



Dacorum Borough Council

Summary Internal Controls Assurance (SICA) Report

September 2024

Final



Summary Internal Controls Assurance

Introduction

1. This summary controls assurance report provides the Audit Committee with an update on the emerging Governance, Risk and Internal Control related issues and the progress of our work at Dacorum Borough Council between 15th July 2024 and 10th September 2024.

B Corp

2. TIAA Ltd has achieved its certification as a B Corporation (or B Corp), joining a growing movement of companies that are reinventing business for the benefit of all people and our shared planet. Verified by B Lab, the not-for-profit behind the B Corp movement, the achievement demonstrates that TIAA Ltd meets high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability alongside a commitment to goals beyond shareholder value.

The news comes as the ongoing climate crisis and widening social inequality continue to pose urgent challenges to our economy. B Corp Certification assesses the entirety of a business’ operations and currently covers five main impact areas: Governance, Workers, Community, Environment and Customers. The certification process is rigorous, with companies required to reach a score of 80 points in the B Impact Assessment while providing evidence of responsible practices relating to energy supplies, waste and water use, worker compensation, diversity, and corporate transparency. A business must also legally embed their commitment to purpose as well as profit in their company articles.

TIAA Ltd is now part of a growing community of over 8,000 businesses globally that have certified as B Corps. The B Corp community in the UK is one of the largest and fastest growing in the world, with over 1,700 companies spanning a range of different industries and sizes. Names include The Guardian, Innocent Drinks, Patagonia, Tony’s Chocolonely, The Big Issue, Finisterre, Elemis, and Sipsmith Gin.

Audits completed since the last SICA report to the Audit Committee

3. The table below sets out details of audits finalised since the previous meeting of the Audit Committee.

Audits completed since previous SICA report

Review	Evaluation	Key Dates			Number of Recommendations			
		Draft issued	Responses Received	Final issued	1	2	3	OEM
Leisure Contract	Reasonable	5th July 2024	22nd August 2024	11 th September 2024	0	0	2	1
Climate Change	Limited	13th February 2024	20th August 2024	11 th September 2024	0	6	3	3
Performance Management	Reasonable	5th February 2024	20th August 2024	11 th September 2024	0	3	0	1

Follow-up Review of Housing Allocations and Homelessness	Reasonable	30 th July 2024	16 th August 2024	29 th August 2024	0	1	1	2
Housing Regulatory Compliance and Building Safety	Reasonable	20 th August 2024	29 th August 2024	6 th September 2024	0	1	0	2

4. The Executive Summaries for each of the finalised reviews are included at Appendix A. There are no issues arising from these findings which would require the annual Head of Audit Opinion to be qualified.

Progress against the 2024/2025 Annual Plan

5. Our progress against the Annual Plan for 2023/24 is set out in Appendix B.
6. Follow Up will be reported in detail to the next Audit Committee in keeping with the agreed alternate committee approach with a detailed follow up schedule going to the 12th February 2025 Audit Committee to allow for final resolution of any concerning recommendations ahead of the year end.

Changes to the Annual Plan 2024/25

7. There have been no changes to the audit plan.

Progress in actioning priority 1 & 2 recommendations

8. We have made no Priority 1 recommendations (i.e. fundamental control issue on which action should be taken immediately) since the previous SICA.

Frauds/Irregularities

9. We have not been advised of any frauds or irregularities in the period since the last SICA report was issued.

Other Matters

10. We have issued a number of briefing notes and fraud digests, shown in Appendix C, since the previous SICA report.

Responsibility/Disclaimer

11. This report has been prepared solely for management's use and must not be recited or referred to in whole or in part to third parties without our prior written consent. The matters raised in this report not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all the improvements that might be made. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared, and is not intended, for any other purpose. TIAA neither owes nor accepts any duty of care to any other party who may receive this report and specifically disclaims any liability for loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature, which is caused by their reliance on our report.

Appendix A: Executive Summaries

The following Executive Summaries are included in this Appendix. Full copies of the reports are provided to the Audit Committee.

