



## Three Rivers District Council Audit Committee Progress Report 27 November 2025

### Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

- Note the Internal Audit Progress Report for the period to 14 November 2025
- Approve amendments to the Audit Plan as at 14 November 2025
- Agree changes to the implementation date for 8 audit recommendations (paragraph 2.5) for the reason set out in Appendices 3 to 5
- Agree removal of implemented audit recommendations (Appendices 3 to 5)

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# 1. Introduction and Background

## Purpose of Report

1.1 This report details:

- a) Progress made by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) in delivering the Council's annual audit plan for 2025/26 as at 14 November 2025.
- b) Proposed amendments to the approved 2025/26 Annual Audit Plan.
- c) Implementation status of all previously agreed audit recommendations from 2019/20 onwards.
- d) An update on performance management information as at 14 November 2025.

## Background

- 1.2 The work of internal audit is required to be reported to a Member Body so that the Council has an opportunity to review and monitor an essential component of corporate governance and gain assurance that its internal audit provision is fulfilling its statutory obligations. It is considered good practice that progress reports also include proposed amendments to the agreed annual audit plan.
- 1.3 The 2025/26 Annual Audit Plan was approved by Audit Committee on 25 March 2025.
- 1.4 The Audit Committee receives periodic updates on progress against the Annual Audit Plan from SIAS. This is the second report giving an update on the delivery of the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan.

# 2. Audit Plan Update

## Delivery of Audit Plan and Key Audit Findings

- 2.1 At 14 November 2025, 48% of the 2025/26 Audit Plan days had been delivered. Appendix 1 provides a status update on each individual deliverable within the audit plan.
- 2.2 There have not been any final reports issued since the September meeting of the Audit Committee. However, the position is not dissimilar to progress in the November 2024 report, and all audits have been allocated resource to ensure that the agreed KPIs for deliverable days (95%) and draft reports issued (90%) are met before 31 March 2026.

## All Priority Audit Recommendations

- 2.3 Audit Committee Members will be aware that a Final Audit Report is issued when agreed by Management. This includes an agreement to implement the recommendations made. It is SIAS's responsibility to bring to Members' attention the implementation status of

recommendations; it is the responsibility of officers to implement the recommendations by the agreed date.

- 2.4 The table below summarises progress in implementation of all outstanding internal audit recommendations as at 14 November 2025, with full details given in appendices 3 to 5:

Year	Number of Recommendations made	Total Number of Outstanding Recommendations	Not yet due	Overdue & a revised implementation date provided	No update received	Percentage implemented %
2023/24	39	2	1	1	0	95%
2024/25	35	8	4	4	0	77%

- 2.5 Since the September 2025 Audit Committee, extension to implementation dates have been requested by action owners for seven recommendations (some were not due at the time of the extension request) as follows:

- One from the 2023/24 Sundry Debtors audit, with a revised target date of 31 March 2026 (was 31 March 2025).
- Two from the 2024/25 Public Health Funerals audit, both with revised target dates of 29 June 2026 (was 31 December 2025).
- One from the 2024/25 Council Tax audit, with a revised target date of 31 March 2026 (was 30 April 2025).
- One from the 2024/25 Procurement Act audit, with a revised target date of 28 February 2026 (was 31 January 2026).
- Two from the Business Rates audit, both with a revised target date of 31 January 2026 (was 30 September 2025)

#### Proposed 2025/26 Audit Plan Amendments

- 2.6 For the Shared Service's 11 days contingency, 6 days have been allocated to the Financial Billing audit and 5 days allocated to the Agency audit (in light of the complexities of the audit area). The above changes have fully utilised the remaining plan contingency balance

#### Reporting of Audit Plan Delivery Progress

- 2.7 To help the Committee assess the current position in terms of progress against the projects in the 2025/26 Audit Plan, an analysis of agreed start dates is shown at Appendix 2. Dates have been agreed with management and resources allocated accordingly.
- 2.8 The 2025/26 Annual performance indicators and targets were approved by the SIAS Board in March 2025. Actual performance for Three Rivers District Council (including the Shared Services Plan) against the targets that are monitored in year is set out in the table below.

