Management of Travellers' Sites 2016-17

City of York Council

Internal Audit Report

Business Unit: Health, Housing and Adult Social Care
Responsible Officer: AD Housing & Community Safety
Service Manager: Supported Housing Manager
Date Issued: 27th April 2017
Status: Final
Reference: 11530/004

	P1	P2	P3
Actions	0	0	0
Overall Audit Opinion	High Assurance		

Summary and Overall Conclusions

Introduction

The City of York Council is responsible for providing management and support services to travellers' sites, taking in to account the distinct cultural needs and values of the community as well as its commitment to the promotion of equality.

There are three travellers' sites owned and managed by the Council; James Street (20 pitches), Clifton Site (23 pitches) and Osbaldwick Site (18 pitches).

The Council has appointed a site manager who, along with 3 staff members, manages the daily operation of the sites. The housing department is principally responsible for providing management and support services to the travellers' sites, however, in reality services are provided by a range of council departments and agencies across the city.

The 2016/17 budget allocation for the management of the Council's travellers' sites amounts to £270,322.75. This audit of travellers' sites will aim to provide assurance that the Council is fulfilling all statutory requirements in its management of travellers' sites, with particular focus on the day-to-day running of sites.

Objectives and Scope of the Audit

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system will ensure that:

- The Council's management of travellers' sites is compliant with the relevant legislation.
- The Council provides the same standards of management and support services to travellers' sites as to customers in other forms of social housing.

The receipt and arrears procedure for travellers' sites, originally included in the audit specification, is now being reviewed as part of the 2016/17 audit of Housing Rents.

Key Findings

The audit work carried out on the management of travellers' sites by the Council highlighted that, at the time of the audit, systems, processes and the controls were robust and sufficient in mitigating risk. A couple of minor issues were identified; however these had already been considered by staff and were in the process of being rectified.

The Council has up-to-date policies and documents that are compliant with the relevant legislation, such as the Mobile Homes Act (1983), Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act (2010). The Council developed a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy (2013- 2018) that included an action plan with agreed deadlines. Whilst this strategy has a well-developed action plan to improve both the management of travellers' sites and identify opportunities to provide more pitches, it has not progressed since 2014. Senior Managers will be reviewing this Strategy during 2017/18 as it still remains advertised on the Council website and is available for download by the general public.

The team at Ordnance Lane keep thorough and detailed records on all of the correspondence, repairs requests and general queries for each tenant. These records are kept on the Document Management System (DMS). For each tenant in the sample we selected there was a signed Pitch Agreement on file. The only minor issue noted is that there was not always a copy of the tenant's identification on file. This has already been acknowledged by the housing team and for all applications going forward copies of identification will be kept on DMS alongside the application document.

Statistics produced by the BI Hub show that 94.77% of repairs requested for travellers sites in 2016/17 were completed within the allocated time frame. Repairs completed within the timeframe for social housing tenants were 95.03%. From the data analysis performed and using the data compiled by the BI hub, it is evident that tenants across the three travellers' sites receive the same standard of service that tenants in other forms of social housing receive.

Overall Conclusions

It was found that the arrangements for managing risk were very good. An effective control environment appears to be in operation. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided **High Assurance**.

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

Audit Opinions and Priorities for Actions

Audit Opinions
Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit. Our overall audit opinion is based on 5 grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
High Assurance	Overall, very good management of risk. An effective control environment appears to be in operation.
Substantial Assurance	Overall, good management of risk with few weaknesses identified. An effective control environment is in operation but there is scope for further improvement in the areas identified.
Reasonable Assurance	Overall, satisfactory management of risk with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made.
Limited Assurance	Overall, poor management of risk with significant control weaknesses in key areas and major improvements required before an effective control environment will be in operation.
No Assurance	Overall, there is a fundamental failure in control and risks are not being effectively managed. A number of key areas require substantial improvement to protect the system from error and abuse.

Priorities for Actions	
Priority 1	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Priority 2	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Priority 3	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.