



# Thurrock Council Internal Audit Report

<b>AUDIT REFERENCE</b>	INT2526-16
<b>AUDIT TITLE</b>	Focused Expenditure
<b>AREA OF ASSURANCE</b>	Finance
<b>DATE</b>	21/11/2025
<b>AUDIT SPONSOR</b>	David McNamara - Assistant Director Strategic and Corporate Finance Tendai Dooley - Director Children's Social Care and Early Help

*This report should not be shared without approval from the Head of Internal Audit, Counter Fraud, Risk Management and Insurance.*

# CONTENTS

1

## **Audit Summary**

Overview, Assurance Rating and Key Findings

2

## **Recommendation & Action Plan**

Findings, Recommendations, Management Actions, Responsible Owner and Key Dates

3

## **Summary of work completed**

Detail of work completed

4

## **Appendices**

Distribution List, Definitions

# AUDIT SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND / SCOPE

The Local Government Act 1972 (section 151) provides instruction and guidance on the Council's use of, and control of public money.

The Council Constitution, Chapter 9, Part 3 Finance Procedure Rules outlines the financial standards which the council follow, these are:

- Ensure that the Council's resources are used wisely and for the purposes intended
- Ensure best practice for dealing with financial matters
- Improve value for money, service delivery and customer satisfaction
- Secure the financial standing of the Council

The audit was undertaken in accordance with the approved 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan where the key objective was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the controls applied by the Council for the processing of payments in relation to Direct Debits, purchase cards and a small sample of children's expenditure.

This audit reviewed the processes applied for provision, approval and receipting of payment requests in conjunction with the methods of payment that are available to be applied

### ASSURANCE RATING

#### LIMITED ASSURANCE

We have provided LIMITED assurance as issues identified could significantly increase the risk of objectives not being achieved.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS RAISED

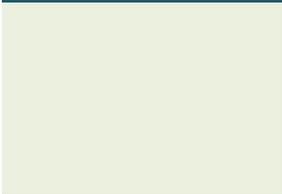
HIGH	6
MEDIUM	0
LOW	1
TOTAL	7

### STRENGTHS

- The Council Constitution is current and clearly defines the Financial rules and roles and responsibilities of staff
- There are documented processes that outline the available payment methods for use in purchasing services
- Accessible guidelines to staff on how to raise payments
- Recognition of statutory requirements applicable to Children Services and conformance to standards

### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- We recommend communications are sent out to all budget holders to remind them of importance to follow the processes and controls in place for approvals of expenditure. Recommendation 1 (HIGH)
- We recommend a review of Direct Debit Process to ensure secondary approval of new direct debit requests and review of existing Direct Debits. Recommendation 2 (HIGH)
- We recommend an increased review of purchase card activity to ensure appropriate procurement routes, oversight of spend patterns, and timely compliance with policy requirements. Recommendation 3 (HIGH)
- We recommend directorates are provided with updated training and guidance to ensure correct routes to be followed when raising payments. Recommendation 4 (HIGH)
- We recommend a full review is completed on purchase card allocation to ensure only essential cards are held, with no more than two per location and a review is undertaken on high-spend areas for potential fixed supplier arrangements. Recommendation 5 (HIGH)
- Re emphasis to staff that revenue spend requires secondary approval through the Expenditure Control Panel, and ensure they attend finance training where uncertainties or breaches occur. Recommendation 6 (HIGH)
- We recommend completion of training on the use of Purchase Cards from all card holders. Recommendation 7 (LOW)



# RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>1. Awareness of approval processes for financial transactions</u></b></p> <p>The Thurrock Council Constitution (23 July 2025) provides reference and guidance on the process for managing and purchasing of services and goods.</p> <p>The Constitution outlines the operational controls applicable to staff and includes reference to the scheme of delegation and authority across the organisation.</p> <p>Further, there are policies in place which link to the Constitution, such as the financial regulations for which budget holders and staff should follow.</p> <p>However, discussions with management confirmed that although there are policies in place, not all budget holders are following the processes, controls and approval methods appropriately. Further, there is a lack of clarity in understanding what approvals can be made at which level at mid-senior level.</p>	HIGH	We recommend that all budget holders are reminded of the approval process for expenditure controls / limits and approval methods.	<p>The Council has a Scheme of Delegation which and a set of financial procedure rules. These documents are in the process of being updated. Once updated, training and communications will be provided to budget holders and relevant staff.</p> <p>In the interim communications will be sent out to all budget holders to re-confirm the approval process.</p>	Dave McNamara March 2026

