

Chorley Council

Final
Internal Audit Report

Water Management 2022/2023

Audit Assurance: Limited
Auditor: David Holgate/Jacqui Murray
Date Issued: 11th May 2023



Cert No: 20128
ISO 9001



Chorley
Council

WORKING TOGETHER

Reason for the Audit & Scope	
1	<p>Chorley Council has management responsibility for a significant number of open water bodies. Many of the Council's water bodies are open to the general public, therefore the Council has a legal responsibility to ensure the water bodies and their immediate surroundings are safe for all visitors and officers working nearby. Water management refers to the inspection, monitoring and ongoing management of these Council-owned water sites.</p> <p>The review is included in the 2022/23 Annual Audit Plan approved by the Governance Committee on the 23rd November 2022.</p>

Audit Objectives	
2	The overall objective of the audit was to provide an opinion of the adequacy, application and reliability of the key internal controls put in place by management to ensure that the risks are being sufficiently managed.
3	The audit also assessed the effectiveness of the various other sources of assurances using the three lines of defence methodology.
4	The audit will focus on specific risks where the controls in place mitigate a gross red / amber risks to a residual green risk. In addition, all fraud risks and performance management data will be included within our work.

Audit Assurance	
5	Water Management at Chorley Borough Council has not been reviewed previously by Internal Audit.
6	The Head of Internal Audit is required to provide the Governance Committee with an annual audit opinion on the effectiveness of the overall control environment operating within the Council and to facilitate this each individual audit is awarded a controls assurance rating. This is based upon the work undertaken during the review and considers the reliance we can place on the other sources of assurance.
7	Appendix A shows the risks that have been tested for Water Management and the assurance opinion awarded to each. Our evaluation of the reliance we can place on the three lines of defence is also shown.
8	<p>Our review identified that the Council's procedures for water management and safety at Council-owned open water sites (reservoir, lodges, ponds etc.) was formalised in 2016 with a Water Safety Policy, however it is evident that the procedures are not operating as outlined and there is a general lack of awareness and access to the policy for the officers/teams maintaining water sites across the borough. Testing of the key requirements set out within the Water Safety Policy highlighted the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy has not been reviewed and updated since its implementation and therefore does not reflect key changes that have occurred within the service such as the introduction of the Alloy Asset Management System to record inspections and reporting defects. • Although it is recognised that Alloy has significantly improved agile working and automated the inspection and maintenance regime and that the parameters in relation to the frequency of inspection are aligned, the methodology for defect reporting and the process for inspection does not meet the requirements of the policy. • Site risk assessments that inform the nature and frequency of inspection for each site have not been revisited since policy implementation. • The majority of identified water sites are plotted on the Alloy system and whilst all of the bodies of water classified as high risk within the Water Safety Policy are being routinely inspected, it was identified that 53% of the remaining sites are not routinely inspected and monitored with no

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historical evidence available to support that these have ever been carried out. The Council has a duty of care under The Occupiers Liability Act to ensure the safety of visitors on council owned land and due to a lack of comprehensive, documented inspections across all sites the Council may struggle to demonstrate that we are meeting the obligations in this respect.

- There is an absence of supervisory checks to ensure that inspections are carried out at the correct frequency and/or standards of inspections are maintained across all sites.

To reduce the likelihood of harm to employees and to ensure that the Council meets its obligations under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, it needs to ensure that any Health and Safety risks have been identified and suitable safe systems of work have been adopted.

Whilst a generic working near water risk assessment is in place, further work is required as the risks and controls are not site specific and are not reflective of the individual conditions and the full range of hazardous activities undertaken for each body of water. Furthermore, there were no safe systems of work available specifically compiled for tasks/jobs that are conducted around water sites.

Although it can be seen that a level of inspection and ongoing monitoring is apparent, due to the fact that only a proportion of identified sites are being proactively inspected, procedures have deviated from the approved policy and the significance of the Health and Safety risks highlighted a **Limited** assurance rating has been awarded for this review. The action plan at Appendix B provides further details of the findings and risks identified.

