

Crawley Borough Council

Report to the Audit Committee

3 September 2024

Internal Audit Progress Report

Report of the Deputy Head of Southern Internal Audit Partnership – FIN/667

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Committee has a responsibility to review the Internal Audit Progress report to ensure that action has been taken by relevant managers on risk based issues identified by Internal Audit.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is requested to receive this report and note progress to date, as at 31 July 2024.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. The Committee has a responsibility to ensure that action has been taken by relevant Managers on risk based issues identified by Internal Audit.

4. Background

- 4.1. The Committee approved its Internal Audit Plan at its meeting of 12 March 2024.
- 4.2. Under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, the Council is responsible for:
 - ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of functions and includes arrangements for the management of risk; and
 - undertaking an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards and guidance.
- 4.3. In accordance with proper internal audit practices (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards), the Chief Internal Auditor is required to provide a written status report to the Audit Committee, summarising:
 - The status of 'live' internal audit reports (outstanding management actions);
 - an update on progress against the annual audit plan;

- a summary of internal audit performance, planning and resourcing issues;
- a summary of significant issues that may impact on the Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion.

1.2 The progress report is attached at Appendix A and provides a clear and transparent articulation of internal audit activity, performance, and outcomes during the period up to the end of July 2024.

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Southern Internal Audit Partnership

Assurance through excellence
and innovation

CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2024

Prepared by: Iona Bond, Deputy Head of Partnership

August 2024

1. Role of Internal Audit

The requirement for an internal audit function in local government is detailed within the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which states that a relevant body must:

‘Undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.’

The standards for ‘proper practices’ are laid down in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards [the Standards – updated 2017].

The role of internal audit is best summarised through its definition within the Standards, as an:

‘Independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisations’ operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes’.

The Council is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate risk management processes, control systems, accounting records and governance arrangements. Internal audit plays a vital role in advising the Council that these arrangements are in place and operating effectively.

The Council’s response to internal audit activity should lead to the strengthening of the control environment and, therefore, contribute to the achievement of the organisations’ objectives.

2. Purpose of report

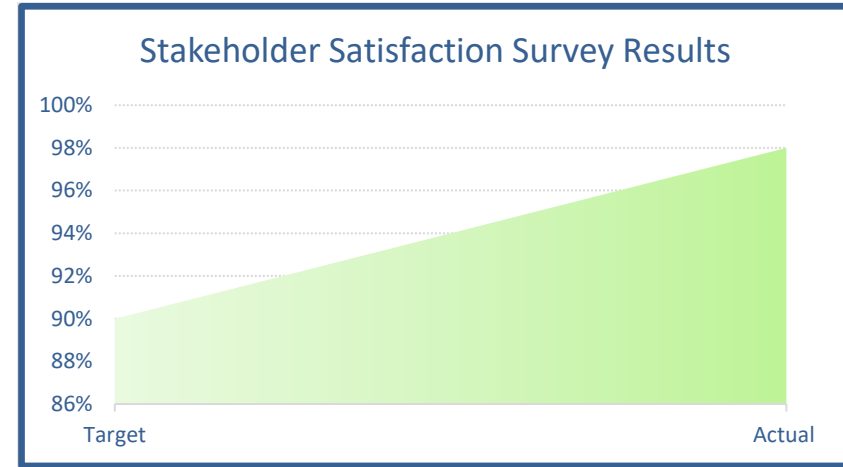
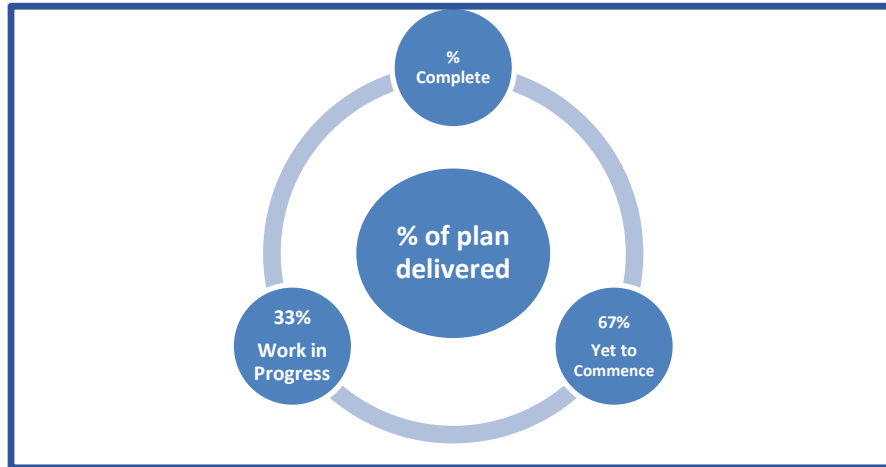
In accordance with proper internal audit practices (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards), and the Internal Audit Charter the Chief Internal Auditor is required to provide a written status report to ‘Senior Management’ and ‘the Board’, summarising:

- The status of ‘live’ internal audit reports;
- an update on progress against the annual audit plan;
- a summary of internal audit performance, planning and resourcing issues; and
- a summary of significant issues that impact on the Chief Internal Auditor’s annual opinion.

Internal audit reviews culminate in an opinion on the assurance that can be placed on the effectiveness of the framework of risk management, control and governance designed to support the achievement of management objectives of the service area under review. The assurance opinions are categorised as follows:

Substantial	<i>A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited</i>
Reasonable	<i>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.</i>
Limited	<i>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.</i>
No	<i>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.</i>

3. Performance dashboard



Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

An 'External Quality Assessment' of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership was undertaken by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) in September 2020. The report concluded:

'The mandatory elements of the IPPF include the Definition of Internal Auditing, Code of Ethics, Core Principles and International Standards. There are 64 fundamental principles to achieve with 118 points of recommended practice. We assess against the principles. It is our view that the Southern Internal Audit Partnership conforms to all 64 of these principles.'

'We have also reviewed SIAP conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and Local Government Application Note (LGAN). We are pleased to report that SIAP conform with all relevant, associated elements.'

4. Analysis of 'Live' audit reviews

Audit Review	Report Date	Audit Sponsor	Assurance Opinion	Total Management Action(s)*	Not Yet Due	Complete	Overdue		
							L	M	H
2022/23 Reviews									
Air Quality Management	07.02.2023	HofCoS	Reasonable	3 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)		1	
Compliance – Gas Safety (Housing Stock)	08.03.2023	HofCH	Reasonable	12 (6)	0 (0)	8 (5)		3	1
Health and Safety – Driver Safety Training	13.04.2023	Hof GP&P	Limited	7 (3)	0(0)	2 (0)		2	3
Contract Management	18.09.2023	HofCF	Limited	6 (1)	3 (0)	0(1)		2	
2023/24 Reviews									
Compliance - Electrical Safety (Housing Stock)	13.10.2023	HofCH	Limited	6 (2)	0 (0)	0 (2)	1	3	2
IT Asset Management	15.12.2023	HofD&T	Reasonable	3 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)		1	
Housing Responsive Repairs	20.12.2023	HofCH	Reasonable	14 (0)	1 (0)	6 (0)		7	
Community Facilities –Regulatory Compliance	09.02.2024	HofCH	Reasonable	4 (0)	1 (0)				
Compliance – Fire Safety (Housing Stock)	09.04.2024	HofCH	Reasonable	8 (7)	0 (0)	2 (2)	1		5
Procurement	30.04.2024	HofCF	Limited	4 (0)	0 (0)				
Nuisance and Anti Social Behaviour	30.05.2024	HofCH	Reasonable	4 (1)	1 (0)	2 (0)			1
Data Backup and Ransomware Protection	31.05.2024	HofD&T	Reasonable	10 (1)	7 (0)	3 (1)			
Accounts Receivable and Debt Management	14.06.2024	HofCF	Reasonable	3 (3)	0(0)	2 (2)			1
Homelessness	28.06.2024	HofSS	Reasonable	6 (3)	3 (1)	2 (2)			1
Community Infrastructure levy	18.06.2024	HofE&P	Reasonable	2 (0)	2 (0)				
S106 Agreements	18.06.2024	HofE&P	Reasonable	2 (0)	2 (0)				
Housing Rents	03.07.2024	HofCH	Limited	5 (5)	3 (3)	2 (2)			
Main Accounting	19.07.2024	HofCF	Limited	10 (2)	10 (2)				
Total							3	19	14

*Total number of actions (total number of high priority actions)





Audit Sponsor

HofCF	Head of Corporate Finance	HofD&T	Head of Digital and Transformation
HofE&P	Head of Economy and Planning	HofComS	Head of Commercial Services
HofCoS	Head of Community Services	HofGP&P	Head of Governance, People and Performance
HofCH	Head of Crawley Homes	HofSS	Head of Strategic Housing

5. Executive Summaries of reports published concluding a ‘Limited’ or ‘No’ assurance opinion

There has been one report published concluding a “Limited” assurance opinion to date during 2024/25.