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>2. Direct Debit Payments</u></b></p> <p>Our testing identified that there is no secondary approval for some payments made by Direct Debit.</p> <p>Further, the finance team are not consistently notified when Services set up new Direct Debits. In several cases the team only became aware of a new mandate when the first payment request is received.</p> <p>When the payee is unfamiliar, the finance team must contact the bank to identify the originating team and then manually update internal records with the correct budget and subjective codes.</p> <p>On these occasions there is a risk that payments are made prior to formal approval being given.</p> <p>In addition, there is no annual review undertaken by the finance team to confirm whether existing Direct Debits remain valid, active, appropriately coded or should still be paid.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>We recommend that management develop a process to ensure the following:</p> <p>All new Direct Debits initiated between the Budget Holder and Service Provider are forwarded to the finance team with the supporting audit trail, to allow for clear record keeping and reduce the risk of incorrect payments being processed.</p> <p>Review of existing Direct Debit records should occur on a regular basis to confirm whether they are still appropriate.</p>	<p>Deputy S151 to review current direct debit list with relevant head's of finance to ensure only valid arrangements are in place. This will be reviewed on a regular basis. All new direct debits should only be approved by the Section 151 Officer or a nominated deputy.</p> <p>All head's of finance will be made aware via communications that all new direct debits will require S151 Officer approval.</p>	<p>Dawn Calvert/Dave McNamara</p> <p>31<sup>st</sup> March 2026</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>3. Purchase Cards:</u></b></p> <p>Our testing of expenditure identified instances where the same suppliers were being used on multiple occasions. Where this occurs, they should be set up as a supplier (after going through the procurement process).</p> <p>In addition, the current policy governing the issuance and use of purchase cards states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single transactions must not exceed £500</li> <li>• Cumulative monthly spend must not exceed £5,000</li> </ul> <p>Our review of spend between April 2025 and August 2025 noted that there were instances where officers were spending over the cumulative limit on a regular basis. Although, permission for this was provided, the policy states it the cards should only be used on an adhoc basis, where other routes are not available.</p> <p>Further, instances were identified where requests were approved via a directorate signoff in relation to permanent increase of limits. However, these should be reviewed frequently to ensure they are appropriate.</p> <p>Instances were also noted where evidence was not always uploaded onto the system in relation to spend and had to be retrospectively uploaded once it was chased by the finance team.</p>	<p><b>HIGH</b></p>	<p>We recommend that management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure where suppliers are being used regularly, the payments are not made via the purchase card process, but via the appropriate procurement route. This would ensure the Council are receiving best value for money</li> <li>• Conduct periodic reviews and escalate officers frequently exceeding spend limits to both budget holders and senior management to enable an increase of visibility and accountability</li> <li>• Mandatory /refresher training be provided to cardholders and approvers on policy limits</li> <li>• Where permanent increases are processed, these are reviewed on a quarterly basis with the Director who approved them initially and ensure they are only further approved by an appropriate member of senior management</li> <li>• Ensure management are made aware that all purchases require evidence to be uploaded as soon as possible. This will reduce the additional time taken for the finance team to complete their reconciliations</li> </ul>	<p>Management recognise the value of review of transactions. This has led to a permanent increase in individual limits in a small amount of cases. It has also identified opportunities to use Council supply chain as an alternative to future card payments.</p> <p>Quarterly data on Procurement Card spend is reported to SLT with accompanying analysis of use and appropriate recommendations. This is then reported onto the Finance Recovery Board.</p> <p>Management will review the effectiveness of the reconciliation process</p>	<p>Marie Ogles 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026</p> <p>Marie Ogles Ongoing</p> <p>Marie Ogles 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>3. Purchase Cards continued:</u></b></p> <p>Discussions with management confirmed that for one expenditure sample reviewed, an invoice totalling circa £2.5k had been split into smaller payments. This allowed the £500 card limit to be maintained, whilst deliberately circumnavigating the controls so that the payment would not be declined.</p> <p>Discussions with management confirmed there are instances where spend on the cards was not appropriate or aligned to what they should be used for. Examples include purchases of inappropriate vouchers, Christmas decorations and flowers for staff.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All purchase card holders are made aware that any breach of the policy will result in both removal of the card and relevant misconduct procedures followed in line with the Council's policy</li> </ul>	<p>The instances led to conversations and increased training and greater compliance including increased use of the Council's supply change.</p> <p>All purchase card holders will be made aware that any breach of the policy will result in both removal of the card and relevant misconduct procedures followed in line with the Council's policy.</p> <p>Where card holders are not including receipts within the appropriate timelines these will be escalated via the finance monthly dashboard. Where these are still not completed, these will go to the S151 officer monthly.</p> <p>Annual online training has been provided (and completed) for 2026. However, in line with the findings, in person training will be provided to make card holders aware of policies breaches.</p>	<p>Marie Ogles Complete</p> <p>Dave McNamara 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>4. Appropriate payment method applied:</u></b></p> <p>Purchase cards are intended to serve as an alternative payment method where traditional processes, such as Accounts Payable or Direct Debit are not applicable. They are best suited for single, one-off items or low value purchases.</p> <p>However, our review identified several payments that could have been processed through existing procurement channels, where 'tighter' controls and approvals would typically apply. For example, some transactions may have required a purchase requisition and expenditure panel approval, suggesting that policy adherence and oversight were insufficient.</p> <p>Summary of Observations for a sample of Directorate's</p> <p><b>Adult Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two payments for legal services</li> </ul> <p><b>Children's Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One conference hall hire (£7,962.50)</li> <li>• Multiple purchases of IT equipment (e.g. tablets)</li> <li>• Two training events</li> </ul> <p><b>Corporate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five payments related to the ARAP scheme (Assess Afghan Relocations and Assistance policy).</li> </ul> <p><b>PLACE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 payments for car equipment, with 11 made to just two providers</li> </ul>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>Note, the below points link to the recommendations noted in recommendation 3</p> <p>We recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All card holders are reminded of the policy of when purchase cards should be used</li> <li>• Focused training is provided to card holders over appropriate spend</li> <li>• There are additional review and spot check spending on purchase cards where they are linked to grants the Council have received.</li> </ul>	<p>Part of annual training for all cardholders. However, will also be included as part of the in-person training to note in proper use of the cards.</p> <p>Part of the annual training for all cardholders</p> <p>More spot checks to be carried out especially those linked to grants</p>	<p>P2P Complete</p> <p>P2P Complete</p> <p>Marie Ogles Ongoing</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>5. Multiple expenditure to single services:</u></b></p> <p>Our review identified a notable concentration of expenditure in one service area relating to the provision of food at a Council managed care home.</p> <p>Management completed a review of top card spends and top expenditure categories. They noted that the top two related to the same specific care home.</p> <p>Between April and August, a total of £37,982 was spent on food-related items via Purchase Cards. Of this, £21,759 was spent with just two supermarkets: Asda and Morrisons.</p> <p>Purchases were made by eight individual cardholders, each operating within their agreed monthly cumulative spend limits. However, whilst no single cardholder exceeded their individual threshold, the combined monthly usage exceeded the Council's £5,000 cumulative limit for use of the cards in one area.</p> <p>This occurred as there were multiple card holders for the one home.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>We recommend that a review is completed across all card holders to ensure that each service area only has a limited number of cards on a necessity basis. Including ensuring that for any one place there are no more than two card holders.</p> <p>Further, management should ensure where significant spend is occurring on areas such as food, a review is completed to see the potential of bringing in fixed suppliers who would provide better value for money and reduce the risk on items being used for personal use.</p>	<p>Review carried out with P2P, Procurement and Expenditure Control to limit the number of cards to this service and work on a more permanent solution for suppliers</p>	<p>Procurement/P2P/ Marie Ogles 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

