

Appendix C – Risk Management and Control of Resources

Why this is important

- 3.1 All organisations, whether they are private or public sector, face risks to people, property and continued operations. Risk is the chance or possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by an unwanted or uncertain action or event. Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control to risk. Its objectives are to secure the assets of the organisation and to ensure the continued financial and organisational well-being of the organisation. In essence, it is therefore an integral part of good business practice. Risk management is concerned with evaluating the measures an organisation already has in place to manage identified risks and then recommending the action the organisation needs to take to control these risks effectively.
- 3.2 It is the overall duty of the Executive to approve the Council's risk management policy and strategy, and to promote a culture of risk management awareness throughout the Council.

Key controls

3.3 The key controls for risk management are:

- procedures are in place to identify, assess, prevent or contain material known risks, and these procedures are operating effectively throughout the Council
- a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness of risk reduction strategies and the operation of these controls. The risk management process should be conducted on a continuing basis
- managers know that they are responsible for managing relevant risks and are provided with relevant information on risk management initiatives
- provision is made for losses that might result from the risks that remain e)procedures are in place to investigate claims within required timescales
- acceptable levels of risk are determined and insured against where appropriate and
- the Council has identified business continuity plans for implementation in the event of disaster that results in significant loss or damage to its resources.

Responsibilities of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

- 3.4 To prepare and promote the Council's risk management policy statement and overall risk management strategy
- 3.5 To develop and maintain appropriate risk management controls in conjunction with Chief Officers
- 3.6 To include all appropriate employees of the Council in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance
- 3.7 To offer insurance cover to schools in lien with Fair Funding arrangements
- 3.8 To effect corporate insurance cover, through external insurance and internal funding and to negotiate all claims in consultation with other officers where necessary.
- 3.9 To manage, maintain and review the Council's Risk Register, providing reports to Managers and Directors as required, and reporting to Executive as appropriate.

Responsibility of Chief Officers

- 3.10 To ensure appropriate controls are in place, to manage service provision and financial and non-financial risks in an effective, efficient and economic manner. To also ensure that the

operation of these controls are regularly reviewed, utilising any advice given by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits, Internal Audit, the Council's insurers, or specialists (e.g. crime prevention, fire prevention, health and safety, occupational health).

- 3.11 To ensure that all risks in relation to the operation of their service(s) are identified. Appropriate measures to manage and mitigate the risks are identified and put into operation. All identified risks and the mitigations are included on the Council's risk register and reviewed in accordance with corporate requirements. The reviews must include an assessment of whether any additional risks have arisen that need to be managed and included on the register and whether any additional controls or mitigations are required, or whether any of the existing risks are no longer relevant.
- 3.12 To ensure that any proposals for new services, projects or changes in policy are reported to Executive for approval, with a robust assessment of the risks involved and the ways in which the risks can be managed, and that those risks are actively managed and included on the risk register as soon as Executive approval is given.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

- 3.13 To notify the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits immediately of any loss, liability or damage that may lead to a claim against the Council and to provide any information or explanation required by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits or the Council's insurers.
- 3.14 To notify the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles that require insurance of any alterations affecting existing insurances. This shall include all risks associated with trading activities and any services provided to Council-owned companies, external customers, charities, customers, whether individuals or external bodies, whether or not those services are charged for.
- 3.15 To consult the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits and the Director, Customer and Organisational Development on the terms of any indemnity that the council is requested to give.
- 3.16 To ensure that employees or anyone covered by the council's insurances, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment of liability in regard to any insurance claim

Internal controls

Why this is important

- 3.17 The Council is complex and beyond the direct control of individuals. It therefore requires internal control which manages and monitors progress towards strategic objectives.
- 3.18 The Council has statutory obligations and thus requires internal controls to identify, meet and monitor compliance with these obligations
- 3.19 The Council faces a wide range of financial, administrative and commercial risks, both from internal and external factors, which threaten the achievement of its objectives. Internal controls are necessary to manage these risks.
- 3.20 The system of internal controls is determined in order to provide measurable achievement of:
- efficient and effective operations
 - reliable financial information and reporting

- compliance with laws and Regulations
- and/or risk management

Key controls

3.21 The key controls and control objectives for internal control systems are:

- key controls should be reviewed on a regular basis and the Council should make a formal statement annually to the effect that it is satisfied that the systems of internal control are operating effectively. This Statement of Internal Control (SIC) is a key part of the Council's statement of accounts and fundamental to corporate governance.
- managerial control systems, including defining policies, setting objectives and plans, monitoring financial and other performance and taking appropriate anticipatory and remedial action. The key objective of these systems is to promote ownership of the control environment by defining roles and responsibilities.
- financial and operational control systems and procedures which include physical safeguards for assets, segregation of duties, authorisation and approval procedures and information systems and
- an effective internal audit function that is properly resourced. It should operate in line with the principles contained in the Auditing Practices Board's auditing guideline Guidance for Internal Auditors, CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom and with any other statutory obligations and Regulations.