Performance Indicator	Annual Target	Profiled Target to 14 November 2025	Actual to 14 November 2025
<b>1. Planned Days</b> – percentage of actual billable days against planned chargeable days completed (excludes unused contingency)	95%	60% (120 / 201 days)	48% (96 / 201 days)
<b>2. Planned Projects</b> – percentage of actual completed projects to draft report stage against planned completed projects by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025	90%	42% (8 out of 19 projects to draft)	32% (6 out of 19 projects to draft)
<b>3. Client Satisfaction</b> – percentage of client satisfaction questionnaires returned at 'satisfactory overall' level (minimum of 39/65 overall)	90%	90%	100% (based on one questionnaire received in 2025/26)
<b>4. Number of Critical and High Priority Audit Recommendations agreed</b>	95%	95%	No Critical or High Priority Audit Recommendations made to date in 2025/26

2.9 In addition, the performance targets listed below are annual in nature. Performance against these targets will be reported on in the 2025/26 Head of Assurance's Annual Report:

- **5. Annual Plan** – prepared in time to present to the March meeting of each Audit Committee. If there is no March meeting, then the plan should be prepared for the first meeting of the financial year.
- **6. Planned Projects** - percentage of actual completed projects to Final report stage against planned completed projects. Reported annually within the Chief Audit Executive's annual report and opinion.
- **7. Chief Audit Executive's Annual Report** – presented at the Audit Committee's first meeting of the civic year.

2.10 We currently report no risks to the delivery of the agreed audit plan, or ability to provide an annual assurance opinion. However, it should be noted that Plan delivery is currently below the agreed profile. This is a

service wide performance issue which was recently reported to the SIAS Board with the following reasons:

- a) Audits being pushed back, deferred or cancelled at client request, thereby altering the profile of delivery and time lapse while a replacement audit is brought forward.
- b) Delays in our external co-sourced partner being able to commence some of their allocated audits.
- c) Recruitment to two existing trainee auditor vacancies during quarter one, with both not starting until quarter two.
- d) Some anecdotal evidence of senior staff at partners experiencing capacity challenges linked to LGR. This is a known risk talking to Heads of Internal Audit who have already been through this process.

2.12 We are satisfied that the current position should be recovered during quarters 3 and 4, given that both previously vacant positions have now been successfully recruited to and the new staff members are now in post.

## APPENDIX 1 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26 – UPDATE ON POSITION AS AT 14 November 2025

### 2025/26 SIAS Audit Plan

AUDITABLE AREA	LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	RECS				AUDIT PLAN DAYS	LEAD AUDITOR ASSIGNED	BILLABLE DAYS COMPLETED	STATUS/COMMENT
		C	H	M	L				
Key Financial Systems									
Agency Staffing (Shared Services Plan)						11	Yes	1.5	ToR issued
Council Tax (Collection rates and debt management) (Shared Services Plan)						7	Yes	6	In Quality Review
Debtors and General Ledger Exception Reporting (Shared Services Plan)						12	Yes	2	In Planning
External Audit Financial Recommendations (not VFM) (Shared Services Plan)						0	Yes	0	Cancelled
Non-Domestic Rates (collection rates and debt management) (Shared Services Plan)						7	Yes	6	In Quality Review
Payroll - Systems Audit (Shared Services Plan)						12	Yes	11	In Fieldwork
Financial Billing (Shared Services Plan)						6	Yes	0	In Planning
Treasury Management (Shared Services Plan)						8	Yes	2	In Fieldwork
Operational Audits									
Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme						10	BDO	8.5	In Quality Review

