

## Audit & Governance Committee – Recommendations Tracker

13 March 2024

Number	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation / Action	Action by whom	Action update	Target date for Completion
A7/23	5 June 2023	Annual Complaints Performance Report	<p>The Customer Relations Manager, the Head of Customer Engagement and System Development and the Director of Law and Governance will take Committee member's comments and suggestions away and will report back at November's meeting where the LGSC Annual Letter and Complaints Update, and Council Complaints – Half Yearly Update items are scheduled; areas to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) comparative complaints figures with other local authorities.</li> <li>b) whether a similar internal investigator appointment will be beneficial for ASC and having more internal investigator roles in Education Services.</li> <li>c) consider whether the Corporate category can be renamed to 'Other' and explore whether it can be broken down by the services they related to as soon as possible; to liaise with Committee members on the services to be listed.</li> <li>d) consider how non-formal complaints information such as around highways that residents direct to Members, can be incorporated in future reports or provided to the Committee in another form.</li> <li>e) explore the suggestion with database providers of a response box being</li> </ul>	<p>Customer Relations Manager / Head of Customer Engagement and System Development / Director of Law and Governance</p>	<p>As of 14 February 2024, the Customer Relations Team Manager and the team provided the following update:</p> <p>The ongoing Customer Service Transformation Programme has remained the focus for the Service. Officers remain committed to addressing the questions from the Committee; at this time the update is such that a significant amount of the focus on Customer Service Transformation includes the areas highlighted by committee and as such they remain a work in progress.</p> <p>Update provided by the Customer Relations Manager on 13 November 2023:</p> <p><b>Regarding the Task and Finish group on complaints</b> (refer to item 7 - Annex 2, heading: 'Learning from Complaints'): The group is currently at discovery stage with all three customer relations teams engaged in the process. The aim is to provide an outcome report for the Chief Executive by 31 December 2023, a summary of which can then be shared with the A&amp;G Committee in the New Year.</p> <p>Update provided by the Customer Relations Manager on 3 November 2023:</p>	June 2024