Responsibilities of the Audit Manager

3.22 To test and assess the Council's control environment and to make recommendations whenever necessary to improve the controls in order to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and Regulations.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

3.23 To manage processes to check that established controls are being adhered to and to evaluate their effectiveness in order to be confident in the proper use of resources, achievement of objectives and management of risks.

3.24 To review existing controls in the light of changes affecting the Council and to establish and implement new ones, particularly to ensure compliance with Audit recommendations. Chief Officers are responsible for removing controls that are unnecessary or not cost or risk effective – for example, because of duplication – but only after consultation with internal audit and the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits . To undertake an annual review of the operation of internal controls as part of the process for the completion of the Annual Governance Statement via the completion of questionnaires for each service, with action plans developed, implemented and monitored in response to any issues raised. To ensure that in any areas of their service where refunds are processed there is a division of duties between the member of staff raising the refund, and the member of staff approving the refund, and that the approver checks and certifies both that the refund is appropriate and that the bank account to be

credited is the account of the person to whom the refund is due.

3.25 To ensure staff have a clear understanding of the consequences of lack of control.

Responsibilities of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

3.26 To lead the preparation of the statement of internal control, working with representatives from each department to ensure that the council's internal controls are properly evaluated, and that any significant concerns are identified.

Audit requirements

Internal Audit

Why this is important

3.27 The requirement for an internal audit function for local authorities is implied by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 that requires authorities to "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs". The Accounts and audit regulations (as amended), require the council as a corporate body to "maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit".

3.28 Accordingly, internal audit is an independent and objective appraisal function that is determined by the council for reviewing the system of internal control. It examines, evaluates

and reports on the adequacy of internal control as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

Key controls

3.29 The key controls for internal audit are:

- a) that it is independent in its planning and operation
- b) the Audit Manager has direct access to the Head of Paid Service, all levels of management and directly to elected members and
- c) the internal auditors comply with the Auditing Practices Board's guideline Guidance for Internal Auditors, as interpreted by CIFPA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom.

Responsibilities for the Audit Manager

3.30 To ensure that internal auditors have the Council to:

- a) access Council premises at reasonable times
- b) access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems
- c) receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration
- d) require any employee of the Council to account for cash, stores or any other local council asset under his or her control
- e) access records belonging to third parties such as contractors when required and
- f) directly access the Head of Paid Service, the Executive and Audit and Governance Committee

3.31 To prepare strategic and annual audit plans in accordance with current best practice and the recommendations of the external auditor, taking account of the characteristics and relative risks of the activities involved.

3.32 To ensure that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any fraud or irregularity.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

3.33 To ensure that internal auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.

3.34 To ensure that auditors are provided with any information and explanations that they seek in the course of their work.

3.35 To consider and respond promptly to recommendations in audit reports.

3.36 To ensure that any agreed actions which arise from audit recommendations are carried out in a timely and effective fashion.

3.37 To notify the Audit Manager immediately of any suspected fraud, theft, irregularity, improper use or misappropriation of the Council's property or resources. Pending investigation and reporting, the Service Director should take all necessary steps to prevent further loss and to secure records and documentation against removal or alteration.

3.38 To ensure that new systems for maintaining financial records, or records of assets, or changes to such systems are discussed with and agreed by the Audit Manager before implementation.

External Audit

Why this is important

3.39 The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires the appointment of external auditors for an annual audit of the Council's accounts and an examination of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The external auditor has rights of access to all documents and information necessary for audit purposes.

3.40 The basic duties of the external auditor are defined in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office. The Act also makes it an offence for a person to fail to comply with any requirement of an auditor under the Act without reasonable excuse. The Code of Audit Practice first issued in March 2020 lays out the auditor's objectives to review and report upon:

- the financial aspects of the audited body's corporate governance arrangement
- the audited body's financial statements and
- aspects of the audited body's arrangements to manage its performance, including the preparation and publication of a specified performance information and compliance in regards to the preparation and publication of the BVPP.

