

Audit & Governance Committee – Recommendations Tracker
22 November 2023

ACTIONS

Number	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation / Action	Action by whom	Action update
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	Update provided by the Director of Law and Governance on 13 November 2023: 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.

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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"> a) comparative complaints figures with other local authorities. b) whether a similar internal investigator appointment will be beneficial for ASC and having more internal investigator roles in Education Services. 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. 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. e) explore the suggestion with database providers of a response box being added to 	<p>Customer Relations Manager / Head of Customer Engagement and System Development / Director of Law and Governance</p>	<p>Update provided by the Customer Relations Manager on 13 November 2023:</p> <p>Regarding the Task and Finish group on complaints (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&G Committee in the New Year.</p> <p>Update provided by the Customer Relations Manager on 3 November 2023:</p> <p>a) Comparative complaints figures with other local authorities.</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) Whether a similar internal investigator appointment will be beneficial for ASC and having more internal investigator roles in Education Services.</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</p>
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			<p>formal complaints indicating the residents' borough or district.</p> <p>f) provide a report on the customer services steering group, identifying the problems, where those were occurring and what was being done.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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 the volumes of complaints escalating through the process.</p> <p>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.</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&G Committee Chair and Vice Chair are included in the circulation of the weekly reports going forward.</p>
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				<p>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.</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> <p>e) Explore the suggestion with database providers of a response box being added to formal complaints indicating the residents' borough or district.</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>f) Provide a report on the customer services steering group, identifying the problems, where those were occurring and what was being done.</p> <p>In Education Services the steering group continues to focus on improving the quality and timeliness of responses whilst identifying</p>
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				<p>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>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.</p> <p>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.</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</p>
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					<p>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>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
A8/23	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	

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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	
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	Update provided by the Strategic Lead - Strategy and Policy on 26 October 2023: 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.
A14/23	12 July 2023	Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23	Committee members will feedback any queries on the Narrative Report within the Statement of Accounts in due course.	Committee members	

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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	Update by the Strategic Finance Business Partner on 2 November 2023: The Value for Money assessment is underway for 2022/23 and will be included in the Audit Findings Report 2022/23 as part of the item: Statement of Accounts 2022/23 to be reported to this Committee in January 2024.
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	
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"> • That existing employees alongside new employees would be asked to sign the Code of Conduct too. • That the headcount figures regarding the whistleblowing cases be updated to include other employees such as those in schools and contractors. 	Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance	

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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	
A19/23	13 September 2023	Recommendations Tracker and Work Plan	The Strategic Finance Business Partner will provide a joint update with Grant Thornton in early October on the progress of the finalisation of the Statement of Accounts 2022/23 and pension fund accounts.	Strategic Finance Business Partner	<p>Joint update provided by the Strategic Finance Business Partner and Grant Thornton, 12 October 2023:</p> <p><u>2021/22</u> The final technical review of the 2021/22 accounts has been completed and a revised Audit Findings Report is in draft. The Council are expecting to receive a copy of this report early next week, with a view to having the accounts signed off by the end of next week. (See item 9)</p> <p><u>2022/23</u> The audit of the 2022/23 accounts is well underway and making good progress. We do not yet have an agreed date for completion and are working through outstanding queries. We are still aiming to bring audited accounts to the November meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee. (now scheduled for the January 2024 Committee)</p>