Risk and Controls	Control Evaluation
Risk 1 – Relevant policies and procedures are not communicated effectively to employees, leading to confusion as to roles and responsibilities	
Policy/Strategy is in place and approved	Working as intended
Flood Risk Management is adequately managed	Working as intended
Policy/Strategy is up to date, owned and reviewed regularly	Action 1
Policy/Strategy is suitable/fit for purpose (Legislation)	Action 1
Policy/Strategy is accessible/staff awareness of policy	Action 1
Procedure/working practices are in place	Action 1, 9 & 13
Risk 2 – Legal and statutory requirements may not be being met due to ineffective management of water sites.	
Policy/Strategy is suitable/fit for purpose (Legislation)	Action 1
All open water sites have been identified	Action 2
Inspection programme in place	Action 3, 4 & 5
Comprehensive records are maintained	Action 6
Supervisory checks undertaken by team leaders	Action 7
Health & Safety (employees)	Action 8
Signage requirements have been considered for each site	Action 10
Rescue equipment requirements have been considered for each site	Action 10
Recreational club use managed and licensed	Action 13
Risk 3 – A failure to recognise all existing water site assets meaning that some may fall into disrepair or become dangerous	
Procedure/working practices are in place	Action 1, 9 & 13
All open water sites have been identified	Action 2
New sites are identified as per the policy process	Action 2
Inventories are in place to manage assets at each site	Action 3
Inspection programme in place	Action 3, 4 & 5
Risk 4 – A lack of maintenance of water areas to prevent them from becoming hazardous	
Procedure/working practices are in place	Action 1, 9 & 13
Responsibilities are clearly defined	Action 1
Inspection programme in place	Action 3, 4 & 5
Regular maintenance and reactive maintenance are undertaken	Action 6
Comprehensive records are maintained	Action 6
Supervisory checks undertaken by team leaders	Action 7
Risk 5 - Potential lack of adequate staff training for appropriate roles covering water areas	
Supervisory checks undertaken by team leaders	Action 7
Suitable site-specific training requirements identified	Action 11
Training matrix helps identify any gaps	Action 11
Officers are First Aid trained	Action 12
Risk 6 - Inadequate insurance cover meaning that the Council's legal obligations cannot be met	
Insurance policy in place	Working as intended
Site changes are communicated to the Insurance Team	Action 1
Awareness of risk management requirements	Action 1
Risk 7 - Complaints received about water sites are not being recorded, investigated, monitored and resolved in a timely manner	
Corporate complaints procedure in place	Working as intended
Service specific complaints are handled in a timely manner	Working as intended
Complaint records are available	Working as intended
Risk 8 - Risks for each water site have not been identified, recorded and monitored adequately – including health and safety risks, injury risks and emergency procedures	

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Inventories are in place to manage assets at each site	Action 3
Health & Safety (employees)	Action 8
Safe Systems of Work are operational	Action 8
Lone Working arrangements are in place	Action 9
Signage requirements have been considered for each site	Action 10
Rescue equipment requirements have been considered for each site	Action 10
Officers are First Aid trained	Action 12
Water Safety promoted through educational campaigns	Action 14
Open Water specific risk register in place	Action 15

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AUDIT ASSURANCE

Three Lines of Defence

Audit Area	1 st Line	2 nd Line	3 rd Line	Internal Audit opinion
Water Management	Team Leader	Senior Management	Audit	Reliance cannot be placed on the first line of defence as there is a lack of supervision to ensure risk management practices are being completed.

Risk and Control Evaluation

Risks Examined	Full	Substantial	Adequate	Limited
Risk 1 – Relevant policies and procedures are not communicated effectively to employees, leading to confusion as to roles and responsibilities				✓
Risk 2 – Legal and statutory requirements may not be being met due to ineffective management of water sites.				✓
Risk 3 – A failure to recognise all existing water site assets meaning that some may fall into disrepair or become dangerous				✓
Risk 4 – A lack of maintenance of water areas to prevent them from becoming hazardous				✓
Risk 5 - Potential lack of adequate staff training for appropriate roles covering water areas				✓
Risk 6 - Inadequate insurance cover meaning that the Council's legal obligations cannot be met			✓	
Risk 7 - Complaints received about water sites are not being recorded, investigated, monitored and resolved in a timely manner		✓		
Risk 8 - Risks for each water site have not been identified, recorded and monitored adequately – including health and safety risks, injury risks and emergency procedures				✓
OVERALL AUDIT OPINION				✓

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MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