Housing Rents

Audit Sponsor	Assurance opinion	Management Actions		
Head of Crawley Homes				

Summary of key observations:

Following the introduction of the Active H System in early 2023 some initial issues regarding reporting functionality were identified. Whilst our audit confirmed that these were being actively followed up and progress monitored they remained unresolved at the time of the audit. The impact of these being that effective monitoring, particularly around arrears was being hampered. Additionally, we identified that there was also a lack of understanding within the team regarding what reporting functionality was available for use.

Our testing identified that rent reports arrears values did not match with the rent arrears balance reports and although weekly reconciliation is manually being undertaken, there were some discrepancies. The issues identified were due to either lack of team understanding of the system or completing the

process slightly out of sync. In addition, a review of provided examples of Pro-Active Arrears monitoring within Active H (as of July 2024) clearly showed explanations of some of the key points helping with focussed arrears monitoring.

There have been some issues with the team reconciling differences, therefore it is important for the team to understand the need of reconciling items and the timing of postings in terms of the reporting capabilities to ensure it ties into the period end timescales in the system.

Although a rent review (including Affordable Rent) was undertaken and outcome validated by Finance at Go-Live in February 2023, our testing found some instances of new tenancies where the rent increase was not correctly applied.

6. Planning & Resourcing

The internal audit plan for 2024/25 was presented to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Audit Committee in March 2024.

The audit plan remains fluid to provide a responsive service that reacts to the changing needs of the Council. A number of changes have been made to the plan and these are shown in the table in section 8.

We are satisfied that the revised audit plan for the year remains robust and sufficient to enable an annual assurance statement to be provided.

Progress against the plan is detailed within section 7.

7. Rolling Work Programme

Audit Review	Sponsor	Scoping	Terms of Reference	Fieldwork	Draft Report	Final Report	Assurance Opinion	Comment
2023/24 Reviews								
Housing Rents	HofCH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Limited	
2024/25 Reviews								

Audit Review	Sponsor	Scoping	Terms of Reference	Fieldwork	Draft Report	Final Report	Assurance Opinion	Comment
Governance								
Asset Management (Council Buildings) – Repairs and Maintenance	HofComS							Q4
Commercial Properties	HofCF	✓	✓					
Safeguarding	HofCoS							Q3
Risk Management	HofCF HofGP&P	✓	✓	✓				
HR and Organisational Development	HofGP&P							Q4
Information Governance	HofGP&P							Q2
IT								
User Access	HofD&T							Q4
Project Risk Management	HofD&T	✓	✓	✓				Q1
Core financial								
Accounts Payable	HofCF							Q3
Medium Term Financial Planning	HofCF							Q3
Housing Benefits	HofCF	✓	✓	✓				
Delivering affordable homes for Crawley and reducing homelessness								
Homelessness	HofSS							Q4
Regulatory Compliance – Water Checks	HofCH							Q4
Regulatory Compliance - Asbestos	HofCH	✓	✓	✓				
Cleaning and Clearance	HofCH	✓	✓	✓				
Protecting the environment								
Refuse Collection and Recycling	HofComS	✓						
Improving job opportunities and developing the local economy								
Crawley Growth Programmes	HofE&P HofCF							Q3
Towns Fund	HofE&P HofCF	✓	✓	✓				

Audit Review	Sponsor	Scoping	Terms of Reference	Fieldwork	Draft Report	Final Report	Assurance Opinion	Comment
Creating stronger communities								
Environmental Health – Food Safety	HofCoS							Q2
Environmental Health – Health and Safety Licensing	HofCoS							Q2
Community Grants	HofCoS							Q2
Disabled Facilities Grants	HofSS							Q3
Other								
Vehicle Workshop/Fleet Management	HofComS							Q4
Parking and Enforcement	HofCoS							Q4