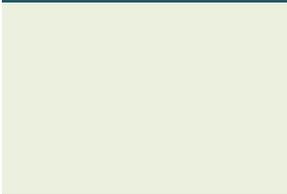
AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b>6. Non-Compliance with Expenditure Approval Processes:</b></p> <p>Through discussions with management, we identified several instances of expenditure being incurred without adherence to the required approval processes, including the use of the Expenditure Control Panel.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> An invoice relating to the construction of shower cubicles with a total cost of approximately £13,750, was approved solely by a Director verbally with no audit trail. This approval of expenditure did not follow the required Council approval policy.</p> <p>The policy states, three quotes are required (which were obtained) and then these are provided to expenditure control for final approval once Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) checks are completed on the suppliers.</p> <p>As the work was completed, the payment had to be made to the supplier.</p>	HIGH	<p>We recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All directorate senior members are reminded that where they have approved spend, these cannot go ahead without having secondary approval from the relevant process (such as expenditure control).</li> <li>All expenditure in this manner should require a PO approval and consideration of checks such as CIS.</li> </ul>	<p>This was a breach of the Council's expenditure control process. In line with current arrangements the relevant officer and ED will be written to by the S151 Officer and the statistics provided to the senior leadership team.</p>	<p>Complete S151 Officer – Dawn Calvert</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>7. Non-Completion of Training:</u></b></p> <p>The required training for Purchase Card use is accessible as an e-learning module on Oracle.</p> <p>Management have confirmed that at the time of the audit there were 22 officers including four directors who had not completed their training.</p> <p>Due to the above, the cards were frozen until the training was complete.</p>	<p>LOW</p>	<p>We recommend to demonstrate good practice and all purchase card holders' complete refresher training and are reminded of the importance of timely completion due to the variety of issues noted in this report.</p>	<p>Refresher training takes place every 12 months for all cardholders</p>	<p>Complete</p>