**APPENDIX 1 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26 – UPDATE ON POSITION AS AT 14 November 2025**

AUDITABLE AREA	LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	RECS				AUDIT PLAN DAYS	LEAD AUDITOR ASSIGNED	BILLABLE DAYS COMPLETED	STATUS/COMMENT
		C	H	M	L				
Property Management Process Resilience						10	BDO	9	Draft Report Issued
Financial Billing (including Property Services and Temporary Accommodation)						10	Yes	5	In Fieldwork
Leisure – Hire of Grounds						10	Yes	3	In Fieldwork
Watersmeet Theatre						10	Yes	0	Allocated
<b>Corporate Services</b>									
Risk Management						10	Yes	5	In Fieldwork
Geographic Information System						14	BDO	2	Draft Report Issued
Business Continuity Planning						6	Yes	0	Allocated
<b>Grant Certifications</b>									
SHDF	Unqualified	0	0	0	0	1	SIAS	1	Final Report Issued
Fast Followers - Innovate UK Net Zero Living programme	Unqualified	0	0	0	0	1	SIAS	1	Final Report Issued
<b>IT Audits</b>									
Cyber Security (Shared Services Plan)						15	BDO	0	Allocated
<b>To Be Allocated</b>									
Unused Contingency (Shared Services Plan)						0	N/A		



**APPENDIX 1 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26 – UPDATE ON POSITION AS AT 14 November 2025**

AUDITABLE AREA	LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	RECS				AUDIT PLAN DAYS	LEAD AUDITOR ASSIGNED	BILLABLE DAYS COMPLETED	STATUS/COMMENT
		C	H	M	L				
Follow-Up Audits									
Follow-up of outstanding audit recommendations						8	N/A	6	
Strategic Support									
2026/27 Audit Planning						5	N/A	0	
Audit Committee						8	N/A	5.5	
Chief Audit Executive Opinion 2024/25						3	N/A	3	Complete
Client Liaison and Plan Monitoring						7	N/A	5	
SIAS Development and Global Internal Audit Standards Implementation						3	N/A	3	
2023/24 Projects Requiring Completion (5 days TRDC plan / 5 days Shared Services Plan)									
Community Safety		0	0	0	0	10	SIAS	10	Final Report Issued
Business Rates		0	0	0	0		SIAS		Final Report Issued
TRDC TOTAL		0	0	0	0	121		62	
SHARED SERVICES TOTAL		0	0	0	0	83		33.5	
COMBINED TOTAL		0	0	0	0	204		95.5	

Key to recommendation priority levels:

C = Critical, H = High, M = Medium, L = Low

## APPENDIX 2 2025/26 AUDIT PLAN PROJECTED START DATES

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Audits	Payroll – Systems Audit (In Quality Review)	Risk Management (In Fieldwork)	Financial Billing (inc Property Services and Temporary Accommodation) (ToR Issued)	Leisure – Hire of Grounds (In Fieldwork)
	Treasury Management (In Fieldwork)	Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (In Quality Review)	GIS (Draft Report Issued)	Creditors and GL Exception Reporting (In Planning)
	External Audit Financial Recommendations (not VFM) (Audit Cancelled)	Council Tax (Collection rates and debt management) (In Quality Review)	Property Management Resilience (Draft Report Issued)	Watersmeet Theatre (Allocated)
		Non-Domestic Rates (Collection Rates and Debt Management) (In Quality Review)	Agency Staffing (In Fieldwork)	Business Continuity Planning (Allocated)
IT Audits				Cyber Security (Allocated)
Grants	SHDF Final Report Issued			
	Fast Followers - Innovate UK Net Zero Living programme Final Report Issued			
2024/25 Carry Forward	2024/25 Community Safety Final Report Issued			
	2024/25 Business Rates Final Report Issued			

## APPENDIX 3 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2023/24 AUDIT PLAN

Benefits 2023/24 Final report issued May 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved x or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that uncollectable housing benefit overpayments are written-off at regular intervals through the year.	Medium	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Position -July 2024 No update received from action owner.</p> <p>Position - September 2024 Agree with the recommendation and we will do these quarterly.</p> <p>Position -November 2024 No update received.</p> <p>Position -February 2025 A review of old debt has started. Before we consider write-offs, we are considering passing suitable debts to an Enforcement agent first.</p> <p>Position - September 2025 No update provided.</p> <p><b>Position – November 2025</b> <b>There is a dedicated team currently working through all HB overpayments to ensure collectable overpayments are processed quickly and write off old uncollectable amounts.</b></p>	Revenues Manager	31 July 2024	x	<p>31/03/26</p> <p>(Previous implement ation dates were: 30/09/24 and 30/04/25)</p>

