

# Audit Agenda



**Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 7.30 pm**

## **Conference Room 2 - The Forum**

The Councillors listed below are requested to attend the above meeting, on the day and at the time and place stated, to consider the business set out in this agenda.

### Membership

Councillor Birnie  
Councillor Douris  
Councillor Elliot

Councillor S Hobson  
Councillor Reynolds (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Stewart (Chair)

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support on 01442 228209

## **AGENDA**

### **10. PRE-MEETING QUESTIONS & RESPONSES (Pages 2 - 8)**

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### QUESTIONS TABLE – WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER

Report Title: SICA Report

Page and Paragraph Number	Question	Responsible Officer	Response
Page 21	How many garages do we manage? How many garages have credit amounts of over £1000?	Head of Housing Operations	In total we have 5392 let garages. At the time of audit there were 3 accounts over £1000. We have refunded money on 2 of these accounts. There is currently 1 account with arrears over £1000 and we have taken steps to contact the tenant.
Page 22	What does CHCK mean?	Head of Housing Operations	CHCK stands for check. It is an account code used by managers on Orchard when an account has been checked.
Page 25	Action: Ask F&R OSC if they would benefit from sight of delivery plans for identified savings in the MTFS	Head of Financial Services	Head of Financial Services will raise with Chair of F+R OSC.
Page 26	Why is this titled “Executive Summary”?	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	This is a standardised page aimed at senior management to allow for review to form a “helicopter view” of the target area. The nomenclature “Executive” was settled upon by TIAA and that is actually reflective of what a lot of other audit services providers call this page. You are correct in noting that Executive is not a term that sees a lot of usage at Dacorum Council, though some other councils use it a fair bit more. As you would probably expect Internal Audit Services do quite a bit of benchmarking and the terminology is broadly standardised with more convergence than variety.
Page 27	Will the training be delivered to Cabinet members and new SLT members before the workshop to review the risks in March?	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	TIAA could certainly accommodate that. Last time this was discussed I think that Feb/March was mentioned.
Page 32	Waste Management - what is under discussion	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	Both the specifics of the review and the timing of it. Fiona Jump has supported in some early discussions and I believe this is still ongoing.
Page 32	Are TIAA on course to deliver the planned audits?	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	I believe this should be fine. All audits are on TIAA’s resource tracker and TIAA resources are available to undertake all reviews. TIAA also have sufficient flexibility in

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			resources to adjust/flex should that be required. But it would be helpful to firm up start dates for all reviews.
Page 34	Is this recommendation and action acceptable to the SPE OSC?	Assistant Director Place, Communities and Enterprise/Hemel Garden Communities Programme Director	KPIs are to be developed when associated projects are in delivery mode. This is likely to be some years in the future. At this point projects are identified KPIS will be agreed and discussed with OSC.
Page 35 row 1	Is this recommendation and action acceptable to the SPE OSC?	Assistant Director Place, Communities and Enterprise.	The responsible officer is currently away from the office. A response will follow on their return.
Page 35 row 2	The revised implementation timetable date has passed. What is the estimated date for this MOU to be finalised and signed?	Hemel Garden Communities Programme Director	Wording addressing the employment liabilities has been discussed with St Albans District Council and Herts. County Council and the revised Memorandum of Understanding will be reported back to the Hemel Garden Communities Board on 14 <sup>th</sup> December.
Page 36 row 1	The revised implementation timetable date has passed. Should this be updated with the 30 November 2023 date in the Action taken column?	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	Priority 1 and 2 Revised dates are usually updated following oversight from the Audit Committee. After the Audit Committee this will happen should there be no pushback. However hopefully this should shortly be changed to actioned anyway.
Page 36 row 2	Is the date 31/12/23 realistic if this policy is being thoroughly reviewed and approved?	Head of Safe Communities	A revised implementation date of 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2024 has now been provided by the Head of Service.
Page 38	Who is the H&S consultant?	Claire Saunders, Health and Safety Consultant	The Council has employed Claire Saunders to undertake this role in the organisation.
Page 38	What is CHSR? Why was it reduced from 3 to 2?	Claire Saunders, Health and Safety Consultant	CHSR is the Corporate Health and Safety and Resilience team. There has been an issue with recruitment and in order to recruit to the two vacant posts there was a restructure of the team. It is now no longer responsible for the management of Regulatory Services Technical Assistants, (4 staff) and solely focused on Health, Safety

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			and Resilience. The current investment in Health and Safety required a Head of Service Post to sit at Corporate Leadership Team to drive forward any change programs. The additional resource for managing the Technical Assistant Team has been relocated to another team.
Page 4	Page 40 Why are these items classed as outstanding when the due date has not been passed?	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	<p>This was the tailored report for all recommendations to date that was requested.</p> <p>The thing that is outstanding is rectification or mitigation in respect of addressing the identified control deficiency.</p> <p>As such recommendations will be listed as outstanding even where the date has not yet passed.</p> <p>It provides you with oversight in respect of current control gaps and stands apart from whether actions have been implemented by a stated date.</p> <p>Further narrative is provided to explain it in 7. (on page 18)</p>
	Page 40 Where are the actions for Housing Repairs and Maintenance, Empty Homes, Procurement,	Philip Lazenby (TIAA)	We were asked to provide recommendations for this year's reports not for last years. Those reports are pertain to last Financial year and were issued delayed at management request except for empty homes which was issued on the 4 <sup>th</sup> April. If you wish us to provide an update for last year as well or to include these specific reviews that would be fine.

