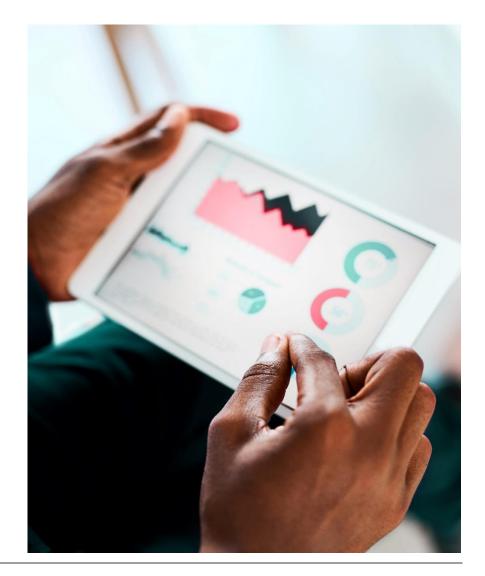


CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
RECOMMENDATIONS: COMPLETE SINCE LAST FOLLOW UP REPORT	· 5
RECOMMENDATIONS: IN PROGRESS	7
RECOMMENDATIONS: OVERDIJE	10



SUMMARY

	Total Recs	Н	М	L	To follow
					up
2023/24					
Car parking	6	-	4	2	4
Tree Management	7	4	3	-	7
Waste Management	7	2	4	1	6
Risk Management	3	-	3	-	3
Communications and nformation Sharing	5	-	4	1	4
Sub-total	28	6	18	4	24
022/23					
Democratic services	6	1	3	2	4
Main financial systems	5	-	3	2	3
Policy review	1	-	1	-	1
Environment - Street cleaning, fly tipping & enforcement	3	-	3	-	3
Leisure services	4	-	4	-	4
Sheltered accommodation	7	3	4	-	7
Sub-total	26	4	18	4	22

H M H		otal Recs	Н	М	L	To follow
						up
2	2 - 2 - 2 -	- 2 - 2 -	2 - 2 -	- 2 -	2 -	
	2 2 2					
	1 - 1 - 1 -	- 1 - 1 -	1 - 1 -	- 1 -	1 -	-
	1 - 1 - 1 -	- 1 - 1 -	1 - 1 -	- 1 -	1 -	-
<u>-</u>	59 12 39 8 51 4	12 39 8 51 4	39 8 51 4	8 51 4	51 4	4

SUMMARY

15 high or medium priority recommendations have been followed up on since the last Audit and Scrutiny Committee (which includes 12 recommendations for which a revised implementation date was previously agreed that is not yet due). We have confirmed with reference to evidence and through discussions that two recommendations have been completed/closed since our last follow up report. Updates have been received for the remaining outstanding recommendations and it is clear that work is being done to progress them but they have not yet been fully implemented.

2023/24

▶ Of the 24 high or medium priority recommendations raised so far in 2023/24, six were due to be followed up. Two have been completed for Tree Management and four remain in progress and on target to meet their previously agreed revised implementation date.

2022/23

Five recommendations were due to be followed up from 2022/23, two remain as in progress and three remain overdue and have not reached their previously agreed revised implementation dates.

2021/22

▶ Of the three outstanding high or medium priority recommendations raised in 2021/22, we have confirmed all three remain overdue (two on s106 agreements and one on building control). The updates confirmed that work is still ongoing on these recommendations to meet their previously agreed revised implementation dates.

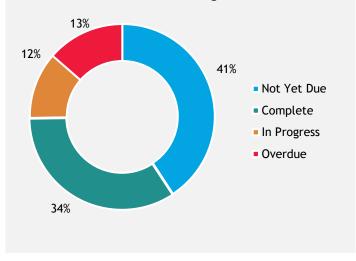
2020/21

▶ The one outstanding recommendation raised in 2020/21 for Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity remains overdue but on target to meet the previously agreed revised implementation date.

REQUIRED AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTION:

We ask the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to note the progress against the recommendations.

