

Current Implementation Position for Low and Medium Risk Recommendations
issued in Quarter 4 2019/20

RECOMMENDATIONS	INITIAL MANAGEMENT RESPONSE incl. PLANNED IMPLEMENTATION DATE (PID)	CURRENT STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION PER MANAGER
Housing Stock Asset Management – 7 May 2020		
<p>The HRA Business Plan should be reviewed as soon as practical with a report subsequently being presented to Executive.</p> <p>Regular updates should subsequently be reported to cover any changes to the plan. This should be at least annually, but more frequently depending on circumstances (e.g. changes to numbers of housing stock where this impacts the plan).</p>	<p><i>Head of Housing Services:</i> Accepted. The plan will be reviewed as soon as practicable taking account of the current Covid-19 demands placed on the Council. PID: March 2020</p>	<p>The HRA Business Plan was reviewed and was approved by Executive at their December 2020 meeting.</p>
<p>The 'handover checklist template' obtained should be reviewed to ensure that it captures all relevant information, with amendments being made accordingly.</p>	<p><i>Head of Assets:</i> The checklist will be reviewed by Assets / Housing to ensure that it captures all necessary detail. PID: July 2020</p>	<p>As part of the invoice process the contractor must provide details of the attributes replaced / renewed via the ActiveH contractor portal. If this is not done, then the job cannot be closed on the system.</p> <p>We are working to ensure all orders go through ActiveH so that this process is followed</p>

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Contractors should be reminded of the need to use the portal wherever possible and to follow the naming conventions on the documents being uploaded.	<i>Head of Assets:</i> Reminder to be issued to all Contractors using the Portal when works recommence post Covid-19. PID: August 2020	Many HIP contractors are already on the portal and more are being added this year
Relevant staff should be reminded of the need to perform manual updates in relation to performed works on a timely basis.	<i>Head of Assets:</i> Reminder to be issued to all relevant staff for when works recommence post Covid-19. PID: June 2020	We are working to get all contractors onto the portal. Staff are regularly reminded of the importance of this.
Financial Strategy, Planning and Budgetary Control – 31 March 2020		
The 'Managing Your Cost Centre' course should be made mandatory for new budget managers with consideration being given to running this as refresher training for existing budget managers.	<i>Strategic Finance Manager & HR staff:</i> The Strategic Finance Manager will liaise with HR to ascertain how to make the course mandatory for new starters with budget management responsibility. PID: March 2021	Sessions have been arranged with the L & D Officer (including ad hoc where required). Further dates planned for 2021. Completed.
Limits relating to capital expenditure set out in the Code of Financial Practice should be reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant.	<i>Strategic Finance Manager & Principal Accountant (Capital & Treasury):</i> Capital limits will be reviewed to ensure appropriate delegations are set to allow the HIP to support the needs of the service within the agreed total budget. PID: August 2020	Delegated authority already in place to allow Asset manager ability to amend HIP within agreed total budget.

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Council Tax: Recovery and Enforcement – 20 February 2020		
The bulk write-off authorisation sheets should be checked for obvious errors and omissions post-scanning.	<i>Exchequer Manager / Revenues and Recovery Manager:</i> This is part of the process and I will ensure this is done. PID: Immediate.	No further response required.
Application of the threshold over which individual authorisation by the Exchequer Manager is required should be clarified in respect of account aggregation and consistently adhered to.	<i>Exchequer Manager / Revenues and Recovery Manager:</i> I will ensure that all authorisations in the future include any aggregated accounts that are above the threshold. PID: Immediate.	No further response required.
National Non-Domestic Rates – 30 January 2020		
A variation of contract should be completed to ensure the correct authority is listed.	Senior Procurement Business Partner: A variation of contract will be completed to ensure WDC is listed as the authority. PID: Completed.	No further response required.

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Main Accounting System – 31 March 2020		
<p>The journal authorisation process should be brought up to date.</p>	<p><i>Strategic Finance Manager:</i> The Journal Authorisation Process will be maintained in a more timely manner, with deadlines being set for when approvals need to be made by (within a fortnight of month end for Principal Accountant level, with 1 further week for Strategic Finance Manager authorisations.) PID: Ongoing.</p>	<p>Owing to the volume of work faced this year as a result of COVID-19 and other significant projects, it has not yet been possible to fully implement the new deadlines so far this year. Work is ongoing to build this into the new FMS solution to ensure material journals are authorised as part of a timely, robust and consistent process. The new system is due to go live in July 2021.</p>
<p>The year-end write off of suspense account balances should be reconsidered as opposed to carrying forward the balances.</p>	<p><i>Strategic Finance Manager:</i> The process is to be reviewed in conjunction with the Principal Accountant (Capital & Treasury) and the Accountancy Assistant, to agree the appropriate action. This will be reviewed as part of the 2019/20 final accounts. PID: End of April 2020.</p>	<p>Suspense is cleared down more frequently to ensure balances are not carried forward if it is not appropriate to do so.</p>