**Report Title:** Q1 & Q2 Strategic Risk Register

Page and Paragraph Number	Question	Responsible Officer	Response
General	<p>Previous questions submitted to 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023 Audit meeting apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the need for clearer risk descriptions</li> <li>- how mitigating actions will have the desired effect</li> </ul>	Strategic Leadership Team	This feedback has been passed on to those updating the Strategic Risk Register and will be reflected in the Q3 update. (Head of Financial Services).

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Page 43/44	Failure to Deliver Place Shaping and Regeneration ambitions. It is not clear what actions have directly contributed to the change in the risk score. Please explain what action has directly contributed to the reduction in consequence and or likelihood.	Strategic Director, Place	The responsible officer is currently away from the office. A response will follow on their return.
Page 44	Delivery of safe and good quality homes. This includes a clear explanation. Has the impact of the Social Housing Regulations Act and Building Safety Act been quantified? What is the estimated cost to the council of meeting the new legislative requirements?	Strategic Director, Housing and Property	It is difficult to quantify additional costs at this stage as we are waiting for the government to confirm and finalise different elements of the new statutory requirements in order to be able to take a view on the additional costs that may come from them. There is no new money to implement these new requirements so any additional costs would need to come from reallocations within existing budgets.
Page 69 Compliance with statutory and legislative requirements - comments row	“Review of Council statutory responsibilities underway which will link into future annual service planning process”. Can we have a briefing on this please (how will it work? what will this cover? when will it be ready? who is involved?)	Chief Executive	The request has been put to the responsible officer. Response to follow, this will be after committee on 22 <sup>nd</sup> November.
Page 69 Compliance with statutory and legislative requirements - comments row	“Preparation for Regulator of Social Housing Standards requirements is underway.” What are the regulators requirements and what is our assessment of preparedness?	Chief Executive	The request has been put to the responsible officer. Response to follow, this will be after committee on 22 <sup>nd</sup> November.
Page 69 comments row	What is the Dacorum Assurance Framework that is being developed?	Chief Executive	The request has been put to the responsible officer. Response to follow, this will be after committee on 22 <sup>nd</sup> November.
Page 70 Compliance with statutory and legislative requirements. Evidence Risk is being managed row	Can we see the monthly compliance report on General Fund and Housing Revenue Account assets presented to the Council's Strategic Leadership Team?	Chief Executive	The request has been put to the responsible officer. Response to follow, this will be after committee on 22 <sup>nd</sup> November.

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Page 70 Cyber attack/data breach - Evidence Risk is being managed row	Who independently assesses the technical infrastructure and security function? How often do they perform tests? What tests do they perform? What evidence do we have that they perform their tests against best practice?	Strategic Director, People and Transformation	Comment from the requestor- 'Appreciate this cannot be answered here and a separate secure response may be required' A response on this question will be circulated to Members separately via email due to its confidential nature.
Page 73 Financial Resilience - Comments	What is being done in the near term to manage the current projected pressure on the HRA of circa £400k in 23/24?	Strategic Director Housing and Property	The service are working on expenditure mitigations and income maximisation. These are the priority means of mitigation. Alongside this, the HRA holds revenue reserves that can be used to support the 23-24 revenue position if needed. This requires Member approval. Quarterly reports on the financial performance of the HRA go before Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. (Head of Financial Services).
Page 77 Place Shaping and Regeneration Evidence Risk is being managed	What is the scope and status of the cross-service work on HRA and General Fund assets to identify regeneration, place shaping and environmental improvement opportunities?	Strategic Director , Place	The responsible officer is currently away from the office. A response will follow on their return.
Page 78 Recruitment and retention of staff – Evidence Risk is being managed	What is the “revised market forces approach” and has it been implemented as stated in the comments row?	Strategic Director, People and Transformation	A new market forces policy was implemented in Spring 2023, which improved the approval and governance process in awarding Market Forces Payment’s to teams with recruitment/retention difficulties. Since then the Development Management team (Planning) were successful in their market forces business case and now receive a market forces payment. It is evident that the recent addition of the Market Forces Payment for the Development Management team generated significant interest in the latest recruitment campaign, which resulted in: Lead Planner with 14 applications and Planning Officer with 73 applications. These posts have now been appointed to with permanent members of staff.
Page 79 Working with Strategic Partners - Evidence Risk	First line may be a typo “Failure to work...”	Head of Financial Services.	Apologies, this is indeed a typo.



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Page 93 row 5 Ratio of HRA debt to revenues %	Are the negative estimates figures, correct? If yes, why have they changed so much?	Head of Financial Services	Yes these figures should not be negative and should read q1 506%, q2 495%. Apologies for the mistake.
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