8. Adjustments to the Internal Audit Plan

The following adjustments to the plan have been made:

Plan Variations	
Added to the Plan	Reason
Regulatory Compliance – Asbestos	Cancellation from 2023/24
Removed from the Plan	Reason
Leasehold Management	To accommodate the Regulatory Compliance – Asbestos review
Tenancy Management	Incorrectly included within 24/25 Plan. Due in 25/26
Council Tax	Service capacity issues for Q3 due to number of scheduled audits. Annual billing precludes ability to undertake in Q4. Moved to Q1 25/26

Annexe 1

Overdue 'High Priority' Management Actions

Compliance – Gas Safety Audit (Housing Stock) – Reasonable Assurance**Observation:**

The Council has a contractual arrangement with a third party to undertake gas safety checks and included in the terms of the contract is an agreement to comply with Data Protection legislation between the parties. The Council shares gas safety data with the contractor which includes information relating to individuals residing in council owned properties. The contract states that "Notwithstanding this clause 30, in the event that the Service Provider is reasonably expected to be acting as a Data Processor it shall enter into a data sharing agreement with the Client". We requested a copy of the Data Sharing Agreement between the two parties however we were informed that the Council was not able to locate the Data Sharing Agreement that was in place. Without reference to the Data Sharing Agreement the Council cannot define what is the parties' roles and the purpose of the data sharing and what is going to happen to the data.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
If there is no DSA present in the strong room, we will draft and issue a DSA between the Client and the Service Provider.	28.04.2023	30.09.2024	Work in progress. New DSA being drafted.

Health and Safety – Driver Safety Training – Limited Assurance**Observation:**

The Council's Vehicle Policy requires a Manager or Supervisor to complete a Grey Fleet Register Form for drivers using their own vehicle/s during any Council business to ensure the vehicles are 'fit for purpose', taxed and roadworthy. The purpose of the form is to capture that a drivers Driving Licence, Road Fund Licence Disc, Insurance Certificate and MOT Certificate has been checked annually at the same time as the CBC Drivers Assessment Form and placed on file.

A sample of 25 drivers were selected for testing across three service areas; these were Crawley Homes, Communities and Neighbourhood Services. Of the 25 drivers, 11 were drivers that used their own vehicles and should have been subject to completion of a Grey Fleet Register Form. This had not been

completed for any of the drivers, nor were the Services Managers aware of the requirement.

We also noted that vehicle tax discs were abolished in 2014 and therefore, the requirement to check a drivers 'Road Fund Licence Disc' is obsolete. The Council can check this on the Gov website at <https://www.gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax> and may wish to amend the wording in the Vehicle Policy if this is still a requirement.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
All employees who use their personal vehicle for council business will have their Driving Licence, Road Tax paid status, Insurance Certificate and MOT Certificate checked annually as part of their annual PDR (appraisal). The Grey Fleet Form (GFF) will be completed as a record of these checks. Further, all council vehicle drivers will have their driver licences checked annually during PDRs. These driver checks (via PDRs) will next take place between mid-June and the end of August 2023. (Head of Governance, People and Performance to seek confirmation of completion of this initial task from line managers).	30.09.2023	31.10.2024	The new process was to be launched this year 24/25. The target is to do this in mid-September 24 when everyone has returned from leave. Service managers will have to do the checks for 24/25 and this may be done at PDR time if that suits.

Health and Safety – Driver Safety Training – Limited Assurance

Observation:

All employees driving on Council business, whether they are operating personal, or fleet vehicles are subject to driver risk assessments completed by line management.

A sample of 25 drivers were selected for audit testing. One Driver Assessment Form could not be provided, leaving 24 available for testing.

On 4 occasions the drivers risk rating had not been calculated correctly. This meant that:

- One driver was scored 15 points rather than 35, still making them low risk.
- One driver was scored 35 instead of 40 taking them from low to medium risk.

