

Audit Title:	National Fraud Initiative				Date of Report:		January 2014	
Number of ‘High Priority’ Recommendations:	NA	Current Audit Opinion:	NA	Previous Audit Opinion:	NA	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	NA	
<u>Key Recommendations</u>								
<p>Several reports with potential matches for fraud and error were received by the Council by the Audit Commission. These matches were risk assessed, prioritised and investigated by Internal Audit, in conjunction with relevant service areas. the results are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creditors: The NFI duplicate payment matches were superseded by work carried out by Internal Audit, using their own processes to identify duplicate payments over a three year period. This work has identified £27,000 of previously unrecovered duplicable payments, which are now in the process of being reclaimed from suppliers• Housing Benefits: Numerous matches were received from the Audit Commission. Matches are currently under investigation by the Housing Benefit Fraud Team. Two frauds have been proven from investigations carried out so far, to the value of £2,500.• Blue Badges to Deceased Persons: Work with the service area identified 33 deceased current blue badge holders. As a result these badges have now been cancelled. Eight records for further investigation have been identified and notified to the section. The Council was able to cancel one additional blue badge as a result of the exercise, as it was found that a non-deceased badge holder had current passes in both Wiltshire and Swindon.• Concessionary Travel to Deceased Persons: Work with the department identified 149 deceased current badge holders for cancellation, which will prevent future renewal. A further 74 records for investigation have been identified and notified to the section. A further 24 records with out-of-date addresses were also identified from the exercise.• VAT: A number of potentially incorrect payments of VAT against supplier invoices were investigated, but were found to have been paid at the correct amount when review. No further action was required.• Insurance: Two cases of potential serial insurance claims were reported to the Council. These were found to be legitimate claims in both cases. No further action was required.• Immigration cases: Several potential cases of housing tenants not having the correct immigration status were identified through the NFI exercise. Internal Audit worked with the UK Borders Agency to review these cases. All queries in relation to the cases raised have been resolved to their satisfaction and one case has been handed over to the Borders Agency for pastoral assistance in relation to their immigration status.								
<p>There are on-going investigations in relation to the above (and other) NFI reports, which will be resolved by March 2014.</p>								

Audit Title:	Museum Storage Follow-Up				Date of Report:		October 2013	
Number of ‘High Priority’ Recommendations:	3	Current Audit Opinion:	3	Previous Audit Opinion:	4	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	Of Concern	
<u>Key Recommendations</u>								
The key recommendations made as a result of the review are:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The assessment of the recommendations made in the security review, by Wiltshire Police, of STEAM should be completed. This review should give due regard to the nature of the Council’s insurance policies against theft. An action plan with responsibilities and target dates to implement the recommendations should then be prepared.• The accession register entries without locations should be investigated to establish whether the Council is still the owner of them. If so they should be located to rule out the possibility that they have been stolen. Priority should be given to the highest valued pieces.• The storage of works of art, historical artefacts and archaeological finds should be included in the Service Delivery risk register. The risk of continuing with present storage arrangements and taking no action to improve them should be clear. When identifying the mitigating actions to address the risks, the resources needed and their cost should be identified.								

Audit Title:	Streetsmart					Date of Report:	November 2013	
Number of 'High Priority' Recommendations:	8	Current Audit Opinion:	8	Previous Audit Opinion:	NA	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	Of Concern	

Key Recommendations

Please note that the Streetsmart audit report was published prior to the approval of the re-integration of Swindon Commercial Services with the Council.