## APPENDIX 4 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2023/24 AUDIT PLAN

Sundry Debtors 2023/24 Final report issued October 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved ✗ or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend debts are chased consistently, and the manual intervention process is followed by the Debt Recovery Team to ensure all recovery actions are followed.	Medium	<p>Agreed. The team works through the aged debtors report run at the beginning of each month, to ensure any queries or further recovery action is taken, once the standard recovery processes have completed. There is currently limited action that can be taken, which can vary from one debt type under SD to another. We are looking at this in greater detail during 24/25.</p> <p>Position – November 2024 No update received.</p> <p>Position – February 2025 A review of Sundry Debt work started in February 2025 to establish and agree what work the individual services carry out and what the Recovery Team do. The intention is that individual services will raise a debt and complete the standard admin work around making arrangements, sending a reminder etc. The debt will only be passed to Recovery if formal recovery action is required i.e. tracing a debtor, passing to an Enforcement Agent etc.</p> <p>Position - September 2025 No update provided.</p> <p><b>Position – November 2025</b> <b>Work is progressing in writing off long term sundry debts and engagement with enforcement agents. The constitution at Three Rivers has been amended to make it clear that the director of finance can write off uncollectable amounts. The recovery team has been consulted over the transfer of sundry debts to Finance and this is now well underway. Once this is in place sundry</b></p>	Revenues Team Leader for SD	31 March 2025	✗	31/03/26

## APPENDIX 4 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2023/24 AUDIT PLAN

Sundry Debtors 2023/24 Final report issued October 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<b>debts will be part of the budget monitoring conversation with Service Heads who ultimately have the decision making powers around these.</b>				
02	Write-offs should be raised regularly through the year.	Medium	<p>Agreed. We are working to bring management of SD, around write-offs in particular back in line with previous BAU practices / regularity.</p> <p>By the end of 2024/25 write offs should be written off on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Position – November 2024 No update received.</p> <p>Position – February 2025 Some write-offs have been processed. Before further write-offs are processed, we are considering passing suitable debts to an Enforcement agent first.</p> <p>Position - September 2025 No update provided.</p> <p><b>Position – November 2025 Debts capable of being pursued have been passed to enforcement agents whilst those that are deemed uncollectable are written off. Once sundry debts have passed to Finance it is intended that these will be reviewed as part of the budget monitoring cycle with service managers.</b></p>	Revenues Team Leader for SD	31 March 2025	✓	

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Public Health Funerals 2024/25							
Final report issued November 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	Management should ensure that: 1) the draft policy is finalised and approved, as planned. 2) a copy of the approved policy is made available on the Council's website.	Medium	<p>Waste &amp; Environment Manager and Environmental Strategy Manager to present report and policy to relevant committees and ensure website is updated in due course.</p> <p>Position (March 2025) Environmental Strategy Manager recently attended a PHF training course and is feeding some of that learning into the policy and procedures documents.</p> <p>Position (September 2025) Policy is written - committee report is in the process of being finalised to take this policy to committee.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025</b> <b>Report cycle is as follows;</b> <b>CMT 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026</b> <b>JLT 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026</b> <b>General Public Services Committee 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026</b> <b>Policy and Resources Committee 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b></p>	Waste & Environment Manager and Environmental Strategy Manager	31 July 2025	*	29/06/26  (Previous implementation date was 31/12/25)
03	We recommend that: 1) Procedure notes should be documented to ensure officers are undertaking correct processes and relevant controls applied. This should include the requirement to take documents, valuables and/or cash or simply photograph them and leave them in-situ, as appropriate. 2) The inventory recording any personal effects taken from the	Medium	<p>Procedure notes to be reviewed and decision made by SLT/Legal as required.</p> <p>Procedure notes to be updated.</p> <p>Position (March 2025) Environmental Strategy Manager recently attended a PHF training course and is feeding some of that learning into the policy and procedures documents.</p> <p>Position (September 2025)</p>	Waste & Environment Manager and Environmental Strategy Manager	31 December 2025	*	29/06/26

