cost of providing PCs.
- 4.5.5 Were it not for the fact that this is the final year of the current arrangement, a recommendation would be made that this, and indeed all, expenditure is allocated correctly so that the true cost of services is recorded and reported.
- 4.5.6 An examination of the detail under the repair and maintenance headings revealed payments to Wallgate for a service contract for the maintenance of the hand dryers in the PCs. The contract is managed by Housing and Property Services.
- 4.5.7 Included in the schedule is a dryer listed as being in the gents' toilet at St Peters Car Park. This PC has not been in service for some years and has been incorporated into the car parks staff rest room. The current charge is £119 a year.

***Risk***

***Expenditure is not charged to the correct cost centre.***

***Recommendation***

***The cost of servicing the hand dryer in St Peters Car Park should be allocated to the correct cost centre.***

**4.6 Repairs and Maintenance**

- 4.6.1 PCs are a soft target for vandalism and general misuse and so repairs are routinely required. Normally it is SITA staff who identify the repair and they complete a defect report that is mailed to the surveyors in Property Services and copied to Contract Services. Property Services order the repair from the approved contractor, Pinners.
- 4.6.2 From time to time all PCs are inspected by a surveyor and a member of Contract Services to assess the condition of the facilities and to consider any areas for inclusion in a future improvements programme. The most recent inspections took place at the end of November.

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The audit concluded that there are sound systems and procedures in place to manage the council's public conveniences service.
- 5.2 The audit can therefore give a **SUBSTANTIAL** level of assurance that the systems and procedures in place are appropriate and working effectively.

**Richard Barr**  
**Audit & Risk Manager**