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COMPLETED RECOMMENDATIONS/REFERRALS/ACTIONS – TO BE DELETED

A4/23	8 March 2023	Statement of Accounts 2021/22	The Committee will be provided with information concerning the detailed review on areas for improvement and action plan produced following the debrief meeting next month between the Council and Grant Thornton.	Chief Accountant (Corporate) / Strategic Finance Business Partner / Grant Thornton	Update by the Strategic Finance Business Partner on 2 November 2023: In addition to the report presented to this Committee in July, further recommendations for improvement areas are set out in the Audit Findings Report 2021/22, reported to Committee as part of this agenda, item 9: STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 (November 2023).
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A11/23	12 July 2023	Update on the Surrey Forum and the Four Associated Strategic Partnership Boards	The Director – Corporate Strategy and Policy will check whether there had been a report to the Council on the establishment of the Surrey Forum and non-statutory boards collectively.	Director – Corporate Strategy and Policy	<p>Update provided by the Strategic Lead - Strategy and Policy on 26 October 2023:</p> <p>A report was presented to Cabinet in late 2021 on the establishment of the Forum: “Surrey Forum And Delivering Through Partnerships”. According to the minutes of the Cabinet meeting that the report was presented at:</p> <p><i>“The report was introduced by the Leader who explained that the report provided an overview of the framework of the strategic partnerships that we have across Surrey and their governance. The report sets out how a number of county-wide strategic partnership boards (the Health and Wellbeing Board, the One Surrey Growth Board and the Greener Futures Board) that oversee and respond to issues of major significance in Surrey, come together to contribute towards delivery of Surrey County Council’s four priority objectives: i) Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit, ii) Enabling a greener future, iii) Tackling health inequality and iv) Empowered and thriving communities.</i></p> <p><i>In order to better align and co-ordinate the work of these boards, strengthen collaboration between partners, an overarching Surrey Forum had been established. This formalises previously informal arrangements bringing together a range of leaders from the public, private and voluntary, community and faith sectors. The Surrey Forum will be guided by intelligence, expertise, and best practice through shared data and insights capabilities, underpinned by the Surrey Office for Data Analytics (SODA), it</i></p>
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					<p><i>will analyse county-wide issues to identify and act on key areas of focus.”</i></p> <p>The work of the individual non-statutory Strategic Partnership Boards has also been referenced in papers to Cabinet. For example, a 2021 report to Cabinet on Surrey’s Greener Futures Climate Delivery Plan, discussed the work of the Greener Futures Board in that context. Similarly, the work of some of the boards has been discussed at Council: in the Leader’s Statement to a meeting of the Council on the 13 October 2020, the leader referenced the work of the One Surrey Growth Board.</p> <p>As for the statutory Health and Wellbeing Board, the board has all of its meetings and agendas published and has itself received updates from some of the non-statutory Strategic Partnership Boards, such as the One Surrey Growth Board (Item 39/20).</p>
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A20/23	13 September 2023	Internal Audit Progress Report - Quarter 1	The Orbis Chief Internal Auditor will consider the suggestion around individual services and teams which were responsible for completing the medium and low priority actions, reporting back to Internal Audit on their completion rather than Internal Audit having to chase.	Orbis Chief Internal Auditor	<p>Update provided by the Audit Manager on 13 November 2023:</p> <p>The suggestion to have individual services and teams respond directly to Internal Audit about completed medium and low priority actions for which they were responsible has been considered, and discussed with the wider team who undertake service liaison roles. We have concluded that it would require significant investment of time to set in place processes within different services and for services to get to grips with this, as opposed to continuing with the present system of having an Auditor do an annual 'sweep-up' of these actions ahead of the preparation of our Annual Report. As such we will stick with the established process, though will keep its efficiency under review.</p>
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A21/23	13 September 2023	Internal Audit Progress Report - Quarter 1	The Strategic Finance Business Partner will provide a response on the Council's provision made several years ago in its accounts around equal pay claims.	Strategic Finance Business Partner	<p>Update provided by the Strategic Finance Business Partner on 10 November 2023:</p> <p>In July 2005 the council introduced new pay and conditions arrangements for its employees in respect of equal pay and harmonisation legislation. These arrangements were fully implemented by July 2006. The 2006/07 accounts made a provision to cover the cost of any harmonisation claims and although no claims were made during the period for claims, the council recognised a potential risk that claim may be made in respect of periods prior to 2006 and a provision was made. These amounts have been fully drawn down.</p> <p>In 2014/15 the council became aware of two other cases related to pay and conditions with the potential liability of up to £4m. An additional provision was therefore made to meet the potential liability for a potential breach of national insurance wage requirements for 'on call' payments to sleepover carers and holiday pay entitlements for peripatetic tutors.</p> <p>Neither of these provisions remain in place.</p>
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A22/23	13 September 2023	Home to School Transport – Progress Update	The Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) will provide the exact number of children and young people who applied for transport by 31 July that did not have transport confirmed by two weeks before the start of term.	Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL)	Update provided by the Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) on 29 September 2023: We had 372 families who had not heard two weeks before the start of term which fell to 50 families the week before. Every family were notified before the start of term unless there were specific issues obtaining providers. We also received a further 1200 applications after 31 July.
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A23/23	13 September 2023	Home to School Transport – Progress Update	The Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) will liaise with the SVoac colleagues to get the information requested regarding data quality issues around two sets of addresses: how high a priority is it to resolve that and what plans are in place to get the process right.	Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL)	<p>Update provided by the Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) on 29 September 2023:</p> <p>The data held in the system is as accurate as the last point of contact when the details were recorded by front door services. All services are responsible for data management and processes are in place for staff to validate demographic details on every contact. Address data will only be as accurate as the last time it was recorded as individual circumstances may change over time.</p> <p>Surrey has automated data collection from all 392 mainstream schools.</p> <p>For non-active children (i.e. those not known to SCC services), Surrey will accept that the schools address is the most up to date and will overwrite non-matching addresses already in the system.</p> <p>For active children (i.e. those known to SCC services) Surrey accept that our address data is the most up to date. Incoming data from schools that does not match our master data will be placed into conflict for the Schools Data Team to validate which address is correct.</p> <p>SCC follows the guidance from the Central Digital and Data Office and has adopted best practice in accessing address data using Ordnance Survey(OS) AddressBase products. Local Authorities are advised to consider AddressBase your source of truth for all address data in Great Britain and use AddressBase Core whenever possible before other solutions.</p>
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A24/23	13 September 2023	Home to School Transport – Progress Update	The Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) will liaise with the Committee member to discuss the problems referred to him around H2STA.	Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL)	Update provided by the Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) on 29 September 2023: I have contacted Stephen Cooksey to ask for details on specific cases.
A25/23	13 September 2023	Home to School Transport – Progress Update	The Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) will look at where there are barriers around the provision of specialist vehicles and training of specialist drivers, looking into investing into specialist vehicles and grants.	Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL)	Update provided by the Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) on 29 September 2023: PeopleToo are undertaking a Commissioning Review of H2S services following on from their Freedom to Travel recommendations. This will consider further the challenges / barriers of an inhouse / hybrid Community Transport sector fleet and how we can address some of the capacity and geographical issues we face. We are also piloting two complex care contracts with an ambulance style service, which we will review as they progress through the academic year.