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Page 12			<p>added to formal complaints indicating the residents' borough or district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f) provide a report on the customer services steering group, identifying the problems, where those were occurring and what was being done.</li> <li>g) provide an update on the Customer and Communities Directorate's mapping exercise of the Council's communication touch points and whether those were user friendly.</li> <li>h) consider a similar approach of having a central email address for residents when communicating with the Council around reporting a defect or complaint and issues to be allocated to the relevant officers for a response within an agreed timeline.</li> <li>i) provide an update on dovetailing residents' formal complaints with concerns raised to Members if they were about the same issue, as well as where concerns should be referred to the formal complaints process.</li> </ul>		<p><b>a) Comparative complaints figures with other local authorities.</b></p> <p>We are continuing to gather data from comparable authorities. Challenges include that data captured is different and does not lend itself to direct comparisons. So far only three authorities have responded to the data sharing request.</p> <p><b>b) Whether a similar internal investigator appointment will be beneficial for ASC and having more internal investigator roles in Education Services.</b></p> <p>The ASC complaint procedure is a single tier process. The expectation is that the service complained about is best placed to respond in detail; essentially taking forward their own investigation. Complaints are responded to by Managers / Senior Managers who have a background in Social Work and therefore completely understand the complexity of the complaint and if the Council have adhered to its duties under the Care Act 2014.</p> <p>Staffing resources in Customer Relations for Education Services have increased to allow better triaging and quality assurance of complaints as well as enquiry handling. 4 complaint leads have also been appointed within the SEND Service who are working closely with the Customer Relations Team to improve the quality and timeliness of initial responses which in turn will decrease</p>
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					<p>the volumes of complaints escalating through the process.</p> <p><b>c) Consider whether the Corporate category can be renamed to ‘Other’ and explore whether it can be broken down by the services they related to as soon as possible; to liaise with Committee members on the services to be listed.</b></p> <p>The update report recognises the request and refers Services other than social care and education rather than Corporate Services. The weekly complaint snapshot reports shared with the CEO and Leader of the Council provide the Service breakdown suggested. Proposal that A&amp;G Committee Chair and Vice Chair are included in the circulation of the weekly reports going forward.</p> <p><b>d) Consider how non-formal complaints information such as around highways that residents direct to Members, can be incorporated in future reports or provided to the Committee in another form.</b></p> <p>This proposal continues to be considered; challenges include that the way these enquiries are captured and recorded is not currently uniform within the three Customer Relations Teams.</p>	
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Page 14					<p><b>e) Explore the suggestion with database providers of a response box being added to formal complaints indicating the residents' borough or district.</b></p> <p>The request has been shared with the provider who are exploring the most appropriate way to take this forward. Challenges include restrictions due to GDPR which means that providing the information cannot be compulsory and therefore the data may not be complete.</p> <p><b>f) Provide a report on the customer services steering group, identifying the problems, where those were occurring and what was being done.</b></p> <p>In Education Services the steering group continues to focus on improving the quality and timeliness of responses whilst identifying the root causes of complaints. Perceived poor standards of communication and delays in the Education Health Care Plan process continue to be the primary cause of complaints. Education Services continue to work to address this given the acknowledged national challenges in securing assessments and outcome reports by Education Psychologists.</p> <p><b>g) Provide an update on the Customer and Communities Directorate's mapping exercise of the Council's communication</b></p>	
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					<p><b>touch points and whether those were user friendly.</b></p> <p><b>h) Consider a similar approach of having a central email address for residents when communicating with the Council around reporting a defect or complaint and issues to be allocated to the relevant officers for a response within an agreed timeline.</b></p> <p>The above (g and h) continue to be explored as challenges include the fact that the timescales for responses for two of the complaint procedures (Adults and Childrens Services) are governed by statutory legislation and cannot be deviated upon. The introduction of the online self service complaint portal addresses the central point to register a complaint. As the three customer relations teams are located separately within the Council a central or single email address at present needs to be explored in more detail due to the administrative element of recognising the specific nature of the complaint and which service is best able to respond.</p> <p><b>i) Provide an update on dovetailing residents’ formal complaints with concerns raised to Members if they were about the same issue, as well as where concerns should be referred to the formal complaints process.</b></p>	
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					The CFLL Customer Relations Team has recruited an officer to a new role that focuses on building relationships with members and services. The role remit includes working with the services and members to decrease the volume of duplicated effort in providing both a response for the Member to share with the family or their representative MP and a formal stage 1 complaint response direct to the family.	
A8/23 Page 16	12 July 2023	Counter Fraud Annual Report 2022/23	The Audit Manager – Counter Fraud will find out whether a check had been undertaken across all schools in Surrey to make sure that all the business managers were on the right salary level.	Audit Manager – Counter Fraud	<p>Update provided by the Audit Manager (Counter Fraud) on 22 January 2024:</p> <p>We will update the Committee at the November meeting of the results of the data matching on school business managers grades. We plan to complete this exercise in Unit4 in September.</p> <p>(Update provided by the Audit Manager (Counter Fraud) on 2 January 2024:</p> <p>Supporting papers for school staff are held locally, confirmation of SBM paypoints would not be possible without writing out to all schools; the team did perform analysis on payroll records for schools. This included stratified sampling and review of high earners to identify anomalies. The team did not detect any oddities. Further work in this area will be picked up once Unit4 has bedded down and BAU has returned to school payroll.)</p>	November 2024