3.41 The external auditor is required to determine whether or not the Council's statement of accounts provides a 'true and fair view' of the Council's financial position, and whether the Council has made adequate arrangements to secure economy, effectiveness and efficiency in the use of its resources. The external auditor is also required to report by exception on other information published with the statement of accounts, to make a statement as to whether the consolidation schedules provided to government for the Whole of Government Accounts are consistent with the Council's statement of accounts, and to write an annual audit letter providing a commentary on the auditor's work together with any issues that the auditor wishes to bring to the public's attention

3.42 The external auditor has the powers to issue public interest reports or written recommendations. If this happens, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 sets out procedures that the Council must follow in order to publicise and consider the report or recommendation.

Key controls:

3.43 The Council is required to ensure that the external auditors are appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The external auditor will follow the National Audit Office code of audit practice when carrying out their audits.

Responsibilities of the Audit Manager

3.44 To ensure that external auditors are provided access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the external auditors deem necessary for the purposes of their work.

3.45 To manage the external audit appointment process to ensure that the appointment of the external auditor is made in accordance with the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, and that the Executive is advised of the options available for the appointment.

3.46 To ensure there is effective liaison between external and internal audit.

3.47 To work with the external auditor and advise the Full Council, Executive and Corporate Directors, Directors and Service Directors on their responsibilities in regards to external audit.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

- 3.48 To ensure that external auditors are provided access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets which the external auditors deem necessary for the purposes of their work.
- 3.49 To ensure that all records and systems are up to date and available for inspection.

Preventing Fraud Bribery and Corruption

Why this is important

- 3.50 The Council will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities, whether from inside or outside the Council.
- 3.51 The Council's expectation of propriety and accountability is that members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.
- 3.52 The Council also expects that individuals and organisations (for example suppliers, contractors, service providers) with whom it comes in to contact will act towards the Council with integrity and without thought or actions involving fraud and corruption.

Key controls

- 3.53 The key controls in regards to the prevention of financial irregularities are that:
- a) the Council has an effective Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and maintains a culture that will not tolerate fraud or corruption
 - b) all members and staff with integrity and lead by example
 - c) senior managers are required to deal swiftly and firmly with those who defraud or attempt to defraud the Council or who are corrupt
 - d) high standards of conduct are promoted amongst members
 - e) the maintenance of a register of interests in which any hospitality or gifts accepted must be recorded
 - f) whistle blowing procedures are in place and operate effectively and
 - g) legislation including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 is complied with.

Responsibilities of the Audit Manager

3.54 To develop and maintain the Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

3.55 To maintain adequate and effective internal control arrangements.

3.56 To ensure that all suspected irregularities are fully investigated.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

- 3.57 To make sure that all suspected irregularities are reported to the Audit Manager
- 3.58 To undertake an investigation in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary procedures where the outcome of an audit investigation indicates improper behaviour.
- 3.59 To make sure where financial impropriety is discovered, the Audit Manager is informed, and where sufficient evidence exists to believe that a criminal offence may have been committed, the Police are called in to establish with the Crown Prosecution Service whether any prosecution will take place.
- 3.60 To maintain a departmental register of interests

Assets Security

Why this is important

3.61 The Council holds assets in the form of property, vehicles, equipment, furniture and other items worth many millions of Pounds. It is vital that assets are safeguarded and used efficiently in service delivery and that there are arrangements for the security of both assets and information required for service operations. An up-to date asset register is a prerequisite for proper fixed asset accounting and sound asset management.

Key controls

- 3.62 The key controls for the security of resources such as land, buildings, fixed plant machinery, equipment, software and information are:
- a) resources are used only for the purposes of the Council and are properly accounted for
 - b) resources are available for use when required
 - c) resources no longer required are disposed of in line with the law and the Regulations of the Council so as to maximise the benefits
 - d) an asset register is maintained for the Council, assets are recorded when they are acquired by the Council and this record is updated as changes occur with regard to the location and condition of the asset
 - e) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with reference to safeguarding the Council's assets and information, which includes the requirements of the Data Protection Act and software copyright legislation and
 - f) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with reference to safeguarding the security of the Council's computer systems which include maintaining restricted access to the information held on them and compliance with the Council's computer and internet security policies.