# OBSERVATIONS

AREA IDENTIFIED	RISK RATING	OBSERVATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	RESPONSIBLE OWNER & COMPLETION DATE
<p><b><u>8. Review of Faster Payments Process</u></b></p> <p>A review was conducted on 19 faster payments for the period April to September to assess whether each transaction was supported by sufficient evidence and authorised at the appropriate level.</p> <p>Key Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 63% of payments were processed with the required documentation and authorisation.</li> <li>• 21% lacked documented approval.</li> <li>• 16% raised concerns regarding the appropriateness of payment selection.</li> </ul> <p>A notable improvement in payment processing was observed from June 2025, likely linked to an operational change within the service.</p> <p>In September 2025, the process underwent a formal review, resulting in the implementation of a more automated system via Oracle 4Me, incorporating built-in controls for justification and authorisation.</p>	N/A	<p>In September management implemented an updated system with stronger controls.</p> <p>A sample of payments under the updated system did not identify any issues.</p>	N/A	N/A



# SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

# Summary of work completed

As part of the audit, we examined the Council's arrangements for making payments to external organisations and parties in relation to the purchase and provision of services. The objective of our fieldwork was to assess the robustness of the payment mechanisms and the associated controls in place to ensure:

- The correct payment pathway or process was selected for each transaction.
- Appropriate justification, authorisation, and receipting were provided to support each payment.

Our review included a sample of payments made via the following methods:

- Direct Debit
- BACS / Faster Payments
- Purchase Cards

In addition to the general sample, a targeted review was conducted within the Children's Services Directorate, focusing specifically on the nature and appropriateness of payments processed in that area. This allowed for a deeper understanding of payment practices in a high-volume, service-critical environment.

## 1. Finance

### 1.1 Guidance

The Council's Constitution is publicly accessible via its website and is confirmed to be current, having been revised in July 2025. The Constitution outlines the operational controls applicable to staff and includes reference to the scheme of delegation and authority across the organisation. Further this links to the financial regulations which all budget holders must follow. However, discussions with management revealed that on occasions this is not adhered to and there is a lack of knowledge of what the processes and controls are. This lack of visibility may hinder effective oversight and consistent application of delegated financial authority. **(Recommendation 1)**

### 1.2 Direct Debits

New Direct Debits are initiated directly between the relevant Operational Service or Team and the external service provider. The Finance function is responsible solely for ensuring that the Direct Debit payments are executed and is not required to approve or authorise the initial setup of the Direct Debit arrangement.

Historically, Finance was routinely notified by budget holders or service teams when new Direct Debits were established. However, this notification process appears to have lapsed and is now applied inconsistently across the organisation. The absence of a formalised communication or approval mechanism may limit Finance's visibility and oversight of recurring financial commitments. **(Recommendation 2)**

Finance currently processes 55 recurring Direct Debits each month. A sample review of 16 Direct Debit payments confirmed that these payments remain ongoing and that the respective budget holders have been identified for accounting reconciliation.

# Summary of work completed

## 1.3 Faster payments

We conducted a review of 19 faster payments processed between April and September 2025 to assess compliance with the Council's payment authorisation procedures. The objective was to determine whether appropriate approvals and supporting documentation were in place for each transaction.