- One driver score had not been populated in the available fields nor had their total risk rating been calculated. When populated by Audit, the driver's score put them at medium risk.
- One driver score had been incorrectly calculated as 45 instead of 55 taking them from medium to high risk.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
All employees who use their personal vehicle for council business or drive council vehicles will undergo a Driver Risk Assessment (DRA) annually as part of their annual PDR (appraisal). These will next take place between mid-June and the end of August 2023. Line Managers (conducting the assessments) will be reminded to take care in completing this task accurately. (Head of Governance, People and Performance to seek confirmation of completion of this initial task from line managers).	31.08.2023	31.01.2025	To follow the above
The Health & Safety Team will review a small sample from across the organisation to scrutinise the accuracy of scoring.	30.09.2023	31.01.2025	

Compliance – Electrical Safety (Housing Stock) - Limited Assurance

Observation:

There is an Electrical Safety Policy in place which covers the legislation, staff responsibilities, Council's responsibilities, tenants and leaseholders' responsibilities as well as contractors' responsibilities. It also covers legal access and enforcement, repairs and re-wires and data management. The policy was due for a review in December 2022, however, there is no documentation to substantiate that a review took place and no evidence that the policy was approved by the Head of Crawley Homes. In addition, the policy states in section 14 that; 'Failure to allow access after 3 attempts/ 3 letters should result in the case being passed back to Crawley Borough Council legal department to progress through one of the routes identified below. ' However, there is no mention of any routes to resolve these outstanding checks, which makes this section of the policy incomplete.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
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<p>The Electrical Safety Policy will be amended to correct the ‘Head of Property’ to ‘Head of Crawley Homes’. The review will also incorporate the outcome of the review of no access compliancy visits being undertaken together by the new Policy and Engagement Manager, with the agreed outcome being incorporated into the Policy document.</p> <p>Once agreed the amended Electrical Safety Policy document will be submitted to the Head of Crawley Homes, Amanda Kendall, for her comment with any changes (if applicable) incorporated and corporately approved.</p>	30.11.2023	30.09.2024	Specialist supplier engaged to assist with Policy documentation in partnership with Crawley Homes.
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Compliance – Electrical Safety (Housing Stock) - Limited Assurance

Observation:

As of the 31 March 2023, there were 1,199 properties (approximately 15%) overdue electrical safety checks. The Asset Surveyor and Compliance Manager advised that currently they are prioritising checks on all properties due by 31 March 2023 and additional resources have been allocated to complete this.

The policy states that after three attempts, the cases would be passed on to the Council’s legal department to take action. There is no evidence of cases being passed to legal department or any actions taken by the legal department to gain access to the properties with overdue electrical checks. There is no evidence available to demonstrate that there is an escalation or monitoring/reporting process in place for properties once three attempts to carry out electrical safety checks are exhausted. Currently, there is a significant number of electrical inspections overdue with some being around 10 years overdue.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
<p>Improvements have been made in the number of overdue EICRs since the time of audit fieldwork. Whilst the number of overdue EICRs remains at a level which is not acceptable there is evidence that the additional resource allocated to complete all overdue EICRs this financial year is making meaningful progress. Noncompliance has been reduced from 15% to 10% since time of fieldwork, and on this</p>	01.04.2024	01.09.2024	<p>In progress. Non-compliance currently 8% with improvements still being made.</p>

current trajectory outstanding inspections will have been addressed by the end of this financial year.			
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Compliance – Fire Safety (Housing Stock) - Reasonable Assurance

Observation:

Currently, there are two separate records maintained for FRAs. One is maintained by the Council and the other one is maintained by the contractor (FRUK). The FRUK record of all properties is split in three sections for FRAs to be carried out every three years. The total of these properties including all properties in the three yearly inspection cycle came to 499, however the number of properties listed on the records maintained by the Council is 509. Although we were advised that this is due to differences between the two lists in how sub blocks are split, there is the potential for inspections to be missed if there is inconsistency in the way in which properties are recorded.

At the time of our testing there were 26 FRAs that were past their due date as specified in the records. 9 of these were subsequently completed in October and the contractor confirmed that the remaining 17 are due to be completed by the end of this year.