NO.	FINDING	AGREED ACTION	OFFICER & DATE
Policy/Procedures			
1	<p>The Council approved and adopted a Water Safety Policy in 2016, however testing identified that the policy contains outdated information, has not been updated since inception, does not reflect current operational arrangements across all water sites. There is also a general lack of awareness and access to the policy for officers/teams maintaining water sites the policy can be largely considered as non-operational.</p> <p>The Water Safety Policy needs to be reviewed as soon as possible to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Council and reflects the resources available within the Streetscene team. Formal policy approval should be sought and once agreed should be shared openly with the operational team to ensure awareness and the operation of robust arrangements to safeguard officers and the public.</p>	<p>The Head of Streetscene and Waste will review the existing Water Safety policy to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects current operations. Once reviewed formal approval will need to be obtained and the policy will need to be shared widely amongst officers with responsibility in the process.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>March 2024</p>
Site Identification			
2	<p>Identified open water sites are listed within the appendix to the Water Safety Policy, however our review identified that an additional site had been adopted and maintained since the implementation of the policy and had not subsequently been included within this core list.</p> <p>It is essential that the Council maintain a core record of all open water sites that it is responsible to clearly identify location and condition and help identify any costs/risks associated with them.</p>	<p>Whilst it is recognised that most water sites have been identified and plotted on the Alloy Asset Management system, additional work is required to align sites with the reviewed Water Safety Policy. A process to ensure new water sites are identified and scheduled for inspection needs to be established and awareness raised throughout the responsible teams.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>March 2024</p>

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Inspection Regime			
3	<p>Water site risk assessments that inform the nature and frequency of inspection, and the level of monitoring required at each site, are in need of urgent review as they have not been revisited since the policy was implemented; and a completed/documented risk assessment has not been undertaken for the newly adopted site.</p> <p>Furthermore, a review of available risk assessments identified a lack detail of the methodology/criteria carried out and does not provide sufficient rationale to support the risk profile assigned to each water site.</p>	<p>Water site risk assessments will be reviewed by the Streetscene & Waste service to ensure they are up to date and reflective of the current risk profiles of each site. This will detail the decision-making methodology that supports the rationale behind inspection frequency, signage and rescue equipment.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>October 2023</p>
4	<p>Testing established that 53% of the open water sites (excluding high risk) listed within the Water Safety Policy are not subject to inspection, despite an initial risk assessment taking place and a frequency of inspection outlined. Additionally, a review of the Alloy Asset Management System, utilised for recording inspection data, highlighted records are not available for 3 water sites.</p> <p>There is a risk that the Council may struggle to demonstrate that it is meeting its responsibilities as landowner under the Occupiers Liability Act by not ensuring sites are assessed and inspected on a regular basis, and that sufficient evidence of inspections is retained.</p>	<p>All water sites will be inspected by the Ranger Service. This will be completed by June 2023.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>June 2023</p>
5	<p>For water sites that are subject to inspection it could not be evidenced that the standard of inspection outlined within the policy was attained for all inspections undertaken. The input fields on the Alloy Asset Management System do not match Policy requirements and no accompanying notes were provided for further insight to the findings/outcomes.</p>	<p>The Alloy Asset Management System will be amended to reflect the inspection requirements set out in the Water Safety Policy. This will also include accompanying notes to allow inspecting officers to write their findings/outcomes.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>June 2023</p>
6	<p>Although testing identified that reported defects were addressed within one month of the reported date a specific requirement of the Policy relating to the categorisation of reported defects into high,</p>	<p>The Alloy Asset Management System will be amended to reflect the defects categories set out in the Water Safety Policy.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>June 2023</p>

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	<p>medium and low risk is no longer operational and does not appear to be supported by Alloy.</p> <p>Additionally, limited information was available on Alloy to establish what the specific nature of the reported defect was and what remedial action was undertaken.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to re-establishing the categorisation of reported defects as per the Policy to ensure that essential/high risk remedial action are prioritised and dealt with within a suitable timeframe.</p>		
Management			
7	<p>Whilst it was apparent that some supervisory checks are being undertaken within the Streetscene Service no evidence was available to support that checks are being carried out specifically for water sites to ensure that the inspection programme is being robustly carried out and defects are being correctly identified.</p> <p>A programme of periodic supervisory checks should be introduced to ensure that standards are maintained, and a consistent approach applied across all water sites by all teams.</p>	<p>Periodic supervisory checks will be expanded to cover the Rangers. These will be recorded in the Alloy Asset Management System.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>June 2023</p>
Health & Safety			
8	<p>Working near water is an inherent risk and safety measures should be adopted to safeguard officers from harm. Risk assessments are essential to help identify specific site risks and provide officers with the tools to help manage this risk.</p> <p>A review of the available risk assessments for working near water highlighted further work is required as the risks and controls are not site specific and are not reflective of the individual conditions and the full range of hazardous activities undertaken for each body of water.</p>	<p>The Streetscene & Waste Service will work with the H&S team to assess the requirements for each site-specific risk assessment and safe systems of working near water. This will consider individual conditions and the full range of hazardous activities undertaken for each body of water. The review will be aligned with the migration to the new HARRIET (Hazard Assessment, Risk Review, Identification and Evaluation Tool) system.</p>	<p>Chris Walmsley</p> <p>March 2024</p>