Responsibility of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

3.63 To make sure that an asset register is maintained in line with good practice for all fixed assets. The function of the asset register is to provide the Council with information about fixed assets so that they are:

- Safeguarded
- used efficiently and effectively and
- adequately maintained

3.64 To receive the information required for accounting, costing and financial records from each Chief Officer.

3.65 To ensure that assets are valued in line with the Code of Practice on Local Council Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (CIPFA/LASAAC).

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

3.66 The Director, Property and Infrastructure will maintain a property database in a form approved by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits for all properties. The Director, Customer and Organisational Development will maintain a register of computer assets in a form approved by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits. The Director, Property and Infrastructure will maintain, in a form approved by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits, a register of plant and machinery and moveable assets currently owned or used by the Council. Any use of property by a

department or establishment other than for direct service delivery should be supported by documentation identifying terms, responsibilities and duration of use.

- 3.67 To ensure that lessees and other prospective occupiers of council land are not allowed to take possession or enter the land until a lease or agreement, in a form approved by the Director Housing in consultation with the Director, Property and Infrastructure, has been established as appropriate.
- 3.68 To ensure the proper security of all buildings and other assets are under their control.
- 3.69 Where land or buildings are surplus to requirements, to notify the Director, Property and Infrastructure who will then determine a recommendation for sale or future use to gain best value for the council.
- 3.70 To pass title deeds to the Head of Legal Services who is responsible for custody of all Title Deeds.
- 3.71 To ensure that no Council asset is subject to personal use by an employee without proper council.
- 3.72 To ensure the safe custody of vehicles, equipment, furniture, stock, stores and other property belonging to the Council.
- 3.73 To ensure that the Department maintains a register of moveable assets in line with arrangements approved by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits.
- 3.74 To ensure that assets are identified, their location recorded and that they are appropriately marked and insured.
- 3.75 To consult the Director, Property and Infrastructure in any case where security is thought to be defective or where it is deemed that special security arrangements may be needed.
- 3.76 To ensure cash holdings on premises are kept to a minimum.
- 3.77 To ensure that keys to safes and similar receptacles are carried on the person of those responsible at all times; loss of any such keys must be reported to the Audit Manager as soon as possible.
- 3.78 To record all disposal or part exchange of assets that should normally be by competitive tender or public auction, unless, following consultation with the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits, the Executive agrees otherwise.
- 3.79 To arrange for the valuation of assets for accounting purposes to meet requirements specified by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits.
- 3.80 To ensure that all employees are aware that they have a personal responsibility with regard to the protection and confidentiality of information, whether held in manual or computerised records. Information may be sensitive or privileged, or may possess some intrinsic value, and its disclosure or loss could result in a cost to the Council in some way.

Inventories

- 3.81 To maintain inventories and record an adequate description of furniture, fittings, equipment, plant and machinery above £100 in value.
- 3.82 To carry out an annual check of all items on the inventory in order to verify location, review, condition and to take action in relation to surpluses or deficiencies, annotating the inventory accordingly. Attractive and portable items such as computers, cameras and video recorders should be identified with security markings as belonging to the Council.
- 3.83 To make sure that property is only used in the course of the Council's business, unless the

Director or Service Director concerned has given permission otherwise.

Stocks and Stores

3.84 To make arrangements for the care and custody of stocks and stores in the department.

3.85 To ensure stocks are maintained at reasonable levels and are subject to a regular independent physical check. All discrepancies should be investigated and pursued to a satisfactory conclusion.

3.86 To investigate and remove from the Council's records (i.e. write-off) discrepancies as necessary, or to obtain Executive approval if they are in excess of a predetermined limit.

3.87 To authorise or write off disposal of redundant stocks and equipment. Procedures for disposal of such stocks and equipment should be by competitive quotations or auction, unless the Service Manager, Procurement advises otherwise.,.

3.88 To seek Executive approval to the write-off of redundant Stocks and equipment in excess of £5,000.

Intellectual Property

Why this is important

3.89 Intellectual Property is a generic term that includes inventions and writing. If these are created by the employee during the course of employment, then, as a general rule, they belong to the employer, not the employee. Various Acts of Parliament cover different types of Intellectual Property.

3.90 Certain activities undertaken within the Council may give rise to items that may be patentable, for example, software development. These items are collectively known as Intellectual Property.