The key recommendations made as a result of the review are:

- The roles of client and provider for Streetsmart services should be clearly defined. A single SBC client should be established as the main and first point of contact for stakeholders needing to interact with SCS for Streetsmart services. The role of other SBC departments, e.g. Commercial Services and Highways, should also be clearly defined. All service delivery issue identification and resolution should be referred through the SBC client as the first point of contact and dealt with using formal issue resolution processes and remedial action plans which are agreed and tracked through to completion.
- The guidance currently being produced on expected SBC/SCS partnership behaviours should be finalised and form the basis of facilitated sessions to resolve current issues with relationship management. Activities to develop trust and partnership behaviours should be undertaken.
- The Council should identify the skillsets required of officers involved in delivery and management of Streetsmart services, to act as efficient commissioners and delivers of services, in a Locality based model. Training and support should be provided and sufficient capacity should be allocated to cultural change and capacity/capability building for SBC and SCS officers.
- A 'root and branch' review of contract management processes between SBC and SCS should take place, to ensure processes are fit for purpose and can be suitably adapted to being brought back in-house.
- As SCS is brought back into the Council, a list of management information required to support delivery of services and agile, optimal decision-making by both Client and provider should be produced. Consideration should be given to modernising largely paper based processes for delivery and management of services, including electronic scheduling and job administration through handheld devices, appropriate software and tracking hardware.
- Performance management structures and processes should ensure there is sufficient independent, senior manager and Member review of performance of Streetsmart services. Developing financial management information should be a key activity once SCS is brought back into the Council.. Reporting on work activity (e.g. job volumes) should also take place to help predict and manage demand for services pro-actively and help both organisations understand each other's pressures.
- Robust costing for proposed 2014/15 Streetsmart savings should be produced, along with contingency planning to deal with any shortfall that may arise.

Audit Title:	Housing Capital Programme				Date of Report:	October 2013	
Number of 'High Priority' Recommendations:	11	Current Audit Opinion:	3	Previous Audit Opinion:	-	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	Of Concern

Key Recommendations

The key recommendations made as a result of the review are:

- The Council's Corporate Strategy should recognise the role that improvements to social housing make to achieving its priorities, reflecting the priorities in the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- The capital programme for housing repairs should also highlight the contribution that it makes to wider priorities within the Council and its partners, and should use it as a possible means of obtaining additional funding and as a determinant in allocating funding between projects within the programme.
- In recognising the interaction resulting from 'self-financing' between rent levels, repayment of debt, and future investment, the updated Housing Strategy should address the wider effects of investment in reducing fuel poverty, reducing crime, local employment, and health and wellbeing. In particular, it should highlight the contribution that these factors make to the priorities in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Corporate Strategy, and One Swindon. As an example of good practice evaluate the principle set out the Nottingham City Homes – Health and Wellbeing outcomes from the Secure Warm Modern improvement programme.
- Housing Services should seek assurance from the Contract Manager at SCS, responsible for the Housing Capital Programme, that there is a robust performance and quality assurance process in place and operating for reporting, monitoring and managing delivery. Any emerging issues/risks that may arise from performance below contract requirements should be discussed and resolved through regular client/contractor meetings. These should be recorded in an issues log/risk register including an action plan which is subject to regular review to ensure actions are implemented satisfactorily.
- In evaluating tenders for capital works projects, it should be ensured that all known items and management fees are included in costing so as to minimise the possible levels of subsequent variations and identify any tenders that have been reduced in value by excluding items likely to be required at a later stage.
- Evaluate trialling a three month pilot project with the Contact Centre to help mitigate the cost of reactive repairs by bringing forward or reprioritising planned repairs. As part of the pilot provide a detailed copy of the 2013/14 Capital Programme of works to the Contact Centre so that staff can refer more significant reactive jobs to Housing Services for consideration of delivery under a relevant Capital Programme contract.
- Review the value of the pilot project after three months to see if there is benefit in continuing the arrangement.
- Housing Services should ensure that the timeliness of repairs are delivered in accordance with targets set out in the tenants handbook. To support this pilot, Housing Services should provide guidance and ensure that any queries are resolved on a timely basis by dedicated officers.
- Completed capital programme repair jobs should be mapped to relevant properties on the Open Housing data base and used to effectively monitor achievement of the Decent Homes Standard.
- A procurement strategy should be developed within the Council for property-related services that reflects:

- Forthcoming tendering of the current SCS 'basket of works'
 - Re-tendering of the roofing contract, currently with Apollo Group
 - Resourcing of projects within future capital programmes that does not hold back works because of lengthy procurement cycles.
- With the latter in mind, tendering for a range of trades and professions within a framework agreement should be considered.
- Housing Services and Property Services should benchmark with others, exchange of best practice, and being able to demonstrate value for money.