Key findings from the review include:

- 63% of payments were processed with the required authorisation and included sufficient evidence to support the payment request.
- 21% of payments were made without any documented approval.
- 16% of payments raised concerns regarding the appropriateness of the process followed, including ambiguity around the correct payment route or missing procedural steps.

These findings highlight inconsistencies in the application of payment controls and suggest a need for clearer guidance and strengthened oversight to ensure all faster payments are processed in accordance with established protocols.

**In September 2025, the faster payments process underwent a review, leading to the implementation of an automated system via Oracle 4Me. This enhanced process now ensures the mandatory submission of supporting evidence and the appropriate authorisation for all transactions. (Observation 8)**

## 2. Children Services

### 2.1 Guidance

The review assessed Children Services' understanding and application of the Council's established payment methods. Discussions with Line Management confirmed that staff are aware of and follow the prescribed payment processes. Payments reviewed were processed in line with documented procedures and the service operates under a statutory requirement that guides expenditure to support and safeguard the welfare of children in the local area.

### 2.2 Review of payments

We reviewed a sample of 20 payments processed by two teams within Children Services for the period April – September 2025 to assess compliance with the Council's payment procedures and to verify that appropriate approvals and justification were in place. The following findings were made:

- Oracle payments (13 of 20; 65%) — Processed through Oracle and subject to the system's automated approval controls; documentation and approval met expected procedure requirements.
- Purchase card / Faster Payment (4 of 20; 20%) — Transactions reviewed included supporting evidence and authorising approvals consistent with policy.
- Service–Finance approved payments (3 of 20; 15%) — Payments processed after formal request and documented approval between the Service and Finance teams.

An additional targeted review of purchase-card travel spend (for example, flight bookings) concluded that card use was justified. Rationale included alignment with statutory requirements and demonstrable cost-effectiveness once additional staff costs (travel/subsistence/time in lieu) were considered. Compliance with payment procedures was satisfactory for the reviewed sample of payments.

# Summary of work completed

## 3. Purchase cards

### 3.1 Guidance

The Council's Purchase Card Policy is accessible to all staff via the internal intranet. Originally issued in June 2021, the policy is currently at version 2.0 and is subject to review as and when deemed necessary by the business. However, it is unclear when the policy was last formally reviewed or updated, which may present a risk in terms of ensuring alignment with evolving operational practices and financial controls.

The policy provides comprehensive guidance on the appropriate use of purchase cards and clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of both cardholders and their Line Managers. It also specifies the applicable spend limits for individual cardholders:

- A maximum of £500 per single transaction
- A monthly spend cap of £5,000

Requests for increased limits are allowed only in exceptional circumstances on a temporary or permanent basis and would require justification from the line manager.

These thresholds are designed to ensure that procurement cards are used for low-value, ad hoc purchases and remain within controlled financial parameters

### 3.2 Review of payments

Between April and August 2025, a total of 2,170 transactions were processed using the Council's Purchase Cards. To assess compliance with internal financial controls, a sample of 50 transactions was randomly selected for review. These transactions were drawn from across four key Operational Services: Children's, Adult's, Place, and Corporate. The objective of the review was twofold:

- To confirm that staff adhered to the spend control limits as defined in the Council's procurement card policy.
- To evaluate the nature of the expenditure and determine whether the correct payment route had been applied in each case.

This targeted sampling approach provided insight into operational compliance and helped identify any deviations from policy or opportunities for process improvement.

### 3.3 Single Transaction

Of the payments reviewed we identified that 11 transactions (22%) had exceeded the limit of £500 for a single transaction. This was not limited to an individual service and was prevalent across three of the Operational Services. Further analysis of all payments made in this period confirmed that 91 payments had been made over £500 and that they had been made by 25 card holders. Of these card holders 15 had made multiple purchases. Testing confirmed that although the policy is clear on officer responsibility, there is a lack of compliance locally and control from the system in restricting use or breach of policy. (**Recommendation 3**)

# Summary of work completed

## 3.4 Reconciliation of Monthly Spend

A monthly reconciliation exercise is conducted by the Procurement Team to ensure transparency and compliance with spending policies. As part of this process, a report detailing all procurement card transactions from the preceding month is circulated to the respective cardholders and their Line Managers. Cardholders are responsible for completing the receipting of payments, while Line Managers are expected to review the transactions to confirm that all expenditures are appropriate and in line with organizational policy.