Review	Key Findings
Leisure Contract	<p>KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No printed name and/or job title of signatories appears on the contract agreement page. More frequent update to committee terms of reference is needed to ensure required attendees and that the council structure is up to date. No risks listed on the risk register pertain to the leisure contract management. <p>GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leisure contract between Dacorum Borough Council and Sport and Leisure Management Ltd is well defined and suitably signed off by all relevant parties. Clear and timely reporting of activities, attendance and finances of the Leisure provider, was evidenced.
Climate Change	<p>KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is at a very early stage in its preparedness for meeting the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Climate change considerations are not yet embedded into corporate decision making, targets and objectives. The Council's risk registers do not include any reference to climate change risks, and therefore do not identify actions that are needed to mitigate the impact and adapt to the consequences There is no forecast of how reductions in emissions will be achieved in order to deliver net-zero by 2050 and the associated milestones along the way. <p>GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive programme management framework has been put in place very recently to address the range of projects that need to be undertaken in order to deliver sustainable services into the future. The Council has high aspirations and very positive ambitions for reducing the likelihood and impact of Climate Change. There is a high level of activity being planned.
Performance Management	<p>KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policies or procedures were evidenced in regards to Performance Management. No process in place to check the validity of raw data sent across. <p>GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KPIs are set and monitored and reported monthly, and with a process manual in place for how to use the InPhase software which tracks KPI data.

Review	Key Findings
<p>Follow-up Review of Housing Allocations and Homelessness</p>	<p>KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 219 Homelessness Applications are currently classed as in 'triage', this is due to delays in the service area caused by team capacity and increased workload. • There has been an underspend of £50,058 on staff expenditure, the previous audit identified an £8,000 underspend. • Information in Quarterly Housing Needs Reports is outdated. <p>GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A framework has been put in place that limits Agency Staff usage, the forecast for Agency spending in 24/25 is £0.00.
<p>Housing Regulatory Compliance and Building Safety</p>	<p>KEY STRATEGIC FINDINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with the Building Safety Act 2022, high rise buildings have been registered with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). • The Safe Homes team are working with consultants to input data to a dynamic system, so that real time safety assessment reports can be provided when requested by the BSR. • Fire safety assessments have been completed for all properties, however monitoring of smoke alarm compliance is not systematically evidenced and noted. • Use of a new system MRI Asset commenced from April 2024, with data currently being input. All records for each property will ultimately be on this one system. <p>GOOD PRACTICE IDENTIFIED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Safe Homes team apply best practice frequencies to testing and servicing to exceed minimum legal requirements. • The Council provides access to void flats in high rise buildings for the fire service to carry out training simulations, and lessons learned are shared.

Appendix B: Progress against Annual Plan (i) 2023/24

System	Planned Quarter 23/24	Current Status	Comments
MTFS	1	Final – Report Nov	Final
Commercial Rents	2	Final – Report Nov	Final
Garage Rents	2	Final – Report Nov	Final
H&S - Corp	1	Final – Report Jan	Final
Risk Management Framework	2	Final	Final Issued 08/03/2024
Community Grants	2	Final	Final Issued 06/03/2024
Key Financial Controls	3	Final	Final Issued 06/03/2024
HRA H&S	1	Final	Final issued 23/04/2024 – Presented to July AC
Waste Management	3	Final	Final Issued 05/07/2024– Presented to July AC
Budgetary Control	3	Final	Final Issued 05/07/2024– Presented to July AC
Housing Rents	4	Final	Final Issued 05/07/2024– Presented to July AC
Leisure Contract	3	Final	Final Issued on 10 th September
Climate Change	4	Draft	Final Issued on 10 th September
Performance Management	3	Draft	Final Issued on 10 th September
Overtime and Additional Allowances	2	Discussion Draft - Indicative Reasonable Assurance (SS)	Discussion Draft. Awaiting feedback re exit meeting
Housing Allocations	4	Final 29th August	
Planning Enforcement	4	Discussion Draft (AP)	In progress
Planned and Preventative Estate Maintenance	4	In progress (LG)	In progress