Our testing of a sample of FRA's confirmed that that contractors' records of the dates the risk assessments were carried out matched with the records maintained by the Council.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
<p>The reason that the data was held on an excel spreadsheet by CBC is that asset records held until the implementation of Active-H recorded a block as a Leaseholder defined element, and not an independent block. As such there is a single Leasehold block of 99 flats which has 17 different FRA. It is best practice to undertake 17 individual FRAs as opposed to the single Assessment. Within Active-H the relationship between block and flat now contains a mid-level 'sub-block' in the asset hierarchy which under we are now able record FRAs against this asset to satisfy the Fire Safety Order and dispense with the excel records.</p> <p>The discrepancy between records (between CBC and FRUK) was due to larger blocks being split into 'sub-blocks' by CBC to follow best practice. Once the FRA dates are placed within the relevant sub-block</p>	31.05.2024	30.08.2024	The development within Active-H is finalised in Live, a Request For Change application (which is Free Of Charge) is submitted and system configured to receive change. Successful implementation of which will close action.

of Active-H this will be issued to the Service Provider to reconcile for accuracy, and when achieved will act as the Master Document which can be run as a report for the single source of truth. Active-H will negate the manual intervention of updating dates as a job issued (once marked as complete, will reset the anniversary date to the pre-set criteria.			
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Compliance – Fire Safety (Housing Stock) - Reasonable Assurance

Observation:

There is no formal documented corporate policy, procedure or guidance detailing roles and responsibilities for staff and covering the end-to-end process of Fire Safety management. Management of FRAs and raising instructions to remedy any actions identified is managed by two members of the team.

Although there are Fire Safety policies for each site that requires FRAs covering general needs, hostels, and sheltered accommodation, our review confirmed that only five out of the seventeen policies are in date.

In addition, there is a fire policy which covers enclosed blocks of flat. However, it is dated January 2018 and requires reviewing.

We were advised that FRA's are carried out on a 3 yearly cycle, however there were no documents provided that identified this timescale, or the escalation process where this timescale is not complied with.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
An overarching Fire Safety Policy is being prepared which will identify the roles and responsibilities of CBC Officers in relation to Fire Safety, detailing ownership in the processes of Active-H to record, report, document and execute Fire Safety Management in relation to blocks of flats where relevant legislation is appropriate. This will include details of the full Compliance Team, which has grown from 2 to 4 members following a recent recruitment and management review process.	31.05.2024	01.09.2024	Specialist supplier engaged to assist with Policy documentation in partnership with Crawley Homes.
The building specific Fire Safety Policies are currently being reviewed, with 14 of the 17 Policies in final draft stage for the review of the	31.05.2024	30.09.2024	The Compliance Team have scoped the brief for Impart Links to assist with a review of macro policies.

Head of Crawley Homes for ratification. The outstanding 3 Policies (including enclosed blocks of flats) are part of a review of Policies which will ensure that all have been reviewed and confirmed by the Head of Crawley Homes.			This will be issued this month with hopefully the draft updated policy available during September for managers to review. Building specific policies have been reviewed with comment by the HoS.
The roles and responsibilities of the Service Provider will be defined by the outcome of Action 3.1, with responsible Officers confident of the current Service providers abilities and professionalism to meet the required level of Service in the interim period.	28.06.2024	30.09.2024	Procurement Team engaged and working with external provider to secure service provider in contract with clearly defined terms, conditions, and responsibilities.

Compliance – Fire Safety (Housing Stock) - Reasonable Assurance

Observation:

There is an agreement in place with the service provider (Fire Risk UK) which is dated 2012, however the start or finish date is not specified. This agreement is not signed by a representative of the Council. It does not provide any information on any processes, responsibilities or expectations from the Council. The agreement refers to specification attached in annex, but this was not available. There is an invoice attached with the document which states that the contract term is minimum one year and this is signed by both parties and is dated 25.04.2012.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
A procurement exercise will take place on the Fire Risk Assessment and Fire Safety Management of CBC assets, this will clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Service Provider through Contractual Obligations and will set out the terms and conditions service delivery, along with the contract duration.	28.06.2024		

Nuisance and Anti Social Behaviour - Reasonable Assurance

Observation:

A review of the Council's published ASB Policy identified that it was brief, with limited coverage of the Council's ASB roles and responsibilities. At the time of our review the Tenancy Services Manager confirmed that the ASB Policy was being revised and updated and following all relevant internal consultation and, as at January 2024, pending a couple of minor amendments still to be made, was ready for consultation with customers and stakeholders. Although the Policy is anticipated to be operational from April 2024, a clear deadline has not yet been set to ensure that this is achieved. Our review of the draft updated version of the Policy found it to be much more comprehensive, and to set out the Council's ASB roles and responsibilities more thoroughly.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
Consultation is currently running until 25 March 2024, feedback to be reviewed and any necessary changes to be made. Go Live target date end of May 2024.	31.07.2024	30.09.2024	Policy has been updated and is awaiting senior manager sign off (delayed due to annual leave).