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Public Health Funerals 2024/25							
Final report issued November 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
	property is completed, signed and dated by both officers at the time of completion, i.e. at the property. A record should be kept where no items are taken (unless the Council decides not to take any personal items).		<p>Policy is written and procedure notes are in the process of being updated. However in the meantime checklists/inventory logs have been introduced.</p> <p>Committee report is in the process of being finalised. The Policy will go to Committee, Procedures will go to CMT for information. Use of genealogists is being considered as part of the committee report.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025</b>  <b>Report cycle is as follows;</b>  <b>CMT 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026</b>  <b>JLT 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026</b>  <b>General Public Services Committee 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026</b>  <b>Policy and Resources Committee 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b></p>				

Asset Management and Garages 2024/25							
Final report issued January 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	The Property Strategy and Policy should be refreshed and appropriately approved. Management should consider developing an asset management plan/action plan to help ensure the Strategy and Policy is achieved. Or, add additional detail to the new Strategy and Policy to provide more depth, such as other policies, processes and procedures.	Medium	<p>A refresh of the Property Strategy &amp; Policy has already been identified for action by the Head of Property Services &amp; Major Projects. A revised Strategy, together with an action plan will be prepared and adopted during 2025.</p> <p>Position (March 2025) This task has not started yet.</p> <p>Position (September 2025)</p>	Head of Property Services & Major Projects	30 September 2025	*	31/03/26

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Asset Management and Garages 2024/25 Final report issued January 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>This task has been reprogrammed and will be concluded by 31 March 2026.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025</b>  <b>This task is about to commence and will be completed by 31 March 2025.</b></p>		31 March 2026	*	
07	<p>Ensure that there is an appropriate plan and resources in place to ensure all lease rent reviews and lease renewals dates are accurately recorded on TRAMPS, with event dates.</p> <p>Ensure there is an appropriate lease rent review and lease renewal timetable in place and that outstanding cases are allocated to officers for action, with prioritisation.</p>	Medium	<p>As data is added to the TRAMPS system the 'events facility' will become more effective. At the end of 2024 the Team produced an updated spreadsheet of essential events (such as rent reviews &amp; lease renewals) and we have developed a programme to address these outdated actions, whilst we populate TRAMPS. The target date is achievable, subject to the successful and timely recruitment of the Property &amp; Estates Officer.</p> <p>Position (March 2025)  Prior to the departure of the Interim Senior Surveyor, their last task was to update the lease event spreadsheet, to identify outstanding lease renewals and rent reviews. The Property Services Team have already begun implementing these rent reviews and lease renewals by combination of in-house resources and external agency support.</p> <p>Position (September 2025)  To provide additional assurance, we have been testing critical date data on an asset-by-asset basis. As a result, we have extended the deadline for completion of this task until 30 November 2025</p> <p><b>Position (November 2025)</b></p>	Property & Asset Manager	30 September 2025	*	30/11/25



## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Asset Management and Garages 2024/25 Final report issued January 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>As indicated in September's update, we have revised the date for completion of the TRAMP's data until 30 November and this remains on target. Work continues on a daily basis to update the TRAMP's system with key data.</p> <p>Perhaps more importantly, all outstanding lease renewals and rent reviews have now been actioned. With Property Officers prioritising higher value and older rent reviews and lease renewals. The period of negotiation and settlement will continue over the coming few months but will lead to all outstanding reviews and renewals being lifted to market value and backdated rent reviews and new rents will generate additional revenue income for TRDC.</p>		<p>30 November 2025</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>*</p> <p>✓</p>	

