

2. Business Rates Audit Report Executive Summary

Audit Objective

The overall objective of this audit was to review the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal controls designed to manage and mitigate financial and non-financial risks relating to the Business Rates function

Assurance Opinion		Number of actions	
		Priority	Number
Substantial	There is a sound system of internal control designed and operating in a way that gives a reasonable likelihood that the objectives will be met.	High	0
		Medium	2
		Low/Advisory	2
		Total	4

Audit Approach and Scope

The scope of this audit was to review the debt recovery action taken by the team.

Key controls tested	Assessment	Actions Raised
In-house debt recovery		Aged debts not regularly monitored.
Monitoring of suppressed recovery cases		Some suppressed recovery cases not monitored regularly
External debt recovery		Cases 'in liquidation' are not passed back to the Council promptly for write off

Summary and next steps

In the main, the recovery of business rates debts is well monitored as based on the evidence available and officers regularly review those cases in arrears. The team should be recognised for the flexibility they have shown over the last three years as they have been asked to put on hold their normal business rate tasks in order to award the various business rate grants that became available to businesses to help them get them through the pandemic.

It is only within the last few months, that the team have returned to their normal 'working' and reintroduced tasks such as visiting properties and general housekeeping functions such as reviewing small balance write-offs etc. Unfortunately, these will have to be placed on hold again as one of their team members has recently been seconded to the Housing Benefit Overpayment project for the foreseeable future.

This is a final report of the audit findings and incorporates the remedial action agreed with the System Lead Payments & Collection and the Business Rates Manager.

Remedial action has been agreed with management for all of the findings identified.