Audit Title:	SCS Ltd – Housing Voids				Date of Report:	October 2013	
Number of 'High Priority' Recommendations:	14	Current Audit Opinion:	N/A	Previous Audit Opinion:	-	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	N/A

Key Recommendations

The key recommendations made as a result of the review are:

- Produce a Housing Voids Business Plan, linking the business unit's contribution to SCS's overall corporate aims, objectives and priorities. This should include specific and measurable performance criteria and targets for the unit, incorporating the Housing Services Client contract requirements.
- Adopt a standard format to report, manage and escalate issues for resolution at contract works meetings with Clients and to measure overall performance against contract requirements/targets.
- Operational and financial performance monitoring should be conducted regularly.
- Written working procedures and guidance, for housing repairs including housing voids works, should be produced, periodically reviewed and held as part of an on-line company reference manual. The manual should be supported by specific training for all current and new staff to maintain awareness and understanding.
- Induction training should be provided to all new members of staff and be supported by additional training for managers including budget and service performance management and monitoring.
- As part of business as usual, current jobs should be progressed to invoice status stage as they are completed.
- Performance time targets for each job type (capital or revenue) should be set and allocated across the stages needed to complete e.g. the revenue job target is 14 days and could be allocated as following: asbestos survey - 3 days, undertaking of repair – 7 days, inspection and administration time for awarding and collating certificates of completion, inspections and transfer of keys from and to the Client – 4 days (i.e. 2 days at start and 2 days at the end of process). These targets should be introduced as local performance targets and the relevant targets agreed with SCS staff and sub-contractors awarded Housing voids jobs.
- The housing voids work management spreadsheets held by the Housing Voids Administrator should be developed to provide comprehensive job monitoring information and activity against local and contractual performance indicators.

- A reconciliation of the SCS Housing Voids jobs being worked on (as recorded on the Housing Voids job management spreadsheet) should be conducted on a weekly basis i.e. every Monday morning, with the Housing voids job status reported by the Client and shared on the Housing O-drive. This is to ensure consistency of jobs and status information, highlighting any sticking points or issues that need escalating by the Head of Housing Voids for resolution at the Client/Contractors Housing Voids Contract meetings.
- The Client Housing Repairs Surveyors should be required to provide electronic confirmation of on-site agreed job variations and upload these on to the Open Housing system for subsequent confirmation to the company. Housing Services should be requested to process the variation on the Open Housing System within 7 working days of being agreed onsite and forward to SCS (this should be incorporated as a performance indicator for the Client).
- The status of WIP and performance against targets should be monitored at least fortnightly and where necessary action taken to address any variations. In the event of any delays/issues caused by the Client in processing jobs and/or in making prompt payment should be escalated by the Housing Voids Manager at Client/contract meetings.
- The responsibility for Housing property key control should be formally assigned to one or two officers within the SCS Housing Void Repair Team. This person(s) should also be responsible for overall co-ordination and control of the whole job process to ensure there is accountability, transparent and co-ordination of working.
- The sub-contractor portal should be closed down with immediate effect as advised by the Auditor at the summary of field work meeting with both the Finance Director (SCS) and Financial Controller (SCS). The system should not be used until the system and controls have been reviewed and assurance provided by an independent and suitably qualified body that the system has complete and reliable controls in place. The system's operational controls must comply with the Company's financial regulations
- In compliance with Contract Standing Orders all work must be approved by an approved signatory before work awards are notified to contractors.