Council Tax 2024/25 Final report issued January 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	<p>A full housekeeping exercise should be undertaken to review historic discounts and exemptions that should have a provisional end date / end date in the system.</p> <p>We also recommend that a follow up of all other discounts and exemptions that do not require a provisional end date be completed, with ongoing periodic checks moving forward.</p>	High	<p>A full review of all Discounts and Exemptions will take place during the year, particularly those that do not usually have an expected end date, such as SMI or 'O' where the situation is unlikely to change unless there is a change in occupiers.</p> <p>Position – February 2025, This has been delayed whilst the service undergoes a period of transformation with officers being trained to be generic and</p>	Revenues & Benefits Service Delivery Manager	31 March 2025	*	<p>31/03/26</p> <p>(Previous implementation date was 30/04/25)</p>

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Council Tax 2024/25 Final report issued January 2024							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
			<p>therefore able to work across the service. The first phase of the training is due to complete by 31.03.2025 and we will then complete the review of all discounts and exemptions.</p> <p>Please note all Single Person Discounts and Empty Homes have been reviewed.</p> <p>Position - September 2025 No update provided.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025</b>  <b>The Service is still undergoing a period of transformation with officers being trained to be generic and therefore able to work across the service. This has now entered the second training phase due to end March 2026. At this stage we will look to review in payment discount and exemptions. The overall performance around processing is always in the top quartile of local authorities benchmarking.</b></p>				

Cyber Security 2024/25 Final report issued May 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved * or ✓	Revised Deadline
02	<p>Cyber Security Phishing Campaign</p> <p>We recommend the current training and communication campaigns in respect of cyber security are further developed in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing existing cyber security training to enhance the current focus on recognising phishing emails and</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>ICT will review the outcomes of the phishing campaigns, including the phishing training awareness and work with both Councils SIRO's to consider onward training for colleagues who persistently fail phishing tests, or click on the links multiple times. ICT will consider running annual cyber security campaigns.</p> <p>Position - September 2025</p>	ICT Business Relationship Manager	31 December 2025	✓	

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Cyber Security 2024/25 Final report issued May 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved ✗ or ✓	Revised Deadline
	<p>the risks of clicking on suspicious links.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requiring staff to re-complete the cyber security training module in instances where they fail more than one test exercise or click on links multiple times.</li> <li>• Considering the running of annual cyber security campaigns to maintain continual staff awareness.</li> </ul>		<p>On target - Phishing campaign One ran in January 2025, initial results were reported to CMB at WBC and CMT at TRDC. Results have also been reported at It Steering Group in April, July.</p> <p>Mandatory training for IT security modules continues to be required annually by all staff. Further training has been released in line with increasing cyber threats, such as Social Engineering. Those completion rates have been reported into IT Steering group and at CMB and CMT.</p> <p>Cyber awareness event is currently being explored with Herts Constabulary for Q3. Next steps are to undertake phishing campaign 2.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phishing campaign is scheduled for Q3.</b></li> <li>• <b>Phishing and Social Engineering Awareness training continues to be actively promoted for both officers and elected members, with progress reported quarterly to the IT Steering Group.</b></li> <li>• <b>A Cyber Awareness event is now confirmed for Q4, in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary.</b></li> </ul>				

Procurement Act Preparedness 2024/25 Final report issued May 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved ✗ or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that performance reports are submitted annually to both Councils to allow oversight and understanding for each organisation.	Medium	The 2024/25 annual procurement report for Watford was completed and presented on 6 May 2025, with plans to replicate the approach for	Associate Director of Customer and	July 2025	✗	28/02/26  (Previous implement

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Procurement Act Preparedness 2024/25 Final report issued May 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved ✗ or ✓	Revised Deadline
	Formal agreement of performance reporting to be agreed with each Council to ensure they have appropriate oversight of their procurement performance under the new Procurement Act arrangements.		<p>Three Rivers and introduce quarterly stakeholder reviews.</p> <p>Position - September 2025 The 2024/25 annual procurement for Watford has now been signed off by Portfolio Holders. Guidance from Three Rivers on the approach for their annual report awaited. Recruitment for a permanent Procurement Manager is shortly due to commence at which point quarterly stakeholder reviews will be implemented.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025 Procurement Manager interviews scheduled for week commencing 3 November 2025. Three Rivers confirmed that annual report should be produced, and this will be completed by the end of November 2025.</b></p>	Corporate Services			ation date was 31/01/26)

