

# Internal Audit reports identifying 'significant' risk or 'of concern':

## Tenancy Engagement

**Audit Committee**

**Date: 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

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Author:	Head of Internal Audit
Wards:	None
Locality Affected:	None
Parishes Affected:	None

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### **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 Members requested that at least one individual audit report be presented to each meeting of the Committee. At the last meeting Members requested that the report on *Tenancy Engagement* be brought to the July meeting of the Committee.
- 1.2 The Council's Audit Committee has a strategic role to ensure that the Council's assurance framework is operating effectively. To this end it should seek assurance that key areas that contribute to this framework are operating effectively.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the contents of the report be noted.

### **3. Detail**

#### Background

- 3.1 This audit review was requested by the Head of Housing Services following a reorganisation in Housing that established a new Participation Team. The scope of the review was to evaluate:
  - Whether current participation services met statutory objectives
  - Whether the services provide value for money; and
  - The extent to which the participation function met the Council's localities agenda

#### Key Recommendations

- 3.2 As noted above a number of the recommendations made have been impacted by the reintegration of the SCS StreetSmart Services Highway Maintenance team in to the Council's Highway and Transport team.
- 3.3 The key recommendations made in the report are as follows:
  - Clear objectives for Tenant Participation must be agreed in consultation with tenants prior to any significant changes being made to the way tenants are involved in the delivery of housing services' objectives.

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- The five expectations for tenant participation, detailed in the HCA National Framework (see below) should be included in the participation principles agreed with Swindon tenants:
  - Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing (including influencing priorities, policies and delivery).
  - Consulting with tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
  - Providing tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how providers meet all of the Tenant Services Authority standards and to scrutinise performance against standards.
  - Social housing providers to support tenant panels or similar and to publish performance to support tenant scrutiny.
  - The framework also expects providers to involve tenants in developing local offers.
- Following appropriate consultation to determine the joint objectives consider including items from other authorities’ strategies in Swindon’s.
- In determining the level of value for money achieved from the current participation services support should be sought from the Finance Team to ensure:
  - All the participation services are included in the cost calculations
  - The full cost of providing each service is fully understood
  - The basis for apportioning costs are not made overly complex
  - The contribution of each activity toward the agreed objectives is fully understood.
- Positive action to reduce the barriers to involvement should be considered for minority groups identified above.

3.4 The Internal Audit report (issued on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014) is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.5 The Head of Housing Services has provided an update (see Appendix 2) on progress in implementing the recommendations from the report.

3.6 The Head of Housing Services will also be attending Audit Committee to answer any questions that Members may have.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

4.1 Not Applicable

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**5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report however the detailed audit report addresses the suitability of internal controls within the systems examined

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Internal Audit is a statutory requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. The Internal Audit service also provides assurance to the Director of Finance regarding the requirements of Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 None

Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 5.4 Effective systems of internal control within the Council will help to ensure that the Council's corporate objectives and those set out in One Swindon are achieved.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 Not Applicable

Risk Management

- 5.6 Not applicable

**6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director: Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

**7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

**8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Internal Audit report: *Tenancy Engagement* (January 2014)  
8.2 Appendix 2 – Update provided by the Head of Housing Services (June 2014)