System	Planned Quarter 23/24	Current Status	Comments
Housing Transformation Improvement Programme (HTIP)	4	Postponed	Postponed to 2024/25

KEY:

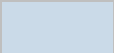
 To be commenced	 Site work commenced	 Draft report issued	 Final report issued
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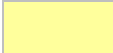
Appendix B: Progress against Annual Plan (ii) 2024/25


System	Planned Quarter 24/25	Current Status	Comments
Financial Resilience	1	Preliminary Meeting on the 26/6/24 Exit meeting 9/09/2024	
Key Financial Controls	1	Draft report issued 03/07/2024	
Community Engagement	1	Preliminary meeting 29/7/2024	
Business Continuity	1	Draft report issued 23/06/2024	
Housing Regulatory Compliance and Building Safety	1	Final Issued on 10/09/2024	
Fleet Management Strategy	2	Draft report issued 2/09/2024	
Private Sector Housing	2	Meeting schedule 25/09/2024 Head of Safe Communities joshua.smith@dacorum.gov.uk	
Capital Programme	2	Fieldwork in progress	
Income – Cash and Bank	3	Scoping Meeting 3/7/24 Preliminary meeting 28/11/2024	
Tenancy Management and Enforcement	3	Preliminary meeting set up for 16/10/24	
Leaseholders- review of section 20 process	3	Preliminary meeting set up for the 08/1/25	
MTFS	3	Preliminary Meeting scheduled October 2024	
Risk Management Framework	3	Preliminary Meeting 19/10/24	


System	Planned Quarter 24/25	Current Status	Comments
Housing Transformation and Improvement Programme (HTIP)	4	Deferred until September at client request, scoping meeting 13/09/2024	
Recruitment and Training	4	Scoping Meeting arranged for Preliminary Meeting on the 09/09/24	
Project Management	4	Preliminary meeting arranged for the 15/1/2025	
Licensing	4	Awaiting response to request for opening meeting.	

KEY:

 To be commenced

 Site work commenced

 Draft report issued

 Final report issued

Appendix C: Briefings on Developments in Governance, Risk and Control

TIAA produce regular briefing notes to summarise new developments in Governance, Risk, Control, Counter Fraud and Security Management which may have an impact on our clients. These are shared with clients and made available through our Online Client Portal. A summary list of those briefings issued in the last three months which may be of relevance to Docorum Borough Council is given below:

Summary of recent Client Briefings and Alerts

Briefing Type	Subject	Web Link	TIAA Comments
Data Protection Alert	New Digital Information and Smart Data Bill	New Digital Information and Smart Data Bill - TIAA	The UK government is introducing a Digital Information and Smart Data Bill (DISD), distinct from the previous government's failed Data Protection and Digital Information Bill in several ways. Learn more about this new bill and the actions to take to keep your data protected.
Client Briefing	The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023	The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 - TIAA	Learn about the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, aimed at boosting the UK's efforts to combat economic crime and improve corporate transparency. Discover the Act's key points and requirements.
Client Briefing	Cyber Security Threats	Cyber Security Threats - TIAA	The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has published an alert of a significant risk to IT systems and infrastructure. Attackers are exploiting vulnerable Small Office and Home Office (SoHo) devices at organisations to leverage attacks. Typically, SoHo devices (broadband routers etc) do not feature the advance security protection of enterprise level IT systems, thus making them an easy target.
Security Alert	Suspect found guilty of hospital terror plot	Suspect found guilty of hospital terror plot - TIAA	We detail the alarming story of a suspect found guilty of a hospital terror plot.

Briefing Type	Subject	Web Link	TIAA Comments
Security Alert	Violent incidents at GP practices	Violent incidents at GP practices - TIAA	<p>There has been a concerning rise in the number of violent incidents occurring at GP practices over the last two years, bringing the NHS crisis sharply into focus.</p>