For the period under review, there is clear evidence that procurement cards were generally used appropriately. Transactions primarily related to low-value or one-off purchases that would not have been suitable for processing through the standard Accounts Payable route or subject to the Expenditure Control Panel. This indicates a sound understanding of the intended use of procurement cards across the organization.

However, we did identify 33 transactions that may have been more appropriately processed through alternative payment methods or may have required additional approval prior to purchase. These exceptions suggest an opportunity to reinforce guidance on payment route selection and approval thresholds.

**(Recommendation 4)**

During the review period, a significant level of expenditure (£21,758.07) was identified within one service area relating to the provision of food from two suppliers, used in a Council operated Care Home. While the Council is statutorily obligated to meet such costs, the method of payment via procurement cards held by eight individual users raises questions about the appropriateness of card usage for this type of recurring, high-value spend.

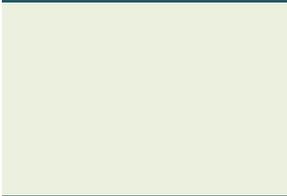
Although each transaction may fall within individual cardholder limits, the combined monthly cumulative total across these eight users would exceed the policy threshold if processed through a single card. This pattern suggests that the current approach may not align with the intended controls and oversight embedded in the procurement card policy. **(Recommendation 5)**

## 4. Expenditure Panel

The Expenditure Control Panel is responsible for reviewing and approving all new requests for expenditure over £500. Discussions with Line Management identified a number of incidents where both this process and the existing procurement rules were not followed. **(Recommendation 6)**

## 5. Training

Training on the use of Purchase Cards is available as an e-learning module on Oracle. Discussion with Line Management identified that from the current list of cardholders, 22 officers including four directors have not yet undertaken or completed the training. **(Recommendation 7)**



# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX I: REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

- Cllr Lynn Worrall – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Transformation, Strategic Relationships, Reputation and Influence
- Cllr Lee Watson – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Good Growth
- Cllr Fraser Massey – Chair of the Audit Committee
- Cllr Srikanth Panjala – Vice Chair of the Audit Committee
- Cllr Val Morris-Cook – Cabinet Member for Resources
- Cllr Vicki Hartstean – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Community Safety
- Cllr George Coxshall – Leader of the Conservative Group and Shadow Member for Finance
- Cllr Jacqui Maney – Shadow Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
- Denise Murray – Commissioner
- Cristina Hall – Chief of Staff to Commissioners
- Dave Smith - Chief Executive Officer
- Daniel Fenwick - Executive Director of Corporate Services, and Monitoring Officer
- Dawn Calvert – Interim Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer
- Tendai Dooley - Director Children’s Social Care and Early Help
- Jasbir Sandhu – Head of Financial Strategy
- Clare Moore – Head of YOS and Prevention
- James Bennett – Head of Children in Need and Safeguarding
- Mark Terry – Finance Manager
- Halfield Jackman – Senior Financial Accountant
- Paul Garvey – Procurement Systems Manager



# APPENDIX II: DEFINITIONS

## ASSURANCE RATINGS

<b>NO ASSURANCE</b>	Taking account of the issues identified, NO assurance can be taken that the controls upon which it relies to manage the risk(s) are suitably designed, consistently applied or effective. Urgent action needs to be taken to ensure any risk is managed.
<b>LIMITED ASSURANCE</b>	Taking account of the issues identified, LIMITED assurance that the controls upon which it relies to manage the risk(s) are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective. However, we have identified issues that, if not addressed, significantly increase the likelihood of the risk materialising and objectives not being met.
<b>REASONABLE ASSURANCE</b>	Taking account of the issues identified, REASONABLE assurance can be taken that the controls upon which it relies to manage the risk(s) are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective. Prompt action needs to be taken to ensure any risk is managed.
<b>SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE</b>	Taking account of the issues identified, SUBSTANTIAL assurance can be taken that the controls upon which it relies to manage the risk(s) are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective. Some minor areas for improvement are advised.

## RECOMMENDATION PRIORITY RATINGS

<b>HIGH</b>	To address a finding which impacts a strategic risk or key priority, which makes achievement of the Council's aims more challenging.
<b>MEDIUM</b>	To address a finding where the Council is in actual or potential breach of its own policy or a less prominent legal responsibility but does not impact directly on a strategic risk or key priority.
<b>LOW</b>	To address a finding where the Council is in actual or potential breach of its own policy but no legal responsibility, and where there is low level (if any) impact on strategic risks or key priorities.