2020 - 2024 Audits with outstanding recommendations



RECOMMENDATIONS: COMPLETE SINCE LAST FOLLOW UP REPORT

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
2023/24 - Tree Management	TM1 Insufficient Implementation of Tree and Woodland Strategy 1.1 The Council should update the Tree and Woodland Strategy, or create supporting standard operating procedures (SOPs), to incorporate: • Roles and responsibilities • Delivery targets• Agreed KPIs• National guidance and best practice, including the requirement for a risk-based and proactive inspection programme. 1.2 Implemented Strategy should include an action plan, with delivery target dates and assigned responsibility. Progress against the action plan should be overseen by the Clean and Green Committee periodically.	High	RESPONSIBLE Corporate Manager (Green Spaces)	Jan 2024 Closed	Management update: The Clean and Green Committee approved the new Tree Policy on 11/12/2023. The Policy will be presented annually to the Committee. The Policy details the Council's inspection regime, prioritisation for tree works and risk thresholds. The Policy is supported by an Action Plan detailing timescales for actions. Internal audit comment: Recommendation closed by Internal Audit following receipt of Policy, Action Plan and Committee report.
	 1.3 The policy should include a schedule of reviews, to ensure it is reviewed and updated at regular intervals as required. 1.4 Supporting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or appendices should be created to support the aims of the strategy and govern how the aims will be implemented, e.g., tree inspection policy. 				
2023/24 - Tree Management	TM7 Incomplete Oversight Processes 1.1 The Council should arrange monthly invites for 1-2-1s with the Tree Officer, to ensure regular progress monitoring occurs. Where meetings are missed, they should be rescheduled at the earliest convenience to ensure regular check ins can be completed. 1.2 The Director of Environment should discuss	Medium	Corporate Manager (Green Spaces)	Jan 2024 Closed	Management update: One to one meetings are in place, a Tree Management Working Group has been proposed and will be introduced which will report to the Clean and Green Committee. This was discussed by the Committee in the recent meeting on 26/02/2024. A new inspection programme was introduced and approved by the Clean & Green Committee on 11/12/2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS: IN PROGRESS

These recommendations have been marked as In Progress as they have not been implemented by their original date; a revised date has been provided.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
2022/23 Leisure Services	Rec 2: Feasibility studies 2.1 Officers should consider carrying out a feasibility study to inform the development of a potential exit strategy from the Brentwood Leisure Centre and Football Hub facilities and activities, which should include plans to value the saleability of these assets in future years. 2.2 As part of budget setting, officers should review the sufficiency of the sinking fund for the replacement of facilities when they reach the end of their expected lifespan.	Medium	Corporate Manager - Community, Leisure and Health	December 2023 March 2024	Management previous update: A condition survey has been completed on the Brentwood Centre which informs the prioritisation of works that need to be undertaken. This also helps inform the Leisure Procurement Strategy that will be presented to Members on 15 January 2024 Housing Health and Community Committee. The draft report and Strategy sets out the process for the new joint leisure procurement contract which will commence in April 2025. The Council is also seeking external legal support in the drawing up of the contract. The Football Hub has been paused while BBC gets confirmation from Leyton Orient Football Club as to their decision to remain at Chigwell School or move to the Brentwood Centre site which is due by 31 March 2024 at the latest. Management most recent update: Previous update still applies. Internal audit comment: Recommendation remains open and on target to meet revised implementation previously agreed.
2022/23 Leisure Services	Rec 4: Training and guidance 4.1 Leisure services should track and monitor all mandatory staff training and development, covering both Council staff and Everyone Active staff. 4.2 Consider whether there is a need to develop or update any leisure services specific guidance, policies and procedures and that these are readily accessible to Council staff and Everyone Active.	Medium	Corporate Manager - Community, Leisure and Health	December 2023 March 2025	Management previous update: As part of the new KPIs, which are a part of the new contract, there will be a request for the training records for staff to ensure that they are sufficiently trained. Management most recent update: Previous update still applies. Internal audit comment: Recommendation remains open and on target to meet revised implementation previously agreed.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