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A9/23	12 July 2023	Counter Fraud Annual Report 2022/23	The Audit Manager – Counter Fraud will ensure that next year’s Counter Fraud Annual Report includes an NFI results section summarising the major areas identified in the cases.	Audit Manager – Counter Fraud	<p>Update provided by the Audit Manager (Counter Fraud) on 2 January 2024:</p> <p>The Annual Counter Fraud Annual Report in July will include results on the biennial NFI exercise (results are reported in alternate years to reflect the 2 year cycle of NFI).</p>	July 2024
A10/23	12 July 2023	Update on the Surrey Forum and the Four Associated Strategic Partnership Boards	The Director – Corporate Strategy and Policy will liaise with the chairs of the Surrey Forum and the non-statutory boards: One Surrey Growth Board, Greener Futures Board, and Thriving Communities Board, asking whether the agendas, minutes and membership lists could be made available to all Members.	Director – Corporate Strategy and Policy	<p>Update provided by the Strategy Officer - Corporate Strategy and Policy on 15 February 2024 and 29 February 2024:</p> <p>A Sharepoint site is now up and running but by invite only - the team is working with IT to ensure that it is shareable without permissions. In recent weeks the team has been discussing this with the secretariats of each partnership group and are in the process of handing over.</p> <p>The Team expect this to be fully complete by the end of the month, with the responsibility moving forwards of updating this resting with each of the secretariats.</p> <p>For additional context, in order to avoid duplication, the solution the team has come up with is a single SharePoint that links to the 4 boards. However, as the OSGB and the H&amp;WB already provide the information members want to see on their external sites, the team has decided to just link that information. Greener Future and the Thriving Communities Board however, will have the information hosted within the Sharepoint site and so those are the secretariats we have been mainly in dialogue with.</p>	March 2024

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Page 18					<p>An update to be provided at the end of February with the result.</p> <p>(Update by Committee Manager on 20 December 2023: the link will be circulated to members as soon as this is set up.</p> <p>Update provided by the Strategic Lead - Strategy and Policy on 26 October 2023:</p> <p>Approval has been received from the chairs of One Surrey Growth Board, Greener Futures Board and the Thriving Communities Board to make the agendas, minutes and membership lists of the non-statutory boards available to all Members. It has been agreed that officers will create a dedicated SharePoint space where these papers will be saved and the link will be circulated to members as soon as this is set up. As the Surrey Forum provides a more discursive, advisory setting, often sitting in workshop mode, it will not be publishing its agenda, minutes or membership list.)</p>	
A16/23	12 July 2023	External Audit Plan 2022/23	The Grant Thornton representative will confirm whether PSAA has approved the proposed audit fee for 2022/23.	Grant Thornton representative	<p>Extract from minutes of January's (2024) Committee meeting:</p> <p>The Grant Thornton representative noted that they were still waiting for Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to approve the proposed 2022/23 audit fee, that was done on a quarterly cycle.</p> <p>(Update provided by the Strategic Finance Business Partner on 9 January 2024:</p>	TBC



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					It is understood that the fees quoted in Annex A are yet to be agreed by PSAA.  Grant Thornton to provide an update at January's Committee meeting.)		
Page 19	A17/23	12 July 2023	Whistleblowing Annual Report	The two recommendations for improvement made by the Committee will be incorporated into next year's Whistleblowing Annual Report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That existing employees alongside new employees would be asked to sign the Code of Conduct too.</li> <li>• That the headcount figures regarding the whistleblowing cases be updated to include other employees such as those in schools and contractors.</li> </ul>	Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance	July 2024	
	A18/23	12 July 2023	Whistleblowing Annual Report	The Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance will ensure that next year's Whistleblowing Annual Report includes the comparison of how other councils track their grievances as well as their whistleblower cases.	Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance	July 2024	
	A32/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Customer Relations Team Manager will look to provide a dashboard or Key Performance Indicator within the complaints annual report going forward setting out the year-on-year comparison regarding the volume of financial remedies to enable the evaluation of improvements being made.	Customer Relations Team Manager	Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024:  This will be included going forward beginning with the Annual Report due in 2024.	June 2024