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Equality and Diversity – 16 January 2020		
Support, guidance and advice, in addition to that available within policies, could be easier to locate on the intranet, with additional contact information available should staff be unable to find an answer to their queries or concerns.	<i>HR Manager:</i> Update of intranet and access to information in conjunction with Comms. PID: June 2020.	An updated page is in the process of being created (Feb 2021) to link with work from the Task and Finish Group and training events through WCC e.g. EQUIA's. Completed.
Corporate Health and Safety – 8 January 2020		
The review of the Driving for Work Policy should be expedited and the final document rolled out to staff as soon as possible.	<i>Head of Health and Community Protection:</i> The driving for work policy is being reviewed and will be consulted upon in due course. PID: 03/20.	Draft is with Workforce steering group currently. It is linked to the new payroll system and therefore is awaiting the correct time to roll out widely.
Checks on the eligibility of staff to drive on Council business should be undertaken in a uniform manner across the Council with consideration to rolling out the Driver Declaration Form to all staff.	<i>Head of Health and Community Protection / Senior Management Team:</i> The driving for work policy is being reviewed and will be consulted upon in due course. PID: 03/20.	As above.

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<p>The role and activity of the Safety Representative Groups should be revisited in light of the failure to re-institute properly attended meetings.</p>	<p><i>Head of Health and Community Protection / Senior Management Team:</i> A review of the function of the group, its attendees will be undertaken. PID: 03/20.</p>	<p>With Covid this group hasn't been able to meet. This will be timetabled when capacity across organisation allows. This work has, however, been included in Covid work streams as they progressed in alternative ways.</p>
<p>Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults – 22 January 2020</p>		
<p>The 'Safeguarding' homepage should be available with the other team pages rather than only being accessible through the search bar.</p>	<p>Engagement Officer: The new homepage is due to be launched on the intranet, it will be easy to locate and will be kept up-to-date. PID: End of Feb 2020</p>	<p>The new homepage was launched on the intranet on 14 July 2020. It is accessible through the team pages, in the Staff Resources section in Useful Links, as well as using the search bar of the intranet. The homepage is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in guidance and procedures. The intranet main page has also highlighted specific safeguarding issues e.g. County Lines and Hate Crime.</p>
<p>The whistleblowing policy should be reviewed and corrected with the current information.</p>	<p>Audit and Risk Manager: The whistleblowing policy is about to undergo a thorough review and, as part of that process, will be updated with the correct information. PID: Feb 2020</p>	<p>The Audit Risk Manager and one of the HR Business Partners have reviewed the Policy thoroughly. Time now needs to be found to update the document before eventually storing it on the intranet.</p>

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Local Elections – 2 March 2020		
<p>New payment rates should be formally agreed for all relevant posts with agreements regarding pay award uplifts being adhered to.</p>	<p><i>Democratic Services Manager:</i> New payment rates will be presented to a meeting of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee prior to the May 2020 elections. PID: April 2020</p>	<p>The report on fees is going to the Licensing & regulatory Committee on 8 February 2021.</p>
<p>Arrangements should be made to pay the additional amount to the Chief Executive.</p>	<p><i>Electoral Services Manager:</i> The fee paid in relation to the elections to be held in May 2020 will be amended to include this additional amount. PID: July 2020</p>	<p>The amount paid to the Chief Executive, as Returning Officer in respect of contested Town and Parish elections held in May 2019 was incorrect by £183.04. Arrangement for this amount to be paid the Returning Officer, will be included with the fee to be paid as Returning Officer for the Police Crime Commissioner and Warwickshire County Council Elections to be held on Thursday 6 May 2021.</p>

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Events Management – 31 March 2020		
<p>A penalty should be established for markets that go ahead without approval.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> This will form part of a bigger piece of work that is going on to rejuvenate the markets. The Market policy and the pricing structure are all being looked at. As part of that review, and in light of emerging CV-19 plans to restart the markets and events once it is appropriate to do so, we will consider the merits of a penalty for markets operating without permission. PID: December 2020.</p>	<p>I have been looking at this a part of the wider work of re writing the markets policy and tendering out the new market operators contract. Penalty charges differ from council to council and are sometimes just eluded too, rather than a monetary figure given. Personally, I would like to have a monetary figure given.</p>
<p>An appeals process should be established to allow organisers the opportunity to appeal should permission be denied.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> Part of the same piece of work mentioned above. The whole process of new markets needs looked at and the practicalities of this recommendation will be considered in light of the overall markets review. PID: December 2020.</p>	<p>An appeals process is mentioned in the current markets policy, but it is not formally laid out. Once the new markets policy is agreed then a new appeals process should be listed along with it. This is an ongoing bit of work alongside the wider market work.</p>