2023/24 Tree Management	Rec 2: Incomplete understanding of tree stock conditions in the borough The Council should collate the data on number of trees from the National tree Map into a report to ensure oversight/monitoring of tree stock levels can be implemented by Management and enable monitoring of overall stock levels. The Council should ascertain the level of resources required to gather the necessary data on current tree stocks, e.g., tree age, type and condition, to support a risk-based inspections programme.	High	Corporate Manager Green Spaces	October 2023 April 2024	Management previous update: Request to FAIR committee outlining resource required has been submitted. Awaiting outcome of Committee. New Tree Management Policy and action plan approved by Members which will help progress the recommendation. Management most recent update: Fixed term Tree Officer Approved at FAIR committee for new financial year. Budget to purchase Tree Software approved at FAIR committee for new financial year. Tree Officer job description and advert complete. Awaiting HR for job evaluation. Ready to advertise as soon as this is back. Internal audit comment: Recommendation remains open and on target to meet the revised implementation date previously agreed.
2023/24 Tree Management	Rec 4: Inadequate complaints handling and absence of established procedures The Council should develop the 'prioritisation of works' document to add specific implementation guidance related to trees, including time scales for responses. The Council should complete a review of all open complaints in the dash system and ensure that either actions are taken where these have been missed, or the actions taken but not documented are included in the records to enable their closure. The Council should monitor complaint response times against the newly agreed timescales, as a service KPI. Guidance should be documented to cover response times when the Risk and Insurance officer requests information related to tree insurance claims.	High	Corporate Manager Green Spaces	October 2023 April 2024	Management previous update: Prioritisation of works document will be submitted to Green and Green as part of the #OneTeam joint Tree Management Strategy. DASH system currently under review to ensure that officers are receiving correct information and that the appropriate channels are filtering BBC specific complaints. Officers have consulted Zurich and received a recommended proforma to complete for insurance claims. This will be implemented as part of a new digital system. New Tree Management Policy and action plan approved by Members which will help progress the recommendation. Management most recent update: Complaints procedure is currently being investigated. Systems are in place. One to Ones in place. Regular checking that enquires have been responded to underway.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
					Internal audit comment:
					Recommendation remains open and on target to meet the revised implementation date previously agreed.
2023/24 Tree	Rec 5: Absence of contract management The Council should create a contractor database or excel file to support management of the providers used. They should request copies of contractor insurance certificates and health and safety policies and record the expiry dates and key details. To support this, calendar reminders should be added ahead of expiring contractor insurance policies, to ensure copies of new policies are obtained before works are agreed.	Medium	Corporate	December	Management previous update:
Management			Manager Green Spaces	2023 April 2024	New Tree Management Policy and action plan approved by Members which will help progress the recommendation which has not yet been implemented.
					Management most recent update:
					Draft tender complete. Pricing Schedule Complete. Awaiting procurement to put notice out.
					Internal audit comment:
					Recommendation remains open and on target to meet the revised implementation date previously agreed.
2023/24 Tree	Rec 6: Underutilised Computer Management	Medium	Corporate	October	Management previous update:
Management	System		Manager Green Spaces	2023	Review of computer system underway. Current system is
	A review of the functionality of the existing computer management software, Pear, should be completed, to ascertain whether it is able			April 2024	outdated technology which does not allow for Cloud data to sync externally. Requiring officer down time uploading to an outdated computer system.
	to meet the Council's needs. Consideration should also be given to				New Tree Management Policy and action plan approved by Members which will help progress the recommendation.
	potentially sharing software with Rochford				Management most recent update
	Council as part of a shared working partnership.				Procurement of Ezytreev software through G Cloud framework to commence new financial year. Budget is now approved.
					Internal audit comment:
					Recommendation remains open and on target to meet the revised implementation date previously agreed.