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Page 20	A33/23 22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Head of Customer Services will share the document which set out the parameters of the Task and Finish Group.	Head of Customer Services	<p>Update provided on 20 February 2024:</p> <p>The Head of Customer Services sends her apologies, requesting that she defers her item to the next available meeting please (June's Committee) - it had already been deferred from January's Committee to March. This is because she is unable to provide a detailed update currently. The outcome report has now been received and is being shared with Michael Coughlin as Director Customers and Communities. She and the Customer Relations Team Manager anticipate being able to share the full update at the next A&amp;G Committee and respectfully, request that the item is postponed to the next available date. In the interim they can confirm that the Senior Complaints Practice Lead role, has been confirmed and recruitment is in progress.</p> <p>(Information provided by the Customer Relations Team Manager on 8 January 2024:</p> <p>The report was commissioned by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to review the organisation-wide approach to complaints handling in response to SCC's performance against key performance indicators (KPIs). Specific concerns were raised about timeliness of complaint responses and escalations to the Ombudsman. More details are contained within the outcome report and will be shared at Committee in March 2024.)</p>	June 2024
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A35/23	22 November 2023	LGSCO Annual Letter and Complaints Handling Update	The Committee Manager will add an item to the work plan for the next Committee meeting in January where officers will present the results of the Task and Finish Group.	Committee Manager	The item has been deferred to June’s Committee, see reason under action A33/23.	June 2024
A38/23	22 November 2023	Annual Governance Statement Half Year Update	The Director - Law and Governance will provide an update on health integration and how it was improving.	Director - Law and Governance	The Director - Law and Governance is liaising with the Public Health team to provide an update prior to the March Committee.	March 2024

### COMPLETED RECOMMENDATIONS/REFERRALS/ACTIONS – TO BE DELETED

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A6/23	5 June 2023	Questions and Petitions	The Director of Law and Governance will note the member of the public’s suggestion of consideration to be given to positive feedback of nil return, as part of the report to be received later in the year concerning Members’ and officers’ declarations of gifts and hospitality.	Director of Law and Governance	<p>Director of Law and Governance reported on the matter in the Ethical Standards Annual Review 2023-24 report (March), see item 8, paragraph 29.</p> <p>(Update provided by the Director of Law and Governance on 13 November 2023:</p> <p>Following the introduction of unit 4, online systems to record officer declarations of interest and gifts and hospitality are currently being implemented with a communication to all officers scheduled for early December. It is proposed that a new, annual report on Member and officer declarations of interests and gifts and hospitality, be incorporated into the annual report on ethical standards to the Committee which is timetabled for March 2024.)</p>
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A15/23	12 July 2023	External Audit Plan 2022/23	The External Audit Update Report scheduled for November will include a separate report on the Value for Money (VfM) arrangements.	Grant Thornton representative	The Value for Money assessment was included in the Audit Findings Report 2022/23 as part of the Statement of Accounts item reported to the Committee in January 2024.
A1/24	17 January 2024	Recommendations Tracker and Work Plan	The Committee Manager will provide to officers the letter/details of the complaint from the school in the Committee Member's division where serious issues had not been resolved such as several staff members with payments still outstanding.	Head of Business Services	The Committee Manager provided a response to the Committee Member on 14 February 2024 from the Head of Business Services.
A2/24	17 January 2024	Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25	Regarding Annex 1, paragraph 2.25 on Environmental Sustainability, the Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate) will find out where that work is shared regarding the reporting of carbon impacts of the Capital Programme.	Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate)	The Greener Futures Team take an annual carbon report to Cabinet. In addition, the Capital Programme Panel are amending the capital business case template to ensure carbon impacts are captured for capital schemes.
A3/24	17 January 2024	Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25	Regarding Annex 1, paragraph 3.8 around Commercial Investments: Property, the Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate) will review the figures in Table 7 around the expected gain for Retail.	Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate)	The forecast gain was mis-labelled and actually related to anticipated capital expenditure in future years. The table was updated prior to being approved by Cabinet and Council.

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A4/24	17 January 2024	Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25	The Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate) will review the numbering and lettering of the various annexes.	Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate)	Amended for the final version presented to Cabinet and Council.
A5/24	17 January 2024	Statement of Accounts 2022/23	The Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate) will share with the external auditors the request for the Committee to receive the audit plan from them at the March Committee meeting.	Strategic Finance Business Partner (Corporate)	<p>The new external auditors continue to carry out their initial independence checks. Until these are complete, they cannot begin liaison with the council in order to understand key risks to inform the audit plan. Initial discussions suggest that the audit planning phase will commence in March and therefore the External Audit Plan will be brought to the Committee for consideration in June.</p> <p><b>Verbal update to be provided at the March Committee.</b></p>

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