Accounts Receivable and Debt Management - Reasonable Assurance

Observation:

Within the Corporate debt policy, there are inconsistent references to the role of Head of Corporate Finance which include Head of Corporate Finance and Head of Finance. According to the Corporate Debt Policy, write offs are undertaken twice a year. All write offs under £2500 are approved by the Head of Finance. All write offs between £2500 - £50k are approved by the Leader of the Council. All write offs over £50k are approved by Cabinet.

At the time of testing, the last write off approved by the Head of Corporate Finance was on 15 December 2022. Prior to this it was reported the previous write off exercise was in 2020. The latest write offs included transactions raised in 2013. It was confirmed at the close of audit meeting that a write off exercise was undertaken in March 2024 after the testing ended.

Our testing also revealed that a total of £50,070.61 is currently suppressed under the category of awaiting write off. Analysis of the accounts identified it covers debts raised between 2013 to 2024. The data supplied in relation to suppressed accounts also identified 57 debts totalling £33k, which was statute barred. This suggests that timely review of debt is not being undertaken or recovery action is not being progressed.

Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
We will have a write off action every 6 months, the next session is planned June/July. This will incorporate a thorough review of debt and consider all necessary debts for write-off, therefore avoiding items that are statute barred remaining without being written off.	31.07.2024	31.10.2024	We have started the process for the June/July write offs and submitted them for approval. For some of the accounts the process will be straight forward and we should be able to implement them shortly after approval. We have included on the list some Town Centre Bid levy invoices, for those ones we will need their Board approval which meets on 25th September.

Homelessness - Reasonable Assurance			
<p>Observation:</p> <p>Homelessness relief duty lasts for 56 days, the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities states that a homeless person owed main housing duty should be notified on day 57, unless significant further investigation is needed.</p> <p>The Housing Options Officer enters in the Abrisas system the date they notify the homeless person at each stage of the process. We obtained a report from the Abrisas for homelessness applications between October 2023 – March 2024 showing the relief start and end date, and main duty start date. We tested to ensure main duty had been notified on day 57.</p> <p>Of the 111 cases tested we found only 7 had been notified of main duty support on day 57 (6% of the total cases tested), and 104 had been beyond day 57.</p>			
Management Action	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Latest Service Update
Additional resources have been brought into the team for a period of 3 months to address the backlog of over due main duty decisions after day 56 (officers started in the roles mid May).	31.07.2024	TBC	Additional resources in place and progressing.

Annexe 2

Overdue 'Low & Medium Priority' Management Actions (July 2023)

Audit Review	Report Date	Opinion	Priority	Due Date	Revised Due Date
Air Quality Management	07.02.2023	Reasonable	Medium	01.07.2023	31.03.2025
Compliance – Gas Safety Audit (Housing Stock)	08.03.2023	Reasonable	Medium	31.03.2023	31.08.2024
			Medium	31.03.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	28.04.2023	31.08.2024
Health and Safety – Driver Safety Training	13.04.2023	Limited	Medium	31.03.2024	31.12.2023
			Medium	30.04.2024	31.01.2025
Contract Management	18.09.2023	Limited	Medium	30.11.2023	31.12.2024
			Medium	30.11.2023	31.12.2024
Compliance - Electrical Safety (Housing Stock)	13.10.2023	Limited	Medium	30.11.2023	30.09.2024
			Medium	30.11.2023	31.08.2024
			Medium	30.11.2023	31.08.2024
			Low	30.12.2023	30.09.2024
IT - Asset Management	15.12.2023	Reasonable	Medium	01.03.2024	31.08.2024
Housing Responsive Repairs	20.12.2023	Reasonable	Medium	31.01.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	30.04.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	30.04.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	30.04.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	30.04.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	31.05.2024	31.08.2024
			Medium	31.05.2024	30.09.2024

Compliance – Fire Safety (Housing Stock)	09.04.2024	Reasonable	Low	30.12.2023	01.09.2024