

Follow Up Audit Objective

To provide assurance that management has implemented agreed actions to mitigate the risk exposures found in the 2022/23 Out of Hours audit.

Follow Up Progress Summary

Priority	Complete	In Progress	Not Started	Not Agreed	Summary
Priority 1	0	0	0	0	0
Priority 2	3	0	0	0	3
Priority 3	0	1	0	0	1
Total	3	1	0	0	4

Follow Up Assessment

We conducted an Out of Hours audit in 2022/23 to provide assurance on the management, application and payments made through the out of hours schemes in operation at the council. We found four weaknesses and provided **Limited assurance**.

In this follow up review, we have found that three of the four agreed actions have been completed. The remaining action has a revised implementation date of May 2026. Our key findings are summarised below.

Key Findings



Since the original audit, the council has:

- Developed, consulted on and approved a new Out of Hours Policy.
- Reviewed and increased the scheme rates and incorporated these into the new policy.
- Clearly set out the line managers' responsibilities in relation to the verification of claims.
- Highlighted the differences between claiming overtime or additional hours and out of hours.



Further action is needed to:

- Carry out a six-month review on both the new process and cost, and include out of hours expenditure as part of the monthly budget monitoring processes.

Further Information

We have performed testing and reviewed supporting evidence to confirm the council's progress in implementing all priority 1 and 2 actions. Our assessment of the priority 3 actions is based on self-assessment by the responsible officer.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for our detailed findings.

Issue and Agreed Action	Follow Up Assessment	Complete
<p>Issue: A total of three Out of Hours schemes were provided, with the Homesafeguard (HSG) Team not currently having a policy or procedure documents in place. On review of the three documents provided they were found to be out of date and not reflective of current practices. The last review date, which was to include pay update details, was in 2014 by the Principal Payroll & HR Support Officer, no reviews or updates have been noted since.</p> <p>Without having clear documentation, the schemes are open to interpretation within each service area making it difficult for the council to have full oversight and management of the out of hours delivery.</p> <p>Agreed Action: Out of Hours schemes, including policy and procedure, will be reviewed to find efficiencies and best practice in the delivery of services across the council whilst ensuring best value for money. Once reviewed, the schemes will be approved to ensure corporate oversight.</p> <p>It is noted that changes to schemes, policy and procedure will be subject to staff and UNISON consultation.</p>	<p>Following a consultation period, the Out of Hours Policy was approved by the Personnel Committee in September 2025. This policy supersedes any previous schemes operated by the individual services.</p>	
<p>Priority</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>SWAP Ref: AP#1318</p>

Issue and Agreed Action	Follow Up Assessment	Complete
<p>Issue: Out of Hours Scheme rates have not been reviewed or scrutinised for a significant period of time. NJC Pay Award uplifts have been added to the rates, but aside from this no further review or uplifts have been carried out. Therefore, it is unclear if rates are fair and reflective.</p> <p>In addition to this, issues have been raised regarding the lack of appetite for staff to complete out of hours duties based on the pay rates currently, as there is no reflection for weekend or bank holiday hours. From the benchmarking exercise carried out by East Devon District Council, across seven other authorities providing an out of hours scheme, four of the councils provide uplifted rates for weekends and bank holidays.</p> <p>Agreed Action: Out of Hours Scheme rates will be reviewed as part of the scheme/policy review outlined above and periodically thereafter and approved to ensure value for money and consistency in rates paid across the council.</p> <p>It is noted that changes to rates will be subject to staff and UNISON consultation.</p>	<p>As stated above, the Out of Hours Policy was approved by the Personnel Committee in September 2025. The scheme rates were reviewed as part of the policy setting process. The current rates are included in the policy.</p>	
<p>Priority</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>SWAP Ref: AP#2605</p>

Issue and Agreed Action	Follow Up Assessment	Complete
<p>Issue: Throughout the review we found other issues relating to reviewing the out of hours scheme policies, process for administering claims, and monitoring. Areas of best practice that would support the Council further once the Out of Hours provision has been re-established, includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater financial oversight of claims. • Clearer instructions around claiming overtime/additional hours vs claiming OOH, and these should be enforced during claim verification. • Regular call reports produced and distributed by HSG and used to verify claims. • Train enough staff to cover rotas, where possible. • Clarify the verification process for claims and ensure that sufficient evidence is presented. • To ensure consistency, migrate HSG from manual to electronic claims. <p>Agreed Action: East Devon District Council will consider the best practice guidance as part of the Out of Hours scheme/policy/procedure process review.</p>	<p>The council considered the points raised as part of its Out of Hours policy review, and made some changes to its processes in response to these issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater financial oversight of claims – the new Out of Hours policy sets out the line managers’ responsibilities, including ensuring that the claims are accurate before submitting for payment. In addition, out of hours expenditure is to be included within monthly budget monitoring. • Clearer instructions around claiming overtime/additional hours vs claiming OOH, and these should be enforced during claim verification – this has been reflected in the new policy. • Regular call reports produced and distributed by HSG and used to verify claims – this service has a new management team and service manager, and officers told us there have been improvements in this area. • Train enough staff to cover rotas, where possible – the standby rate was increased as part of the policy review to encourage staff to cover rotas. Out of hours working is voluntary; however, HR will look at this if there are any issues with cover arrangements in the future. • Clarify the verification process for claims and ensure that sufficient evidence is presented - this has been reflected in the new policy. • To ensure consistency, migrate HSG from manual to electronic claims - Payroll has confirmed that HSG still use manual claim forms. These are completed by the claimant, approved by their line manager who send the completed form to Payroll for processing. There are no plans to change this arrangement. 	
<p>Priority</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>SWAP Ref: AP#2591</p>

Issue and Agreed Action		Follow Up Assessment		In Progress		
<p>Issue: Following discussions with Service Managers it was found that there is currently no formal or regular budget monitoring of Out of Hours spend across services. Although it is appreciated that the services may require an Out of Hours provision, it is good financial practice for the spend of Out of Hours to be monitored and scrutinised where possible. The Out of Hours spend for 2021/22 was £51k and for 2022/23 (to February 2023) the spend was £29.37k.</p> <p>Further to this, following discussions with HR/Payroll, there are no formal financial reports produced or reported to SMT for overview and scrutiny.</p> <p>Agreed Action: Out of Hours spend will be reported and reviewed periodically to ensure value for money. This will be incorporated into the people data reports provided to SMT+ and Personnel Committee. HR and Finance will liaise to action this.</p>		<p>The new Out of Hours policy went live in November 2025. There will be a six-month review of both the new process and cost. Out of Hours expenditure will be discussed and reported as part of budget monitoring and there will be a report to ELT / SLT six months after the new process has been implemented. As such a revised implementation date of 31st May 2026 has been agreed.</p>				
Priority	3	<i>SWAP Ref: AP#2592</i>	Responsible Officer	Assistant Director People and Performance / Interim HR Operations Manager	Timescale	31 st May 2026