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<p>The markets policy should be publicised appropriately to create awareness of it amongst organisers and venues within the district.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> The Business Support & Events pages on the website are being reviewed and improved. We have already started benchmarking with other councils. This work is already underway and will form part of the overall Departmental and Council wide restart of events and markets post the current CV-19 crisis. PID: December 2020.</p>	<p>The Market Policy is already available on the WDC website, but we will be highlighting its location through the new Events Manual which will act as the one stop shop for all events organisers.</p>
<p>The status of the Operational Agreement as a true licence document should be clarified with legal advice and documented for future reference.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> This is a long-standing issue and as part of this report, the Team Manager will ensure sure that this is looked over by our legal team and not just taken as a given. PID: September 2020.</p>	<p>No further response required.</p>
<p>Payment of bonds or deposits specified in contractual agreements should be followed and incorporated into a procedure document for future staff to follow.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> This process does need to be re-enforced and implemented. This may be as simple as taking a cheque and holding it in our safe until the mop is finished and then returning it or cashing it depending on any damages. The BSE Team Manager will discuss this with our legal team. PID: October 2020.</p>	<p>This has now been agreed and a full list of the Bonds have been listed in the new Events Manual which is in the final stages of development. When the events finally start again we will be taking bonds.</p>

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<p>There should be clarification over the definition of “markets” and staff should be following the legislation as appropriate.</p> <p>The markets policy should be reviewed and updated accordingly.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i></p> <p>This will be looked at as part of the market policy and a map of the chartered area will be produced so that we can look at the area covered and if there are any markets taking place. Other councils that are affected by this charter will be contacted to make sure they are aware of the area covered.</p> <p>PID: December 2020.</p>	<p>We have researched the definition of market and this is noted in the new events manual. The Markets Policy is being updated and a link to the policy is in the new events manual to make is easy to find.</p>
<p>The role of the Events staff should be considered when reviewing the risk register to ensure appropriate measures are in place to reduce any risks relevant to them.</p>	<p><i>Business Manager - Projects and Economic Development:</i></p> <p>The risk register is reviewed regularly and this will be raised as a risk and monitored going forward.</p> <p>PID: Immediate and ongoing.</p>	<p>An element of risk to WDC Events Staff responsible for facilitating and attendance at events has been added to the Development Services, Business Portfolio Holder risk register. Mitigation to include relevant risk assessments for attendance at events and appropriate PPE if required for WDC staff. Virtually no events have taken place since the first lockdown, and events for 2021 look likely to be heavily impacted and many may not proceed.</p>

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<p>A formal review of expenditure with suppliers should be undertaken by service managers, with the appropriate procurement practices being followed for all suppliers.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> Business Support and Events Team Manager has already looked into the current and historic expenditure with suppliers and made some improvements. This work will be ongoing and continued close monitoring with the Procurement Team will take place. It is recognised that this issue does not lie solely with events and markets. PID: January 2021.</p>	<p>This is a piece of work that has been brought up by in the audit and by myself separately. I have a meeting with procurement in the following month to work on some new contracts to formally appoint businesses for the various lines of expenditure. Work has already started to reduce this additional random expenditure in relation to the Christmas lights.</p>
<p>The Procurement team should be contacted immediately to discuss the issues over the expenditure with CJ's Events.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager:</i> I have already spoken to Procurement and we are looking at ways that this element can either be included in an existing contract or the creation of a new contract to go out for tender. PID: Ongoing.</p>	<p>This is the main company that the issue above refers too. I am working with procurement to make this type of expenditure/work a specific contract that can be tendered out.</p>

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<p>The potential of charging for events should be explored. This will allow the team to maximise their income and reduce the current overspending of budgets. If it is decided to charge, a formal scale of fees and charges should be put in place.</p>	<p><i>Business Support Team Manager / Business Manager - Projects and Economic Development:</i> This is already underway through conversations with the Portfolio Holder. We are doing research on other councils and what they do and don't charge for and how much they charge. We are also listing the events we have and what it currently costs the council to put on. Current year budgets have been uplifted to reflect the actual costs of events and markets as they stand but it is recognised that the service area should look to maximise income and reduce expenditure for the Council going forward. PID: November 2020.</p>	<p>No further response required.</p>
<p>Banking Arrangements – 2 March 2020</p>		
<p>The payment information screenshots should be included in the retention policy for Finance to ensure that their retention is justified and that they are only held for the appropriate length of time.</p>	<p><i>Strategic Finance Manager:</i> The need to retain these will be reviewed and a decision will be subsequently made as to whether there is a need to include these in the retention policy. This will also be considered as part of the implementation of the new Financial Management System. PID: June 2020.</p>	<p>Screenshots not required to confirm that payment has been made, as this information is held within the system.</p>

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VAT Accounting – 5 March 2020		
<p>VAT compliance in respect of e-receipting by the Council's on-line payment portals and systems processing telephone payments should be investigated.</p>	<p><i>Head of Finance:</i> Work with the Housing Services Team and Building Control teams (with potential IT support) to implement process to ensure compliance. PID: September 2020.</p>	<p>Response Outstanding.</p>