RECOMMENDATIONS: OVERDUE

These recommendations have been marked as overdue as they have exceeded their original and revised implementation dates by at least once. Therefore, they have now missed at least two revised implementation dates.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
AUDIT 2021/22 - Building Control	 21/22 BC rec 2: The service should request the Council's ICT department and third-party provider to enable functionality that allow management to download reports from the system which closely monitor progress against ISO and statutory KPIs. There should be reports that show: Application date and date approved or rejected versus the ISO and statutory completion date requirements All current active applications being worked on All rejected applications within a specified timeframe All approved applications within a specified timeframe. The Council should also liaise with the system service provider to ensure that the completion 	_		June 2022 Oct 2022 Dec 2022 Feb 2023 June 2023 Dec 2024	Management previous update: The situation remains as before and there is currently not even a provisional date for when these will be developed (the industry is going through major changes following Grenfell, with central government being slow to develop their exact requirements in terms of service levels etc amongst other issues). Management most recent update: There has been a development, if somewhat negative, in this regard. A letter has been provided by LABC (the national body representing Local Authority Building Control Services) to the central government bodies responsible for the overall Building Control System in England and Wales. The whole structure and nature of the current Building Control System is in a state of flux, flowing from the Grenfell events. The letter outlines the general national picture, currently, which is one that Brentwood Building Control very much finds itself in. Of particular interest in the letter in relation to the next audit / review is the section headed 'Operational Standards Rules', which reflects our previous audit responses.
	service provider to ensure that the completion deadline dates are precisely calculated on the system.				In terms of the target previously indicated by our service for implementation, this was a purely random date given the problems at national level. Looking at the next audit / follow up, this is highly likely to remain the approach; a random date being selected. At a local level Brentwood's own pending 38% reduction in available building control staff resource, alongside a national shortage, in turn effecting recruitment, I feel make this is a highly realistic evaluation.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
2021-22 - S106 agreements	Responsibility for the recording, allocation and monitoring of \$106 contributions to the capital programme should be clearly assigned and communicated to a team or individual within the Council, who should own the process for ensuring contributions are utilised on appropriate projects in a timely manner and prior to any contributions becoming repayable to the developers.	High	Director, Housing and Regeneration Strategic Director and Interim Director Housing Interim Director of Resources Strategic Director and Deputy Chief Executive	Jan 2023 Feb 2023 July 2023 Sep 2023 April 2024	Management previous update: Due to resource limitations and changes, Officers have considered the \$106 review action and have determined that it can be dealt with through the Planning Improvement Plan. This will also enable the new monitoring software for the Community Infrastructure Levy to be used for \$106s. Management most recent update Officers are on track to meet the April 24 date. Internal audit comment: Recommendation remains open. Responsible officer confirmed they were on track to meet the revised implementation date previously agreed.
2020/21 - Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity	20/21 DRBC rec 1: Management should perform a training needs analysis to identify and assess the level and type of training required by all members of staff with regards to business continuity and disaster recovery and should develop a mandatory training programme that is based upon these requirements. Training delivery methods could include, but not be limited to, the exercise types suggested in Appendix I in our report. Attendance should be recorded and monitored and training records should be maintained for audit purposes. Furthermore, Management should conduct a formally documented test of its business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements and should put arrangements in place to test them on a routine basis or following a significant change to the Council's operations. The results of the tests should be reported to	Medium	Risk and Insurance Officer	Oct 2021 June 2022 Sep 2022 Dec 2022 Sep 2023 Nov 2023 Sept 2024	Management previous update: Officers are currently writing a new joint Business Continuity plan for both Councils. The plan will assist what is now a single Corporate Leadership Team to make informed decisions and set priorities for resources should there be service disruption. The overarching plan will be supported by individual Service Business Continuity Plans. Officers have started working with Service Managers to assess risk and write their plans, but this is a process that will take until the second quarter of 2024 to complete. Once fully completed the Plan will be subject to final approval and adoption by the Corporate Leadership Team. Officers will then exercise the plan to demonstrate its use. Disaster Recovery, whilst linked to Business Continuity, is a more technical aspect. Officers have met and drafted out the Service Business Continuity plan for IT, so this work is underway. Officers are aiming to complete the process at the end of quarter two, so an exercise in June 2024. Following that there will be a programme of review and further exercises.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
	Senior Management and any issues identified should be resolved in a timely manner.				Management most recent update:
					Some recent positive events lead us to believe that September this year is feasible to complete the Business Continuity Plan.
					Internal audit comment:
					First part of the recommendation previously closed by Internal audit. Work is progressing to implement the second part, however recommendation remains open. Responsible officer confirmed they were on track to meet the revised implementation date previously agreed.
2022/23 Democratic	Rec 5: FOI evidence	Medium	Corporate	May 2023	Management previous update:
Services	 Democratic Services should monitor the responses to FOI requests by the departments and follow up on any open FOIs that are approaching the 20 working-day deadline or ensure that extensions are agreed. Training on the FOI process and legislative requirements should be provided to all officers who are involved in responding to and monitoring FOI requests. A report on the status of FOI requests should be presented to CLT for oversight on at least a quarterly basis. 		Manager Democratic Services	Oct 2023 Jan 2024	This remains ongoing due to the service review. Hopefully completed by January 2024.
				June 2024	Management most recent update:
					Democratic Service Review is still to take place. Meanwhile, each authority is continuing to monitor their FOIs. The Brentwood system automatically flags requests approaching and beyond the statutory time frame. This is also done at Rochford. An internal training programme for the Brentwood DASH system has been devised and ready to roll out. Trainers for the FOI process and legislative requirements is currently being sourced for both authorities.
					CLT now receives FOI completion data monthly as part of our dashboard monitoring.
					Internal audit comment:
					The responsible officer was not available during the follow up process and the management update was provided by a deputy. Recommendation remains open and a new revised implementation date agreed.
2022/23	Rec 1: Review of policies	Medium	H&S: Director	Sept 2023	Management previous update:
Environment - Street cleaning, fly tipping & enforcement	Management should ensure that both policies, Health & Safety and Environmental Health Enforcement Policy are reviewed and updated to reflect the current arrangements and		Assets and Investments	Dec 2023 March 2024	The H&S Wellbeing Policy has been produced and approved by Brentwood members on 13/09/23.

AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
	Brentwood Centre operator covering leadership, management and oversight to ensure transparent and consistent monitoring and to drive the achievement of desired outcomes.				
	 d) Implement a process for quality checks over leisure services, including staff posing as secret customers and running through a series of requests for tasks to determine the quality of leisure services offered. 				

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