Key controls

3.91 In the event that the Council decides to become involved in the commercial exploitation of interventions, the matter should proceed in accordance with corporately developed intellectual Property procedures.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

3.92 To ensure that controls are in place to ensure that staff do not carry out private work in council time and that staff are aware of an employer's rights with regard to Intellectual Property.

Asset Disposal

Why this is important

3.93 It would be uneconomic and inefficient for the cost of assets to outweigh their benefits. Obsolete, non-reparable or unnecessary resources should be disposed of in accordance with the law and the Regulations of the Council.

Key controls

3.94 Assets for disposal are identified and are disposed of at the most appropriate time and only when it is in the best interests of the Council, and best price is obtained, bearing in mind other factors, such as environmental issues. For items of significant value, disposal should be by competitive tender or public auction.

3.95 Procedures protect staff involved in the disposal from accusations of personal gain.

Responsibilities of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

3.96 To issue guidelines representing best practice for disposal of assets.

3.97 To ensure appropriate accounting entries are made to remove the value of disposed assets from the Council's records and to include the sale proceeds if appropriate.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

- 3.98 To seek advice from purchasing advisors on the disposal of surplus or obsolete materials, stores or equipment.
- 3.99 To ensure that income received for the disposal of an asset is properly banked and coded.

Treasury Management

Why this is important

- 3.100 Many millions of pounds pass through the Council's books each year. This led to the establishment of codes of practice. These aim to provide assurances that the Council's money is properly managed in a way that balances risk with return, but with the overriding consideration being given to the security of the Council's capital sum.

Key controls

- 3.101 That the Council's borrowings and investments comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Prudential Code for Capital Finance and with the Council's treasury policy statement.

Responsibilities of Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

- 3.102 To arrange the borrowing and investments of the Council in such a manner as to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Prudential Code for Capital Finance and the Council's treasury management policy statement and strategy.

- 3.103 To report on treasury management activities to the Executive in line with regulatory requirements and best practice.

Investments and borrowing

- 3.104 To ensure that all investments of money are made in the name of the Council or in the name of nominees approved by the Full Council.
- 3.105 To ensure that all securities that are the property of the Council or its nominees and the Title Deeds of all property in the Council's ownership are held in the custody of the appropriate Service Director.
- 3.106 To effect all borrowings in the name of the Council.
- 3.107 To act as the Council's registrar of stocks, bonds and mortgages and to maintain records of all borrowing of money by the Council.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

Investments and borrowing

- 3.108 To ensure that loans are not made to third parties and that interests are not acquired in companies, joint ventures or other enterprises without the approval of Full Council, following consultation with the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits.
- 3.109 To ensure that staff inform the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits nominated Treasury Management officer in advance of any significant cash income or expenditure in order to optimise the Council's borrowing and investment performance.

Banking

Responsibilities of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

- 3.110 To operate bank accounts as are considered necessary- opening or closing any bank account with the exception of appointee ship accounts shall require the prior written approval of the Chief Accountant.
- 3.111 To ensure that the Council's bank accounts are reconciled to the financial accounts on a

daily basis, and that the reconciliations are kept up to date.

3.112 The Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits is responsible for all arrangements and communications with the council's banker for all accounts other than appointee-ship accounts.

- 3.113 The Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits will have the sole responsibility for ordering cheques and drafts from the council's bank for all non-appointee accounts.
- 3.114 The Director, Finance, Revenues, and Benefits shall be responsible for making suitable arrangements for the custody and issue of cheques and drafts from the council's bank for all non-appointee accounts, and to pay all money received into the Council's bank account not later than the following day after receipt.
- 3.115 To open, close and operate appointee ship accounts in accordance with best practice.

Responsibilities of the Executive

3.116 To approve the appointment of the Council's corporate bankers.

To authorise the specific officers entitled to authorise electronic payments, or sign cheques or other authorities for payment on all non-appointee accounts.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

Banking

- 3.117 Money received other than by direct transfer to the Council's account must be banked promptly, ideally not later than the following working day. Small amounts may be delayed according at the relevant Chief Officer's discretion. No income may be held for longer than one working week before it is banked. All income must be banked in full and must be supported by sufficient documentation to ensure that it can be adequately identified and accounted for.
- 3.118 Bank accounts must be reconciled with the council's financial accounts on a weekly basis. This reconciliation must be completed by no later than the end of the following week.
- 3.119 To ensure staff follow the procedures for banking and cash handling in Appendix I and also follow any further instructions on banking or cash handling issued by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

Trust funds and funds held for third parties including appointee-ship accounts

- 3.120 To arrange for all trust funds to be held wherever possible in the name of the Council. All officers acting as trustees by virtue of their official position shall agree arrangements for the deposit of securities etc. relating to the trust with the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits in writing. This will include the creation of appointee-ship bank accounts where required.
- 3.121 To arrange, where funds are held on behalf of third parties, for their secure administration, approved by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits, and to maintain written records of all transactions.
- 3.122 To ensure that trust funds and appointee-ship bank accounts are

operated within any relevant legislation and the specific requirements for each trust.

