

Internal Audit Recommendations and Agreed Actions

<i>Recommendation</i>		<i>Priority</i>	<i>Agreed Action</i>	<i>Responsible officer</i>	<i>Target Date</i>	<i>Progress</i>
<i>R1</i>	The training needs of staff involved in advertising and sponsorship should be reviewed to ensure that best practice and techniques are being deployed.	3	Agreed. Will be picked as part of the IPA process.	Head of Tourism and Communications	December 2019	A new business development manager was appointed earlier this year. He is in the process of developing training modules for staff within the Tourism & Communications department who have a commercial/sales role. These will be rolled out over the next few months.

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R2	A specific policy should be developed that governs the wider spectrum of advertising and sponsorship.	2	Agreed. It is currently in progress. High level advice has been sought which will contribute to the production of guidance for the Council.	Director of Communications and Regeneration	November 2019	A policy is being developed in association with the corporate policy team with the intention of producing a final version that is applicable, not just to advertising and sponsorship on assets such as tram and bus shelters, but also provides clear guidance for other Council-owned companies such as Blackpool Airport and Blackpool Transport.

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R3	The production of an advertising and sponsorship strategy and operational plan should be seen as a priority.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications Business Development Manager	March 2020.	This has been delayed by the appointment of a business development manager. That person is now in place and has been tasked with producing a full business plan by the end of October.
R4	We recommend that the Advertising team updates their web presence and also the literature to promote their services, using good examples from other local authorities.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications Advertising Manager	March 2020	Web presence has been updated on the blackpool.gov site, though we are exploring other ways to make it more commercially appealing without breaching corporate guidelines

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R5	Any strategy or operational plan should also be supported by a risk register.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications Advertising Manager	March 2020	The risk register is being developed at the same time as the operational business plan with a view to having this in place by the end of October
R6	The responsibility for securing sponsorship should be clearly assigned and be part of the overall strategy.	2	Agreed. This will be looked at part of the strategy that will be written as per Recommendation 3.	Head of Tourism and Communications Business Development Manager	March 2020	The responsibility for securing sponsorship is now assigned to the new Business Development Manager role. This covers Illuminations, events and publications.

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R7	Market testing of what an external advertising agency could offer to build on and enhance the current advertising function should be considered.	2	Agreed. Will test market to see whether an external agency can help deliver national advertising.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	We are in discussion with an external agency to explore the cost v benefit of outsourcing the sale of national advertising on to our assets. Initial discussions suggest that this will require an upgrade of some tram and bus shelters so that they are capable of carrying digital advertising.

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R8	The Advertising team should conduct a stock-take to ascertain the entirety of advertising assets maintained by the Council. This stock-take should include assets that are little used, such as litter bins and also vehicle advertising. It should also include the Councils digital and social media platforms.	2	Agreed. Will need to capture assets from across the Council.	Head of Tourism and Communications Advertising Manager	March 2020	A detailed audit has been carried out for the assets that fall within the remit of the Communications & Regeneration directorate. This comprises bus and tram shelters, billboards, poster sites, the screens in Bickerstaffe, and free-standing pods and panels. It also includes the digital and social media platforms. Further work is being done on identifying assets in other directorates and arms-length companies.
R9	A central asset register should be established by the Advertising team.	2	Agreed. As above	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	This will be finalised once the full stock-take of all Council assets has been completed.

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R10	A comprehensive and supported rate card for the advertising assets should be maintained.	2	Agreed. Head of Tourism and Communications felt that this was already in place for Visit Blackpool, and will check. However these need to be in place across all advertising assets, with necessary baselines and volume discounts.	Head of Tourism and Communications Business Development Manager	March 2020	Rate-cards are in place for the assets and products that sit within the Tourism & Communications services. This will form the basis of a uniform rate-card that can be utilised across all Council assets.
R11	Charge rates should be benchmarked periodically with similar and/or nearby local authorities to ensure that a fair market rate is being achieved.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	This is undertaken on a regular basis.

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R12	The Advertising team should conduct an analysis on achieving an effective balance between selling Council advertising space primarily to external advertisers as opposed to internal council customers within the context of a potentially increased advertising offer.	2	Agreed. Campaigns – consider assets (if appropriate) before spending on external advertising. Some free capacity is already being given to Council Services.	Head of Tourism and Communications Business Development Manager	March 2020	We work closely with other Council services so that they are able to access advertising platforms where appropriate. This can be done without charge (subject to availability) or at discounted rates if advertising space needs to be guaranteed.
R13	As part of the above assessment the Advertising team should assess their income models to allow for internal customers to access advertising space at a reduced rate where mutually beneficial.	2	Agreed. This will be linked to Recommendation 12 (Rate Card). Free space is offered to Council services presently, but not everything can be free.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	As above.

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R14	The Advertising team should incorporate the leisure centres and other customer facing buildings as part of their overall Council advertising assets and look to actively place appropriately selected adverts, even if it is to advertise local council services.	3	Agreed. Will discuss with Head of Leisure, Catering and Parks, to ascertain what opportunities exist.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	Discussions on how to integrate assets that sit in other Council buildings such as leisure centres have been delayed due to the pandemic, but these will be resumed over the coming weeks. During lockdown we have experimented with the use of hired digital screens in reception areas such as Customer First for COVID-related public information messages.
R15	A thorough review of the current physical advertising asset base should be undertaken to produce a scheduled maintenance and replacement programme.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications Advertising Manager	March 2020	Review temporarily delayed due to the COVID impact but the review is now underway with a view to completion by the end of October.

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R16	On future advertising related projects, a closer working arrangements should be established with Planning and Highways to allow for problems and issues to be discussed and rectified earlier in the process.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	Arrangements in place for future projects such as a potential roll out of digital screen technology.
R17	The advertising business and strategic plans, when developed should incorporate planned increases to the advertising assets.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	These will form part of the business plan under development.
R18	The Advertising team should engage with the relevant teams within the Council to influence the creation of advertising assets in key new development locations.	2	Agreed.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	The development of new advertising assets (and particularly digital technology) now forms part of the Growth & Prosperity agenda.

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R19 The Advertising team should review the feasibility and the income generation potential from advertising on websites, which should at a minimum include advertising local Council Services.	3	Agreed. Head of Tourism and Communications asked that Internal Audit send some examples of other Councils advertising on their websites.	Head of Tourism and Communications	March 2020	An initial proposal has been put forward by an external agency that specialises in placement of advertising on local government websites. We are exploring how this might work without damaging the integrity of our site and also what level of income might be generated.