Business Rates (Voids and Reliefs) 2024/25 Final report issued June 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved ✗ or ✓	Revised Deadline
01	We recommend that a data matching / relief check exercise is undertaken to ensure the legitimacy of relief claims.	Medium	<p>A process and timetable for data matching are scheduled to be agreed by 30 September 2025 and this action is currently pending.</p> <p>Position (September 2025) No update provided.</p> <p><b>Position - November 2025 Process and timetable agreed and data matching being undertaken</b></p>	Revenues Manager/Finance Manager/Head of Revenues and Benefits	September 2025	✗	31/01/26

## APPENDIX 5 OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/25 AUDIT PLAN

Business Rates (Voids and Reliefs) 2024/25 Final report issued June 2025							
Ref No.	Recommendation	Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved ✗ or ✓	Revised Deadline
02	We recommend that, in line with the planned review of this area, a strategy is devised and implemented to ensure that quality assurance checks are in place within the Shared Service to ensure compliance with required standards and policies by Business Rates officers.	Medium	<p>A strategy is being developed to implement quality assurance checks, with training scheduled to begin by 30 September 2025 and this action is currently in progress</p> <p>Position (September 2025) No update provided.</p> <p><b>Position – November 2025</b> Training has been provided. New data post recruited to and quality assurance now being managed by team leaders following departure of previous manager. Position to be reviewed in new year but current evidence is that QA has improved substantially.</p>	Quality and Assurance Team	September 2025	✗	31/01/26

## APPENDIX 6 – ASSURANCE AND RECOMMENDATION PRIORITY LEVELS

Audit Opinions		
Assurance Level		Definition
Assurance Reviews		
<b>Substantial</b>		A sound system of governance, risk management and control exist, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
<b>Reasonable</b>		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.
<b>Limited</b>		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.
<b>No</b>		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.
<b>Not Assessed</b>		This opinion is used in relation to consultancy or embedded assurance activities, where the nature of the work is to provide support and advice to management and is not of a sufficient depth to provide an opinion on the adequacy of governance or internal control arrangements. Recommendations will however be made where required to support system or process improvements.
Grant / Funding Certification Reviews		
<b>Unqualified</b>		No material matters have been identified in relation the eligibility, accounting and expenditure associated with the funding received that would cause SIAS to believe that the related funding conditions have not been met.
<b>Qualified</b>		Except for the matters identified within the audit report, the eligibility, accounting and expenditure associated with the funding received meets the requirements of the funding conditions.
<b>Disclaimer Opinion</b>		Based on the limitations indicated within the report, SIAS are unable to provide an opinion in relation to the Council's compliance with the eligibility, accounting and expenditure requirements contained within the funding conditions.
<b>Adverse Opinion</b>		Based on the significance of the matters included within the report, the Council have not complied with the funding conditions associated with the funding received.
Recommendation Priority Levels		
Priority Level		Definition
<b>Corporate</b>	<b>Critical</b>	Audit findings which, in the present state, represent a serious risk to the organisation as a whole, i.e. reputation, financial resources and / or compliance with regulations. Management action to implement the appropriate controls is required immediately.
	<b>High</b>	Audit findings indicate a serious weakness or breakdown in control environment, which, if untreated by management intervention, is highly likely to put achievement of core service objectives at risk. Remedial action is required urgently.
<b>Service</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Audit findings which, if not treated by appropriate management action, are likely to put achievement of some of the core service objectives at risk. Remedial action is required in a timely manner.
	<b>Low</b>	Audit findings indicate opportunities to implement good or best practice, which, if adopted, will enhance the control environment. The appropriate solution should be implemented as soon as is practically possible.