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A26/23	13 September 2023	Home to School Transport – Progress Update	The Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) will provide further detail on her explanation that the H2STA team did not know which school children would be starting at until they made an application for H2STA, despite the admissions team having that information and that placements could change for SEN children.	Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL)	<p>Update provided by the Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) on 29 September 2023:</p> <p>There are approximately between 10,000 - 12,000 pupils with EHCPs and we transport around 4,000 - we cannot assume everyone requires or wants support because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) it would significantly increase the budget; and b) there is not enough supply (in terms of available drivers and vehicles). <p>We therefore need to consider where the resource should be used for those that require it the most. This also assumes that all pupils would be eligible and not all pupils would be, therefore we would have to assess all EHCP holding children which would necessitate a significant increase in resource and budget.</p> <p>We are also working with the admissions team and contacting families throughout the year to advise them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) where we found at KST they were staying on at the same establishment we would extend arrangements; or b) if they were changing establishment they would need to apply.
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A27/23	13 September 2023	Home to School Transport – Progress Update	Following the deep dive into budget forecasting with the CFLL Governance Board scheduled for October, the Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL) will provide a breakdown of costs, particularly between special needs and the general provision, expanding on what the pressures are and how difficult it is and why.	Assistant Director – Support Services (CFLL)	Slides provided by the Assistant Director - Support Services (CFLL) on 3 November 2023, regarding the Budget Deep Dive Presentation following presentation at the Board on 11 October.
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