Audit Title:	Link Centre Ice Rink 2013/14				Date of Report:	November 2013	
Number of 'High Priority' Recommendations:	4	Current Audit Opinion:	3	Previous Audit Opinion:	N/A	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	Moderate

Key Recommendations

The audit scope included a review of all contracts in place between the Link Centre and ice rink users.

- Contracts should be reviewed in full at the close of each contract period and re-negotiated prior to being agreed. The contract should also be reviewed during the contract life, to ensure obligations are being fulfilled.
- The appropriateness of the catering element in the contract should be fully reviewed to establish whether this should be a part of future contracts at all. If to continue, any future catering incentives offered should be directly linked to the amount of business that is generated. Additional terms should also be introduced to ensure that catering income paid as part of the contract is not excessive. The contract should be clear as to the terms and conditions of such an incentive and any additional terms no longer included should be removed.
- Current arrangements regarding advertising should be justified. Where advertising is to continue, there should be clear guidance as to what constitutes an appropriate / inappropriate advertisement, to ensure that rules are clear and transparent. Where possible, SBC should explore undertaking attempts to sell advertising directly, as a means of generating additional income. There may be opportunities to join up with other SBC departments whose roles include selling advertising space on borough property.
- The entire marketing package agreed through the contract should be reviewed as soon as possible. In future, additional benefits purchased through the contract should be assessed against the marketing offering and only entered into if providing clear benefit and value for money to the Council. SBC should be more involved in visits, working in partnership to ensure that wider Ice Rink and Link Centre objectives are being met.

Audit Title:	Social Care Transport 13/14				Date of Report:	January 2014	
Number of 'High Priority' Recommendations:	7	Current Audit Opinion:	3	Previous Audit Opinion:	N//A	Overall Evaluation (Risk):	Moderate

Key Recommendations

- The responsibilities of the LA to provide transport should be reviewed and then communicated to key stakeholders (e.g. Social Workers, parents, foster carers and children) to avoid unnecessary or overly generous transport arrangements being put in place across the Teams. Where necessary, specific consideration should be given to defining expectations in relation to the age, needs and vulnerability of the child, the journey distance, etc, that should be taken into account when deciding on transport.
- To supplement future guidance regarding eligibility of transport, the merits of determining a policy on transport options should be reviewed to ensure priorities in regards to transport options are clear, in particular, to reinforce the view that transport is not by default the LA's responsibility and that taxis should be a last resort. Where necessary, this should include any wider initiatives to encourage options, such as walking or cycling schemes.
- Transport requests should include clear justification for why SBC are providing transport and the reason why other modes of transport are not possible. Any other reasons outside those agreed in the policy (as above) should be clearly justified.
- A suitable method of collating issues and incidents relating to transport should be determined i.e. designating an officer within Children and Families to coordinate complaints. Once established, issues with transport should be recorded within the Care Teams and forwarded to the designated officer and then the Passenger Transport Manager to resolve. Complaints and issues should be reviewed on a routine basis and common issues identified and discussed in order to resolve issues and raise standards of the service provided. Where necessary, consideration for penalties should be pursued, as per the contract specification.
- The way in which budget monitoring of social care transport is undertaken should be reviewed, as the current arrangements do not allow for an accurate or timely picture of the cost of transport provision to be determined. A centralised transport budget in Children and Families could allow for reductions in the administration time associated with recharging expenditure to Teams and allow savings (such as those gained by sharing taxis) to be better demonstrated, without distorting the costs to individual Care Teams.
- It should be reviewed whether to include Care Team budget headings within the authorised cost centres for the Passenger Transport Manager and other relevant signatories in the Transport Team. If this is not deemed appropriate, invoices in future should be sent to Team Managers of Care Teams to review and authorise their transport expenditure prior to passing the invoice for payment.
- A review of the foster carer allowance scheme should be undertaken, in consultation with foster carers and Social Care Teams, with specific consideration for the cost of transport, including any limits and the rate that these will be paid. Once the allowance scheme has been reviewed, the expectations of Foster Carers in regards to transport should be reinforced to both the Carers and Social Care Teams.