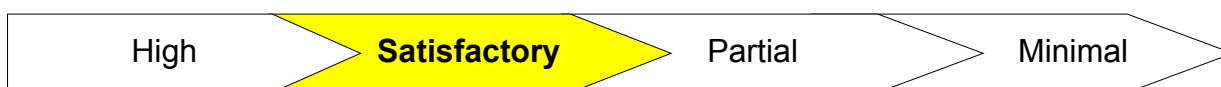


Appendix 3B: Assurance and Themes

Assurance



Corporate Procurement Strategy and Toolkit

Objective

To assess whether the Corporate Procurement Strategy and Toolkit are:

- fit for purpose and reflect relevant professional standards and recognised good practice guidance
- consistent within themselves and other Contract Management Framework documents.

Theme

Overall, the Council's Corporate Procurement Strategy and Toolkit are fit for purpose, consistent within themselves and the other elements of the contract management framework.

The Strategy is clear and concise containing those elements of any business strategy that would expect to be seen. It compares favourably to others seen, being succinct and readable. Action is still required to set up the Procurement Review Board in accordance with the role stipulated in the Contract Procedure Rules.

Each objective within the strategy is accompanied by a set of key performance indicators. They are consistent with key aspects of the Contract Procedure Rules and the restructuring of the procurement function. They should therefore, provide meaningful measures of the successful, or otherwise, implementation of the contract management framework. Overall, this reflects a move away from traditional 'buying sections' to a more modern procurement function that uses technology to assist with the procurement process. It should also help ensure that the Corporate Procurement Team (the team) can influence procurement behaviours within the Council.

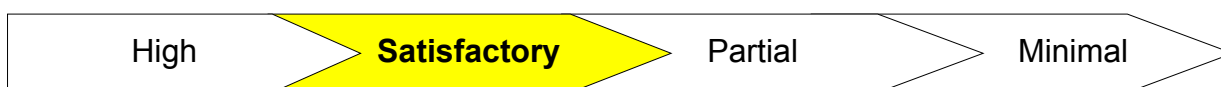
The team has been restructured into two specialisms to enable it to provide more oversight of procurement across the entire Council. This is consistent with restructurings seen elsewhere, where this procurement approach has been adopted. Job profiles have been updated accordingly, with appropriate levels of professional qualification set out for each role.

The team has produced a number of types of spend analysis which have been used to inform the annual Procurement Plan and realise better procurement savings through aggregation and collaboration opportunities. The spend analyses' produced compare favourably with examples seen elsewhere.

As at May 2016 when the fieldwork for the audit was completed, a Contracts Register had been produced and was available via the Council's external website but it was not up to date. Officers have informed Internal Audit that the Contracts Register is now aligned to spend analysis and is a complete, accurate up-to-date record of corporate contracts.

Appendix 3B: Assurance and Themes

Assurance



A critical services, supplies and works Contracts Register also needed to be produced at this time. The identification of these contracts and production of exit strategies would assist the Council's resilience should a business interruption event due to contract failure occur. This exercise is expected to be completed by the end of March 2017.

The Procurement Toolkit (collectively the toolkit and all other supporting guidance documents and templates) compares favourably to what has been seen elsewhere, being more comprehensive than is normally seen. Guidance on post-tender negotiation and Appendix 4 of the Procurement Toolkit could not be located at the time of the audit.

The team need to ensure that only current procurement documents are available on the intranet and internet.

Number of actions agreed: 6

Risk Management Corporate and Service Plan Risks

Objective

To assess whether risks, controls and assurance within risk registers are properly understood and consistently defined in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Toolkit.

Theme

Corporate Risk Register

The Corporate Risk Register was found to be maintained in accordance with the approved Strategy, using the Covalent (the performance management IT system). The process for identifying risks at this level and then monitoring how well they are mitigated is in line with good practice.

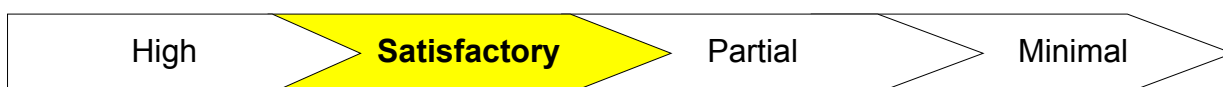
Corporate risks are reviewed annually as part of the process for developing the Corporate Plan as would be expected. It is good that the number of risks at this level are kept to a manageable number and are strategic. There is evidence that risks move in and out of this register as issues are dealt with. The content of the risk register complies with good practice guidance.

The current Corporate Risk Register report format may make it difficult for recipients to:

- efficiently digest the high-level information the document provides
- easily see where the issues lie (i.e. which really are the most significant risks due to the way the colours within the matrix are currently configured).

Appendix 3B: Assurance and Themes

Assurance



The controls identified against risks are, in most cases, a mixture of actions that will either prevent, detect or direct activity to operate in the manner expected, which indicates a robust control environment.

The movement of the current risk score since the last update of the register was also provided to the audience, thus demonstrating how the implementation of the planned actions had affected the risk rating. Although most of the risks reviewed demonstrated an understanding of the risk and control environment, this was not consistently the case.

Number of actions agreed: 0

Public Health, Health Protection

Objective

To assess whether there are robust policies, procedures and working arrangements in place with relevant parties to ensure public safety, prevent transmission of diseases and manage incidents which threaten the public's health.

Themes

Overall, the Council is discharging its regulatory duties effectively with regard to the protection of the local population's health. The policy, procedure and working arrangements framework includes:

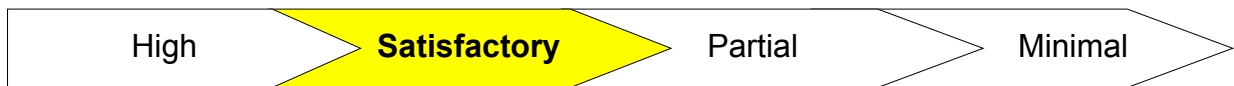
- a comprehensive Emergency Plan and Combined Operating Procedures in Essex (COPE) for multi-agency responsiveness to emergencies developed by the Essex Resilience Forum
- Business Continuity Procedures for the in-house service
- Cold Weather and Heatwave Plans adopted from Public Health England
- Seasonal Influenza Plan created with local partners
- an overarching plan for Control of Communicable Disease developed by Public Health England Essex Health Protection Team on behalf of Essex Directors of Public Health, Chief Officers of Local Authority Environmental Health Departments.

All plans went through a high level of review, involving the Director of Public Health, the Local Health Resilience Partnership and Public Health England's Local Health Protection Team, to ensure they followed good practice.

A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the members of the Local Health Resilience Partnership. This outlines the key roles and responsibilities of partners in the event of a significant public health incident or outbreak, as well as the agreement to provide resources and help to fellow partners.

Appendix 3B: Assurance and Themes

Assurance



To gain assurance regarding the preparedness of partner organisations to address public health issues, responsibility for which is defined within the Health & Social Care Act 2012, the Council is part of two Essex-wide groups. These groups also conduct exercises based on potential health protection scenarios and assess their success to ensure lessons are learnt. The Council also gains continuous assurance from the activities of Public Health England and the Local Health Protection Team.

The budget for Health Protection within the Council is approximately £15,000. Whilst relatively small, it may be able to reclaim monies from partner health bodies if it was required to significantly increase spend in response to a significant public health incident, as part of a risk sharing agreement.

Increased reporting to Members and Senior Management is required to provide assurance regarding the work that the Director of Public Health and Public Health Team are carrying out in relation to health protection.

Number of actions agreed: 1