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	In addition, testing identified that the Service does not have Safe systems of work (SSOW) in place in relation to working near water. Adopting robust SSOW for employees working in or around water will help demonstrate that the Council is meeting its responsibility under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.		
9	<p>All employers have a legal duty to ensure the safety of their employees whilst they're at work, this includes ensuring that lone workers are as safe as possible and our review highlighted that the Rangers team have recently been provided with Solo Protect devices as they work alone on weekends.</p> <p>To further strengthen lone working arrangements a formal procedure needs to be developed within the Service outlining the arrangements to be followed to manage the risks of working alone keeping officers healthy and safe.</p>	Lone Working arrangements will be formalised in a procedure to reflect the needs of the service.	Chris Walmsley September 2023
Safety Equipment/Signage			
10	<p>It is evident water safety signage and equipment is present across many of the Council's water sites to help ensure greater awareness of the potential dangers of water, however the site specific risk assessments do not provide the assessment criteria and rationale to support the level of signage/equipment provided at each site.</p> <p>Site specific risk assessments should be reviewed to include this requirement and safety equipment checks need to be considered when the frequency of inspections is assigned.</p>	See action 3	See action 3
Training			
11	A Training Matrix is in place for the Streetscene service however it was not fully up to date at time of review and it is unclear if bespoke	The Waste & Streetscene Service will liaise with Organisational Development to ensure all training	Chris Walmsley

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	<p>training has been provided for officers specifically working on or near water including the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards that are expected (policy awareness); • Legal requirements and implications of work undertaken (including safety equipment); • Safe systems of work/risk assessments specific; • Incidents/emergency procedures. 	records are held centrally on the Learning Hub.	September 2023
12	<p>Consideration has been given to the level of First Aid provision within the Ranger Team however based on the training records provided we were unable to confirm that there has been an assessment of First Aid provision for employees working across all water sites.</p> <p>To ensure the council meets it's requirements under The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, an assessment of first aid needs is to be completed to determine the type of first aid provision needed and the type of equipment that should be provided for employees.</p>	The service has considered First Aid provision and provided assurance that the council meets its requirements under The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981.	Complete
Recreational use of Council Water Sites			
13	<p>Our review established that there is a lack of established procedure for obtaining a lease/license for use of the Council's open water site. A core register of users was not available, and testing identified only one long-standing lease for the use of Yarrow Valley Park – Big Lodge by a local recreational club. Arrangements have been in place continually since 1992 and there was no evidence of ongoing review during this period. After enquiries made during the course of this review the arrangement has now been passed to Legal Services to ensure that the terms and conditions outlined within the original lease continue to meet the requirements of the Council as landowner.</p>	<p>The Commercial Directorate will undertake a piece of work to identify clubs/groups currently using the water sites for recreational use, creating a core register of users. The service will need to ensure a valid up to date lease is in place for use of Council water to clearly define the responsibilities of the leaseholder and the Council. This will then need to be regularly reviewed.</p>	<p>Adam Nickson</p> <p>July 2023</p>

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	A valid up to date lease is essential to ensure that the responsibilities of the leaseholder and Council are clearly defined.		
Promoting Water Safety			
14	<p>Risk management practices such as education campaigns are essential to preventing incidents. Testing found that a program of Summer Water Safety sessions outlined in the Water Safety Policy are no longer being delivered.</p> <p>As the Council has recently suffered a fatality at Yarrow Valley Country park, as part of the Policy refresh consideration should be given to water safety sessions as these can play a key role in tackling water safety and educating residents about the risks posed by water.</p>	The service will review delivering water safety sessions and assess in line with the availability of resources within the service.	Chris Walmsley September 2023
Risk Management			
15	An open water specific register should be drafted so ensure that the unique risks associated with managing water sites across the borough are adequately captured, monitored, and regularly reviewed. This should be added to the Grace risk management system to ensure the information is kept up to date.	The Head of Streetscene & Waste will complete a water specific risk register in Grace to assess the risks associated with managing water sites.	Chris Walmsley July 2023

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