Responsibilities of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits-

Imprest accounts

- 3.123 To provide employees of the Council with cash or bank imprest accounts to meet minor expenditure on behalf of the Council and to prescribe rules for operating these accounts. Minor items of expenditure should not exceed the prescribed amount.
- 3.124 To determine the petty cash limit and to maintain a record of all transactions and petty cash advances made and periodically to review the arrangements for the safe custody and control of these advances.
- 3.125 To reimburse imprest holders as often as necessary to restore the imprests, but normally not more than monthly.

Responsibilities of Individuals authorised by Executive to authorise the release of electronic payments

3.126 Individuals authorised by Executive to authorise the release of electronic payments must:

- keep secure any electronic tokens or similar used to enable authorisation, and, if lost, report their loss immediately
- keep entirely confidential all passwords used to access the system or systems in which the authorisation is enabled, ensure those passwords are in accordance with best practice as recommended by the Council's ICT Client Team, and that they are updated regularly and not used for any other system access
- only access those systems on equipment approved by the Council's ICT Client Team for the authorisation of electronic payments
- follow the instructions provided for the authorisation of payments
- carry out any audit checks required on the payment file, or on individual payments, prior to authorisation, and evidence those checks
- only authorise a payment file when confident that the payments are appropriate
- liaise with the Council's ICT service if there are any technical issues concerning payment
- report any issues or concerns to the Director, Finance, Revenue and benefits at the earliest possible opportunity.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

Imprest accounts

3.127 To ensure that employees operating an imprest account:

- obtain and retain vouchers to support each payment from the imprest account. Where appropriate, an official receipted VAT invoice must be obtained
- make adequate arrangements for the safe custody of the account

- produce upon demand by the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits cash and all vouchers to the total value of the imprest amount
- record transactions promptly
- reconcile and balance the account at least monthly; reconciliation sheets to be signed and retained by the imprest holder
- provide the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits with a certificate of the value of the account held at 31 March each year
- ensure that the float is never used to cash personal cheques or to make personal loans and that the only payments in to the account are the reimbursed of the float and change relating to purchases where an advance has been made and
- on leaving the Council's employment or otherwise ceasing to be entitled to hold an imprest advance, an employee shall account to the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits for the amount advanced to him or her.

Staffing

Why this is important

3.128 In order to provide the highest level of service, it is crucial that the Council recruits and retains high calibre, knowledgeable staff, qualified to an appropriate level.

Key controls

3.129 The key controls for staffing are:

- a) an appropriate staffing strategy and policy exists, in which staffing requirements and budget allocation are matched
- b) procedures are in place for forecasting staffing requirements and cost
- c) controls are implemented that ensure that staff time is used efficiently and to the benefit of the Council and
- d) checks are undertaken prior to employing new staff to ensure that they are appropriately qualified, experienced and trustworthy.

Responsibilities of the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits

3.130 To ensure that appropriate budget provision exists for employees, based on the approved establishment.

3.131 To act as an advisor to Chief Officers on areas such as National Insurance and pension contributions, as appropriate.

Responsibilities of Chief Officers

3.132 To review and agree the draft staffing budget produced by the Director, Finance, Revenue and Benefits

3.133 To ensure that the staffing budget is an accurate forecast of staffing levels and is equated to an appropriate revenue budget provision (including on-costs and overheads).

- 3.134 To monitor staff activity to ensure adequate control over such costs as sickness, overtime, re-grading, training and temporary staff, and to meet the budget reduction for turnover provision.
- 3.135 To ensure that the staffing budget is not exceeded without due council and that it is managed to enable the agreed level of service to be provided.
- 3.136 To ensure that the Director, Customer and Organisational Development and the Director, Finance, Revenues and Benefits are immediately informed if the staffing budget is likely to be materially over or underspent.