



Internal Audit

FINAL REPORT

HOMELESSNESS 2007-08

To: **Diane Burridge** **Director of Operations**

For information: Alasdair Bovaird Chief Executive
Michael Perry Assistant Chief Executive
Phil O'Dell Director of Resources
Roz Millership Head of Housing Management
Liz Petrie Housing Management Manager

1. Introduction

An audit of Homelessness has been carried out as part of the 2007-08 audit plan. Detailed tests have been carried out on the systems of control and the management of risk within this area.

2. Findings and recommendations

The detailed findings and recommendations are set out in the attached appendices. A Management Action Plan is attached and we should be grateful if you would arrange for its completion and return by 24 September 2007. A satisfaction survey has been sent to the Housing Management Manager.

3. Conclusions

No significant problems were identified during our work. It can therefore be concluded that the systems of control are functioning satisfactorily. The risk of error or misadministration is therefore low

Sheila Bronson
Audit Manager
24 August 2007

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1.1 AREAS COVERED DURING THE AUDIT

The key areas of possible risk identified at the planning stage of the audit were as follows:

- a) Non compliance with the Homelessness Act 2002 where applications for homelessness are not determined in accordance with the current legislation;
- b) Lack of provisions for suitable accommodation and a review process is not in place;
- c) Insufficient qualified/trained staff to
 - provide assistance & advice on alternative accommodation/homelessness prevention
 - process applications;
- d) Timescale for action plans in place under the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 is not met;
- e) Homelessness Strategy is not reviewed/updated for 2009 or beyond and not in line with the Housing Strategy;
- f) Housing Benefits are incorrectly calculated and Housing section receives the incorrect amount due;
- g) Average length of stay in Bed and Breakfast accommodation is outside of BVPI targets;
- h) Invoices received from the Bed and Breakfast are incorrect;
- i) Information provided to members of the public are incorrect or not up to date;
- j) Data protection Act 1998 is not adhered to.

The methodology stated in the terms of reference document was used to establish and test the controls that management have in place for mitigating or reducing the above risks to an acceptable level.

1.2 OVERALL AUDIT OPINION

Subject to the matters raised below it was confirmed that effective controls are in place to support the administration of the service. We are therefore pleased to report that the likelihood of significant error or misadministration is low.

2003-04 AUDIT

1.3 PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

It is pleasing to note that the recommendation made at the previous audit has been fully implemented.

2007-08 AUDIT

1.4 RECONCILIATIONS

During our testing we were unable to reconcile the amounts posted to the Homelessness Accommodation Account Code to those recorded in the Housing Homelessness Accounts, due to an entry omission in the Homelessness Accounts. We also identified a lack of regular reconciliation between these two accounts.

We therefore recommend that a regular system of reconciliations is introduced to ensure accuracy between the department's records and the Financial Information System reports.

1.5 RETENTION POLICY

During the audit the Housing Officers were not able to confirm if documents have been destroyed under the retention policy other than old files/documents are kept in a secured site.

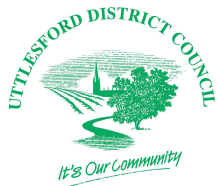
We therefore recommend that the published retention policy should be followed in particular in relation to unsuccessful applications to ensure that these are not retained beyond the legal requirement period.

1.6 ANALYSIS OF HOMELESS ENQUIRY ON THE WEBPAGE

During the audit it is identified that homeless advice is provided on the website, however analysis of the use of the Council website is not carried out to show the number of hits on the homeless webpage.

We therefore recommend that analysis on hits are carried out and if necessary to further develop the web as good practice in the Prevention of Homelessness.

Meng-Chee Leong
August 2007



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MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Audit						
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Appendix Para	Recommendation	Significance * Low ** Med *** High	Agreed / Not agreed	Officer Responsible	Officer Comments	Implementation date
1.4	A regular system of reconciliations is introduced to ensure accuracy between the department's records and the Financial Information System reports	**	Agreed	JS	JS has asked SE to provide monthly updates	Done
1.5	The published retention policy should be followed in particular in relation to unsuccessful applications to ensure that these are not retained beyond the legal requirement period.	**	Agreed	JS	JS to keep all homeless docs for 5 years and dispose for any over this time	Immediate
1.6	Analyses on hits are carried out and if necessary to further develop the web as good practice in the Prevention of Homelessness.	*	Agreed	MF	Web Development Officers to email JS with figures monthly	As soon as IT have setup tracking for homelessness page on the website

Agreed _____ Roz Millership _____ (Head of Division) Date ___ 24 August 2007 _____